

Elision in BBC English
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الحذف في BBC الإنجليزية
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Abstract

Elision is the omission of sounds or the process of not pronouncing certain sounds, syllables or words in speech for easier language. The present study tends to shed light on the types of elision in English and most commonly used ones. The model of Skandera & Burleigh's theory that divides elision into two (hierarchically independent) categories. This theory is adopted to analyze the selected data. It is concluded that consonant elision is the most prominent type in BBC English particularly the consonants **at encounters** in BBC and spoken English in general.

Key Words: Elision, Consonants, Vowels, aphaeresis, *syncopation*, apocopation

الملخص:

الحذف هو عملية عدم نطق أصوات أو مقاطع أو كلمات معينة في الكلام لتسهيل اللغة. تميل الدراسة الحالية إلى تسليط الضوء على أنواع الحذف في اللغة الإنجليزية وأكثر أنواعها شيوعاً في اللغة الإنجليزية بي بي سي. تم اعتماد نموذج نظرية سكانديرا وبيرلي الذي يقسم الحذف إلى فئتين (مستقلتين هرمياً) لتحليل البيانات المختارة. نستنتج أن حذف الحروف الساكنة هو الأبرز في لغة بي بي سي الإنجليزية، وخاصة الحروف الساكنة في نهاية الكلمة وهي أكثر الأنواع التي يصادفها المستمع في لغة بي بي سي واللغة الإنجليزية المنطوقة بشكل عام – الكلمات المفتاحية: الحذف، الاصوات الصحيحة، اصوات العلة، حذف بداية الكلمة، حذف منتصف الكلمة، حذف اخر الكلمة

Section One

Introduction

1.1 The Problem of the Study

Usually, when individuals communicate, they tend to modify their pronunciation to harmonize with their audience and typically speak at a rapidity. As a result there will be a change in the shape of the spoken

words. Accordingly, specific words are dropped, certain phonemes are excluded and some phonemes are connected through vocal communication. These changes are regarded as properties of connected speech. Within the domain of phonological processes that affect connected speech are insertion, rhythm, assimilation, elision, and linking.

Elision is the omission of sounds, syllables or words in speech. This is done to make the language easier to pronounce in a fast manner. Thus, elision is needed to speak easier, simpler, and more like native speakers in rapid condition such as in songs. This paper tries to answer the following questions:

1. What are the types of elision in English that are commonly used in BBC English ?

1. What are the most frequent types of elision in BBC English?

1.2 The Aims of the Study

The study aims at:

2. Investigating the different types of elision in English that are commonly used in BBC.

3. Finding out the most frequent types of elision in BBC English.

1.3 The Hypothesis of the Study

To achieve the aims mentioned above, it is hypothesized that:

1. Different types of elision in English could be used in BBC English.

2. There might be types of elision used more frequent than others in the selected BBC English.

1.4 The Value of the Study

It is hoped that the current study is useful to the linguists who are interested in studying phonology, pragmatics and sociolinguistics.

1.5 The Procedures

1. Presenting a sufficient theoretical background about what elision .

2. Selecting data form BBC You Tubes that involve types of elision to be investigated.

3. Analyzing the selected data and finding out the different types of elision and the most frequent ones in BBC English.

1.6 The Limits

The current study is limited to investigate the different types of elision in English and finding out the most frequent types of elision in BBC English on YouTube.

Section Two

Literature Review

Introduction

This section presents a survey of elision through having a look at its historical background, the different definitions and senses it carries, the different types, and the way it operates. This section also presents a survey about the principal framework that elision involved in ‘connected speech’. A list of theories of elision is presented to illustrate how elision could be categorized from one classification to another.

2.1. Connected Speech

Phonetic articulation that is aware of the context of rapid speech production is known as connected speech. Here is where phonetic segments are somewhat influenced by the articulatory needs of surrounding segments, even though they would otherwise be realized entirely in isolation. These incidents are the inevitable results of people speaking more quickly and maybe less attentively. According to McMahon (2002,128), connected speech processes essentially enable speakers to say more in less time.

Furthermore, according to Crystal (2008) spoken language is referred to as connected speech, like a single sound, word, or phrase, which were the focus of much previous linguistic research. It is now understood that these units undergo significant alterations when they are employed in connected speech, as evidenced by procedures like elision and assimilation, for example, and changing into /n/ in phrases like "boys" and "girls" (ibid,p. 101).

It is concluded that connected speech is speech that is spoken continuously. One effect of connected speech is that individual speech segments are impacted by their neighboring segments, or the speech sounds that precede and follow them. This can cause a segment to shift somewhat in location or articulation style, or occasionally completely vanish. As a result, how a word is spoken in connected speech may differ from how it is pronounced in isolation. The numerous facets of connected speech can be categorized under five main themes according to Skandera& Burleigh (2005:57), they are: linking, rhythm, strong and weak forms, assimilation, and elision.

2.2. Elision Definitions.

Elision is defined as the process of deletion one or more phonemes , usually for easier pronunciation. Vowels and consonants can undergo such process . The occurrence of Elision is more common for consonants . Nevertheless, vowels may be reduced to the point that the vowel is no longer pronounced as in words like “ police “ “correct” or “suppose” being realized as /plis/, /Kirekt/ or /spu:z/ . In rare, cases such as in some

realizations of the words perhaps both consonants and vowel elision may even occur at the same time.

According to Harthman & Stork (1972 :75) elision refers to an omission of speech sound between syllables or words in connected speech, usually for ease of pronunciation , as in:

"There isThere s . "

Crystal (2008:166) stated that "elision, phonetically and phonologically, refers to the deletion of sounds in connected speech. Consonants and vowels and sometimes the whole syllables may be dropped." Hudson (2000: 414) emphasizes the phenomenon of universality concerning elision.

2.3. Elision in English Historically

Elgin (1979: 95) showed that a phonological rule that /g/ is dropped when it is followed by a final nasal as in :

"Sign /sain/ , design /dizain / . but , when it is followed by a suffix as in *signature* /signicha/", it is pronounced.

Kuiper and Allan (1996 :75) pointed out that certain consonants, other than /g/, are silent even in careful speech., e.g," *Wright , knee, gnaw , thistle , fasten, walk, lamb ...etc.*"

Conversely, Fromkin et al (2003 :311) agree with Hudson (2000 :412) in that /b/ in old spelling is omitted when it occurs finally preceded by a nasal consonant such as " *Limb /lim/ , climb /klaim/ "*, but when it is followed by a suffix, /b/ sound is retained, as in " *limb /lim/ , limber /limba/"*

2.4. Types of Elision in English

A) Consonant Elision

This section is concerned with the phonemes whose omission is largely reliant on their surrounding phonemes in their English language rarely or never has double consonants. In English, although a word may be written with a double consonants, it is articulated with one consonant.

Carr (2013: 60) argues that "elision of consonant occurs in coda rather than in onset consonants". The elision of consonants in English occurs by the speaker to simplify the complexity of consonant cluster. For example, 'acts' changes to /æks/ rather than /ækts/, 'scripts' pronounced as /skrips/ rather than /skripts/.(Roach,2000:, 142-143).

Gimson (1977: 297) states various cases of consonant elision under rapid speech. The following words are articulated with single , not double consonants : (omission , annoy , affect, offer, arrange ...etc. The following examples can show this process:-

- "last time" is articulated with single /t/ not double /tt/ as follows :/ la:staim/

B) Vowels Elision

To reduce the number of syllables in a long word, a vowel is elided for example, the word

- " history" becoms /histri:/ (Gimson (1977: 297)"

a) The Elision of initial vowels:

Gimson (1977: 297) clarifies that vowels are omitted when they preceded by a word ends with a consonant and followed by a consonant :

- "Not alone...../notðloun /...../notllon/ "

b) The Elision of Medial vowels :

Gimson (1977:143) shows that the sound /ð/, when it is preceded by a separate sounds such as voiceless plosives /p/, /t/ and /k/, usually disappears.

- "Potato /pðteitou//pteitou/"

Through the process of elision, the final consonant clusters are elided in a word for easier pronunciation ,e.g. "last" / la:s/, "post" /pos/, "just" /dʒas/, "tinned" /tin...tim/, "bald" /bo:l/, "you mustn't" /masn/"; and sometimes before a vowel, particularly after syllabic /n/, e.g. " wouldn't " /wodn/ (Quirk,1964 :301).

C .The Elision of a syllable :

Crystal (2003: 247) illustrated that a whole syllable may be disappeared especially when there are miscellaneous consonants as in :

- "Library.../laibrðri/ /laibri/ "
- "Particularly .../pðtikjulði/ /pðtikjuli/ "

2.4.2. Some Phonological Restrictions in Elision :

Elision is governed by certain and fixed rules that should be abided. The following some of these rules :

a. omission of weak vowels after p, t, k :

- "Today / t h dei/ "
- "Canary / k h neri / "
- "Tomato / t h meitu / "

2. When weak vowel followed by n , r and l is disappeared and n, r and l turned to syllabic :

- "Tonight /tnait/ "
- "Correct /krekt/ "

3 . Three consonants cluster followed each other, the middle consonant will be omitted :

- "Acts /æks/ "
- "Looked back /lukbæk/ "
- "Scripts /skrips/ " (Katamba , 1989 : 277)"

4. Final (v) in (of) is disappeared when comes before consonant :

- " of them / ovthim/ "
- "Waste of money /weistmni / " (Roach ,2000 : 143)

5. [g] is omitted when it is followed by a final syllabic (n) as in :

- "Reassign /rizain /" (Ibid : 145)."

2.5. Lass's Classifications of Elision

Elision can be divided into three kinds, based on the theory of Lass (1984:187), that is:

- Aphaeresis** is initial deletion: as in English *I am* → *I'm*, *I have* → *I've*, or the loss of initial /k/ before /n/ in English *knife*, *knight*.
- Syncopation** is most frequently used for vowel loss, for example: "/sekriteri/ vs. /sekritri/ 'secretary', /dikʃənəri/ vs. /dikʃnəri/ 'dictionary', etc. "
- Apocopation** is loss of a final element. For example: final /t/ is deleted when it is followed by a word starts with another consonant, as in [læst^haim] 'last time'.

2.6. Skandera& Burleigh's Classifications of Elision

The many types of elision are explained by another clue. Based on the type and location of the sounds removed, Skandera& Burleigh (2005:95-97) theory divides elision into two (hierarchically independent) categories

2.6.1. The Categorization Depending on the Type of Sounds Omitted Makes a Distinction Between:

- Elision of consonants often occurs in order to simplify consonant clusters. The consonants elided are most typically plosives and fricatives, as in *old man* /əʊldmæn /, when it is pronounced [əʊlmæn]. A letter that is not articulated in a written form of a word is referred to as silent letter, for examples: "*knife, knight, lamb, listen, whistle, and wrong."*
- Omission of vowels may occur in unstressed syllables of polysyllabic lexemes, most typically when they are followed or preceded by a stressed syllable, and after one of the voiceless plosives, /p, t, k/. If weak vowels is followed by syllabic consonants /n, l, or r/, however, the gap is sometimes filled, or the elision compensated for, by transforming that consonant into a syllabic consonant.
- Elision of complete syllables can occur when the syllables are unstressed, most typically when preceded or followed by a stressed

syllable, especially when the omitted syllable includes a consonant that is recurred in the following syllable.

2.6.2. The Categorization Depended on the Place of the Sounds Omitted Distinguishes Between:

- a) Initial Elision: Elision at the start of a word is theoretically labelled *aphaeresis*. Aphaeresis can be seen in the history of elision where some consonants occur initially as in " *knife*, *knight*, and *wrong*".
- b) Medial Elision: Elision occurs at the middle of a word is typically called *syncope* which refers to the elision of vowels occur in unstressed syllables of polysyllabic words, for example, in " *today*, *tonight*, *evening*, *dictionary*, and *secretary*."
- c) Final Elision: Elision at the final position of a word is typically called apocope, or apocopation. For examples: " *oldman*, *looked back*, *next*, and, historically, in *lamb*."

2.7. Roach's Classifications of Elision

Roach (2009:125-126) classifies different samples of elision:

- a) Omission of weak vowel when comes after p, t, k, for examples *potato* [p^h'teitəʊ], and *today* [t^h'dei]. The vowel in the first syllable may be deleted ; the aspiration of the initial plosive occupies the whole middle position of the syllable where ^h indicates aspiration in the phonetic transcription.
- b) Weak vowel + n, l, r becomes syllabic consonant. For example: "tonight [tnait], police [pli:s], correct [krekt]. "
- c) Avoidance of complex consonant clusters. Complex consonant clusters of three stops or two stops followed by a fricative, the middle plosive can be omitted , for examples *acts* [æks], *looked back*[lʊkbæk], *scripts* [skrips].
- d) Loss of final v in 'of before consonants, for example: lots of them [lɒts ə ðəm], *waste of money* [weist ə mʌni].

The fact that contractions are regularly represented with special spelling forms, for example:

1. " had', 'would': spelt' d, articulated d (after vowels), əd (after consonants). "
2. " is', 'has': written 's, articulated s (after voiced consonants), z (after voiceless consonants), except that after s, z, ʃ, ʒ, tʃ, dʒ, 'is' is pronounced iz and 'has' is pronounced əz in contracted form."
3. " 'will': spelt 'll, pronounced l (after vowels), əl (after consonants). "
4. " 'have': spelt' ve, pronounced v (after vowels), əv (after consonants)."

5. " 'not': spelt n't, pronounced nt (after vowels), nt (after consonants).
There are also vowel changes associated with n't (e.g. 'can' /kæn/-
'can't' /kɑ:nt/; 'do' /du: - 'don't' /dəʊnt/. "
- " 'are': spelt 're, pronounced a after vowels, usually with some change in
the preceding vowel "(e.g. 'you' /ju:/ , 'you're' /jʊə/, 'we' wi:/ - 'we're' /wiə/,
'they' /ðeɪ/ - 'they're' /ðeə/. "

2.8. Birjandi&Nodoushan's Classifications of Elision

Then, theory from Birjandi&Nodoushan (2005:135-136), they also stated that elision can occur due to five causes, there are:

- Omission of a weak vowel after the voiceless stops /p/, /t/ and /k/.
The word *permit* is often articulated as [p'mit] which is the schwa sound /ə/ disappears after /p/.
- weak vowel disappears before the syllabic consonants /l/, /m/, /n/ and sometimes /r/. For example, the word *seven* ['sevn] shows the loss of the schwa /ə/ before /n/ sound.
- Complex clusters are often deleted for easier pronunciation of the sound. For example, *clothes* /kləʊðz/ is pronounced as /kləʊz/.
- Elision /v/ is often occurs when it comes before a consonant. For example, the name *Pavlov*, sometimes is elided to ['pæləf] to simplify its pronunciation.

It can be concluded from the clarification of the specialists above, they have analogous opinions about elision in their books. They believed that elision happens when a sound or syllable is disappeared or omitted. The sounds that are omitted are those sounds that they don't have any auditory value and their articulation is weak. There are different theories in classification of the elision process from the above experts, for example Skandera& Burleigh, they classify elision of the sounds relying on their types and their position.

Only Lass categorizes the elision in the sound position namely Aphaeresis, Syncope, and Apocope. Other theories of Birjandi, and Roach also provided that elision occurs in the loss of final v in 'of' before consonants.

Since this study is aimed to know the kinds of elision in BBC English and to find out the most frequent types of elision in BBC English, this research uses theory from Lass (1984) as the main theory.

Section Three

Methodology

Introductory Remarks

The present section introduces the data selected for the study as well as the model adopted for the analysis of the selected data. The model is Skandera& Burleigh (2005, p.95-97) theory that divides elision into two (hierarchically independent) categories (p.95-97).

3.1 Description of Data

Ten videos are selected in the present study. The data sources are collected from BBC YouTube on their own official website (BBC Learning

English: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/features/pronunciation>:
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/features/pronunciation>

3.2 Method of Analyzing Data

The current study utilizes a description qualitative method of analysis.

3.3 Model of Analysis

Based on the type and location of the sounds removed, Skandera& Burleigh (2005:95-97) theory divides elision into two (hierarchically independent) categories .

A. The Categorization Depending on the Type of the Sounds Omitted Distinguishes Between:

- d) Elision of consonants occurs to make the pronunciation of consonant clusters easier .
- e) Elision of vowels usually occurs in unstressed syllables of polysyllabic words.
- f) Elision of syllables totally can occur in unstressed syllables , most usually before or after a stressed syllable.

B. The categorization depending on the location of the sounds omitted distinguishes between:

- d) Elision at a word initially is theoretically labelled *aphaeresis*.
- e) Elision in the middle of a word is usually named *syncope*, or syncope.
- f) Elision at the word finally is typically called *apocope*, or apocope.

3.4. Data Analysis

A. The Categorization Based on the kind of Sounds Omitted:

1. Elision of Consonant

Extract 1: "Can you tell me what time it is?" Can you tell me /wʌ' taimɪtɪz?/"

- "Elided Consonant: /t/ at the end of "what" "
- Extract 2 : "I haven't seen him in years."** /Cɪ hævntsɪn 'ɪmɪnjɪəz/"
- " Elided Consonant: /d/ at the end of "haven't"
- Extract 3 : "He's got a brilliant idea."** /hi:zgɒt ə brɪəniətəɪ'diə/ "
- Elided Consonant: "/l/ in "brilliant"
- Extract 4 : "They shouldn't do that."** /ðeɪʃʊdn̩t du: ðæt/ "
- Elided Consonant:" /t/ in "shouldn't"
- Extract 5 : "Could you pass me the salt?"** /kʊdju: pɑ:s mi: ðəsə:lt?/"
- Elided Consonant: /d/ in "could"
- Extract 6: "Let's take a break."** /letsteɪk ə breɪk/ "
- Elided Consonant: /t/ in "let's"

2 Elision of Vowels

While less frequent than consonant elision, vowel elision can occur in BBC YouTube videos, especially in rapid speech or informal contexts.

- Extract 7 : "I would like to know..."** /aɪd lɪktənəʊ.../ "
- Elided Vowel: /ʌ/ in "would"
- Extract 8: "It's a bit difficult."** /ɪts ə bɪtdɪfɪkəlɪt/ "
- Elided Vowel: /ɪ/ in "bit"
- Extract 9: "Have you ever been there?"** /hævju: evərbɪndʒeə?/"
- Elided Vowel: /ɛ/ in "ever"
- Extract 10: "Can you give me a hand?"** /kænju: gɪv mi: ə hænd?/"
- Elided Vowel: /ɪ/ in "give"
- Extract 11: "I don't know what to do."** /aɪdəʊntnəʊwɒttə du:/"
- Elided Vowel: /ɒ/ in "what"

3. Elision of Whole Syllables

Although less used than consonant and vowel elision, it has been noted that the entire syllables can sometimes be dropped in rapid speech or specific phrases within BBC YouTube videos.

- Extract 12: "Gonna have a cuppa."** /gənə ə kʌpə/ "
- Elided Syllable: /hæv/ in "have"
- Extract 13: "See you later!"** /si: ju: l'ɑ:tə!/"
- Elided Syllable:" /leɪ/ in "later"
- Extract 14: "What are you up to?"** /wɒtərju: əptə?/"
- Elided Syllable:" /tʊ/ in "up to"
- Extract 15: "I'm just popping out."** /aɪmdʒʌstpɒpɪŋaʊt/ "
- Elided Syllable: /pɪŋ/ in "popping"
- Extract 16: "Fancy a bite to eat?"** /fænsɪ ə baɪttəɪ:t?/"
- Elided Syllable:" /baɪt/ in "bite"

B. The categorization based on the position of the sounds omitted:

1. Elision of the Start of a Word (*aphaeresis*)

It is also known as initial consonant cluster reduction, is less common than other types of elision in spoken English, and even less frequent in BBC YouTube videos due to their formal nature. However, there are a few instances where it can occur, particularly in rapid speech or specific phrases.

Extract 17: "Can I have another one?" /kənaiævənəðəwʌn?/ "

- Elided Sound: /h/ in "have"

Extract 18: "I know what you mean." /aɪəʊwɒtju: mi:n/ "

- Elided Sound: /n/ in "know"

Extract 19 : "Give me a hand." /gɪv mi: ə ænd/ "

- Elided Sound: /h/ in "hand"

Extract 20 : "Let's go!" /lets goʊ!/ "

- Elided Sound: /l/ in "let's"

2. Elision of Consonants at the End of Word (*apocope*)

Frankly speaking, it has been spotted that elision of consonants at the end of word is the most common type the listener encounters in BBC YouTube videos and spoken English in general.

Examples like "can't" instead of "cannot," "got" instead of "gotten," "met" instead of "metted" are heavily used BBC YouTube videos in the present study. Nearly, 80 % of the extracts above have included this kind of elision.

Extract 21: "what time is it,"

/wʌ' taɪmɪtɪz/

Extract 22: "I haven't seen him in years"

"/aɪhævntsɪn 'ɪmɪnjɪəz/ "

3. Elision the Middle of a Word (*syncope*)

Although not typically present in formal speech like BBC YouTube videos, instances of elision within a word do occur in natural, rapid, or informal spoken English. However, due to the formal nature of BBC content, only the following examples are found in the whole videos examined in the current study.

Extract 23: "Gimme a sec." /gɪmɪ ə sɛk/ (Instead of "Give me a second.")

- Elided: /kən/ in "can"

Extract 24: "Gonna need some help." /gənəni:dsəmhelp/ (Instead of "Going to need some help")

- Elided: /tʊ/ in "to"

Extract 25: "Lemme just..." /ləmədʒʌst/ (Instead of "Let me just...")

- Elided: /t/ in "let"

3.3 Conclusions

Elision is the omission of sounds, syllables or words in spoken language that is done to make the language easier in pronunciation and with a fast manner. Thus, elision is needed to speak easier, simpler, and more like native speakers in rapid condition such as in songs. Based on the type and location of the sounds removed, Skandera & Burleigh (2005:95-97) theory divides elision into two (hierarchically independent). The categorization depending on the type of the sounds omitted distinguishes between the loss of consonants that often occurs for easier pronunciation of consonant clusters, unstressed syllables may undergo the omission of vowels of polysyllabic words, as well as elision of complete syllables may occur when the syllables are unstressed, typically when these syllables are preceded or followed by a stressed syllable. On the other hand, the categorization depending on the position of the sounds omitted distinguishes between elision at the beginning of a word is theoretically labelled *aphaeresis*, elision at the middle position of a word which is terminologically named *syncope*, or syncope, and elision that occurs finally of a word and technically called *apocope*, or apocope.

The present study finds that consonant elision is the prominent in BBC English. Vowel elision, on the other hand, can less occur in BBC YouTube videos, especially in rapid speech or informal contexts. Furthermore, it has been noted that the entire syllables is the least types of elision used in BBC English.

Finally, it is concluded that initial consonant elision *aphaeresis*, is less common than other types of elision in spoken English, and even less frequent in BBC videos due to their formal nature. On the contrary, it has been spotted that elision of consonants at the end of word *apocope* is the most noticeable type the listener encounters in BBC and spoken English in general. Due to the selected BBC content, only rare examples of elision within a word *syncope* are found in the whole videos examined in the current study.

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