The Phonetics of English Pronunciation - Week 9

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Topics

- Your "homework"

- "LINKING"

  The forgotten German consonant [ʔ]
  (The German desire for "clarity")

  The "binding" English inheritance from France

  The joys of variety
  (different types of linking)

  Read: Section VI.1, pp. 77-87

Before the lecture: Exercise 7&8

1. Transcribe the following words, paying particular attention to the quality of the unstressed vowels. (Look them up in a dictionary if you are not certain): (US variants in red)

"consternation"
[kɒnstəˈneɪʃən]   [.. ʃn̩]
[kɑnstɚˈneɪʃən]   [.. ʃn̩]

"malicious"
[məˈlɪʃəs]

"applicable"
[əˈplɪkəbəɫ]   [..bɫ̩]

"charismatic"
[kærɪzˈmætɪk]
[kærɪzˈmæɾɪk]

"solicitous" (eifrig bedacht)
[səˈlɪsɪtəs]
[səˈlɪsɪɾəs]

"fantasize"
[ˈfæntəsaɪz]
[ˈfænəsaɪz]

The alternatives for the words *consternation* and *applicable* reflect the common event of "**schwa elision**".

Schwa + /n/ and Schwa + /ɫ/ endings are often reduced to a syllabic [n̩] and syllabic /ɫ̩/ (indicated by the vertical mark under the symbol).

This is exactly the same as in German words like *bitten, leiden, Handel* etc.

Note that, intervocalically, <nt> in American English is pronounced as [n] (just as in Saarländisch, e.g. <unter> [ˈʊnɐ]).

Exercise 7&8 (cont.)

1. (cont.)

"repetition"

[repə(ɪ)ˈtɪʃən] [.. ʃn̩]

"philanthropic"

[fɪlənˈθrɒpɪk]
[fɪlənˈθrɑpɪk]

"recognition"

[rekəgˈnɪʃən]   [.. ʃn̩]

"sequential"

[sə(ɪ)ˈkwenʃəł] .. [.. ʃ̩ł]

Depending on the dictionary you consulted, you may have found a schwa or an [ɪ] in the second syllable of *repetition* and the first syllable of *sequential*.

Either pronunciation can be considered correct, but American and Australian speakers tend to favour the schwa version. In Britain, there is probably an age-linked preference, with younger speakers favouring schwa.

The transcription exercise.

• *Did you transcribe the following text – marking the stressed syllables and the contextual variants?*

It was strangely unnerving in the cold and dark of the night.

[ɪt wəz ˈstreɪndʒli ʌnˈnɜːvɪŋ ɪn̪ðə ˈkəʊɫdn̩dɑːk əv ðə ˈnaɪt]
∗   ʌnˈnɝˑvɪŋ   ˈkoʊɫdn̩ˈdɑɹk

They felt quite small and vulnerable as they became aware

[ðe(ɪ) ˈfeɫt ˈkwaɪt ˈsmɔːɫən ˈvʌɫnɹəbɫ əz ðe(ɪ) bɪˈkeɪm əˈwɛə
                                    ∗∗   əˈwɛˑ

of all the strange sounds of the farmyard.

əv ˈɔːɫ ðə ˈstɹeɪndʒ ˈsaʊndz əv ðə ˈfɑːmjɑːd
∗   ˈfɑɹmjɑɹd

The transcription has the *weakened forms* marked in red to help draw your attention to them.

One of the didactic paradoxes of teaching weak forms is that we are drawing attention to something that has become weak because a lack of attention is paid to it and a lack of effort is invested in it during the articulatory planning and production process!

Weak forms therefore *have to be proctised in phrases* with the effort being applied to the stressed syllables surrounding the weak forms.

Other context-determined „problems" are also marked in red!

∗ Phonemically, this word has /dZ/ following the /n/, but (for those of you interested in what your mouth does!) the velum is often slow in closing off the nasal cavity, so no pressure builds up to produce a [d]. Other words like this are < range >, < lunge >, < bunjee > and you will hear the same sort of reduction in /tS/ words like < lunch >, < branch > etc.

∗∗*Note* that the pronunciation of < *vulnerable* > (in Gefahr, verwundbar), the schwa after the /n/ is normally elided and the word becomes tri-syllabic instead of having 4 syllables.

Other examples are <*general*>, <*temperature*>, <*natural*>, <*interest*>.

If you speak slowly and carefully, the first schwa still tends to be elided, and the /r/ is syllabic, being pronounced a bit longer (this is the case even in British English, although the American version has a stronger [ɹ], of course.

Today's topic: LINKING

- One of the most important differences between spoken English and German (together with "*weak forms*"), is the way in which words are *linked* together in running speech!

- We shall look at the reason **WHY German speakers do not link words in the same way**,

  and then look at the *different types of linking* in English.

"Linking" words together in a sentence is a problem for German learners of English.

There is a much stronger tendency to make the beginnings of words clear in German. English speakers only do this when they are trying to be very precise (for example in noisy conditions, or when talking to someone who is deaf, or when explaining something to somebody who you think will have difficults understanding what you mean.

This means that a German speaker of English runs the risk of being interpreted as being "over-precise" (pedantic, etc.)

Reason: The forgotten German consonant [ʔ]

- It is quite possible to argue that:

    "*No German syllable can begin with a vowel*"

Evidence: < Auge >   =   [ˈʔaʊ . gə]

                < Eiche >   =   [ˈʔaɪ . çə]

                < Insel >   =   [ˈʔɪn . səl]

                < oben >   =   [ˈʔoː . bm̩]

                < uneben >   =   [ˈʔʊn . ʔeː . bm̩]

So [ʔ] can be defined as a consonant phoneme /ʔ/:

             [ˈtoːbən] ≠ [ˈʔoːbən]

The reason why „linking" is a problem for German learners of English is the fact that any word (*apparently*) beginning with a vowel in German *actually* begins with a *glottal stop* [ʔ].

Linguists prefer to call this phenomenon a „juncture" signal rather than saying that all German syllables begin with a consonant, because it signals the beginning of a word, or a meaningful part of a word (morpheme) as in < *be-eilen* > or < *ver-achten* >.

Also, they argue, that the glottal stop can disappear if a word is not stressed, as with „ihn" in the following phrase: („*Ich kenn' ihn*" [ʔɪç ˈkɛniːn].

These are, of course, theoretical arguments that you can accept or not, depending on your scientific persuasion (In English, we know from the last lecture that the /h/ in "*he, his, him*" etc. disappears when these words are weakened when unstressed. But we still accept the glottal fricative /h/ as a phoneme of English!).

The arguments for or against the "phonemic" status of the glottal stop don't change the fact that *German speakers automatically produce a glottal stop* at most syllable onsets. And the more careful they are (*e.g. when they are speaking a foreign language*!!) *the more likely* they are to produce the glottal stop.

Versus. The "binding" inheritance from France.

- English speakers do not have the German desire to separate one word from another.
- This may be an historical influence from the partially Romance origins of English, but that must remain pure conjecture ….

  The fact remains that *we only separate words with a glottal stop if they are being emphasized!*

  "*What an awful idea*!"

  Brit[wɒt ʔən ʔɔːɬ ʔaɪdɪə] vs. Brit[wɒt‿ən‿ɔːɬ‿aɪdɪə]

English runs words together just like French (though this doesn't seem to make French any easier to understand for English speakers!), so the German habit of separating words sounds very unnatural, and the speaker can be interpreted (unjustly) of being over-emphatic, pedantic, etc.

(Remember that differences between the way other people speak and the way you speak yourself always tend to be interpreted as being a reflection of the other people's mood or attitude!)

Different types of linking

- The linking problems stem from the **second** word (the one beginning with a vowel).

- But the **preceding** word can
    a) end in a **consonant** (*hit, gave, push* etc.), or
    b) end in a **vowel** (*so, why, how* etc.)

  and these two conditions lead to **two** basically <u>*different linking phenomena*</u>, which we can call:
  Consonant-to-vowel linking and
  Vowel-to-vowel linking

"Linking words together" is the phenomenon we are talking about. But to help you understand the processes we shall sub-divide them into different categories.

The main subdivision is:

a) consonant-to-vowel: One word ends in a consonant and the next word begins with a vowel (e.g., "*get off*")

b) vowel-to-vowel: One word ends in a vowel and the next word begins with a vowel (e.g., "*go away*")

But don*t be deceived by the spelling (letters are not sounds!):
< *side, give, pale, rope* > etc. end with a consonantal sound, and

< *why, how, though* > etc, end with a vocalic sound.

Consonant-to-vowel linking

- This is the easiest type of linking to explain:
  The final consonant *also* becomes the initial
  consonant of the next word (the two syllables
  share the consonant):

Put it on immediately!	[ˈpʊtɪtɒnɪˈmiːdɪətli]
	[ˈpʊtɪˈɾɑnɪˈmiːdʒətli]
Take it off again!	[ˈteɪkɪˈtɒfəgen]
	[ˈteɪkɪˈɾɑfəgen]
Stick it in a bag!	[ˈstɪkɪtɪnə ˈbæg]
	[ˈstɪkɪˈɾɪnə ˈbæg]

The important word here is "also".

The final consonant is *shared* with the next word. It stays the fnal consonant
but it also starts the next word.

Linking-R

- For American-English speakers, This is just normal consonant-to-vowel linking: *far away* [ˌfɑɹ‿əˈweɪ]

- For British-English speakers it is special, because post-vocalic-R is not pronounced (Engl. is non-rhotic) *But before vowels it becomes **intervocalic,** and therefore has to be pronounced*:

  ***How far can you see*?**   [haʊ ˈfɑː kən jə ˈsiː]
  ***How far is it*?**   [haʊ ˈfɑːɹɪzɪt]

  ***Can you spare the time*?**   [kənjə ˈspɛə ðə ˈtaɪm]
  ***Can you spare a moment*?** [kənjə ˈspɛəɹə ˈməʊmənt]

The linking R is a sub-category of consonant-to-vowel linking for British-English speakers because the /r/ ([ɹ]) only appears in the linking position.

A limerick for practice!

- Did you hear of this farmer from Frattonne
  Who would go to church with his hat on?
  "If I wake up," he said,
  "With my hat on my head,
  I shall know that it has not been sat on."

- [dɪd jə ˈhɪəɹəv ðis ˈfɑːmə fɹəm ˈfɹætɒn]
  [hu wəd ˈgəʊ tə ˈtʃɜːtʃ wɪðɪz ˈhætɒn]
  [ɪfaɪ ˈweɪkʌp | hi ˈsed]
  [wɪð maɪ ˈhætɒn maɪ ˈhed]
  [aɪ ʃəl ˈnəʊ ðətɪˈtæzn̩ bɪn ˈsætɒn]

We have repeatedly said that it is useful to have a fixed text to practise with, so that the feeling of a new pattern of articulation becomes familiar.

The ideal is, that it becomes so familiar that the feeling becomes transferred to other expressions and, ***eventually*** (N.B. this means „*schließlich*" NICHT „*eventuell*"!) ***to all utterances***.

And the US version!

- Did you hear of this farmer from Frattonne
  Who would go to church with his hat on?
  "If I wake up," he said,
  "With my hat on my head,
  I shall know that it has not been sat on."

- [dɪdʒ ˈhɪəɹəv ðis ˈfɑɹmə˞ fɹəm ˈfɹæťɑn]
  [hu wəd ˈɡoʊ tə ˈtʃɜɹtʃ wɪðɪz ˈhæťɑn]
  [ɪfaɪ ˈweɪkʌp | hi ˈsed]
  [wɪð maɪ ˈhæťɑn maɪ ˈhed]
  [aɪ ʃəl ˈnoʊ ðəťɪt ˈhæzn̩ bɪn ˈsæťɑn]

The important difference between the British and the US versions in this context (of linking) is the „flapped" /t/, which we mark here with the shortened [ť]. It could equally well be the internationally agreed sign for an alveolar „flap" or „tap", namely [ɾ].

The other differences are the indication of the post-vocalic R in *farmer* and *church*, the vowel [ɑː] instead of Britisch English [ɒ] in the word *on* and the use of [oʊ] instead of [əʊ] in *go* and *no*.

Vowel-to-vowel linking

- If there is no consonant at the end of the word, it cannot be linked, so the end of the vowel is drawn across.
- Words ending with i-vowels (/iː eɪ aɪ ɔɪ/) insert a weak [j]:
  We ^[j] *always do*, *Free* ^[j] *access*, *tea* ^[j] *up*!
- Words ending with u-vowels (/uː əʊ(oʊ) aʊ/) insert a sort of [w]:
  How ^[w] *are you*?, *Throw* ^[w] *out*, *go* ^[w] *in*

The i-vowels are often written with < y > anyway, so the spelling makes it seem like a consonant-to-vowel link:

/i(ː)/: < happy, key, quay > (but of course also < knee, tea > etc.)

/eɪ/: < hay, say > (but also < weigh, sleigh > etc.)

/aɪ/: < my, fly, shy > (but also < high, tie, > etc.)

/ɔɪ/: Nearly all /ɔɪ/-words end in < y >: < boy, coy, toy >

The u-vowels are often written with < w >

/əʊ/: < sew, grow, flow > but also < go, toe, beau, dough >

/aʊ/: < how, now, brow > but also < plough, tau, Tao >

Intrusive-R linking

- This is a peculiarity of Southern British English as a ***non-rhotic dialect***.
  /ɑː/, /ɔː/ and /ə /words can be written with or without an < r >:
  ma, ta, fah, Shah   or   ***mar, tar, far, car*** etc
  saw, flaw, Shaw   or   ***soar, floor, shore*** etc
  sonata, pizza   or   ***barter, bitter*** etc
- The greater frequency of the < r > spelling has led speakers to transfer the linking-R to the words without < r >:
  Sonata [ɹ] ***in B flat***,   ***Pizza*** [ɹ] ***and salad***, etc.

Purists condemn this typ of [ɹ] insertion as unacceptable, but it has established itself as „normal" over the last several decades.

The notorious phrase, which has been the subject of much discussion, is ***law and order***. In purists' eyes it should be [ˈlɔːənˈⁿɔːdə]. But nowadays even newsreaders can be heard to pronounce it as [ˈlɔːɹənˈⁿɔːdə].

But don't forget. This is NOT POSSIBLE in rhotic dialects!

For a North American speaker, or an Irish or Scottish (or even a South Western British) speaker with a post-vocalic R, this sort of intrusive-R linking is out of the question (because in their mental lexicon there is no confusion between *ma* and *mar*, *ta* and *tar*, *saw* and *soar*, *flaw* and *floor*, etc.

And some practice for home….
(**Don't** hand it in to me this time!)

- *Transcribe the following text, paying special attention to the weak-form and linking phenomena (please mark the accented syllables with '):*

They expected him to arrive at the reception after

all the other aunts and uncles had offered their

congratulations to the excited couple. The object

of the exercise was to give them a final treat.

How many examples of each *type* of linking are you able to identify?

Consonant to vowel linking?

Vowel to vowel linking?

Linking R?

Intrusive R?