

Unit II. Sentence stress

Lesson 10 : Elision

Apart from internal elisions and those associated with weak forms, sounds may be elided in rapid, colloquial speech, especially at word boundaries (Gimson, 1978, p. 297). These sounds include vowels and consonants.

I) Vowels

1) Loss of the weak vowel /ə /after p, t, k

Word	Transcription	Transcription (using elision)
tomato		
potato		
today		
perhaps		
canary		

2) Loss of the weak vowel /ə /+ n, l or r

Word	Transcription	Transcription (using elision)
police		
correct		
tonight		

3) Loss of initial /ə / when followed by a continuant and preceded by a word final consonant

Phrases/ Sentences	Transcription	Transcription (using elision)
He was annoyed		
get another		
run along		
not alone		

*when an appropriate vowel precedes word initial /ə /, it may coalesce with the preceding vowel

phrases	Transcription	Transcription (using elision)
go away		
try again		

or when final /ə / occurs with a following final /r / and word initial vowel /ə /

Phrases	Transcription	Transcription (using elision)
father and son		
over and above		
as a matter of fact		

II) Consonants

In addition to the loss of /h/ in pronominal weak forms and other consonantal elisions, alveolar plosives may be elided.

1) Such elision appear to take place most readily, in rapid speech, in the sequence continuant consonant + /t/ or /d/ (e.g./ st, ft, jt, nd, ld, zd, ,vd) followed by a word with an initial consonant

Phrases	Transcription	Transcription (using elision)
next day		
first flight		
pushed them		
raced back		
just one		
last chance		
refused both		
found five		
caused loses		
let turn		
old man		
moved back		

2) Similarly, word final clusters of plosives or affricates + /t/ or /d/ (e.g. /pt, kt, tʃt, bd, gd, dʒ d) may lose the final alveolar stop when the following word has an initial consonant.

Phrases	Transcription	Transcription (using elision)
kept quiet		
thanked me		
dragged them		
urged them		
helped me		
looked like		
begged one		
judged fairly		
stopped speaking		
robbed both		
changed colour		
reached home		

3) Final /t, d/ followed by a word beginning with /j/ are usually kept in a coalesced form, e.g., /tʃ/ and /dʒ/

Word	Transcription	Transcription (using elision)
helped you	/helptʃu:/	
liked you		
told you		
left you		

4) The /t/ of the negative form /nt/ is often elided, particularly a following consonant

Sentences	Transcription	Transcription (using elision)
You mustn't loose it.		
Doesn't she know?		

And sometimes before a vowel

Sentences	Transcription	Transcription (using elision)
You mustn't over eat		
Wouldn't he come		

5) Less common is the omission of the stops in the negative /nt/

He won't do it/ hɪ 'wʌʊn 'du: ɪt/

6) Clusters of final /t/ or /d/ are sometimes simplified

Sentences	Transcription	Transcription (using elision)
I've got to go.		
We could try.	/wɪ kəd 'traɪ/	
What do you want		
They should do it.		

7) The elision of one of a boundary cluster of two consonants occurs in very rapid speech

Sentences	Transcription	Transcription (using elision)
He went away.		
Give me a cake.		
Let me come	/ let mɪ 'kʌm/	
I'm going to come.		

Reference

Gimson, A. C. (1978) Towards an international pronunciation of English. In Stevens, P. (ed.) In Honour of A.S. Hornby, Oxford University Press, London