

THE STUDY OF THE MODIFICATION OF SOUNDS IN COHERENT SPEECH IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LANGUAGES

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ABSTRACT

In speech sound waves, one word runs into the next seamlessly; there are not little silences between spoken words the way there are white spaces between written words. In the context (in connected speech) some words often sound completely different from the same words when they are spoken separately. So, the same words may carry different definitions. Sometimes, connected speech can lead to rather dramatic changes in the pronunciation of words, including the removal, addition, or alteration of sounds in other sounds or in combination. The given article deals with the contrast analysis of the main phonetic features of spontaneous speech, which include the processes of assimilation, reduction, and elision in English and Uzbek languages.

Keywords: Modification, connected speech, assimilation, reduction, elision.

INTRODUCTION, LITERATURE REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Human perception is a complex process of receiving and processing information. There are several theories and views on the features of speech perception. One of the points of view is that the ability to understand speech is not innate: it develops as we master the world and master the grammar of the language.

Many phonetic data were obtained in the process of studying speech produced in a situation very far from natural communication — reading text, isolated words and meaningless combinations — in laboratory, strictly controlled conditions. The resulting pronunciation was called “canonical” and recorded in dictionaries. Considering the models constructed on the basis of phonetic knowledge obtained in this way as the only acceptable given, phonologists created a gap between description and reality. One cannot but agree with J.J. Ohala that phonology has become a discipline far from phonetics and other empirically oriented disciplines; at the same time, more and more abstract models were created quite freely, the adequacy of which in real speech can be called into question.[1] Models of canonical pronunciation (hereinafter — canonical models) often reflect the phenomena of hyper articulation. Meanwhile, hyper articulation of carefully spoken speech, which is indicated, for example, by R. Smilyanik and A. R. Bradlow [2] far from universally characteristic of natural speech. This means that canonical models are clearly not enough to reflect the important phonetic processes occurring in speech.

Turning to spontaneous speech allows you to penetrate much deeper into the structure and organization of oral speech. Spontaneous speech, apparently, will always attract the attention of researchers due to its naturalness, frequency, high degree of variability of the phonetic units.

Scientists note a number of differences between the perception of sound and written speech. When reading, you can control the rate of receipt of information, segments the incoming signal, however, a hearing message is richer in that it is accompanied by intonation characteristics. The processes of speech perception from hearing and reading differ in a number of parameters: spatio-temporal distribution (written text is distributed in space, and sound text is distributed in time) and in terms of stability / variability, as well as ease / difficulty of segmentation.

Difficulties in perceiving a sounding text can arise not only due to the nature of the different sound of segmented speech (sound-syllable-word), but also at a super-segment level (verbal stress, division into syntagmas, logical and contrast stress). Whereas when interpreting a particular linguistic reality, native speakers are often helped by the context — both linguistic and extra linguistic — foreign students tend to rely on phonetic information. Deviations from the norm of pronunciation, especially at the segment level, interfere with the perception of information for those for whom English is not native.

There is no doubt that the fact that in English words are spoken in isolation and in the flow of speech sound differently depending on whether they are pronounced during speech or separately. When a word is pronounced separately, its pronunciation is perfect, and when it sounds in a stream of coherent speech, we get a completely different pronunciation. In speech, not individual sounds are pronounced, but interconnected sound sequences, and the articulation of any sound in the speech stream is influenced by the articulation of neighboring sounds. In a coherent speech there are no pauses that would correspond to the intervals of written speech. As a rule, pauses in speech are used not between two words following each other, but between groups of words that can be considered a single phonetic word. Some researchers have argued that understanding connected speech processes may be particularly important for the development of listening skills [3] while others see connected speech processes' production as being particularly important for more intelligible pronunciation. [4]

Hieke defined connected speech processes as “the changes which conventional word forms undergo due to the temporal and articulatory constraints upon spontaneous, casual speech”. [5] Citation form pronunciations occur in isolated words under heavy stress or in sentences delivered in a slow, careful style. By contrast, connected speech forms often undergo a variety of modifications which cannot always be predicted by applying phonological rules. It may be that all languages have some form of connected speech processes, as Pinker claims:” In speech sound waves, one word runs into the next seamlessly; there are no little silences between spoken words the way there are white spaces between written words”. [6] We simply hallucinate word boundaries when we reach the edge of a stretch of sound that matches some entry in our mental dictionary. This becomes apparent when we listen to speech in a foreign language: it is impossible to tell where one word ends and the next begins”.

Though connected speech processes are sometimes thought to be a result of a careless speech, they are completely normal. Highly well-educated speakers tend to make less use of some connected speech processes, however, even in formal situations, such processes are completely acceptable, natural and a very essential part of speech.

In this article, we will dwell on the most typical cases of the interaction of sounds in the connected speech, which include the processes of assimilation, reduction, and elision in English and Uzbek languages. Sound modifications are caused by the fact that when connecting phonemes into chains, the speech organs adapt to a quick change of articulations, providing a

more convenient transition from one articulation to another, while changing the quality of sounds

Assimilation can be partial when various variants of phonemes arise, and complete when there is a complete assimilation of articulations.

Speaking about the direction of assimilation, they distinguish progressive, regressive and double assimilation. Progressive assimilation occurs if the previous sound affects the next. This can be characterized by the formula AB, where A is the assimilating consonant, and B the assimilated consonant. For example, in the word “please” the fully voiced variant of the consonant phoneme [l] is assimilated to [p] and is replaced by a partly devoiced variant of the same phoneme. In “What’s it?” [wɒts ‘it] [z] is replaced by [s] under the influence of [t].

Assimilation is a common phenomenon in Turkic languages, especially in Uzbek, and is the conversion of two non-identical consonants into a consonant in the material chain of speech, in a sequence of sounds, due to the ease pronunciation of the speaker. It appears that two consonants, which are contraindicated by a particular character in a particular lexeme, lose the sign of contraindication and become the same consonants as a result of their efforts to eliminate the inconvenience of pronunciation. As a result, an oral version of the lexeme appears. For example, *tarnov-tannov*, *badtar- battar*. In Uzbek language the word “*oshni*” [ɒʃʃnə] (“*osh*” is a type of national food- *palow*, -*ni* is a suffix of objective case) is assimilated to [ɒʃʃə], “*tavba*” [tawbɑ] (confession) to [tɒwwɑ], “*ketdi*” [kɛtdə] (went away) to [kɛttə], “*sotdi*” [sɒtdə] (sold) to [sɒttə], “*navbat*” [nɒwbɑt] (turn) is assimilated to [nɒwwɒt]. There are incomplete progressive assimilation in words like “*singling*” [sɪŋlɪŋ] (your sister) [sɪŋnɪŋ] and “*taqdir*” [tɑqdər] (fate) [tɑqtər]. But incomplete progressive assimilation is rarely mentioned in Uzbek. Because this assimilation occurs to some extent by the position of articulation and is virtually non-existent by articulation and acoustics.

Regressive assimilation occurs when a subsequent sound acts on the previous one, like $A \rightarrow B$. For example, the voiced consonant [z] in “*news*” [nju:z] is replaced by the voiceless consonant [s] in the compound “*newspaper*” [ˈnju:spɛɪpə] under the influence of the voiceless sound [p]. In *doe she* [dɒʃʃi], [z] in *does* [dɒz] was replaced by [ʃ] and thus become fully assimilated to [ʃ] in *she* [ʃi:].

In Uzbek language “*nonvoy*” [nɒnwɒi] (a baker) is assimilated to [nɒwwɒi], “*yigitcha*” [jɪgɪtʃə] (a lad) to [jɪgɪtʃə]. Regressive assimilation also occurs in incomplete form. For example, “*tanbur*” [tɑnbʊr] (tambour-national musical instrument) is assimilated to [tɑmbʊr], “*to’nka*” [tɒnkɑ] (stump) to [tʊŋkɑ], “*taqsimot*” [tɑqsɪmɒt] (divisions) to [tɑhsɪmɒt], “*o’taketgan*” [ɒtɑkɛtɡɑn] (inveterate) to [ɒtɑkɛdɡɑn]. When similar sounds occur side by side it is called contact assimilation. If, there are other sounds between them it is called distant assimilation. *Surnay* [surnai] (national instrument) as [sunnai], *karnay* [karnai] (national instrument) as [kannai], *mahkam* [mahkam] (firmly) as [makkam] are examples for regressive contact assimilation. “*Qo’ltiqtayog’*” [qo’ltɪq’tayog’] (crutch), *to’g’nag’ich* [to’nɑg’ɪtʃ] (pin). Distant assimilation occurs as a result of the interaction of many vowels and occurs mainly in Turkish, Finnish and some German.

Progressive assimilation is much less common than regressive assimilation in English language. There are also optional or occasional assimilations as a result of the rapid speech (give me - gimme; want to - wanna).

The causes of assimilation are explained by the interaction of sounds in the speech stream. It should be noted that assimilation and other cases of modification of sounds in spontaneous speech are constantly present and are of great importance, because in fact, several merges into one word and a phonetic word is formed, as already mentioned above. Such a mixture of sounds, pronounced by the carriers, can be deciphered through the situation and using typical phrases.

Among the factors determining the appearance of assimilation are called such a factor as the style of speech. It is believed that in colloquial speech, characterized by a high pace and careless of pronunciation, assimilation of consonants occurs much more often than official speech and a slow pace, when sounds are articulated more carefully and modification processes are less pronounced.

Another example of the modification of sounds in speech is reduction, which results in the weakening and alteration of the sound of unstressed syllables. It is believed that inertness of the vocal tract is a major factor in the presence of vowel reduction. Vowel reduction occurs in weak positions prosodically or morphologically, especially unstressed syllables and affixes. A distinction is made between quantitative reduction, in which the longitude and strength of the vowel is reduced, and qualitative, in which the quality of the syllable vowels changes, i.e. vowels in unstressed syllables become weaker and shorter. With a very strong reduction, unstressed vowels can reach zero, i.e. stop pronouncing. This type of reduction is called zero reduction. For example, in the words *postman*, *policeman*, vowels may not be pronounced in all unstressed syllables.

In the Uzbek language, the short vowel in the first syllable of one syllabic and two syllabic lexemes is reduced under the influence of the neighboring sonor consonant. For example,

b (i)lan (with), b (i) roq (but), s (i) ra (never), b (i) r(one).

This is because both sonors and vowels share a commonality in acoustic features. Both are voiced sounds. Therefore, the vowel can be reduced by consonants. At the same time, both the vowel and the sonar have a commonality - the function of syllable formation. Of these, in the majority of Turkic languages only vowels can form syllables, while in the Romano-German languages sonorants also form syllables. This is due to the acoustic properties of the sonors.

The short vowels in the first open syllable of the two-syllabic lexemes are reduced in front of the fricative consonants. As a result, there appears to be a mandatory variant of the lexeme. The reason why it is called a forced option is that there is no other option available under this block. For example, k (i)shi (man), p (i)shiq (firm), q (i) zil.

Reduction of short vowels of the of the first syllable preceding sonor consonants in the one syllabic and two syllabic words leads to the emergence of stylistic variants of these lexemes, that is, the difference between conversational and publicistic (radio, television, stage language) variants.

The most common occurrence in the flow of speech is considered to be elision, i.e. a process in which articulation of a sound is not realized in hasty or careless speech. This phenomenon is characteristic not only for colloquial speech, but also for official and neutral styles. There are several types of elision: historical, when letters are not pronounced in the initial, middle or final positions in a word as a result of historical changes (for example, in words such as *walk*, *knee*, *castle*, *write*), as well as modern elision, which often occurs in everyday speech, at a rapid speech. I would like to dwell in more detail on examples of modern elision.

So, the most common cases of modern elision, which we selected from modern audio sources, are:

- omission of the occlusive alveolar sounds / t, d /, for example. in combination *last night, second ring*;
- dropping out of interdental constrictive fricative consonants, eg. in the words *months, clothes*;
- disappearance of the consonant preceding the interdental sound, eg. in the words *fifth, sixth*;
- loss of labio-dental constrictive in the preposition *of* before the interdental consonant, as well as before other consonants at a rapid speech, for example, *point of that, box of pens*;
- dropping out of the labio-dental constrictive consonant in front of the occlusive sonorant, for example, *give me, three rings*;
- reduction of double consonant, eg. *the next train, you've got to scrawl it*.

In Uzbek the dropping out of the vowel at the end of the first word as a result of the collision of the vowel in the second word is the elision like in English. For example, *borolmoq* < *bora olmoq* (can go), *yozolmoq* < *yoza olmoq* (can write), *echkemar* < *echkiemar*, *bekoim* < *beka oim* (), *Oltariq* < *olti ariq* (six ditches), *xujeli* < *xuja eli*.

The case of elision occurs between the vowel ending of dissyllabic, polysyllabic lexemes and the lexemes beginning with a vowel. This is due to the fact that when there are two vowels between the second and third joints of the syllable, the previous vowel is reduced due to the principle of eliminating this inconvenience. In this case, the next vowel will have a stronger position than the previous one. These lexemes are used the same in Uzbek language. For example, *bora olaman* – *borolaman* (I can), *yoza olaman-yozolaman* (I can write). As a result, both words appear as different variants of an invariant lexeme of the immediate speech process.

It is noted that assimilation, reduction and elision form certain modern pronunciation trends, namely:

- “smoothing” of a number of diphthongs;
- transition of triphthongs to the category of monophthongs;
- omission of consonant / j / in words such as *suit, student*, etc. ;
- fusion of consonants / tj / and / dj / in stressed syllables, in which the words *Tuesday, reduce* sound like *Chooseday, rejuice*;
- improper use of the back lingual sonorant in words where there are no endings –ing (*chicken, garden*).
- omission of pharyngeal sound / h /;

There are differences in vowel systems in qualitative and quantitative relations, as well as modification of consonants in connected speech, entail the difficulty of understanding and perception of sounding speech. A phonetic study, in which an attempt was made to identify the degree of perception by Uzbek-speaking students of English and native English speakers of a coherent text containing modified forms, showed that the modification of sounds cannot occur without the influence of prosodic components such as speech rate, pause, volume and the purpose of the utterance. The faster the utterance is pronounced, the richer the sound material is in assimilative processes.

According to the results of a phonetic study, after analyzing and comparing the protocols with the answers of the English and Uzbek-speaking bilinguals, a sharp contrast was established in the depth of perception of the modified speech. The results of the study showed that modifications of sounds in coherent speech do not interfere with the communication of native

English speakers from different regions, but hinder the adequate perception of Uzbek-language bilinguals.

The significance of the findings lies in the fact that knowledge of the modification of words under the influence of reduction of vowels, various assimilations and elision facilitates the perception of a “seamless” structure of speech. This leads to the conclusion that in the perception of sounding speech, it is necessary to rely not only on vocabulary and grammar, but also take into account the phonetic features of pronunciation and modification of sounds. In our opinion, it is necessary to pay attention to this, teaching students both the lexical and grammatical aspect of the language, and the phonetic, since high-quality, authentic language proficiency is possible only with a comprehensive study of all language levels.

In the course of Communicative-Normative phonetics in our university, the tasks facing the teacher are not only setting the correct articulation and teaching the basic intonation structures, but also teaching students the elements of fluent speech, achieving harmonious pronunciation, increasing the level of authenticity and expressiveness of sound in all basic speech styles.

In the early stages of teaching students assimilated forms, one of the exercises is to “decipher” or decode the modified forms with an explanation of each case of a word change. Thus, students not only master the basics of the theory of phonetics, but also apply their knowledge in practice, training first to analyze written language, because it has a number of advantages over the perception of sounding foreign language speech, as mentioned earlier. An example is the following suggestions. The teacher asked six students to stay after the lesson. = The teacher asked six students to stay after the lesson. In this sentence, we observe a case of omission (elision) of the slotted alveolar sound / s / in the word six. Bag guys are often in the street at night. = Bad guys are often in the street at night. Under the influence of the velar sound / g / alveolar / d / changes its place of articulation and also becomes velar. This is an example of regressive assimilation.

The control form is a phonetic dictation, when students are invited to listen to a dialogue or a passage of text containing modified forms. Perceiving speech from their ears, students are faced not only with the problem of identifying altered forms, but also with the correct division of speech into segments, the correct interpretation of phonetic words and, accordingly, determining the context of the statement. Students record the sound flow of speech in phonemic transcription, and then conduct a phonetic analysis to identify assimilated sounds.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the need to teach students phonetic difficulties, in particular modified forms of speech, in practical classes to achieve successful foreign language communication and adequate understanding in real communication.

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