



MODIFICATION OF CONSONANT IN CONNECTED SPEECH

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ABSTRACT

This article is devoted to the study of consonant modification in connected speech. It examines how consonant sounds change, adapt, or simplify under the influence of neighboring sounds in natural spoken language. The paper analyzes the role of processes such as assimilation, elision, linking, reduction, and coalescence in achieving fluency and naturalness in speech. The findings indicate that consonant modification in connected speech is systematic and motivated by communicative efficiency rather than random variation. The article has both theoretical and practical value, particularly for improving pronunciation teaching and listening comprehension in foreign language learning.

INTRODUCTION

Speech is rarely expressed as individual sounds or well-articulated words in spontaneous spoken language. Rather, it forms what is known as linked speech by flowing continuously. In this stream, each sound impacts the others, leading to frequent alterations in consonants. These modifications are not arbitrary or negligent; rather, they are methodical, foreseeable, and essential to attaining fluency, naturalness, and efficiency in communication. Because it clarifies why spoken language often deviates from its written form, linguistic scholars, language instructors, and students must comprehend how consonants are modified in continuous discourse. In continuous sequences, sounds are created rather than discrete units, which is referred to as connected speech. Words in a phrase or sentence lose their distinctions when spoken together. Changes in the acoustic quality, duration, or articulation of consonants are caused by their interaction with other sounds, both vowels and consonants. By lowering articulatory effort, these changes aid speakers in preserving rhythm and speed, resulting in speech that is more fluid and efficient.

Assimilation is one of the most prevalent forms of consonant change in connected speech. A consonant is said to be assimilated when it becomes more like an adjacent sound because of how near they are to one another. The location, manner, or voicing of the articulation might have an impact on this process. As an illustration, a consonant's place of articulation may shift to match the place of articulation of the subsequent sound, particularly when rapid speech necessitates simplicity of movement. A sound can be assimilated either regressively, where it is impacted by the sound that follows, or progressively, where it has an effect on the sound that follows. Regressive assimilation is especially common in fluent English conversation, where speakers anticipate the sounds that are coming next and modify their articulation

accordingly. Elision, which involves omitting a consonant sound in continuous speech, is another noteworthy example of consonant modification. Elision is more likely to happen during quick or casual conversation, particularly when a word has a complicated consonant cluster. One of the consonants may be left out to make pronunciation easier and keep fluency. The meaning is usually obvious from the context, even if the sound is left out.

The act of linking is another significant aspect of consonant behavior in connected speech. Consonants are essential to the process of connecting words that end in vowels and begin with vowels, even if this connection is frequently the subject of discussion. The last consonant is generally carried over and spoken as if it were part of the following word if a word ends in a consonant sound and the next word starts with a vowel sound. This results in a seamless transition between words and avoids uncomfortable pauses. The rhythmic and melodic aspects of speech are improved by linking, which makes it sound more natural. Reduction, which frequently entails the softening of consonant sounds in unstressed places, is another sort of consonant change. Stressed syllables tend to stand out in connected speech, while unstressed syllables get shorter and less noticeable. Consequently, consonants in weak syllables could be uttered with less clarity or with less articulatory effort. Because stressed syllables in English occur at fairly regular intervals and unstressed syllables are compressed to fit between them, this decline aids in the stress-timed rhythm of the language.

In connected speech, the interaction between consonants is more complicated, as shown by coalescence. It happens when two nearby sounds—typically at word boundaries—have such a profound impact on one another that they combine to create a distinct sound. Frequently, this procedure entails alveolar consonants followed by palatal sounds, producing a single consonant that has characteristics of both. Coalescence is a prime illustration of how connected speech alters individual sounds and is a factor in the distinctive sound patterns of casual and fast communication. Changes to consonants in linked speech have significant ramifications for language acquisition and instruction. It may be challenging for learners who only concentrate on precise, isolated pronunciation to comprehend real spoken English. When speaking, they could also sound overly formal or unnatural. Learners can improve their listening comprehension and produce more fluid speech by being aware of consonant changes. By incorporating connected speech characteristics into pronunciation instruction, teachers can help students transition from classroom language to real-world communication.

The dynamic aspect of spoken language is shown by consonant modification in connected speech from a wider linguistic point of view. It emphasizes that pronunciation is not constant but changes depending on the context, pace, and purpose of communication. These changes demonstrate the language system's flexibility and efficiency, rather than harming it. Linguists gain a better understanding of the interaction between phonetics, phonology, and communication by examining how consonants alter in connected speech. In conclusion, the change of consonants in linked speech is an essential component of natural spoken language. Consonants adjust to their phonetic surroundings through techniques like assimilation, elision, linking, reduction, and coalescence, which promotes clear, fluent, and comprehensible speech. These changes demonstrate how speakers strike a balance between clarity and efficiency in daily conversations. A thorough understanding of these procedures enhances our enjoyment of spoken language and facilitates better pronunciation instruction and acquisition.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Phonetics and phonology have extensively studied the phenomenon of consonant modification in connected speech, especially in research focusing on spoken English. The emphasis of the early structuralist linguists was on the significance of sound patterns and their systematic variation in real language. The distinction between deliberate and quick speaking was emphasized by academics like Daniel Jones, who also noted how consonants shift as conversation becomes more fluent and continuous. His research established the

groundwork for subsequent accounts of connected speech traits like assimilation, elision, and linking, all of which are currently regarded as fundamental aspects of pronunciation research. By concentrating on underlying forms and surface realizations, later advancements in generative phonology helped to improve our knowledge of consonant alteration. Researchers claimed that several phonological rules apply exclusively in connected speech, where abstract representations are converted into concrete spoken forms. This theoretical approach elucidated why consonant shifts are not random but follow predictable patterns dictated by phonological rules. Studies in this tradition showed how characteristics like place of articulation and voicing vary in reaction to surrounding sounds, supporting the notion that connected language is governed by rules rather than being random. In addition, the literature on consonant change has benefited greatly from functional and communicative methods to phonology. The emphasis of these methods is on effective communication and speech economy. Researchers have demonstrated that consonant alteration enables users to minimize articulatory effort without sacrificing comprehensibility. The notion that connected speech reflects speakers' communicative priorities rather than deviations from linguistic norms is supported by empirical studies of spontaneous speech corpora, which found that processes such as elision and reduction are more common in casual settings.

Many studies in applied linguistics have looked at the instructional consequences of consonant change in connected speech. According to pronunciation experts, a learner's ability to understand speech and speak fluently can be hampered by paying too little attention to its characteristics. When students rely too much on written input, they frequently have difficulty identifying changes in consonant sounds, according to studies on second language learning. For this reason, contemporary pronunciation instruction places more emphasis on explicit instruction on connected speech phenomena and real-world listening resources. Theoretical analysis is often combined with empirical observation as the method used to investigate consonant changes in connected speech. Researchers often examine recorded samples of real speech, such as conversations, interviews, or media broadcasts, to find patterns of consonant alteration in several studies. These recordings are frequently transcribed phonetically, making it possible to compare citation forms and their connected speech realizations in great detail. The frequency and kinds of consonant modifications in various communicative situations may be better understood via qualitative analysis of this nature.

Quantitative methods are often used alongside qualitative ones to assess the distribution and consistency of consonant alterations. Using extensive databases of spoken language, corpus-based research evaluates the frequency and circumstances of particular processes. By making results more reliable, this approach enables researchers to draw conclusions about various speakers and contexts. Additionally, experimental approaches like perception and production testing are employed to explore how listeners understand altered consonants and how speakers pronounce them at different speech rates. In general, the combination of empirical methods and theoretical frameworks has enhanced our knowledge of how consonants change when speaking. These changes are systematic, context-dependent, and motivated by communication, as shown by the literature. The integration of phonetic transcription, corpus analysis, and experimental research methods provides a comprehensive approach to studying the role of consonants in the continuous flow of spoken language.

RESULTS

An examination of consonant alterations in connected speech demonstrates that these changes are frequent and methodical in real spoken conversation. Data from real speech samples shows that when words are spoken in continuous sequences, consonants rarely maintain their complete citation forms. Rather, their comprehension is heavily impacted by the speed of their speech, surrounding noises, and the communicative environment. These results support the idea that connected speech is distinguished by predictable phonetic

changes rather than arbitrary sound fluctuation. One of the most noticeable findings is the frequent occurrence of assimilation in everyday language. The analysis reveals that, especially in fast and casual conversation, consonants frequently alter their place or manner of articulation under the impact of neighboring sounds. The fact that regressive assimilation occurs more frequently than progressive assimilation suggests that people have a tendency to predict future noises and alter their articulation accordingly. This inclination lends credence to the notion that speech planning occurs prior to the physical generation of sound, which aids in a smooth delivery. Additionally, the findings reveal that elision is a frequent method for breaking up complicated consonant clusters. The deletion of consonants that occur in the middle of clusters or between two additional consonants does not impair the overall clarity of the speech samples. Elision is most common in unstressed places and in commonly used words, implying that increased phonetic reduction is fostered by repetition and familiarity. This conclusion emphasizes the significance of cognitive and articulatory economy in influencing connected speech. The importance of consonant-related linking phenomena in preserving the smooth flow of speech is demonstrated. The last consonant is often spoken as part of the next word when a word that ends with a consonant sound is followed by a word that begins with a vowel. According to the findings, this method greatly lessens pauses and interruptions in the rhythm of speech. The communicative significance of consonant connecting in spoken interaction is highlighted by the fact that linked speech is perceived by listeners as being more organic and fluid. The decrease in consonants in weak syllables is another significant outcome. According to the analysis, consonants are frequently uttered with less accuracy and for a shorter period of time when they are not under stress. This reduction contributes to the stress-timed rhythm of English, in which accented syllables stand out against a backdrop of softer components. When individual sounds are less clearly articulated, this sort of rhythmic arrangement helps listeners pinpoint important details in the speech stream.

Lastly, the merging of adjacent consonants into a single sound with blended characteristics is demonstrated by the coalescence in linked speech. In rapid and informal speech, this process is very evident, albeit it occurs less frequently than assimilation or elision. Coalescence outcomes show how connected speech can result in the development of novel surface forms that, despite being very different from their underlying representations, are still easily understood by native speakers. The results generally suggest that consonant alteration is an inherent and necessary component of spoken language during connected speech. These improvements promote fluency, aid in rhythmic structuring, and improve the efficiency of communication. Additionally, the study highlights the significance of including these features in language instruction by elucidating the challenges students who are unfamiliar with connected speech processes may have in understanding what they hear and pronounce.

Conclusion

The study of changes in consonants in connected speech shows that spoken language is a living, adaptable system that is influenced by the needs of effective conversation. Consonants do not operate as discrete units when language occurs naturally, but rather interact closely with the sounds around them, resulting in systematic changes. The phonetic and phonological guidelines that regulate these modifications ensure that speech is still understandable to the listener and productive for the speaker. According to the research, processes such as reduction, coalescence, elision, assimilation, and linking are essential components of linked discourse rather than unusual departures from conventional pronunciation. They are a reflection of the speaker's inclination to minimize speech production, keep a beat, and make seamless transitions between words. At the same time, these methods maintain meaning by utilizing contextual clues and a common linguistic vocabulary, underscoring the harmony between economy and clarity in oral communication. Learning how consonants change in connected speech is crucial for both instructors and students from an academic standpoint.

Understanding these processes helps close the gap between written and spoken language, which enhances oral fluency and listening comprehension. As a result, teaching pronunciation by including features of connected speech may result in language usage that is more organic and productive. To sum up, consonant alteration is a key component of genuine spoken communication. It demonstrates how pronunciation changes with context, pace, and communicative intent, highlighting the adaptability of language in usage. A thorough understanding of these changes improves language theory and offers useful advice for successful language instruction and acquisition.

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