



SOUNDS ELISION BY TAIWANESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN PRONOUNCING ENGLISH PHRASES

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Abstract

The study aims to figure out the phonological variations of sounds elision realized by Taiwanese university students in pronouncing several English phrases. Eight native Taiwanese students were chosen to support the analysis of the study. They consisted of 8 males and 8 females from the college of humanities and literature of Chung Chen University and from the faculty of foreign languages of Asia University, Taiwan. The study used a descriptive qualitative design. According to Ary, Jacob and Sorensen (2010), qualitative researchers seek to understand a phenomenon by focusing on the total picture rather than breaking it down into variables. The goal is a holistic picture and depth of understanding rather than a numeric analysis of data. After analyzing the data, it was found that the pronunciation of the elision of initial /h/, final /t/ and final /d/ sound realized by the Taiwanese university students were varied. Some still pronounced them and some elided them.

Keywords: Sound Elision, Phonology, Pronunciation

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui variasi fonologis dari penghilangan bunyi yang disadari oleh mahasiswa Taiwan dalam melafalkan beberapa frasa bahasa Inggris. Delapan siswa asli Taiwan dipilih untuk mendukung analisis penelitian. Mereka terdiri dari 8 laki-laki dan 8 perempuan dari perguruan tinggi humaniora dan sastra Universitas Chung Chen dan dari fakultas bahasa asing Universitas Asia, Taiwan. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif. Menurut Ary, Jacob dan Sorensen (2010), peneliti kualitatif berusaha memahami suatu fenomena dengan memusatkan perhatian pada gambaran keseluruhan daripada memecahnya menjadi variabel-variabel. Tujuannya adalah gambaran holistik dan kedalaman pemahaman daripada analisis numerik data. Setelah dilakukan analisis data, ditemukan bahwa pengucapan penghilangan bunyi awal /h/, akhir /t/ dan akhir /d/ yang direalisasikan oleh mahasiswa Taiwan bervariasi. Beberapa masih mengucapkannya dan beberapa menghindarinya.

Kata Kunci: Sound Elision, Phonology, Pronunciation

INTRODUCTION

To speak English fluently needs to pay attention on several distinctive features. Especially to those who are non-native speakers who attempt to interact and communicate to people worldwide. This situation is mostly encountered by both second and foreign language learners (L2/FL). As Maxwell (2010) said that such a situation may pose obstacles for L2/FL learners who aim to improve their pronunciation as well as listening skill. Speaking of foreign language, it is common to find someone speaks English with their accent or way of pronouncing. Taiwanese are one of them. They can be recognized immediately as they speak English because they have a unique way of pronouncing English words and phrases (Maxwell, 2020). According to Anderson and Lynch (1988), there are phonetics and phonological features to be paid attention to speak fluently. One of the phonological

features that one should pay attention on is elision. Elision is a sound change in which a sound is omitted altogether. Elision is defined as a loss or omission of certain segments or syllables in running speech or colloquial English (Yellop & Clark, 1990). It could also make a big difference to someone's pronunciation. In addition, Temperly (1987) reported that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students have a low awareness of connected words together. By having a good knowledge in phonetics and phonology, it can help us to know how to pronounce the words, phrases and even sentences in English correctly.

In relation to the phenomenon above, this study attempts to figure out the variations of sound elision made by Taiwanese university students when they pronounce some of the English phrases. It extends investigation and description of the elision of initial *h*, final *t* and *d* sounds made by Taiwanese university students as they pronounce some English phrases from the perspective of non-native speakers. The main investigation is to figure out that whether the elision of the initial *h*, final *t* and *d* sounds occur when the subjects of the study, which are literally non-native speakers, pronounce the English phrases casually.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Phonology

Phonology is that part of language which comprises the systematic and functional properties of sound in language. It seeks to discover those systematic properties in the domain of sound structure, and find the regularities and principles behind it both for individual languages and for language in general (Wiese, 2006). In order to categorize English language further, one might also point out that several variations exist within the different varieties. These can, for instance, be of a social or regional nature and can occur between different varieties or within them (Collins & Mees, 2006). Concerning the latter, the speakers do, nevertheless, have mutual core features by which they can be classified as a group of speakers. In addition, Fromkin et.al (2003) said that the aim of studying the rules of phonology is to give a phonetic information or guideline on how to pronounce a word in a correct way, so the meaning that conveyed from the spoken word can be conveyed correctly. Although the specific rules of phonology differ from language to language, the kind of rules, what they do, and the natural classes they refer to are the same cross-linguistically.

Connected Speech

Non-native speakers are rarely able to predict which lexical item may or may not appear in a particular situation. They tend to depend almost solely on the sounds which they hear. Learners whose instruction has focused heavily on accuracy suffer a “devastating diminution of phonetic information at the segmental level when they encounter normal speech” (Dalton & Seidlhofer, 2001). That is what connected speech deals with. According to Seong (2008), connected speech is a phenomenon in spoken language that collectively includes phonological processes such as reduction, elision, intrusion, assimilation, and contraction.

Elision of Sound

Elision can be defined as the omission of sounds in connected speech. It is used for the sake of making the pronunciation of sounds easy in connected speech (Crystal, 2003). Yellop & Clark (1990) stated that elision is a loss or omission of certain segments or syllables in running speech or colloquial English. Moreover, Lillet (2007) explained that elision occurs when a sound is removed from a word. The most common elisions in English are omission of sounds /*t*/ and /*d*/. Similar to Lillet, Giegerich (1992) said that most common elision in English words is the omission of sounds /*t*/ and /*d*/ at the word boundary, they are positioned at end of a word before go to the next word. When either the sounds /*t*/ or /*d*/ is between two other consonant sounds, then the /*t*/ or /*d*/ can be omitted. For example, in the phrase “kept going” /*kept*'*gəʊɪŋ*/, the /*t*/ is between two consonant sounds and can be omitted becomes /*kep*'*gəʊɪŋ*/. Another frequent elision is the deletion of /*h*/ when it appears in word-initial position after a word boundary, or etc (Williamson, 2015). For example, in the phrase “give him it” /*giv* *hm* *it*/. The /*h*/ is between two consonant sounds and can be omitted becomes /*giv* *m* *it*/. He added that unstressed pronouns beginning with /*h*/ appear to be susceptible.

The Study

Subjects

The subjects of the study were 8 Taiwanese university students consisting of 4 students of the college of humanities and literature of Chung Chen University and 4 students of the faculty of

foreign languages of Asia University, Taiwan. Hence, the total subjects were 8 students. Eight native Taiwanese students were chosen because that would be sufficient to support the analysis of the study. They consisted of 8 males and 8 females as well just to make it fair.

METHOD

The study used a descriptive qualitative design. According to Ary, Jacob and Sorensen (2010), qualitative researchers seek to understand a phenomenon by focusing on the total picture rather than breaking it down into variables. The goal is a holistic picture and depth of understanding rather than a numeric analysis of data.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data were gained through videos. The subjects recorded themselves reading and pronouncing 18 English phrases which divided into three parts. Part A was 6 phrases consisting of initial /h/ sound, part B was 6 phrases consisting of final /t/ sound, and part C was also 6 phrases consisting of final /d/ sound. The data were then be analyzed through listening and taking notes procedures. The videos collected by the writer were listened carefully as they pronounced the phrases one by one and the writer took notes of phonetic transcriptions of the phrases pronounced by the subjects in the videos. By then, the variations of sounds elision could be gained and described.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In order to answer the question of the study, the findings below present the analysis of the data by describing the sounds elision varieties made by the Taiwanese students in pronouncing English phrases.

Initial /h/ Sound

Here, the phonetic transcriptions were provided into general British English (BrE) and American English (AmE).

Table 1. The list of elided pronunciations of /h/ sound realized by the Taiwanese students and their phonetic transcriptions

Subjects	Phrases	Transcription Before Elided (Normal)		Transcription After Elided		Transcription Realized by the Subjects
		BrE	AmE	BrE	AmE	
1	Give Him	/gɪv hɪm/	/gɪv hɪm/	/gɪv ɪm/	/gɪv ɪm/	/gɪv hɪm/
2						/gɪv hɪm/
3						/gɪv hɪm/
4						/gɪv ɪm/
5						/gɪv hɪm/
6						/gɪv hɪm/
7						/gɪv hɪm/
8						/gɪv ɪm/
1	Very Happy	/'vɛrɪ 'hæpɪ/	/'vɛrɪ 'hæpɪ/	/'vɛrɪ 'æpɪ/	/'vɛrɪ 'æpɪ/	/'vɛrɪ 'hæpɪ/
2						/'vɛrɪ 'hæpɪ/
3						/'vɛrɪ 'hæpɪ/
4						/'vɛrɪ 'hæpɪ/
5						/'vɛrɪ 'hæpɪ/
6						/'vɛrɪ 'hæpɪ/
7						/'vɛrɪ 'hæpɪ/
8						/'vɛrɪ 'æpɪ/
1	Work Here	/wɜ:k hɪə/	/wɜrk hɪr/	/wɜ:k ɪə/	/wɜrk ɪr/	/wɜrk hɪr/
2						/wɜrk hɪə/
3						/wɜrk hɪr/
4						/wɜrk hɪr/
5						/wɜ:k hɪr/
6						/wɜ:k hɪr/
7						/wɜrk hɪr/
8						/wɜrk ɪr/
1	Tell Him	/tɛl hɪm/		/tɛl ɪm/		/tɛl hɪm/
2						/tɛl hɪm/

Subjects	Phrases	Transcription Before Elided (Normal)		Transcription After Elided		Transcription Realized by the Subjects
		BrE	AmE	BrE	AmE	
3	Know Her	/nəʊ hɜ:/	/noʊ hɜr/	/nəʊ ɜ:/	/noʊ ɜr/	/tɛl hɪm/
4						/tɛl hɪm/
5						/tɛl hɪm/
6						/tɛl hɪm/
7						/tɛl hɪm/
8						/tɛl ɪm/
1						/noʊ hɜr/
2						/noʊ hɜr/
3						/noʊ hɜr/
4						/noʊ hɜr/
5						/noʊ hɜr/
6						/noʊ hɜr/
7						/noʊ hɜr/
8						/knoʊ ɜr/
1						Should Have Gone
2	/ʃʊd hæv gɒn/					
3	/ʃʊd hæv gɒn/					
4	/ʃʊd hæv gɒn/					
5	/ʃʊd hæv gɒn/					
6	/ʃʊd hæv gɒn/					
7	/ʃʊd hæv gɒn/					
8	/ʃʊd hæv gɒn/					

As displayed on the table above, the pronunciation realized by the Taiwanese students were varied. The elisions or omissions of the initial /h/ sound rarely occurred. Most of the subjects still pronounced the /h/ sound. Even some of them pronounced the phrases in the combination of British and American English. For example, subject 2. She pronounced the phrase “work here” /wɜrk hɪə/ and combined the American English of the word ‘work’ with /r/ sound, /wɜrk/, and the British English of the word ‘here’ without /r/ sound, /hɪə/.

For the first phrase (give him), only one subject elided the /h/ sound. For the second phrase (very happy), only one subject elided the /h/ sound as well. As for the third phrase (work here), only one subject elided the /h/ sound as well. For the fourth phrase (tell him), still only one subject elided the /h/ sound. The fifth phrase (know her), only one subject elided the /h/ sound. For the last phrase (should have gone), none of the subject elided the /h/ sound.

Final /t/ Sound

Here, the phonetic transcriptions were provided into general British English (BrE) and American English (AmE).

Table 2. The list of elided pronunciations of /t/ sound realized by the Taiwanese students and their phonetic transcriptions

Subjects	Phrases	Transcription Before Elided (Normal)		Transcription After Elided		Transcription Pronounced by the Subjects
		BrE	AmE	BrE	AmE	
1	First Day	/fɜ:st deɪ/	/fɜrst deɪ/	/fɜ:s deɪ/	/fɜrs deɪ/	/fɜrst deɪ/
2						/fɜrst deɪ/
3						/fɜrst deɪ/
4						/fɜrs deɪ/
5						/fɜrs deɪ/
6						/fɜrs deɪ/
7						/fɜrs deɪ/
8						/fɜrs deɪ/
1	Best Friends	/best frendz/	/best frɛndz/	/bes frɛndz/	/bes frɛndz/	/best frɛnds/
2						/best frɛnd/
3						/best frɛnds/

Subjects	Phrases	Transcription Before Elided (Normal)		Transcription After Elided		Transcription Pronounced by the Subjects
		BrE	AmE	BrE	AmE	
4	Last Man	/lɑ:st mæn/	/læst mæn/	/lɑ:s mæn/	/læs mæn/	/bɛs frɛnds/
5						/bɛs frɛnds/
6						/bɛst frɛnds/
7						/bɛst frɛnd/
8						/bɛst frɛnds/
1						/lɑ:st mæn/
2						/læst mæn/
3						/læst mæn/
4	Must Be	/mæst bi:/	/mɑst bi/	/mɛs bi:/	/mɑs bi/	/læs mæn/
5						/læs mæn/
6						/læst mæn/
7						/lɑ:st mæn/
8						/lɑ:s mæn/
1						/mɑst bi/
2						/mɑst bi/
3						/mɑs bi/
4	Left Key	/lɛft ki:/	/lɛft ki/	/lɛf ki:/	/lɛf ki/	/mɑs bi/
5						/mɑst bi/
6						/mæst bi:/
7						/mæst bi:/
8						/mɛs bi:/
1						/lɛft ki/
2						/lɛft ki:/
3						/lɛf ki/
4	Tallest Building	/'tɔ:lɪst 'bɪldɪŋ/	/'tɔ:lɪst 'bɪldɪŋ/	/'tɔ:lɪs 'bɪldɪŋ/	/'tɔ:lɪs 'bɪldɪŋ/	/lɛf ki/
5						/lɛf ki/
6						/lɛft ki:/
7						/lɛft ki:/
8						/lɛf ki:/
1						/'tɔ:lɪst 'bɪldɪŋ/
2						/'tɔ:lɪst 'bɪldɪŋ/
3						/'tɔ:lɪst 'bɪldɪŋ/
4	/'tɔ:lɪs 'bɪldɪŋ/					
5	/'tɔ:lɪst 'bɪldɪŋ/					
6	/'tɔ:lɪst 'bɪldɪŋ/					
7	/'tɔ:lɪst 'bɪldɪŋ/					
8	/'tɔ:lɪs 'bɪldɪŋ/					

As displayed on the table above, the pronunciation realized by the Taiwanese students were varied. The elisions or omissions of the final /t/ sound rarely occurred. Most of the subjects still pronounced the /t/ sound.

For the first phrase (first day), only three subjects pronounced the /t/ sound. The rest of them elided the sound. For the second phrase (best friends), only three subjects elided the /t/ sound. As for the third phrase (last man), only three subjects elided the /t/ sound as well, the rest still pronounced the sound. For the fourth phrase (must be), still only one subject elided the /t/ sound. The fifth phrase (left key), only one subject elided the /t/ sound. For the last phrase (tallest building), only one of the subject elided the /t/ sound.

Final /d/ Sound

Here, the phonetic transcriptions were provided into general British English (BrE) and American English (AmE).

Table 3. The list of elided pronunciations of /d/ sound realized by the Taiwanese students and their phonetic transcriptions

Subjects	Phrases	Transcription Before Elided (Normal)		Transcription After Elided		Transcription Pronounced by the Subjects
		BrE	AmE	BrE	AmE	
1	Boiled Potatoes	/bɔɪld pə'teɪtəʊz/	/bɔɪld pə'teɪtəʊz/	/bɔɪl pə'teɪtəʊz/	/bɔɪl pə'teɪtəʊz/	/bɔɪld pə'teɪtəʊs/
2						/bɔɪjɪd pə'teɪtəʊs/
3						/bɔɪl pə'teɪtəʊs/
4						/bɔɪl pə'teɪtəʊs/
5						/bɔɪld pə'teɪtəʊz/
6						/bɔɪjɪd pə'teɪtəʊs/
7						/bɔɪl pə'teɪtəʊs/
8						/bɔɪl pə'teɪtəʊs/
1	Stand By	/stænd baɪ/	/stænd baɪ/	/stæn baɪ/	/stæn baɪ/	/stænd baɪ/
2						/stænd baɪ/
3						/stæn baɪ/
4						/stæn baɪ/
5						/stæn baɪ/
6						/stænd baɪ/
7						/stæn baɪ/
8						/stæn baɪ/
1	Bold Font	/bɔʊld fɒnt/	/bɔʊld fɒnt/	/bɔʊl fɒnt/	/bɔʊl fɒnt/	/bɔʊld fɒnt/
2						/bɔʊld fɒnt/
3						/bɔʊl fɒnt/
4						/bɔʊld fɒnt/
5						/bɔʊld fɒnt/
6						/bɔʊld fɒnt/
7						/bɔʊl fɒnt/
8						/bɔʊl fɒnt/
1	Bathed Quickly	/bɑːθd 'kwɪkli/	/bæθd 'kwɪkli/	/bɑːθ 'kwɪkli/	/bæθ 'kwɪkli/	/bæθ 'kwɪkli/
2						/bæθ 'kwɪkli/
3						/bæθs 'kwɪkli/
4						/bæθ 'kwɪkli/
5						/bæθ 'kwɪkli/
6						/bæθd 'kwɪkli/
7						/bæθd 'kwɪkli/
8						/bæθ 'kwɪkli/
1	Changed Place	/ʃeɪndʒd pleɪs/	/ʃeɪndʒd pleɪs/	/ʃeɪndʒ pleɪs/	/ʃeɪndʒ pleɪs/	/ʃeɪndʒd pleɪs/
2						/ʃeɪndʒd pleɪs/
3						/ʃeɪndʒ pleɪs/
4						/ʃeɪndʒd pleɪs/
5						/ʃeɪndʒd pleɪs/
6						/ʃeɪndʒd pleɪs/
7						/ʃeɪndʒd pleɪs/
8						/ʃeɪndʒd pleɪs/
1	Send For	/sɛnd fɔː/	/sɛnd fɔː/	/sɛn fɔː/	/sɛn fɔː/	/sɛn fɔː/
2						/sɛn fɔː/
3						/sɛn fɔː/
4						/sɛn fɔː/
5						/sɛn fɔː/
6						/sɛn fɔː/
7						/sɛn fɔː/
8						/sɛn fɔː/

As displayed on the table above, the pronunciation realized by the Taiwanese students were varied. The elisions or omissions of the final /d/ sound rarely occurred. Most of the subjects still pronounced the /d/ sound.

For the first phrase (boiled potatoes), only three subjects pronounced the /d/ sound. The rest of them elided the sound. For the second phrase (stand by), only three subjects elided the /d/ sound. As for the third phrase (bold font), only three subjects elided the /d/ sound as well, the rest

still pronounced the sound. For the fourth phrase (bathed quickly), there were five subjects elided the /d/ sound. The fifth phrase (changed place), only one subject elided the /d/ sound. For the last phrase (send for), almost all of the subjects elided the /d/ sound, only one particular subject who pronounced not the /d/ sound but /t/ sound instead.

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the data, the conclusion can be drawn as follows: as displayed on the tables above (see table 1, 2, 3), most of the Taiwanese students still pronounced and realized the elision sounds. For the initial /h/ sound, on the first phrase (give him), only one subject elided the /h/ sound. For the second phrase (very happy), only one subject elided the /h/ sound as well. As for the third phrase (work here), only one subject elided the /h/ sound as well. For the fourth phrase (tell him), still only one subject elided the /h/ sound. The fifth phrase (know her), only one subject elided the /h/ sound. For the last phrase (should have gone), none of the subject elided the /h/ sound.

For the final /t/ sound, on the first phrase (first day), only three subjects pronounced the /t/ sound. The rest of them elided the sound. For the second phrase (best friends), only three subjects elided the /t/ sound. As for the third phrase (last man), only three subjects elided the /t/ sound as well, the rest still pronounced the sound. For the fourth phrase (must be), still only one subject elided the /t/ sound. The fifth phrase (left key), only one subject elided the /t/ sound. For the last phrase (tallest building), only one of the subject elided the /t/ sound.

For the final /d/ sound, on the first phrase (boiled potatoes), only three subjects pronounced the /d/ sound. The rest of them elided the sound. For the second phrase (stand by), only three subjects elided the /d/ sound. As for the third phrase (bold font), only three subjects elided the /d/ sound as well, the rest still pronounced the sound. For the fourth phrase (bathed quickly), there were five subjects elided the /d/ sound. The fifth phrase (changed place), only one subject elided the /d/ sound. For the last phrase (send for), almost all of the subjects elided the /d/ sound, only one particular subject who pronounced not the /d/ sound but /t/ sound instead.

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