

# Unit 10

## Syllables & Rhythm (1):

assimilation, elision, linking

Slides for the session of

*Phonetics with Listening Practice (British)*

held on

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Robert Spence

{ English Department | LangSciTech }

Saarland University

<English Phonetics: Unit 10:>

/ˈɪŋ.ɡlɪʃ/ /fəˈnet.ɪks/ /ˈjuːn.ɪt/ /ten/

[ˈɪŋ.ɡlɪʃ.fəˈnet.ɪks.ˈjuːn.ətˈtʰen] (AusE, broad)

<Syllables & Rhythm (1)>

/ˈsɪl.əb.əlz/ /ən/ /ˈrɪð.əm/ /wʌn/

[ˈsɪl.əb.əlz.ən.ˈrɪð.əm. | ˈwɛn] (AusE, broad)

<assimilation, elision, linking>

/əˌsɪm.əˈleɪʃ.ən/ /iˈlɪz.ən/ /ˈlɪŋk.ɪŋ/

[əˌsɪm.əˈleɪʃ.ən | əˈlɪz.ən | ˈlɪŋk.ɪŋ] (AusE, broad)

## 1 Assimilation (and elision)

## 2 Linking

## 3 Additional Reading

## 4 Listening Exercises

## 5 Homework

## Assimilation and elision: theory

- Consonants at the edge of one syllable often adapt to neighbouring consonants — becoming more similar to them (ASSIMILATION) or disappearing altogether (ELISION) — so as to make the pronunciation smoother.

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- (Assimilation: a change in quality; elision: a change in quantity.)

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- (Assimilation: a change in quality; elision: a change in quantity.)
- Usually assimilation is ‘anticipatory’ — a preceding consonant adapts to a following consonant. (In French, anticipatory assimilation is also common: « le tragique destin des Romanov »  
[lətʁazikdɛstɛ̃dɛʁomanɔv → lətʁazikdɛstɛ̃dɛʁomanɔv])

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- Alveolar consonants (such as /t d s z l/) are particularly susceptible to anticipatory assimilation in English.

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- Alveolar consonants (such as /t d s z l/) are particularly susceptible to anticipatory assimilation in English.
- Doesn’t this interfere with the ability of phonemes to signal differences in meaning?

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- Alveolar consonants (such as /t d s z l/) are particularly susceptible to anticipatory assimilation in English.
- Doesn’t this interfere with the ability of phonemes to signal differences in meaning?
- No.

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- Alveolar consonants (such as /t d s z l/) are particularly susceptible to anticipatory assimilation in English.
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- No.
- There is still enough distinctive information in the syllable edge as a whole.

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- There is still enough distinctive information in the syllable edge as a whole.
- You could investigate this further by constructing a ‘feature matrix’ of the phonemes involved. (Have you dealt with this topic in your theory lectures?)

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- The next slide contains examples of assimilation:

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## Assimilation and elision: examples

- The first 8 examples are from Eckert and Barry:
- ['kʌmənd 'getɪt] → ['kʌməŋ 'getɪt]

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- ['kʌmənd 'getɪt] → ['kʌməŋ 'getɪt]
- ['stænd 'bæk] → ['stæm: 'bæk]

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- ['pʊt ðə 'plʌg] → ['pʊt̚ ðə 'plʌg]



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- ['kləʊz ðə 'dɔ:] → ['kləʊz zə 'dɔ:]

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- [bʌt (?)əv 'kɔ:s] → [bʌtəf 'kɔ:s]

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- [aɪ kən 'du: ɪt] → [aɪkŋ 'du:ˈɪt]

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- [aɪ kən 'du: ɪt] → [aɪkŋ 'du:ɪt]
- You can find many more exercises on the following wonderful website:  
<https://www.englishpronunciationmadrid.com/assimilation/>

## Linking (Liaison)

- **Why Germans sound so strange (!):**  
[ʔaɪn ˌʔastɛʁo'i:t] ('ein Asteroid')

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Let's look quickly at "Dialectal Differences".

## Linking (Liaison)

- **Why Germans sound so strange (!):**  
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- **Consonant-Vowel Linking:**  
VC V → VC\_V not VCʔV  
/ən/ /'æst ə ɔɪd/ → [ən\_ 'æstəɔɪd]

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/ən/ /'æst ə ɹɔɪd/  $\longrightarrow$  [ən\_ 'æstəɹɔɪd]

- **r-linking:**

$V_1(r) V_2 \longrightarrow V_1 r V_2$  ( $V_1 = aə ɔə ʒə ə ɪə eə ɔə aɪə aʊə$ )

/pɔə(r)/ + /ɪt/  $\longrightarrow$  ['pʰɔəɹɪt] (pour it)

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/ən/ /'æst ə ɹɔɪd/  $\longrightarrow$  [ən<sub>—</sub>'æstəɹɔɪd]

- **r-linking:**

V<sub>1</sub>(r) V<sub>2</sub>  $\longrightarrow$  V<sub>1</sub>rV<sub>2</sub> (V<sub>1</sub> = aə ɔə ʒə ə ɪə eə ɔə aɪə aʊə)

/pɔə(r)/ + /ɪt/  $\longrightarrow$  ['p<sup>h</sup>ɔə<sup>ɹ</sup>ɪt] (pour it)

- **Intrusive r:**

V<sub>1</sub> V<sub>2</sub>  $\longrightarrow$  V<sub>1</sub>rV<sub>2</sub> (V<sub>1</sub> = a: ɔ: ɜ: ə)

/pɔ:/ + /ɪt/  $\longrightarrow$  ['p<sup>h</sup>ɔə<sup>ɹ</sup>ɪt] (paw it)

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/pɔə(r)/ + /ɪt/ → ['p<sup>h</sup>ɔə<sup>ɹ</sup>ɪt] (pour it)

- **Intrusive r:**

V<sub>1</sub> V<sub>2</sub> → V<sub>1</sub>rV<sub>2</sub> (V<sub>1</sub> = a: ɔ: ɜ: ə)

/pɔ:/ + /ɪt/ → ['p<sup>h</sup>ɔə<sup>ɹ</sup>ɪt] (paw it)

- **Intrusive j:**

V<sub>1</sub> V<sub>2</sub> → V<sub>1</sub>jV<sub>2</sub> (V<sub>1</sub> = i: eɪ aɪ ɔɪ)

/si:/ + /ɪt/ → ['si:ʝɪt] (see it)

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/ən/ /'æst ə ʔɪd/  $\rightarrow$  [ən<sub>—</sub>'æstəʔɪd]

- **r-linking:**

V<sub>1</sub>(r) V<sub>2</sub>  $\rightarrow$  V<sub>1</sub>rV<sub>2</sub> (V<sub>1</sub> = aə ɔə ʒə ə ɪə eə ɔə aɪə aʊə)

/pɔə(r)/ + /ɪt/  $\rightarrow$  ['p<sup>h</sup>ɔə<sup>ɹ</sup>ɪt] (pour it)

- **Intrusive r:**

V<sub>1</sub> V<sub>2</sub>  $\rightarrow$  V<sub>1</sub>rV<sub>2</sub> (V<sub>1</sub> = a: ɔ: ɜ: ə)

/pɔ:/ + /ɪt/  $\rightarrow$  ['p<sup>h</sup>ɔə<sup>ɹ</sup>ɪt] (paw it)

- **Intrusive j:**

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/si:/ + /ɪt/  $\rightarrow$  ['si:ʝɪt] (see it)

- **Intrusive w:**

V<sub>1</sub> V<sub>2</sub>  $\rightarrow$  V<sub>1</sub>wV<sub>2</sub> (V<sub>1</sub> = u: əʊ aʊ)

/səʊ/ + /ɪt/  $\rightarrow$  ['səʊ<sup>w</sup>ɪt] (sew it)

Let's look quickly at "Dialectal Differences".

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If you have time, look at the scans of the pages from Eckert and Barry that are here:

[http://www.spence.saar.de/phonetics/unit11\\_20241/](http://www.spence.saar.de/phonetics/unit11_20241/)

Simon Roper:

An Upper-Class Southern British Accent, 1673 - 2023:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KYaqdJ35fPg>

(This relates to the work we did in Unit 5.)

Halliday 1970: 57-59

Study Unit 1: Rhythm

[http://www.spence.saar.de/arcanum/phonetics/Halliday1970/  
Study\\_Units\\_01-10/Unit\\_01/](http://www.spence.saar.de/arcanum/phonetics/Halliday1970/Study_Units_01-10/Unit_01/)

The text is here:

[http://www.spence.saar.de/arcanum/phonetics/Halliday1970/  
The\\_Book/2193\\_001.pdf](http://www.spence.saar.de/arcanum/phonetics/Halliday1970/The_Book/2193_001.pdf)

Have a look at the text of “Dialectal Differences”.

Check to see if there are any words that end with difficult consonant clusters. How would you go about making it easier for someone to pronounce these words?

Check every word which begins with a vowel sound (not necessarily a vowel letter, and not a ‘silent’ consonant letter). Is there consonant-vowel linking at the beginning of the word? Is there an ‘intrusive’ /r/, or /w/ or /j/?