



Syllable and Word Linking in Taiwan English


Coarticulation in New Varieties of English

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August 16, 2011



Limited view of what pronunciation involves


There is low awareness of aspects of English prosody, such as rules of phrasing, intonation and compound noun stress, and as a result they are little taught – so the cycle perpetuates itself.

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- One robust set of features in Taiwan English (TE), the variety of English widely taught and spoken as a foreign language in Taiwan, concerns how syllables and words are linked – or not linked – to each other in running speech.



Linking rules generally neglected in English teaching

Syllables and words need to have some kind of relation to each other; a “choice” of some kind must be made, whether it is overtly taught or not, whether it is conscious or not, and regardless of how consistent the choices are.



Some characteristics of Taiwan English:

- Syntactically:
Frequent lack of inflection and tense markers,
lack of distinction between masculine and feminine pronouns,
incorrect number marking
- Phonetically:
inconsistent vowel values, dropped final consonants,
incorrect word stress,
lack of phrasing or appropriate pauses,
incorrect sentence intonation




The main options are:

- 1. Pronounce each syllable and word separately, with no adjustments made for what comes before and/or after it.



Or:


- 2. Link final consonants to initial vowels, as is typically done in standard US and British English, among other varieties.


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- b. Or they may originate in the model given in a student's earliest English classes, which is not necessarily based entirely on the L1, but is simply a prevailing fossilized pattern of linking;




Or:

- 3. Follow various other linking and assimilation rules, usually unconsciously.

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- c. Or they may be *overgeneralized* rules from the L2, such as the false tap, which will be discussed later.

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- a. These rules are most often carried over from the speaker's L1;



Four types of intersyllabic and interword transitions

- 1. **-stop C + C- junctures:** TE tends to drop the final stop consonant, especially /-t/ (e.g. *basketball* ['bæskəbɔl], *at the* ['æðə] or ['ælə]).

Examples:

- a. parrot story ['pɛɹɹ 'sto:ɹi]; (A)
- b. had a pet parrot [hæd ə 'pɛt ˈpɛɹɹət] (A)
- c. a betel nut stand [ə 'bitəl 'nʌ 'stænd]
- d. you couldn't help but love this parrot [ju 'kʊdn̩t 'hɛlp bʌ 'lʌf 'ðɪs 'pɛɹɹət] (A)
- e. this very smart parrot ['ðɪs 'vɛɹɹi 'smɑ:ɹt : 'pɛɹɹət] (A)

Southern Min

'gnat' [sat bu] > [sap bu] 'stomach'

[bak tɔ] > [bat tɔ] (Bao 2000:97)

- If the following consonant is, however, another homorganic stop, the following consonant may "save" the preceding one due to coarticulation, e.g. ['hɛlp bʌ].

- **2. -C + V- junctures:** TE tends to insert a glottal stop [ʔ] before the V- (e.g. *dis[ʔ]able*, *is [ʔ] it*).

- Final consonants may also sometimes be dropped when utterance final:
- f. looking for the bird. She couldn't sleep at night. ['lʊkɪŋ 'fɔ:ɹ ɒ̩ 'bɛɹɹ ʃi 'kʊdn̩t 'slɪp æ 'na:ɹ] (A)

Examples:

- a. group of students [gɹɹp ʔəf 'stu dæēs] (A)
- b. would begin to jump around wildly [wu bi'gɹɹn tu 'dʒʌm ʔə'ɹaʊn 'waɹ dli] (A)
- c. What are you doing? ['wʌ ɑ:ɹ ju 'du:ɹɹɪŋ] (class example)

Resyllabification

- [iŋə]
- resyllabified to [ɪ nə]

Nasal finals

- /-m/
- [an]
- [aŋ]
- [-ən] and [-əŋ]

- **3. -nasal C + C- and -nasal C + V-junctures:** The vowel preceding the nasal consonant tends to be strongly nasalized and the final nasal consonant articulation is dropped; this is especially common when an approximant initial follows, but can happen before any consonant (e.g. *one year* ['wʌ 'jɪə], *time to go* ['tāi tu 'gou]).

Examples of final nasal deletion:

- a. sometimes crying even louder than the child
['sʌmtaɪms 'kɪaɪɪŋ 'ivē 'laʊðə ðæn ðə tʃaɪlt] (A)
- b. every time she thought of the parrot
['ɛvri 'tāi fɪ 'θɔtəf ðə 'pærəts] (A)

- Alternatively, when the nasal is preserved, it often assimilates to the place of articulation of the following consonant, or has a default value. A -nasal C often assimilates to a different -nasal C, sometimes depending on the following vowel initial, [ŋ] being the default (e.g. *on it* ['ɑŋɪt], *teenager* ['tiŋeɪdʒə]).

But...

- A final nasal may, instead of being deleted, be preserved, however, its place of articulation may assimilate to the following consonant, or it may take a default value



- c. notice from the police ['nɒʊtɪs fɹɒm ðə pə'li:s] (A)
- d. I ride from...all day, uh, all day [aɪ raɪd fɹɒm...ʌ...ɔl 'deɪ əd...ɔl 'deɪ] (A)
- e. pet shop in Taoyuan ['pɛʃɒp ɪŋ 'taʊ ɥyan] (A)
- f. student came to visit him every day ['stju:dən 'kɛn tu 'vɪzɪt hɪm 'ɛvri 'deɪ] (B)



Examples

- a. before the gradu...uh...graduation traveling begin [bɪ'fɔː ðə grædʒuə...grædʒu'eɪʃən 'trævəlɪŋ bɪ'gɪn] (A)
- b. They brought the parrot to a petshop [ðeɪ 'brɔt ə 'pæʃət tu ʔə 'pætʃɒp] (C)



Early anticipatory coarticulation

- g. the tears would stream down her cheeks [ðə 'tiːz wʊd 'stiːm daʊn hɜː 'tʃiːks] (A)



“Misplaced tap” or “false tap”

- c. He would often call out “Mommy,” Daddy,” “Hello” and “Bye-bye.” [he wʊd 'fɔʊən kɔl aʊt 'mʌmi 'dædi hə'loʊ ən 'baɪbaɪ] (D)



- 4. **-V + V- junctures:** TE tends to insert a glottal stop [ʔ] rather than a transitional glide before the V-, or among certain speakers, an alveolar tap [ɾ] (e.g. *he [ʔ] is, how[ɾ] about*).



Reading a written text vs. telling a story ad lib

- Tendency for less “Taiwan English” style linking in some speakers when telling a story ad lib

Assimilation rules in TE

- TE most definitely *does* have its own assimilation rules for running utterances in context; the kinds of linking seen in TE is not simply a reflection of faulty pronunciation of individual words. Something *happens to change* the citation form in the speaker's or reader's mind while processing words appearing in sequence.

Thank you!



Possible reasons

- Panic mode: Too busy with meaning to attend to pronunciation, especially prosody
- Established habit and fossilization
- Teacher attitudes
- Lack of confidence, brushing over pronunciation
- "As long as I'm understood"

- Failure to draw analogies to own native language
- Listening skills and attention
- Quantity and frequency of good, clear, understandable audio input
- Remembering the listener's point of view