English Phonetic Course

Liaison (Linking)

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<th>Lesson Plan</th>
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<td><strong>Main aims of the lesson:</strong> To help students understand and produce not just individual sounds, but the string of phonemes which make up utterances.</td>
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<td><strong>Contents of the lesson</strong></td>
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<td>Intrusive /r/</td>
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<td>Linking /j/</td>
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<td>Intrusive /w/</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work on linking</td>
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**Activities and Procedures**

1. To raise students’ awareness that in English words within a sense group tend to link together to form naturalness and smoothness.
2. Design some activities for focusing on linking.
3. Study the characteristics of linking /r/, intrusive /r/, linking /j/ and linking /w/ in connected speech.
4. Ask the students to listen to the tapes and imitate four types of linking in focus.
5. Have the students listen to the conversations and attempt to gain a natural transition of two adjacent sounds.
6. Have the students practise the guided conversation. Ask them to pay special attention to the linking in connected speech.
7. Comment on the students’ performance by highlighting the achievement of the students’ and the efforts they need for the improvement.
8. Ask the students to do more practice after class and get ready for presentation during the next session.
Teaching Notes
1. Introduction

Liaison means the linking of sounds or words. When we say a sentence in English, we join or “link” words to each other. Because of this linking, the words in a sentence do not always sound the same as when we say them individually. Linking is very important in English. If we recognize and use linking, two things will happen:

1. we will understand other people more easily
2. other people will understand us more easily

However, this is not the case with Chinese. Failure to link them in the way the native speakers do is one of the problems of the Chinese students of English. We are apt to pronounce words as though they were isolated or insert a glottal stop /ʔ/ before the word beginning with a vowel sound. For example, the sentence “This is an apple” is read as /ðɪʔɪzʔɪənʔæpl/, instead of saying /ðɪɪzənæpl/.

Understanding Vowels and Consonants for Linking

To understand linking, it is important to know the difference between vowel sounds and consonant sounds. Here is a table of English vowels and consonants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>vowels</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>e</th>
<th>i</th>
<th>o</th>
<th>u</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>consonants</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>g</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows the letters that are vowels and consonants. But the important thing in linking is the sound, not the letter. Often the letter and the sound are the same, but not always.

For example, the word “pay” ends with:

- the consonant letter “y”
- the vowel sound “a”

Here are some more examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>though</th>
<th>know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ends with the letter</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>w</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ends with the sound</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>uniform</th>
<th>honest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>begins with the letter</td>
<td>u</td>
<td>h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>begins with the sound</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In English, words within a sense group tend to link together to form naturalness and smoothness. Basically, there are two types of linking in English: consonant + vowel and vowel + vowel.
2. Consonant + Vowel

We link words ending with a consonant sound to words beginning with a vowel sound. Namely, when a word ends in a consonant sound, we often move the consonant sound to the beginning of the next word if it starts with a vowel sound.

For example, in the phrase “turn off”:

| We write it like this: | turn | off |
| We say it like this:   | tur  | noff |

Remember that it’s the sound that matters. In the next example, “have” ends with:

– the letter “e” (vowel)
– the sound “v” (consonant)

So we link “have” to the next word “a” which begins with a vowel sound:

| We write it like this: | Can I have a bit of egg? |
| We say it like this:   | Ca-nI-ha-va-bi-to-feg? |

In the type of consonant + vowel linking, the voiceless plosives are normally perceived less aspiration. For example:

keep on  pick it up  not at all  think it over  first of all  look at it

A dialogue:

A: Put the light off.

B: I need it on. I’ve a lot of reading to do.

A: read it downstairs. I couldn’t sleep with the light on.

B: You’d better get under the bedclothes.

A: Have you got a torch?

B: I think I’ll go outside.

3. Linking /r/

The most common liaison phenomena involve /t/ appearing in non-rhotic speech in post-vocalic contexts. A rhotic speaker will pronounce words like far as /far/ whereas a non-rhotic speaker does not pronounce /t/ at all unless followed by a vowel. E.g.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-rhotic</th>
<th>Rhotic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[far]</td>
<td>[far]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[pɔːt]</td>
<td>[pɔːt]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[stɜː]</td>
<td>[stɜː]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[stɜːr]</td>
<td>[stɜːr]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[stɜːrɪŋ]</td>
<td>[stɜːrɪŋ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[rɑːt]</td>
<td>[rɑːt]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For rhotic speakers this is just because *far* has an /r/ in it, but for non-rhotic speakers it appears because the first word ends with a vowel and the second word begins with a vowel – the /r/ links the two words together. In such cases, [r] forms a syllable with the following vowel in connected speech and therefore occurs in a syllable onset – such syllabification across word boundaries is a general feature of connected speech in English. The [r] occurring in this context is usually referred to as Linking R, for the simple fact that there is <r> in the spelling. “In historical terms, these originate in most instances from the loss of rhyme-/r/ and are therefore often associated with r-spellings” (Giegerich: 65).

For speakers of non-rhotic accents /r/ is not pronounced after vowels. However, in these accents, when words that are spelled ending with an <r> or an <re> come before a word beginning with a vowel, the /r/ is usually pronounced. This is linking /r/. In rhotic accents the /r/ is also pronounced when the words are in isolation so cannot be termed linking.

*Examples:*

Far away: [fərə] > [fərə]

More ice: [mɔːrəs] > [mɔːrəs]

More examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>after all</th>
<th>better off</th>
<th>for instance</th>
<th>more or less</th>
<th>far and wide</th>
<th>as a matter of fact</th>
<th>here and there</th>
<th>a clever escape</th>
<th>a number of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4. **Intrusive /r/**

Intrusive /r/ also involves the pronunciation of an /r/ sound, but this time there is no justification from the spelling as the word’s spelling does not end in <r> or <re>. Again this relates to non-rhotic accents; rhotic accents do not have intrusive r. Like Linking /r/ Intrusive /r/ is found in word-final position in phrases such as *law /r/ and order* [laːr ænd ɔːd], *the idea /r/*
of it, spa /tl/ is (Carr: 124; Cruttenden, 2001: 288), in which [r] is inserted after the set of non-high vowels [ə, ɑː, ɔː].

The idea of it  
\[\text{di ərəv ət} > \text{di ərəv ət}\]

Thus, link a final /s/ or even /z/ to an initial vowel in the same sense group by inserting an r-sound even if there is no r in the spelling. The /r/ added in this way is known as Intrusive /r/.

E.g. a banana or an apple

Asia and Africa

China and India

claw and order

papa and mama

5. Linking /j/ & /w/

When one word ends with a vowel sound and the next word begins with a vowel sound, native speakers often link the words with a semi-vowel [w] or [j] sound.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OO O</th>
<th>If our lips are round at the end of the first word, we insert a [w] sound:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We write it like this: too often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We say it like this: too_w often</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OO [ - ]</th>
<th>If our lips are wide at the end of the first word, we insert a [j] sound:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We write it like this: I_j am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We say it like this: I_j am</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Related to vowel liaison (also known as hiatus) is epenthesis of [j] or [w] glide between two vowel phonemes.

5.1 [j]-glide

When a word ends in /i:/, or a diphthong which finishes with /u/, speakers often introduce /j/ to ease the transition to a following vowel sound:

\[\text{[j] is inserted after high front vowels /i:, ɪ, ə, ɔː/ for instance, seeing [ˈsɪŋ], my arms}\]
[mæ̇ɪəmz], day in and day out [deɪ ɪn an deɪ ˈaʊt];

5.2 [w]-glide
[w] is inserted after high back vowels /uː, əʊ, əʊ/, such as doing [dɔːˈɪŋ], how old [həʊ ˈəʊld], go out [ɡəʊˈaʊt] (Cruttenden: 288 and Giegerich: 282).

The insertion of glides [j, w] occurs because they are the least marked epenthetic consonants in hiatus position. In other words, glides are generally considered to have the same featural make-up as vowels, i.e. they agree in both backness and roundness with the preceding vowel, such that [w] occurs after [uː, ʊ] and [j] occurs after [iː, ɪ]. Moreover, this apportioning of the vowel space is based on the fact that vowels which trigger [r]-insertion never trigger [j]-insertion or [w]-insertion. Each glide has its own domain, although the domains exempt all lax front and lax high vowels, which never occur word-finally in English.

If you learn to do this, your English will sound smooth and natural.

6. Practice
4.1 Consonant + Vowel

Thank you. / come in / come over / full up / above all / stand up / Good evening.

Good afternoon. / if only / such a man / six o’clock / some of you / some oil / one of us /

both of them / all of us / worth it / as always / good idea / read it again / an egg / an end /

in an hour / an hour and half / in August / in an instant / a bottle of ink / a bowl of rice /

a box of chocolate /

Note: The voiceless plosives /p/, /t/, and /k/ acquire less aspiration, as in the following:

it is / stop it / keep on / a cup of tea / first of all / not at all / take it off / take it along / take it away / take it out / put it off / pick it up / work out / think of it / speak English / look at it /

leave it alone / let him in / best of all / back in a minute / look it up /

Alice is out.

That’s a good suggestion.

Is the boss in?
The boss is always out.

It would be more than I can arrange.

I won an apple. Did you win anything?

It isn’t attractive, is it?

My watch is ready. Will you fetch it for me?

I gave all my parties from five until seven. Arrive at five exactly, please.

Come along home if you like.

Are you taking anything along, Alfred?

Sing us an English song, please.

If we stop and watch it, I’m afraid we’ll be late.

4.2 Vowel + Vowel

[j]-glide

I am / he is / she is / I ought to / in the end / my uncle / three hours / B. E. A. / any other /

try it / try again / very interesting / highly important / day in and day out / hurry up /

see off / stay up / we agree / May I? /

How are you? Busy as ever?

Shall we agree?

He is already very old.

May I ask how much it is?

I hurt my arm playing volleyball.

The answer to the question is on page fifty-eight.

It’s not necessary for you to stay up all night.
I’ve been waiting for you for three hours.

You’re already a bit late.

[w]-glide
you are / go out / go on / go away / too often / too easy / throw away / no objection /
no end / who else / to ask you / how old /

How old are you?

Who else saw it?

I didn’t go out yesterday.

Try to do it yourself.

What are going to eat for lunch?

Do I have to do every question?

See you again, I hope.

So it all depends on whether or not he returns.

4.3  r-linking

linking [r]

Take care of yourself.

Here it is.

There is a pair of glasses on the desk.

She has been away from her own country for a long time.

Bear in mind that the last bus leaves at eight.

I’m not sure of going.

There is a hill far away.

You’d better get everything settled before it’s too late.
Poor old Tom, he never finds time to buy himself a jacket.

Never again in my life shall I make such a silly mistake!

intrusive [r]

have no idea of it / china and glass / drama and music / Asia and Africa / India and Pakistan /
the sofa over there / area of agreement / soda and milk / law and order / awe-inspiring /

Is Papa in? Mamma is there.

4.4 Mark the word boundaries where linking is likely to occur, and then read the passage aloud.

The Man Who Escaped

Edward Coke used to be an army officer, but he is in prison now. Every day is exactly the same for him.

It is winter now and Coke and all the other men get up at six when it is still cold and dark. They have breakfast at six thirty. Work begins at seven thirty. Some of the men work in the prison factory where they make mailbags, but Coke often works in the fields outside.

The men have lunch at twelve. Lunch lasts an hour and then the men go back to work again. Dinner is at six. Coke usually goes to the prison library after dinner and reads until nine-thirty. The lights go out at ten.

The day is long, hard and boring and every man has a lot of time to think. They usually think about why they are there. Coke does. He always thinks about two men.

One of the men is called Eric Masters. He used to be an army officer, just like Coke. Coke knows that Masters has a lot of money now. The second man’s name is
Hugo. That’s all Coke knows about him. Masters knows where and who Hugo is, but Coke doesn’t.

Every night Coke lies in bed and thinks about Eric Masters and Hugo. There is another thing he thinks about, too. Escaping. He wants to escape and find Masters, and then the other man. Coke is in prison for something he didn’t do.