



English Pronunciation

A student's guide to sound changes



Connected Speech

- In fast speech, when individual sounds are joined together a number of things can happen. For example...
 - Sounds can change
 - Consonants can move
 - Vowels can become weak
 - Extra sounds can be heard

Sounds can change

Say the phrases on the next slide quickly.

What happens to the sound /n/?

Sounds can change

in bedford

ten pence

tin man

Sounds can change

in bedford

/ɪn bedfəd/

/ɪm bedfəd/

ten pence

/ten pens/

/tem pens/

tin man

/tɪn mæn/

/tɪm mæn/

Sounds can change

/n/ changes to **/m/**

before

/p b m/

Consonants can move

Say the phrases on the next slide quickly.

What happens to the underlined
consonants?

Consonants can move

gett up

finall exam

cupp of tea

Consonants can move

getʌ up

/get ʌp/

/ge tʌp/

finall exam

/faɪnəl ɪgzæm/

/faɪnə ɪgzæm/

cupʊ of tea

/kʌp ʊv ti:/

/kʌ pəv ti:/

Consonants can move

The final consonant moves to the beginning of the next syllable.

This happens when the next syllable begins with a vowel.

Vowels can become weak

Say the phrases on the next slide quickly.

What happens to the underlined vowels in these phrases?

Vowels can become weak

to the cinema

fish and chips

a cup of tea

Vowels can become weak

to the cinema

fish and chips

a cup of tea

Vowels can become weak

to the cinema

/tu: ði: sinəmə/

/tə ðə sinəmə/

fish and chips

/fɪʃ ænd tʃɪps/

/fɪ ʃən tʃɪps/

a cup of tea

/æ kʌp ɒv ti:/

/ə kʌ pəv ti:/

Vowels can become weak

The underlined vowels change to
a schwa /ə/.

This happens in fast speech
when the vowels are
NOT STRESSED.

Vowels can become weak

Other examples of weak vowels include;

- /i:/ reducing to /ɪ/
- /u:/ reducing to /ʊ/
- diphthongs losing their 2-vowel character

Extra sounds can be heard

Say the phrases on the next slide quickly.

Which extra sound can you hear between
the words?

Extra sounds can be heard

you are

too early

go in

Extra sounds can be heard

you are

/ju: a: /

/ju: _w a: /

too early

/tu: ɜ:lɪ /

/tu: _w ɜ:lɪ /

go in

/gəʊ ɪn /

/gəʊ _w ɪn /

Extra sounds can be heard

An extra /w/ follows...

.....a final /u:/

.....or a diphthong ending in /ʊ/
where..

...the next word begins with a
vowel sound.

Further practice

Practice activities and more examples can be found in;

“English Pronunciation in Use. Intermediate”
by Mark Hancock.
Cambridge University Press.

References

Underhill, A. (1994). Sound Foundations. In the Teacher Development Series. A. Underhill (Ed). Heinemann