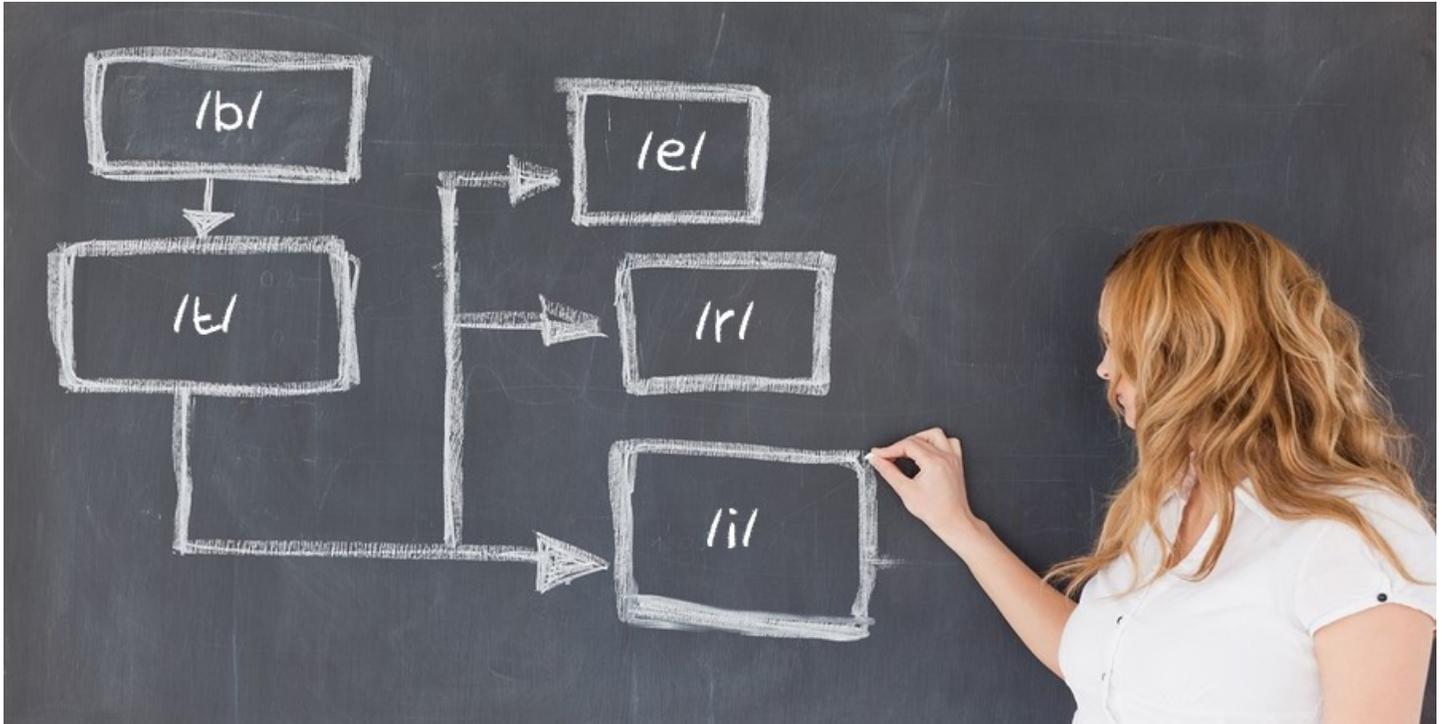


Features of connected speech



In spoken discourse the boundaries between words are very often not clear-cut. Words and sounds are lost and linked together in different ways to enable us to articulate with minimal movement.

This is one of the reasons learners find spoken discourse more difficult to understand than written discourse.

At higher levels it is often not a lack of vocabulary which prevents understanding, but lack of ability to deal with these features of connected speech. Native speakers are more able to use [top-down processing](#) to decide whether what they have heard is **red dye** or **red eye**.

Here are some of the more common features:

Assimilation

Assimilation occurs when a phoneme (sound) in one word causes a change in a sound in a neighbouring word.

For example, try saying the following pairs of words:

- in Bath
- last year
- Hyde Park

You'll notice that the last sound of the first word changes in each case. The **/n/** sound becomes **/m/**, **/t/** becomes **/tj/** and **/d/** becomes **/b/**.

Features of connected speech

Elision

Elision is the loss of a phoneme, most commonly the last phoneme of a word, and most commonly the /t/ and /d/ sounds. Have a look at these examples:

- left back
- stand by
- looked back
- I must go

In each case the last phoneme of the first word is elided (lost). In the most simple terms, the reason is that the time and effort required to change the mouth position from the /t/ to the /b/ sound (as in the first example) or the /t/ to the /g/ sound (as in the last example) is too great!

Delayed plosion

Our “red dye” and “red eye” is an example of this. To articulate “red dye”, we must take a very short pause before the /d/ sound. The /d/ is an example of a **plosive**, consonant sounds where the vocal tract stops all airflow. Other examples are /b/, /d/, /g/, /p/, /t/ and /k/. This pause before the plosive gives us the name of this feature, delayed plosion.

Another example: the **right tie** (delay) – the **right eye** (no delay)

Catenation

In catenation the last consonant of the first word is joined to the vowel sound at the start of the second word.

For example:

- pick it up – (learners will hear something like pi kitup)
- what is it – (learners will hear something like woti zit)

Intrusion

Intrusion is what you might expect from the name – an extra sound “intrudes” into the spoken utterance. Try saying the following pairs of words:

- media event
- I always
- go away

Do you hear the /r/ sound intruding after “media”, the /j/ sound intruding after “I” and the /w/ sound intruding after “go”?