

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE/ A COURSE IN CONVERSATION

## A- BEFORE STARTING

### 1<sup>st</sup> LESSON

An introductory lecture about the course: its objectives and means used to achieve them.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> LESSON

#### ***WHAT is SPEECH?***

Simply speaking, speech (or any utterance) is a continuum of sounds connected in a certain way of a certain language. Speech is the spoken form of a language that is produced by the speaker, transmitted in waves by a certain media (like water or air), and received by the listener.

#### ***WHY we Speak?***

We do so for many reasons. One of them is to communicate with each other. As human beings, we are in need to communicate our thoughts, ideas, feelings and alike with other humans.

#### ***WHAT are the Sciences that study Speech Sounds?***

-**PHONETICS** studies the classification, transcription, and transmission of sounds.

-**PHONOLOGY** studies the system of segmenting of words into its sounds (phonemes), their distribution in words related to a specific sound and other related sound qualities like, stress and intonation over words or speech of that language.

#### ***What are the SOUNDS and their TYPES in SPOKEN ENGLISH Language?***

Sounds can be classified into two main types:

**1- VOWELS** are produced with **no obstacles** in their way in the mouth (i.e. free air passage). They are:

Either **PURE (MONOTHONG)** Vowels which are **12** ones:

/i/ as in: sit      /i:/ as in: seat    /æ/ as in: pat      /ɑ:/ as in: part    /e/ as in: bed  
/ʌ/ as in: come    /ə/ as in: ago    /ə:/ or /ɜ:/ as in : bird    /ʊ/ as in: could    /ʊ:/ as in: food  
/ɒ/ as in: pot      /ɔ:/ as in port.

Or **GLIDING (DIPHTHONG)** Vowels which are a combination of two pure vowels. They are **eight** in **BRITISH** English:

/oi/ as in: soil                      /au/ as in: cow                      /iə/ as in: here  
/ei/ as in: say                      /ou/ or /əu/ as in: go              /eə/ as in: hair  
/ai/ as in: site                      /uə/ as in: poor

Some scientists add a third type which is the (**TRIPHTHONG**) Vowels; a combination of a diphthong + /ə/ as in: fire, higher. It mostly exists where /r/ is not pronounced in a certain situations.

**2- CONSONANTS** are those sounds produced with a certain obstacle in the mouth (i.e. not a free air passage). They are **24** in English sound system as follows:

**/p, b, t, d, k, g, f, v, θ, , s, z, ʃ, ʒ, tʃ, dʒ, m, n, ŋ, r, w, j, h, l/**

### 3<sup>rd</sup> LESSON

**Some other related notions:**

**PHONEME:** the minimal unit in the word that can differentiate meaning.

/Pet/ – /set/, /p/ and /s/ are two different phonemes since they make a difference in meaning between the two words.

**ALLOPHONE:** the variant types of a phoneme that cannot make any difference in meaning but in the way of their production as in having dark /ɹ/ and light /r/.

**WORD:** the smallest unit in an utterance or sentence that has a meaning, as in: to, the, Sally, went,...etc.

**SYLLABLE:** a unit or part of a word that consists of a vowel or a vowel accompanied with one (or more) consonant. For example:

Ago = 2 syllables, or /o:/= 1 syllable, strong /strɔŋ/= 1 syllable, civilization /sivilaizeifən/=5 syllables

**STRESS:** it is the greater effort or prominence on a syllable or more (or even words) in a word or longer group of words in an utterance. In normal speech the open class of words (nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and verbs) receives more or the stronger stress than the other group of words (i.e. the closed system of words such as, auxiliaries, prepositions, articles, pronouns,...etc) except in having certain messages the speaker wants to emphasize by stressing the words that belong to the closed system of words.

## 4<sup>th</sup> LESSON

### **SOME ASPECTS OR PHENOMENA RELATED TO CONNECTED SPEECH:**

#### ***WHY we, sometimes as foreign speakers, cannot catch what the English speaker utters?***

Any foreign English language learner at the very starting point in his journey of learning that language faces many difficulties in understanding what the English native speaker utters. And that is due to the lack of experience and knowledge in that language because of the little or weak training to adjust it. Besides, the existence of many phenomena occurring while speaking on the part of the native English speaker can be a hurdle towards disabling the learner or listener to understand the spoken language. These phenomena are as follows:

**-RHYTHM UNIT** means having stressed syllable accompanied with some other unstressed ones after or before it. In English speech it is to find not only syllables have that criteria but also words in sentences that receive the strong or primary stress (') followed by other having weak stress. But that occur mostly regularly though not all the time. For example:

- 'Walk 'down the 'path to the 'end of the 'canal

- 'Twen ty 'cars

Off course as a learner, it is difficult to catch those words with weak stress. But by doing some practices by listening to some more spoken English text, then trying to repeat them after that, it would be easier to pass this hurdle.

**-ASSIMILATION** means two neighbouring sounds tend to be the same in one aspect or another. It is normal that English sounds are different in their place and manner of production and in voicing. So, to make the production of speech easier, some sounds at the end or the beginning of words tend to be similar with those easier ones at the end or

beginning of another adjacent (neighbouring) words. So, we can hear these types of assimilation:

**Place assimilation:**

- (that person) is said as (thap person)
- (that man) is said as (thap man)
- (meat pie) as (meap pie)

(because /p/ is produced by lips that effects those produced by alveolar ridge like /t/)

- (that thing) where /t/ is pronounced with a sort of dental /t/ (with help of teeth like /θ/)
- Also (get those) where /t/ is similar to / θ /.
- (that case) as (thak case) where the alveolar /t/ becomes the velar /k/
- Also, (bright colour) as (brighk colour)
- (quite good) as (quike good)
- Similarly, the sounds /d, n/as in:  
(good boy) as (goob boy)  
(bad thing) where /d/ is of a dental effect  
(card game) as (carg game)  
(green paper) as (greem paper) because /p/ is produced by lips (bilabial)  
(fine thought) where /n/ is said with a dental effect (by teeth)  
(ten girls) as (tenj girls) where the alveolar /n/ changes into /ŋ/ by the effect of the velar /g/
- (horse shoe) as (horsh shoe), (this sheep) as (thish sheep)
- (those years) as (thouz years)

**Manner assimilation:** it is a matter of manner (way) of production if the sounds are produced in a certain way as in having a sort of friction (affricate sounds as in /s, f, v/), being out of the nose (nasal as in /m,n/), produced with explosion (stop or plosive as in /p,t,k/), with no abstacle (gliding consonants (as in /w,j,r/), or with the air rushing out of the sides of the tong (bilateral as in /l/). For example:

- (that side) as (thas side) where /t/ is changed from stop to friction or affricate /s/.
- (good night) as (goon night)
- But look at the following:  
(in the) as (in ne) where (th) is changed to a sort of dental /n/  
(get them) as (get tem) where (th) is changed into a sort of dental /t/

(read these) as (read dese) where (th) is changed into a sort of dental /d/

**Voicing assimilation:** by voicing it is meant that some sounds changed to be voiced (produced with vibration of the vocal cords, as in /v,z,d/) or voiceless (with no vibration of vocal cords as in /f,s,t/). For example:

- (I have to) as (I haf to) where the voiced /v/ becomes the voiceless /f/ by the effect of /t/
- (cheesecake) where /z/ in cheese is changed into /s/ by the effect of /k/
- But not (like that) as (lige that) or (blak dog) as (blag dog)

In addition to what mentioned above, the pronunciation of the plural and the 3<sup>rd</sup> /s/ is changed into /z/ or can remain as /s/ to assimilate the other last sound, as in: (plays), (ways), (dies), (cats) to suit the voicing of the sound that comes before it.

**-ELISION** means deleting some sounds for the sake of facilitating speech, such as:

Acts /akts/ → /aks/, Of /əv/ → /ə/, today /tədeɪ / → /tdeɪ/, scripts /skripts/ → /skrips/

sixth's throne /siksθs θrəʊn/ → /siks θrəʊn/ or /siksθrəʊn/, all of mine /o:l v main/

looked back /lukt bak/ → /luk bak/,

lots of /lots əv/ → /lots ə/,

waste of money /weist əv mʌni/ → /weist ə mʌni/,

best of three /best f θri:/

**-LINKING /r/** means the pronouncing of the left sound /r/ which is not pronounced if being in a position between one vowel sound before and another consonant after it or in final position, as in: Farmer /fa:mə/ , Actor /aktə/ not /aktər/

But: actor of /aktər əv/, higher education /haɪər edʒukeɪ jən/, here are /hiər ə/

**-INTRUSIVE /r/** means inserting /r/ in speech where it does not exist originally. This phenomenon is said to be criticized by the highly educated people in London as to a false pronunciation. Such as: Formula A → formulaɹ A, media event → mediaɹ event

**-words boundaries:** /ki:pstikiŋ/ might be: keeps ticking, or keep sticking. Recognition the difference in speech is achieved via knowing that sounds like /p, t, k/ are pronounced with a puff of air (aspiration) initially. Also, notice: /maitreɪn/, /treɪləndŋ/

## 5<sup>th</sup> LESSON:

### **tone in speech**

#### ***Is INTONATION IMPORTANT in SPOKEN English?***

**INTONATION (Tune or Pitch)** is the pitch of the voice on word group in an utterance that can show the speaker's attitudes or the grammatical structure of that group. Its importance lies in having certain forms and functions that can affect the hearer's view or ideas about the speaker's personality and attitudes. The variation in pitch of speech is called the (**TONE**). Intonation is considered as one of paralinguistic cues used to facilitate communication with others. The form and functions (or uses) of intonation are as follows:

**Falling or Glide-down Intonation:** symbolized as ↓ or \

It is used for:

Statements which are complete and definite ones: I will be here at 10 o'clock.

Wh-questions: what's your name?

Tag questions as an answer or to force others to agree with the speaker: you won't leave.

Will you?

strong commands: get out!

strong exclamation: oh! , splendid!

'thank you' when showing gratitude

**Rising Intonation:** symbolized as ↑ or /

It is used in:

Statement for the sake of encouraging: I shan't be long!, I won't drive too fast.

Statement for the sake of questioning: you helped him?

Wh-questions to show more interest in something: How's your daughter?

Yes/no question: Have you seen him yet?

Greeting and saying good-bye: Good night. Hul lo

Not very exciting or unexpected things: Thank you. All right

**Falling and Rising or the Dive Intonation:** symbolized as  $\surd$  it is used in:

Incomplete sentences: I came to help him.....

Statements for correction: forty six boys (to mean not forty five)

Statements of Warning: you'll be late

Statements of two parts, the first is of more importance than the other one:

You can keep it if you really want it.

Commands to sound pleading: Don't make me angry. Try

**Take off Intonation:** symbolized as  $-\uparrow$  it is used in:

Grumbling sentences: I didn't hurt you (so why all that). I did

Repetition questions to repeat answer by the listener: Why?

Tag-questions after command: Come over here! Will you?

Both of the statement and its tag-question is positive: you liked it. Did you?

To give opinion rather than getting agreement: you will have tea with us. Won't you?

Questioning exclamation: really?

**Level Intonation:** symbolized as  $-$  or  $\rightarrow$  it is used to:

Show carelessness or being bored by the speaker.