

THE ROLE OF CONSONANTS IN CONNECTED SPEECH

Jizzakh branch of the National University of

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The faculty of Psychology, department of Foreign languages

Phylology and foreign languages

Teshaboyeva Nafisa Zubaydulla qizi

Student of group 301-21:Mo`minova Zukhra Khayot qizi

Annotation: The importance of consonants in connected speech is examined in this article. Consonants have a major impact on spoken language's rhythm, intelligibility, and fluency through their interactions with vowels and other phonetic components. Through an analysis of phonological processes like linking, elision, and assimilation, the paper demonstrates how consonants modify in continuous speech to preserve communication effectiveness. It provides information about how changes to consonants affect speech processing, pronunciation, and language acquisition.

Keywords: Assimilation, elision, connecting, pronunciation, fluency, speech patterns, phonology, linguistic analysis, consonants, and related speech.

The way words and sounds are created in fluid, continuous speech—often departing from their isolated or citation forms—is referred to as connected speech. The behavior of consonants in connection to their phonetic environment is one of the basic elements of connected speech. Speech's rhythm, tempo, and intelligibility are greatly influenced by consonants, which are often described as sounds made with some kind of closure or constriction in the vocal tract. In connected speech, a variety of phonological processes alter consonantal sounds to promote more seamless transitions between words and phrases, in contrast to isolated speech, when consonants are heard clearly and loudly. The three main processes of assimilation, elision, and linking will be the main focus of this article's analysis of the function of consonants in connected speech. Depending

on the listener's accent and level of language proficiency, these interactions between consonants and nearby sounds can either make spoken communication easier or more difficult. Linguists, language learners, and everyone else looking to enhance their speech production and understanding must comprehend these processes.

Consonants' Function in Connected Speech

In connected speech, consonants are essential for determining rhythm, flow, and intelligibility. Consonants in spoken language go through a number of changes and exchanges that support the organic flow of speech. Assimilation, elision, linking, and the realization of certain consonant clusters are some examples of these changes, which all help to improve the fluidity and efficiency of speech.

Assimilation of Consonants in Connected Speech

A consonant sound undergoes assimilation when it becomes more like a nearby sound. Changes in voice, articulation style, or position of articulation may be part of this process. Assimilation facilitates more seamless sound transitions in connected speech, which lessens the cognitive strain on both speakers and listeners.

For instance, rather than using the citation form /ɪn keɪs/, the word "in case" is frequently pronounced as /ɪŋ keɪs/ in English. To match the velar consonant /k/, the nasal /n/ becomes /ŋ/ (a velar nasal). This is a typical example of regressive assimilation, in which the sound that comes after affects the one that comes before.

In fast-paced, informal speaking, assimilation is especially important since it might provide the impression that spoken language is more fluid and natural. It is not restricted to nearby consonants; rather, it can affect vowel sounds and syllable structures in more intricate ways over longer speech spans.

Elimination of Consonants in Connected Speech

In informal speech, elision refers to the removal or absence of a sound, usually a consonant. This usually happens when a consonant sound helps with a smoother

articulation or when it is not necessary for the audience to understand the message. Particularly in fast-paced conversations, elision aids speakers in keeping their speech rhythm and cadence.

In English, the phrase "next day" is frequently pronounced as /nɛks deɪ/ instead of /nɛkst deɪ/ due to the lack of the /t/ or /d/ sound. By omitting the /t/ sound, the speaker can maintain a higher speaking tempo without compromising clarity by lowering the syllabic burden. In casual and colloquial speech, where speakers frequently put speed and efficiency ahead of accuracy, elision is especially crucial. It also has an impact on literary and song lyrics, where syllabic count and rhythm are essential.

Consonant Coalescence and Linking in Connected Speech

Linking is the process by which sounds merge or coalesce to form a continuous stream of speech by connecting across word boundaries. This is especially noticeable in English when it comes to the connecting consonant phenomena. A more fluid connection between words is created when a word that begins with a vowel sound and ends with a consonant frequently links with the initial vowel.

For example, the /g/ sound from "go" is connected to the /ɒ/ sound in "on" in the word "go on," resulting in something like /gɔ:n/. The smooth flow produced by this coalescence contributes to the organic cadence of spoken language. Consonants may also change as a result of their interactions with nearby sounds. Coalescent assimilation, in which two nearby sounds combine to form a single new sound, is a prominent illustration of this. Because the /s/ and /j/ combine to form the /ʃ/ sound, the phrase "this year" can be pronounced as /ðɪʃ jɪə/ rather than /ðɪs jɪə/.

Flapping

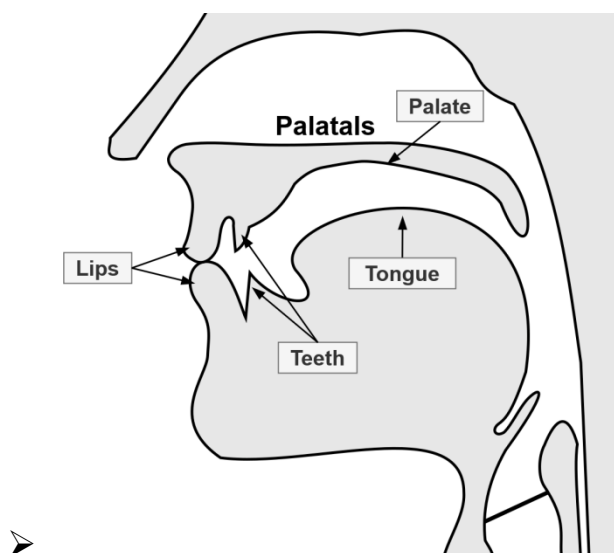
In North American English, the "flap" /ɾ/, which is made by briefly tapping your tongue on the tiny ridge on the roof of your mouth directly behind your top front teeth, is frequently produced when /t/ or /d/ occurs between vowels. Similar to

glides, the flap sound is significantly faster and less distinct than /d/. It also appears to happen just between syllable boundaries. In all American English registers, flapping is very prevalent both within and between words. The flap can still happen if the /t/ or /d/ is followed by a sonorous consonant sound, such as /m, n, ũ, l, r, w, or j/, which means that the vocal tract is relatively open.

- *a lot of* → uh_lo_ruv
-
- *but I* → bu_reye
-
- *that it* → tha_rit
-
- *you hurt it* → you_hur_rit
-
- *right away* → ri_ra_way
-
- *what if* → wuh_rif
-
- *got to go* → go_ra_go
-
- *get over it* → ge_roh_vu_rit

Blending (Palatalization)

In English connected speech, blending—also known as palatalization—is a relatively frequent sound alteration. When a consonant is being spoken and the tongue hits the palate, this is known as blending. Find the palate by looking at the image.



Palatal consonants are phonemic, or stand-alone sounds, in certain languages, including Czech and Russian. Allophonic palatalization, on the other hand, is a "subcategory" of other sounds or groups of sounds in English. In English, palatalization typically happens across a variety of consonant sounds, particularly those that transcend word boundaries. It is crucial to be able to identify this pattern since it is so common and happens in so many various types of speech, even if the degree of palatalization varies depending on the speaker and situation.

Conclusion

One crucial aspect of genuine spoken language that reflects the fluid, dynamic character of communication is the change of related speech. It includes a number of phonological processes that help speakers create speech more smoothly and efficiently, including assimilation, elision, connecting, and reduction. These adjustments, which frequently happen unintentionally, support the preservation of communication's rhythm, tempo, and clarity while also increasing speech's adaptability to various situations. For both language learners and linguists, comprehending related speech patterns is essential because it

shows how spoken language is different from written language. Gaining proficiency in related speech patterns can greatly enhance fluency, listening comprehension, and pronunciation, enabling more successful communication in everyday contexts.

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