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THE ROLE OF CONSONANTS IN CONNECTED SPEECH

Jizzakh branch of the National University of
Uzbekistan named after Mirzo Ulugbek
The faculty of Psychology, department of
Foreign languages
Phylology and foreign languages
Teshaboyeva Nafisa Zubaydulla qizi
*Student of group 301-21:**Makhmudova Adolat Rakhim qizi***

Annotation: *The transformations that consonants go through in connected speeech a prevalent aspect of natural language use are examined in this article. Assimilation, elision, and coarticulation are some of the processes that have a major impact on the pronunciation and overall intelligibility of consonants in connected speech. Because they emphasize the dynamic aspect of spoken language, understanding these alterations is essential for linguists, language learners, and speech therapists. Clarifying these processes, their linguistic significance, and their applicability in many circumstances are the goals of the paper.*

Keywords: *Connected speech, assimilation, accommodation, elision, loss of plosion, nasal plosion, lateral plosion, historical elision.*

Words, phrases, and longer expressions make up the continuous sequence of language used in daily communication. It is noteworthy that the way a word sounds in connected speech and how it is pronounced when spoken alone change significantly. These changes are predictable and often consistent. The influence of speech sounds on one another during communication causes a variety of sound modifications to occur both within words and at their boundaries. The term "connected speech" refers to the organic flow of spoken language, which frequently causes consonantal alterations as a result of assimilation, elision, and coarticulation. These phonological and phonetic changes affect how sounds are

perceived and pronounced, which makes them essential for language acquisition and clear communication.Both linguistic analysis and practical language skills can be enhanced by familiarity with these ideas. In connected speech, processes including assimilation, accommodation, vowel reduction, and elision—also known as deletion—are the result of the interplay between consonants and vowels as well as within each type.

Assimilation is the process through which a consonant is changed to sound more like a nearby consonant in speech:

i. When the interdental sounds [ð] or [θ] arrive after the alveolar sounds [t], [d], [s], [z], [l], and [n], they turn into dental sounds. The influence shifts from a later sound to an earlier one in this instance of partial regressive absorption. As in the expression "at the desk."

ii. When the post-alveolar [r] influences the sounds [t] and [d], they change into post-alveolar sounds, indicating partial regressive assimilation. The sonorant [r] following the voiceless [t] is largely devoiced in "try," "dry," "that right rule," and "the third room," to name a few examples.

iii. Complete regressive absorption is demonstrated by the fact that the sounds [s] and [z] transition to post-alveolar before the sound [ʃ]. For instance, in "this shop" [ðɪs'ʃɑp], "horse-shoe" ['hɔ:rʃu:], and "does she" ['dʌʒi].

iv. Incomplete regressive absorption frequently causes the combinations [t+j] and [d+j] to become affricative. Examples are "congratulate" [kɬn'grædʒulɛɪt], "did you" [dɪdʒu:], "could you" ['kʊdʒu:], and "graduate" [kən'grædʒulɛɪt].

The place of articulation for nasal sounds changes depending on the following consonant.

a) The [m] stays bilabial before another bilabial in "camp," for example, just as it does in "man" before a vowel.

b) Alveolar [n] comes before another alveolar in "cent," as in "net."

c) In "symphony," the labio-dental [f] that follows makes the [m] labio-dental.

d) Before the interdental [θ] in "seventh," the [n] changes to a dental sound.

e) In "pinch," the following affricate [ʧ] causes the [n] to be palato-alveolar.

Before the velar consonant in "thank," the [n] finally assimilates to form a velar [ŋ].

The manner of articulation also changes due to assimilation, as demonstrated below:

❖ Loss of plosion: The first plosive consonant loses its plosion when two follow one another. Phrases like "great trouble," "glad to see you," and "an old carpet," for instance, are examples of incomplete regressive assimilation.

❖ Nasal plosion: The articulation of the plosive and the soft palate's function cause a nasal character in the plosion release when a plosive is followed by a nasal sonorant. Partial regressive assimilation is also demonstrated by the phrases "garden," "mad Mary," "not now," and "let me see,".

❖ A lateral plosion occurs when a plosive is followed by a lateral sonorant [l], changing the plosive's sound to a lateral halt. Certain words, such as "people," "little," and "at last," exhibit partial regressive assimilation.

Assimilation can alter consonant voicing, influencing articulation strength and vocal cords. In particular, when voiced lenis sounds are followed by another voiceless sound, they may become voiceless fortis:

A)Regressive assimilation in words like "newspaper" (where [z] in "news" becomes [s] in "paper") and "gooseberry" (where [s] in "goose" affects "berry") is a notable example of fortis voiceless / lenis voiced assimilation. Additionally, this happens in grammatical forms, such as [v] in "have" and "of" becoming [f] and [z] in "has," "is," and "does" changing to [s]. For instance: "She's five," "of course," "you've spoiled it," "she has fine eyes," along with "Does Pete like it?"

B)Indicating gradual assimilation the weak versions of the verbs "is" and "has" likewise assimilate to the preceding word's last voiceless fortis consonants. "What's your name?" and "your aunt's coming" are two examples.

C) Fortis voiceless consonants [p, t, k, s] cause English sonorants [m, n, r, l, j, w] to become somewhat devoiced. Words like "smile," "snack," "tray," "quite," and "plan," for example, are examples of absorption.Voiced lenis consonants in English usually become voiceless fortis as a result of assimilation, as in "of course" [əfˈkɔːs].

Accommodation describes how "vowel + consonant" and "consonant + vowel" types can be used interchangeably. Vowels that are preceded or followed by nasal sonorants undergo a minor nasalization, as in "never" and "men." Consonants are labialized before the vowels [o] and [y] in Russian, as demonstrated by phrases like кофе (coffee), больше (more), думать (to think), and лучше (better).

Lip position can also be affected by accommodations, especially when it comes to the swapping of vowel and consonant kinds. Consonants exhibit labialization when impacted by nearby back vowels. There are a few examples: "pool," "moon," "rule," "soon," "whose," and "cool."

Additionally, consonants that come before or after front vowels [i:] and [i] have a spread lip position. Take, for example, the words "tea" and "beat," "meat" and "team," "feet" and "leaf," and "keep" and "leak."

Accommodation is also influenced by the soft palate's position. Words like "and," "morning," "come in," and "menta" exhibit slight nasalization, which is caused by the extended lowering of the soft palate when influenced by surrounding sonants [m] and [n].

Elision, or the total loss of English sounds, including vowels and consonants, is common. It usually affects the following sounds and is less noticeable in slow, deliberate speech and more noticeable in quick, informal conversation:

In forms of the auxiliary verb "have," "has," and "had," as well as in personal and

possessive pronouns like "he," "his," "her," and "him," the letter [h] is frequently lost. "What has he done?" for instance, can be pronounced as ['wPt qz I· "dAn].When the sound [l] comes after another [l], it is frequently elided. For example, "already" is pronounced [L'redI], "always" becomes ['LwIz], and "all right" sounds like [L'raIt].When alveolar plosives are followed by another consonant, they are often elided. The pronunciation of "next day" as ['neks 'deI] and "just one" as as ['GAs'wAn], and "mashed potatoes" as ['mxS pq'teItEVz].

Historical elision refers to the omission of some starting consonants in English, such as "write" and "know," or the medial consonant [t] in words like "fasten," "listen," "whistle," and "castle."Although connected speech frequently involves elision, there are also cases where sounds are inserted: An intrusive "r" may be pronounced in between vowels when a word ends in a vowel. "The idea of it" can sound like [ðə aɪ'dɪər əv ɪt], for instance.

Another frequent inclusion is the connecting "r". The pronunciation of "a teacher of English," for instance, is [ə'ti:tʃər əv 'ɪŋglɪʃ]. The palatal sonorant [j] is frequently added to words that finish in a diphthong that glides to [i], such [ai] or [ei]. For example, the pronunciation of "playing" is ['pleɪjɪ̈], as well as "crying" as ['kraɪjɪŋ].The bilabial sonorant [w] can also be used in [V]-gliding diphthongs such as [ɛV] and [aV]. Examples are "allowing" as [ə'laʊwɪ̈] and "growing" as ['grəʊwɪ̈].

Coarticulation

The process known as coarticulation occurs when the articulators' positions for adjacent sounds influence how one sound is articulated. Consonants may get slightly altered in pronunciation as a result of this interaction, changing their sound depending on the situation. The /k/ in "keep" is pronounced differently than the /k/ in "cool," for example, due to the subsequent vowel sound. The role of coarticulation in connected speech and its consequences for speech production and perception will be discussed in this section.

Consonant Modifications in Different Languages

Using examples from Mandarin, Spanish, and French, this section will look at how language modification differs between languages. Understanding these differences helps improve language instruction and foster a deeper understanding of other languages. For language learners, understanding connected speech's consonant modifications is essential because native speech can be difficult to comprehend because to these phonetic shifts.

- This section will describe methods for teaching connected speech, such as listening activities that highlight conversations from everyday life.
- Practice typical adjustments with these activities.
- The importance of listening skills development through exposure to natural speech.

Conclusion

Consonants are crucial for word formation in connected speech, but they also interact with other sounds to affect intelligibility, rhythm, and pronunciation. In connected speech, consonants serve the following essential purposes:

- **Connecting Consonants:**consonants at the beginning and end of words can join together to create a smoother speech pattern. For instance, the "n" in "turn" links with the "l" in "left" in "turn left," resulting in a more seamless transition: "turn left" becomes "turn-left."This linkage contributes to the natural rhythm and keeps the speech flowing.
- **Coalescence:**when two nearby consonants combine to create a new sound, this is known as coalescence. For instance, the "t" and "j" sounds in "don't you" (said rapidly) may blend to form a "ch" sound, which would make it sound like "don'choo."Coalescence reduces the effort required to generate individual sounds, speeds up speaking, and makes pronunciation easier.
- **Clusters of Consonants:** are frequently heard when several consonants occur together without any vowels in between. These clusters may be reduced or simplified in connected speech. In quick speech, the final consonant cluster "ksts" in "texts," for instance, might be shortened to "tex." Consonant cluster reductions support speech's organic rhythm and tempo.

❖ **Final Consonant Devoicing:** Voiced consonants at the end of words can become voiceless in some dialects or in rapid speech. The last "g" in "bag," for instance, might be pronounced as a voiceless "k," which would make it seem like "bak."Another way that connected speech lowers effort and keeps a natural pace is this.

Consonants are crucial for connecting words, creating organic rhythms, and preserving the conversation's flow in connected speech. Consonants adjust to the speed and context of speech through processes like elision, assimilation, connecting, and coalescence, which facilitates more fluid and effective communication. To improve clarity, fluency, and comprehension, both language learners and native speakers must comprehend the function of consonants in connected speech.

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