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**Lecture 6: Modifications of speech sounds in connected speech.**

**Modifications of consonants**

**The System Phonemes**

**Modifications of vowels**

In connected speech sounds do not function as isolated units, their air

collation is affected by their phonetic environment. In other words, speech

Nouns influence each other in the chain of speech. Modifications of speech

occur that occur due to this influence are called assimilation, accommodation

and elision.

Assimilation is the modification of a consonant under the influence of

the neighboring consonant. Accommodation is the process of mutual influence

of consonants and vowels. Elision is a complete reduction of sounds,

vowels and consonants.

These processes are generally accounted for by two factors. The first is

(hc economy of pronouncing efforts on the part of the speaker, whose aim is

lu convey information effectively within the shortest possible time. The second

is purely physiological: it is the degree of mobility of particular organs

or speech. Under the influence of these factors segments undergo certain

dlanges and all sorts of simplifications take place. It should be mentioned

That these phonetic modifications do not affect the meaning of utterances

land do not create barriers in communication, since they are perceived by

(he listener as normal allophonic realizations. However, foreign learners of

I(English should be aware of phonetic adjustments in connected speech, bel;

llUse ignoring them may lead to a strong accent.

**Modifications of consonants**

In modern English consonants undergo various qualitative changes in

(lie chain of speech. The most common type of such changes is assimilation

ion. Assimilation takes place when a consonant is adjusted in order to bet~()

me more like a neighboring sound. Assimilation occurs both within a

word and at word boundaries. Assimilation can affect the place of articulation,

manner of articulation, work of the vocal cords and force of articulaIion,

lip position. The alveolar allophones [t, d, n, 1] are replaced by dental variants when

followed by the interdentally [8, (j] (incomplete regressive assimilation):

*eighth, at the, breadth, on the, all that.*

2. The alveolar [t, d] become post-alveolar under the influence of the post(

incomplete assimilation): *tree, true, dry, the third*

3. [5, z] turn into UJ before [J] (complete regressive assimilation): *horse*

*shoe,* ['h::>:JJu'], *this shop \_*

4. Nasal sonorant’s [n, m] are influenced by the following consonant: bilabial

[m] and alveolar [n] become labio-dental when followed by labiodentals

[f, v]: *triumph, infant, comfort, symphony.* [n] becomes palatoalveolar

before the affricate [tf], *pinch;* in *thank* it assimilates to the velar

[k] and becomes velar.

*Changes in the manner of articulation*

1. Loss of plosion. In the sequence of two plosive consonants the first loses

its plosion (incomplete regressive assimilation): *glad to see you,*

*great trouble, an old clock, big cat.*

2. Nasal plosion. When a plosive is followed by nasal sonorant [m, n], at

the release stage the soft palate is lowered and the air escapes through

the nasal cavity with a slight plosion (incomplete regressive assimilation):

*sudden, not now, at night, let me see.*

3. Lateral plosion. In the sequence of a plosive immediately followed by

lateral sonorant [1] the release is made with lowering of the sides

of the tongue and the air escapes along the sides of the tongue with

lateral plosion: *settle, table, at last* (incomplete regressive assimilation).

*Changes in the work of the vocal cords*

This type of assimilation affects the work of the vocal cords and

force of articulation.

1. English sonorants [m, n, r, w, 1] are partially devoiced when preceded by

fortis voiceless consonants [p, t, k, 5] (incomplete progressive assimilation):

*smart, tray, quick, twins, play, pride.* This type of assimilation is

common in English, but very rare in Russian.

2. Fortis voiceless/lenis voiced type regressive assimilation can be observed

in such words as *newspaper (news* [z] + *paper), gooseberry (goose* [5] +

*berry).* At word boundaries voiced lenis fricatives are commonly assimi1.5.

**The System Phonemes**

lated to the initial voiceless fortis consonant of the following word: *she's*

*jive, have to do it, does Pete like it?* It should be noted that only fricatives

are affected by this type of assimilation, while plosives [b, d, g] remain

voiced in similar context, *big size, good fellow.*

3. Contracted forms of the verbs "is" and "has" may retain voice or be

devoiced depending on the preceding consonant (incomplete progressive

assimilation): *that's* [5] *right; Tom's* [z] *gone; Jack's* [s] *done it.*

Assimilative voicing and devoicing can also be observed in the pronunciation

of the possessive suffix's or s', the plural suffix of nouns (e)s

and the third person singular Present Simple of verbs: *girl's, beds, reads,*

*Pete's, desks, writes.*

*Changes in the*

When followed by the bilabial sonorant [w] consonants change their lip

position: they become labialized: *twinkle, quite, swan.*

There are also adjustment processes that are a result of the consonant vowel

interaction. They are generally described as accommodation or consonant

vowel co articulation. Here are some most common types of accommodation.

Consonants tend to be labialized when followed by a rounded

alzed) vowel: *cool, pot, rude.*

Vowels are slightly nazalized under the influence of the preceding or following

sonorants [m] and [n]: *and, nice, men, morning.*

Alveolar plosive [tl in the intervocal position before unstressed vowels is

replaced by a voiced tap: *pretty, better.*

It should be noted that the allophonic realizations of phonemes can be

described as obligatory for all the members of the language community regardless

of the style of speech. It is obvious that the extent to which co articulation

and simplification processes are displayed in connected speech

depends on the style and tempo of speech. In formal speech the articulation

is more careful and precise. In informal casual discourse (fast colloquial

speech) these processes are more marked. They will be described in Chaplerv'

**Modifications of vowels**

The phonetic process that affects English vowels in connected speech is

called reduction. By vowel reduction we mean shortening or weakening of

Ihe sound, or, in other words, shortening in length that is usually accompanied by a change in quality. \bowel reduction in unstressed syllables is very

common both in English and in Russian.

In connected speech vowels can be exposed either to **quantitative** and

**qualitative reduction** or both. These changes of vowels are determined by a

number of factors, such as the position of a vowel in a word and in an utterance,

accentual structure, rhythm, tempo of speech.

Quantitative reduction or shortening of vowel length takes place in the

following cases:

1. The length of vowel depends on the immediate phonetic environment

(positional length). Vowels are the longest in the final position, they

are shorter before a voiced consonant and the shortest in a syllable

closed by a voiceless consonant, *knee* - *need* - *neat.*

2. Long vowels in form words are shortened in unstressed positions: *At last*

*he* [i'] *has come.*

Modifications in quality occur in unstressed positions. The most

common form of vowel reduction is reduction to schwa [a]. In its production

the tongue is the closest to the neutral position, the lips are

unrounded and it is the shortest of all vowels. The pronunciation of

schwa instead of some other vowel saves articulatory effort and time.

*Man* [meen] *sportsman* ['sp;:dsman], *conduct* ['knndakt] - *conduct*

[kan'dAkt]. *You can easily do it* [ju' kan i:zrlI ,du

Schwa is considered to be the most frequent sound in English. It

is obviously the result of the rhythmic pattern in which stressed syllables

alternate with unstressed ones. Unstressed syllables are given only

a short duration and the vowel in them is reduced.

3. Vowels are slightly nasalized when preceded or followed by a nasal consonant

like in *man, no, then, mean.*

We would like to conclude by saying that certain interrelation

which we observe between the full form of a vowel and its reduced

forms is conditioned by the tempo, rhythm and style of speech.

**Summary**

The phoneme is a minimal abstract linguistic unit realized in speech in

the form of speech sounds opposable to other phonemes of the same language

to distinguish the meaning of morphemes and words.

According to this definition the phoneme is a unity of three aspects:

functional, material and abstract.

The phoneme performs the distinctive function. The opposition of phonemes

in the same phonetic environment differentiates the meaning of

morphemes and words.

The phoneme is realized in speech in the form of speech sounds, its allophones.

Allophones of the same phoneme possess similar articulatory

features. The difference between the allophones is predictable and is the

result of the influence of the neighboring sounds.

The actually pronounced speech sounds (phones) are modified by phonostylistic,

dialectal and individual factors.

Native speakers abstract themselves from the difference between the allophones

of the same phoneme because it has no functional value but they

have a generalized idea ofa complex of distinctive features, which cannot be

changed without the change of meaning. This functionally relevant bundle

of articulatory features is called the invariant of the phoneme.

The articulatory features which distinguish meaning and form the invariant

of the phoneme are called distinctive or relevant. The articulatory

features which do not serve to distinguish meaning are called non-distinctive

or irrelevant.

Transcription is a set of symbols representing speech sounds. Broad (or

phonemic) transcription provides special symbols for all the phonemes of a

language and is used in EFL teaching. Narrow or allophonic transcription

gives special symbols for allophones and is mainly used in research.

There exist various conceptions of the phoneme which can be grouped

into the following main classes: "psychological" or "mentalist" view (special

attention is given to the abstract aspect of the phoneme), "functional"

view (concentrates on the ability of the phoneme to distinguish meaning),

"physical" view (is concerned with the material aspect). The conception of

the phoneme first put forward by L. V Shcherba is a comprehensive one: it

gives equal importance to the three aspects of the phoneme.

The aim of the phonological analysis is, firstly, to determine the distinctive

features of sounds (or their phonemic status) and, secondly, to create

the inventory of the phonemes of a language (the phonemic system of a language).

In other words, phonological analysis is aimed at identifying the

phonemes and classifying them.

There are two methods of phonological analysis: formally distributional

method and semantically distributional method. Formally distributional

method is focused on the position of a sound in the word, or its distribution.