

Lecture 6

Aspects of connected speech

- Rhythm
- Assimilation
- Elision
- Linking

Rhythm

- Rhythm is the relatively equal beat between stressed syllables. It has often been claimed that English speech is rhythmical and that rhythm is detectable in the regular occurrence of stressed syllables.
- The theory that English has stress-timed rhythm implies that stressed syllables will tend to occur at relatively regular intervals whether they are separated by unstressed syllables or not. E.g.

Walk down the path to the end of the canal

- The stress-timed rhythm theory states that the time from each stressed syllable to the next will tend to be the same, irrespective of the number of intervening unstressed syllables.

How did you manage to be there in time?

- In languages which have syllable-timed rhythm, all syllables, whether stressed or unstressed tend to occur at regular intervals of time, and the time between stressed syllables will be shorter or longer in proportion to the number of unstressed syllables.

Stress group

- A stressed syllable, together with any unstressed syllables which may follow it form a stress group.
- The fundamental rule of English rhythm is that each stress group within a word group is given the same amount of time.

*My teacher's in London this Friday for a conference in
Phonetics*

*When did you hear the story about John and the girl
upstairs?*

Rhythm unit (Foot)

- A unit with a stressed syllable as its centre and any unstressed syllables which may come before and after it is called a rhythm unit. The rules are as follows.

1. Any unstressed syllable at the beginning of a word group must go together with the following stress group.

My apologies

The teacher has arrived

2. If the unstressed syllable is part of the same word as the stressed syllable, they belong to the same foot.

I'm going home today for Christmas

3. If the unstressed syllable is closely connected grammatically to the stressed word, although not a part of that word, they belong to the same rhythm unit.

Give it to John

4. Whenever you are in doubt as to which rhythm unit unstressed syllables belong to, put them after a stressed syllable, rather than before it.

He was older than me

Assimilation

1. Definition: Assimilation is the process which takes place when one sound adapts itself to become similar to a neighbouring sound in one or more aspects. In other words, assimilation is the influence of one phoneme upon another neighbouring phoneme, so that they become more alike.
- Assimilation may occur across word boundaries or between words, across morpheme boundaries or within a morpheme or a word. E.g.

light blue

good girl

cats

beds

bent

bank

2. Kinds of assimilation across word boundaries

a. In terms of the direction of change

- Regressive assimilation: $C_f \rightarrow C_i$
- Progressive assimilation: $C_i \rightarrow C_f$

b. In terms of the way in which phonemes change

- Assimilation of place: $C_f \rightarrow C_i$
- Assimilation of manner: $C_f \rightarrow C_i$
- Assimilation of voice: $C_f \rightarrow C_i$

Assimilation of place of articulation

1. Alveolar + bilabial → bilabial

a. / t / becomes [p] before bilabials

- right place [raɪppleɪs]
- might put [maɪppʊt]
- might make [maɪpmeɪk]
- white bird [waɪpbɜ:d]
- might buy [maɪpbʌɪ]
- might win [maɪpwɪn]

b. / d / becomes [b] before bilabials

- hard path [hɑ:bpa:θ]
- should put [ʃʊbput]
- should make [ʃʊbmeɪk]
- good boy [gʊbbɔɪ]
- should win [ʃʊbwin]
- should buy [ʃʊbbɑɪ]