



## **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

getɪ up

finalɪ exam

cupɪ of tea

# Consonants can move

getɹ up

/get ʌp/

/ge tʌp/

finall exam

/faɪnəl ɪgzæm/

/faɪnə ɪgzæm/

cupɹ of tea

/kʌp ɒv 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: <sub>w</sub> a:/

too early

/tu: ɜ:lɪ/

/tu: <sub>w</sub> ɜ:lɪ/

go in

/gəʊ in/

/gəʊ <sub>w</sub> in/

# 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