THE NEED OF TEACHING ASPECTS OF CONNECTED SPEECH TO THE YEMENI STUDENTS OF ENGLISH AT THE TERTIARY LEVEL

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Abstract

Yemeni students join the departments of English at the Yemeni universities with a great hope of acquiring an excellent competence of English after their graduation. Unfortunately, after four years of studying English as major specialization, they realize that their dreams did not fulfill and they cannot understand the native speakers of English in real communicative situations. However, this study is an attempt to find out the main reason behind this phenomena and to suggest some solutions which may enable the departments and the teachers of English at the tertiary level to help their learners to overcome this dilemma which leads to frustration for those graduates of English from the different Yemeni universities.

1. Introduction

Understanding native speakers of English in daily life situations is regarded as one of the major difficulties of the Yemeni students of English. This is probably due to the fact that English is not widely used in Yemen for daily life communication. It is introduced as a school subject at the preparatory stage and taught as a foreign language. At the tertiary level, students of English study two courses of 'Spoken English' in the first level and one course in the first term of the second level. These courses are insufficient and do not help students to overcome their difficulties and problems in understanding native speakers of English in daily life communicative situations. However, students' failure in understanding native speakers of English in such situations is probably due to the fact that 'Spoken English' courses at the tertiary level do not use 'unauthentic texts'. That means they are specially designed for foreign learners of English. In other words, they present the English lessons in a very slow and careful speech and students get used to this style of English; but when they listen to real communication between native speakers of English they fail to understand them. This is because native speakers use many aspects of connected speech such as 'assimilations, elisions and weak forms. Unfortunately, these aspects of connected speech are not taught explicitly in the English courses and as a result students of English encounter so many difficulties and feel that native speakers of

English speak so fast to the extent they cannot understand or follow what they are saying in such situations.

Therefore the researcher conducted this study to find out to what extent students of English are aware of these aspects of connected speech. These aspects of 'connected speech' are not taught explicitly to the students of English because it is believed that they can be acquired by students by listening to the cassettes of the English courses which are mainly prepared by native speakers of English for different levels and by watching English films, interviews, and different functions on the English channels. However, majority of the Yemeni students of English do not have the access to these English channels at home and therefore they rely mainly on what they learn in the literature courses – for students of Faculty of Arts – which do not help students of English to improve their language skills to understand the native speakers of English in real communicative situations.

2. Aims of the study

This paper attempts to find out the main reason of the Yemeni students of English failure in understanding the native speakers of English in real communicative situations. Moreover, it aims at suggesting some solutions which may help the Yemeni students of English to overcome these difficulties they encounter at the present.

3. Hypotheses

a) It is hypothesized that Yemeni students of English do not understand the native speakers of English in their real life communicative situations because they are not explicitly taught the most important aspects of connected speech such as 'assimilation, elision and weak forms' which are used by the native speakers of English in their real life communication.

b) It is hypothesized that Yemeni students of English depend mainly on the written form of the English sentence when they read or act or an English dialogue because they are untrained to use aspects of connected speech such as 'assimilation, elision and weak forms'.

4. Review of the Related Literature

The teachability of connected speech has been one of the controversial issues over the recent years. Some scholars in this field see that learners of English as a foreign language should not be taught connected speech and expecting their successful production in student's speech is asking too much. Some scholars take the view that simply exposing students to the features of connected speech is enough in itself since students will then naturally and without prompting incorporate them into their own speech. However, some other scholars go further in their views and indicate that these features of connected speech should be taught to students and encouraged in their production, particularly in the case of young children, who tend to be excellent mimics of new language, and better able to adopt unfamiliar pronunciation patterns. Others assert that adult students should be trained in a productive capacity in these features of connected speech, since not to do so will leave students sounding overly formal and somewhat stilted in their speech.

4.1. What is connected speech?

Connected speech is a continuous stream of sounds, without clear-cut borderlines between them, and the different aspects of connected speech help to explain why written English is so different from spoken English.

The reason, it seems, is that rapid speech is a continuous stream of sounds, without clear-cut borderlines between each word. In spoken discourse, native speakers adapt their pronunciation to their audience and articulate with maximal economy of movement rather than maximal clarity. Thus, certain words are lost, and certain phonemes linked together as they attempt to get their message across.

4.2. How this affects native and non-native speakers?

Native speakers have various devices for dealing with indistinct utterances caused by connected speech. They take account of the context. This means they assume that they hear words with which they are familiar within that context. In real life interaction, phonetically ambiguous pairs like "a new display" /ə njuːdɪst pleɪ/, are rarely a problem as they are actively making predictions about which syntactic forms and lexical items are likely to occur in a given situation.

Non-native speakers, however, 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" (Brown 1990:10).

Overall the most common feeling seems to be that some of the features of connected speech are worth working on for productive use and others rather less so. (Jones 1975) is of the view that foreign students of English should be taught connected speech but they should not be taught 'slang or colloquial' English. He adds that as foreign students gain confidence, productive precision and fluency in English standard variety, they can be exposed to other important regional types.

It is agreed that there are some aspects of connected speech create so many difficulties for the learners of English as a foreign language and as a result worth working on such as (assimilation, elision and weak forms).

4.3. Assimilation

When a speech sound changes, and becomes more like another sound which follows it or precedes it, this is called assimilation. Jones (1975:217-18) defines assimilation as:

> *The process of replacing a sound by another sound under the influence of a third sound which is near to it in the word or sentence. The term may also be extended to include cases where a sequence of two sounds coalesces and gives place to a single new sound different from either of the original sounds; this type of change may be termed 'coalescent assimilation.*

Similarly, Kelly (2000:109) indicates that "The term assimilation describes how sounds modify each other when they meet, usually across word boundaries, but within words too."

It might be useful here to provide the reader some examples of assimilation in both cases: when sounds meet across word boundaries and within words as well. If we consider the words *the* and *boy*, and look at the phonemes involved, we get /*ðæp*/ and /*bɔɪ*/. If we then place the words into a sentence (for example, *I talked to that boy yesterday /aɪ tɔːkt tə ðæp bɔɪ jestədeɪ/*), we notice that the /t/ phoneme at the end of *that* does not sound like it sounds in the word said on its own. It also occurs within a word. For example, *I   live   in   this   department   alone* /aɪ lɪv ɪn ðɪs dɪˈpɑːpmənt əˈləʊn/. Similarly, the word '*football*' can be pronounced as /*fʊpbɔːl*/.

Raising students awareness of these forms, whenever they arise, is the first step towards helping our learners to speak a little more naturally. Even if they do not assimilate these forms at first. In many cases, the simple awareness of their existence can help enormously in enabling students to better understand the language they hear.

4.4. Elision

Elision in connected speech means the leaving out of a sound or sounds in speech. For example, in rapid speech in English, '*suppose*' /*sə ˈpəʊz*/ is often pronounced as /*spəʊz*/, '*factory*' /*fækˈt tri*/ as /*fæktri*/ and *mostly /ˈməʊstly/* as /məʊsli/ that make it difficult for students to distinguish or recognize individual words in the stream of speech. This is due to fact that they are used to seeing words written as discrete entities in their textbooks. Jones 1972:230) defines elision as:

> *the disappearance of a sound. There historical elisions, where a sound which existed in an earlier form of a word was omitted in a later form and there are contextual elision, in which a sound which exists in a word said by itself is dropped in a compound or in a connected phrase.*

Though historical elisions are not the scope of this paper, it might be useful to give the reader some examples of the historical elisions. That means the lose of all /r/ sounds finally and before consonants in standard English. For example, the /r/ sound is not pronounced in the following words. As a final sound in words like: far /fɑː/, star /sɑː/ and car /kɑː/. Before consonants in words like: form /fɔːm/, march /mɑːtʃ/ and part /pɑːt/. Roach (1991:127) on the other hand defines elision as follows:

> *The nature of elision may be stated quite simply: under certain circumstances sounds disappear; one might express this in more technical language by saying that in certain circumstances a phoneme may be realized as zero realization or be deleted.*

Kelly (2000:110) defines elision as the disappearance of a sound. She sees that "the reason is an economy of effort and some instances the difficulty of putting certain consonant sounds together while maintaining a regular speech rhythm and speed."

However, a native speaker's aim in connecting words is maximum ease and efficiency of tongue movement when getting his/her message across. In minimizing their efforts, they weaken their articulation. If articulation is weakened too much, the sound may disappear altogether, a process known as elision. It is the vowels from unstressed syllables which are the first to be elided in non-precise pronunciation.

Roach (2000:127) emphasizes the point that it is important for foreign learners to be aware that when native speakers of English talk to each other, quite a number of phonemes that the foreigner might expect to hear are not actually pronounced. He listed a small number of the many cases of elision as follows:

i) Loss of weak vowel after /p/, /t/, /k/. In words like 'potato'/p^{h}teɪtəʊ/, 'tomato' /t^{h}mɑːtəʊ/, 'canary' /k^{h}neəri/, 'perhaps' /p^{h}ːæps/, 'today' /t^{h}deɪ/. The vowel in the first syllable may disappear; (where (^{h}) indicates aspiration).

ii) Weak vowel + n, l or r becomes syllabic consonant.

Examples: tonight /tnaɪt/, police/pliːs/, correct /krekt/.

iii) Avoidance of complex consonant clusters.

It has been said that no normal English speaker would ever pronounce all the consonants between the last two words of the following:

1. She <u>acts</u> like she owns the place. /ækts/ simplified to /æks/.

2. Teachers use authentic <u>texts</u> to teach from. /teksts/ simplified to /teks/.

3. George the si<u>xth's thr</u>one /sikθs θrəʊn/ simplified to /siks θrəʊn/.

4.5. Weak Forms

The form in which words appear in rapid speech when they are unaccented or unstressed. For example: *he can give us*. If the word *'can'* is used in isolation or is stressed, the strong form is used /*kæn*/, but in this example, the word *'can'* is unstressed and it should appear in its weak form /*kən*/. That means the vowel sound in *'can'* does not have the same quality in the weak form and is reduced in length and pronounced as /*kən*/ or /*kn*/ in some cases when it is said more rapidly.

There are a large number of words in English which can have a 'full' form and weak form. Lets take the same word 'can' again in the following example: *she can swim faster than I can /ʃi kən swiːm fɑːstə ðən aɪ kæn/*. (The first *'can'* is the weak form, and the second *'can'* is full form). Therefore, students of English need to be taught these differences explicitly when they are introduced in the class.

In other words, students of English should be able to decide when to use the strong and the weak form of these words.

The relevance of certain features of connected speech to students' needs is often debated. However, this is not the case with weak forms. Learners must come to not

only recognise and cope with the weak forms they hear, but also to use them themselves when speaking English. If they do not their language will sound unnatural and over formalised, with too many stressed forms making it difficult for the listener to identify the points of focus. This, the degree to which connected speech contributes towards "naturalness" or "intelligibility", is a useful starting point from which to measure the value to students of the different features of connected speech.

5. The procedure of Methodology (data collection)

The researcher has selected randomly fifteen male and fifteen female graduate students of English from three different Yemeni universities to conduct this study. The study consisted of two phases: the first phase was listening to a short extract from a long interview with a British artist on the 'B. B. C. English World Service' to be used for testing out the samples' ability to understand native speakers of English when they talk in real communicative situations.

The researcher assured the samples of the study that their responses will be treated as confidential and that they will be only used for academic purposes. Moreover, the researcher did not give the samples any background about the nature of the interview and informed that they will listen only once to the conversation and after that they will answer some questions. It might be worth justifying this methodology used here: if the questions were provided to the samples before listening to the conversation, then that will be 'focused listening'. That means, the samples were directed by the questions to focus on some specific information in the conversation and ignore the rest. However, this was not the aim of the researcher because he wanted to test out the samples' ability of understanding what the speakers are talking about in the conversation. This will indicate to what extent they can understand the native speakers of the target language in real communicative situations.

The following is the script of the conversation that was used for conducting the study. Of course there were some 'false starts, gap fillers' and pauses made by the artist but they are not included here:

Int: How old were you when you started painting?
Artist: Well, it's very difficult to say. I mean I don't remember exactly but I probably developed interest as a young child since my mother was as versatile in the arts as I am.
Int: Did your mother encourage you to become an artist?
Artist: She knew the realities and challenges of such a career. So I can say to some extent 'no'. Yet I watched her prepare plaster casts, paint in oils, draw, sculpt and experiment with a makeshift darkroom so it's obvious that she wakened the muse in me.
Int: Was she working as a professional artist?
Artist: In those days art for her was still considered a hobby since she had to work as a public relations writer to supplement the family income. However in

the last few years of her life she became quite well known in at least central of London for all three facets of the creative arts. Even though she was in her eighties shortly before she passed away she had another book published.

Int: Your father, what did he do?

Artist: He was a biologist. He discouraged us completely from any artistic or creative endeavor.

Int: Did he put pressure on you to get a real job or to get married?

Artist: Actually, money and marriage were the only goals for his offspring so of course, all that backfired. I was married the first time when I had just turned 19 and still in college. In the meantime I was working four jobs while taking an overload of courses. Soon after graduation I went through a painful but educational divorce and started traveling for the first time.

Int: Which University did you attend?

Artist: The first two years were spent at a community college and then I transferred to Arts College where I majored in Psychology to please my father since he was paying for it. Though I did manage to take art courses I must admit that I missed out on the entire university experience since I was both working and married - a day student.

Int: How large was the art department there at the time?

Artist: There were only three professors, I think. It wasn't huge. The teachers were less than exciting to me; I will never forget being forced to paint hundreds of tiny squares to delineate between tones. I graduated I thought I hated abstract art simply because I knew little about it.

The following are the questions that were provided to the samples after they have finished listening to the conversation:

1. When did she develop interest in painting?

2. Did her mother encourage her to be an artist?

3. Was her mother working as a professional artist?

4. How did her father help her?

5. Did her father put any pressure on her to get a job or get married?

6. Which university did the artist attend?

7. What did she say about her teachers in the department?

8. What was the artist talking about?

The second phase of the study was a short dialogue between an officer of the lost property office and a lady who has lost one of her suitcases in London airport. Each graduate was given fifteen minutes to get familiar with the context of the following dialogue:

Officer: Good morning can I help you, miss?

Randa :   Yes, I lost one of my suitcases in the airport today.

Officer: Could you tell me how did you lose it?

Randa :	When I came to collect my luggage, I realized that one of my suitcases is missing.
Officer:	Did you check carefully at the conveyor belt?
Randa :	Yes, I waited there perhaps for more than an hour.
Officer:	Did you inform the police about your suitcase?
Randa :	I don't think so. I didn't see a police there.
Officer:	How many pieces of luggage have you got?
Randa :	Four suitcases and one briefcase.
Officer:	Could you describe the missing suitcase?
Randa :	Well, it's colour is navy blue with a silver handle.
Officer:	Did you write your name on the labels?
Randa :	Yes, of course. I also wrote my university address.
Officer:	Could you fill this form of 'lost property', please? You should write all the contents of the suitcase.
Randa :	I can't remember all it's contents at the moment.
Officer:	Well, I think you should calm down and try to remember it's contents. That's very important.
Randa :	That's right. I'll bring a list of it's contents tonight.
Officer:	I think you should bring it as soon as possible.
Randa :	Ok. I'll do my best. Thank you very much, sir.
Officer:	You're most welcome, miss.

The following phonetic transcription indicates how the native speakers of English use some aspects of connected speech 'assimilation, elision and weak forms' in their real communicative situations. This model can be used for comparing the samples' productive abilities in order to find out to what extent the Yemeni students of English are aware of these aspects of connected speech. The following phonetic transcription of the above dialogue may give the reader an idea of the connected speech 'assimilation, elision and weak forms that are used by native speakers of English in real communicative situations:

1./ɒfɪsə : gu<u>b</u> ˈmɔːrnɪŋ kən aɪ help jə mɪs/

2./rændə : jes aɪ lɒst wʌn <u>əv</u> maɪ ˈsuːtkeɪsɪz ɪn ð<u>i</u> ˈeəpɔːt/

3./ɒfɪs̍ə : ku<u>dʒ</u> jə tel mɪ haʊ dɪ<u>dʒ</u> jə luːz ɪt/

4./rændə : wel wen aɪ keɪm tə̣ kəˈlekp̱ ma̱ɪ ˈlʌgɪdʒ aɪ rɪəlaɪzd ðət wʌn <u>əv</u> maɪ ˈsuːtkeɪsɪz z mɪsɪŋ/

5./ɒfɪsə : dɪ<u>dʒ</u> jə tʃɪk ˈkeərfəli ət ðə kənˈveɪər belt/

6./rændə : jes aɪ weɪtɪd ðeə pəˈhæps fə mɔ: ð<u>ə̣</u>n ən aʊə/

7./ɒfɪsə : dɪ<u>dʒ</u> jə ɪnfɔːm ðə pəˈliːs ə̍ˈbaʊt<u>ʒ</u> jə ˈsuːtkeɪs/

8./rændə : aɪ dəʊn^(*(t)*) θɪŋk səʊ/ aɪ dɪdn^(*(t)*) si: ə pəˈliːs ðeə/

9./ɒfɪsə : haʊ meni piːsɪz <u>əv</u> ˈlʌgɪdʒ <u>əv</u> jə gɒt/

10./rændə: fɔ: ˈsuːtkeɪsɪz <u>ən</u> wʌ<u>m</u> <u>ˈbriːfkeɪs</u>/

11./ɒfɪsə : ku<u>dʒ</u> jə dɪˈskraɪb ðə mɪsɪŋ ˈsuːtkeɪs/

12./rændə: wel ɪts ˈkʌlə z ˈneɪvi bluː wɪð ə sɪlvə hændl/

13./ɒfɪsə :   dɪdʒ jə raɪtʃ jɔː neɪm ɒn ðə 'leɪbəlz/

14./rændə: jes əv kɔːs aɪ 'ɔːlsəʊ rəʊp maɪ juːnɪ'vɜːsəti ə'dres/

15./ɒfɪsə :   kʊdʒ jə fɪl ðɪs fɔːm əv lɒsp 'prɒpərti pliːz/ ju ʃəd
rait ɔːl ðə 'kɒntents əv ðə 'suːtkeɪs/

16./rændə: aɪ kɑːn⁽ᵗ⁾ rɪmembər 'ɔːl ɪts 'kɒntents ət ðə məʊmənt/

17./ɒfɪsə :   wel aɪ θɪŋk jə ʃəg kɑːm daʊn ən traɪ tə rɪmembər ɪts
kɒntents/ ðæt's veri ɪm'pɔːtənt/

18./rændə: ðəts raɪt/ aɪl brɪŋ ə lɪst əv ɪts 'kɒntents tə'naɪt/

19./ɒfɪsə :   aɪ θink jə ʃəb brɪŋ ɪt əz suːn əz pɒsəbl/

20./rændə: əʊ 'keɪ/ aɪl du maɪ best/ θæŋk jə veri mʌtʃ sɪr/

21./ɒfɪsə :   ju ɑː məʊs⁽ᵗ⁾ welkʌm mɪs/

a. Data Analysis and findings

The following transcription of the recorded dialogue by the samples of the study clarifies the difficulties encountered by the Yemeni students of English in 'assimilation, elision and weak forms. It might be worth indicating here that the samples did not use any aspects of the connected speech. This indicates that students of English encounter serious difficulties when they attempt to listen to native speakers of English in real life situations:

1./ɒfɪsə :   gʊd 'mɔːrnɪŋ kæn aɪ help ju mɪs/

2./rændə :   jes aɪ lɒst wʌn ɒf maɪ 'suːtkeɪsɪz ɪn ðə 'eəpɔːt/

3./ɒfɪsə :   kʊd ju tel mɪ haʊ dɪd ju luːz ɪt/

4./rændə :   wel wɪn aɪ keɪm tu kɒlɪkt maɪ 'lægɪdʒ aɪ rɪəlaɪzd/
ðæt wʌn ɒf maɪ 'suːtkeɪsɪz ɪz mɪsɪŋ/

5./ɒfɪsə :   dɪd ju tʃɪk 'kærfʊli ət ðə 'kɒnveɪər belt/

6./rændə :   jes aɪ weɪtɪd ðeər 'pɪrhæps fɔːr mɔːr ðæn æn aʊər/

7./ɒfɪsə :   dɪd ju ɪnfɔːrm ðə 'pɒliːs ə'baʊt juːr 'suːtkeɪs/

8./rændə :   aɪ dʌnt θɪŋk sɒ/ aɪ dɪdnt siː ə pɒliːs ðeər/

9./ɒfɪsə :   haʊ meni piːsɪz ɒf 'lægɪdʒ hæv ju gɒt/

'0./rændə: fɔːr 'suːtkeɪsɪz ænd wʌn 'briːfkeɪs/

ι1./ɒfɪsə :   kʊd ju 'dɪskraɪb ðə mɪsɪŋ 'suːtkeɪs/

12./rændə: wel ɪts 'kʌlər ɪz 'neɪvi bluː wɪð ə sɪlvər hændl/

13./ɒfɪsə :   dɪd ju raɪt jɔːr neɪm ɒn ðə 'leɪbəlz/

14./rændə: jes ɒf kɔːrs aɪ ɒlsəʊ rɒt maɪ juːnɪvɪrsɪti 'ədres/

15./ɒfɪsə :   kʊd ju fɪl ðɪs fɔːrm ɒf lɒst prɒpɪrti pliːz ju ʃʊd
raɪt ɒl ðə kɒntɪnts ɒf ðə 'suːtkeɪs/

16./rændə: aɪ kænt rɪmembər ɒl ɪts 'kɒntɪnts ət ðə mɒmənt/

17./ɒfɪsə :   wel aɪ θɪŋk ju ʃʊd kɑːlm* daʊn ænd traɪ tu
rɪmembər ɪts kɒntɪnts/ ðæt ɪz veri 'ɪmpɔːrtənt/

18./rændə: ðæts raɪt/ aɪ wɪl brɪŋ ə lɪst ɒf ɪts kɒntɪnts 'tɒnaɪt/

19./ɒfɪsə :   aɪ θink ju ʃʊd brɪŋ ɪt æz suːn æz pɒsɪbɒl/

20./rændəː   əʊ keɪ/ aɪ <u>wɪl</u> du maɪ best/ θæŋk ju verɪ mʌtʃ sɪr/
21./ɒfɪsə :   <u>juː aːr</u> mɒst welkʌm mɪs/

The phonetic transcription indicates that Yemeni students of English have some other problems besides assimilation, elision and weak forms but these minor problems are not as serious as the aspects of connected speech. However, this transcription is based on the analysis of the absolute majority of the samples' performance which exceeds ninety percent of the total number. This indicates that almost all the Yemeni students of English encounter the same problems and difficulties in understanding the native speakers of English.

The following part is an analysis of the samples' performance of the recorded dialogue but it overlooks the other problems of pronunciation committed by the samples because the focus of this paper is only on the aspects of connected speech.

6.1. *Assimilation*

The responses obtained from the students of English at the fourth level indicate that they are unaware of assimilations in the dialogue. For example, in the first line of the dialogue there is an 'assimilation' in 'good morning'. The /d/ is assimilates to /b/ because it is followed by /m/. That means it could be pronounced as /gʊb ˈmɔːnɪŋ/. It could be also pronounced as /gʊm ˈmɔːnɪŋ / where the /b/ is replaced by /m/ and both varieties are heard by the native speakers of English when they talk to each other in rapid speech in daily communicative situations. Therefore, students may not be able to realize this expression when it is produced by the native speakers of English and that may create a difficulty for our students when they hear the following sentences:

1. 'I think that's a goo<u>d m</u>odel to follow'.
2. 'You should say goo<u>d b</u>ye to your friend'.
3. John is a goo<u>d m</u>echanic.

The same thing can be said about abut the assimilation in the second line: 'Could you tell me how did you lose /kʊ<u>dʒ</u> jə tel mɪ haʊ dɪ<u>dʒ</u> jə luːz ɪt/. In both cases, the /d/ is followed by /y/ and that is called a coalescent assimilation where a new sound /dʒ/ is produced as the combination of these two sounds. Students are not aware of the coalescent assimilation which is used frequently by the native speakers of English in their daily life communication. It might be worth pointing here that no native speaker of English would say this sentence to another native speaker of English: /kʊd jə tel mɪ haʊ dɪd jə luːz ɪt/ in the same way as indicated by the phonetic transcription. Students also did not realize the assimilation of /t/ into /p/ sound in 'to collec<u>t m</u>y luggage…'/tə kəˈlekp maɪ ˈlʌgɪdʒ…./.

Similarly, in 'Di<u>d y</u>ou check carefully…'/dɪdʒ jə tʃek ˈkeəfəli…/,   'Did you inform the police…'/dɪdʒ jə ɪnˈfɔːm ðə pəˈliːs…./, 'Could you describe…'/ kʊdʒ jə dɪˈskraɪb …'/, 'Could you fill…'/kʊdʒ jə fɪl…'/, 'los<u>t p</u>roperty…'/lɒsp ˈprɒpəti…/ 'Did you write your name….'/dɪdʒ jə/ is similar to the previous examples. However, in the second part of the sentence 'wri<u>te y</u>our name…'/raɪtʃ jə neɪm…'/ the combination of these two sounds produces /tʃ/ which is a new sound and that is called a coalescent assimilation. In the nineteenth line, the /t/ sound of the word 'should' is assimilated to /t/ sound: 'Well, I think you shoul<u>d c</u>alm down….'/wel aɪ θɪŋk jə ʃəg kaːm daʊn/. Here, the /d/ assimilates to /g/ sound because it followed by /k/ sound. There is also an assimilation in the

answer to the above question. 'Yes, of course. I also wrote my university address /jes əv kɔːs aı 'ɔːlsəʊ rəʊp maı juːnɪ'vɜːsəti ə'dres/. The /t/ sound is assimilates to /p/ sound because it is followed by /m/ sound. Finally, in the third line from bottom, 'I think you should bring it …..'/aı θink jə ʃəb brıŋ ıt…..'/. The /d/ sound in should is assimilates to /b/ sound because it is followed by /b/ sound.

Students (samples) of the study failed to produce or show these assimilations in their performance while acting out the dialogue. This means students of English are not trained to produce such sounds in their English and that creates serious difficulties for them when they listen to native speakers of English and particularly in rapid speech.

6.2. *Elision*

The analysis of the students' performance of the dialogue indicate that they are unaware of elision and as a result they produced the sounds which are supposed to be elided as shown in the transcription of the dialogue. For example, in the fifth line, '….at the conveyor belt /ə[(t)] ðə kən'veɪə belt/. The /t/ sound is usually elided by the native speakers of English when it occurs final and followed by a word begins with a consonant sound. Similarly, in the eighteenth line, the phrase '…at the moment. /ə[(t)] ðə 'məʊmənt/. The /t/ sound can be elided for the same reasons mentioned above. There are many cases where /t/ sound either disappeared or is replaced by a glottal sound /ʔ/ when it comes final. For example: 'Let me…'. Can be pronounced as either /lem mi…/ or /leʔ mi…/ by the native speakers of English and that creates difficulties for the Yemeni students of English to understand such elided sounds.

However, in this example, the /t/ sound disappeared because it is final, devoiced sound followed by initial, voiced sound /ð/.

In the ninth line of the dialogue, 'I don't think so. /aı dəʊn[(t)] θıŋk səʊ/. The /t/ of the negative /-nt/ is often elided, particularly in disyllables, before a following consonant. The /t/ sound in this example is followed by a consonant /θ/ sound and therefore it can be elided. The same thing can be said about the second phrase which is in the same line: 'I didn't see any police officer'. /aı dıdn[(t)] siː eni p[(ə)]liːs 'ɒfısə/. That means the /t/ sound can be also elided by native speakers of English. In the same sentence, the weak form sound /ə/ in the word 'police' can be elided in rapid speech because the stress is on the second syllable of the word.

In the eighteenth line, 'I can't remember ….'/aı kɑːn[(t)] rɪ'membər…./. The /t/ is elided in rapid speech by native speakers of English. It might be useful to mention here that the Yemeni students of English put more stress on the /t/ sound and make it more prominent. This is because they wrongly believe that if the /t/ sound is not heard properly, the listener may confuse the negative form with the affirmative form of the words 'can' and 'do'. This means that students are not aware of the fact that when these two words are negative they are pronounced differently from their affirmative form. That means, 'do' is pronounced as /duː/ when it is strong form and /də/ when it is a weak form in the sentence whereas 'don't' has a longer or diphthong sound and is pronounced as /dəʊnt/. Similarly, 'can' is pronounced as /kæn/ when it is in strong form in the sentences and /kən or kn/ when it is in a weak form whereas 'can't' has a longer sound and is pronounced as /kɑːnt/.

In the fourth line from bottom, '...I'll bring a list of it's contents tonight'. /...aɪl brɪŋ ə lɪst əv ɪts ˈkɒntents t⁽ɔ⁾ˈnaɪt/. The first syllable is unstressed and therefore /ə/ sound can disappear by the native speakers of English when the talk in rapid speech.

6.3. Weak Forms

In the first line, the word '...can I ...' is unaccented and as a result it should be weak form /kən/. Students pronounced it as strong form /kæn/. In the second line, students pronounced '...on of ...' as strong form /ɒf/ whereas it should be weak form /əv/. This sound was repeated in line 5, 10, 15, 16, 17 and 21. In the same line, '...the airport.' is followed by a word begins with vowel sound 'airport' and therefore it should be pronounced as /ði/. However, all the participants pronounced this word as /ðə/. This sound only comes when it is followed by a consonant.

In the fourth line, students pronounced the word '...I came to collect...' as /tuː/ whereas it should be a weak form /tə/. The same thing is found in line eighteen, students pronounced '...and try to remember...' in it's strong from /tuː/ whereas it should be pronounced as a weak form /tə/ because it is unaccented at the same time it is followed by a consonant sound. In the eleventh line, students pronounced '...and one briefcase' as strong form /ænd/. This form can be used only for contrast or emphasis. However, 'and' here is unstressed and therefore it should be pronounced as a weak form /ən/. The same thing was found in line eighteen '...and try to...' Students pronounced this sound as strong form /ænd/ whereas it should be pronounced as a weak form /ən/ because it is unaccented in the sentence at the same time it is followed by a consonant sound.

In brief, Yemeni students of English encounter these problems in 'assimilation, elision and weak forms because they are not discussed or taught explicitly in their courses. Moreover, students lack the exposure to the English society which is very important for acquiring such issues indirectly by communicating with the native speakers of English.

Therefore, the Yemeni students of English will not be able to get rid of these problems unless these aspects are introduced as part of their English syllabus and emphasized by the teachers in their classes.

7. Suggestions and recommendations

In my humble opinion, the following suggestions may help our Yemeni students of English to overcome their problems in 'assimilation, elision and weak forms. First of all, students should be aware of the fact that the native speakers of English use assimilations when they talk to each other in rapid speech and that is different from the written form. This can be explained by giving some examples from the students' native language. Students should discuss how these sentences are written in Arabic and how they say them in daily life communication.

It should be emphasized that assimilation is something different from 'slang or colloquial English and it is used by educated and non educated people as well. Therefore, there will be no problem when the learners of English adopt it in their language. Students should understand that native speakers of English do not realize

that the learners of English are using 'assimilation, elision or weak forms correctly but they immediately realize if they do not use them in their English.

Students may think at the beginning that they have never heard such expressions by their teachers in the preparatory or secondary classes but if there is a good rapport between the teacher/lecturer and his students they will listen to him/her and understand 'assimilation, elision and weak forms easily. However, assimilation has it's own rules which can be introduced and practiced in the class and also encouraged to be used outside the class in their communication with their friends or native speakers of English.

However, it is very important to indicate here that teachers of English should use assimilation, elision and weak forms in their classes spontaneously as part of their speech in the class.

7.1. Assimilation

It might be useful to use to the following exercises in the Spoken English classes of first year students. When teachers feel that their learners have understood assimilation, they may introduce 'elision' because students may get confused if assimilation and elision are taught at the same time:

1. /t/ assimilates to /p/ before /b/, /p/ and /m/.
Fat boy /fap bɔɪ/. /t/ assimilates to /p/.
Short pencil /ʃɔːp pensəl/. /t/ assimilates to /p/.
That man /ðæp mæn/. /t/ assimilates to /p/.
2. /t/ assimilates to /k/ before /k/ and /g/.
That car /ðæk kɑː/. /t/ assimilates to /k/.
That girl /ðæk gɜːl/. /t/ assimilates to /k/.
3. /d/ assimilates to /b/ before /b/, /p/ and /m/.
Good boy /gʊb bɔɪ/. /d/ assimilates to /b/.
Good pen /gʊb pen/. /d/ assimilates to /b/.
Good morning /gʊb mɔːnɪŋ/. /d/ assimilates to /b/.
4. /d/ assimilates to /g/ before /k/ and /g/.
Good cat / gʊg kæt/. /d/ assimilates to /g/ before /k/.
Good girl /gʊg gɜːl/. /d/ assimilates to /g/ before /g/.
5. /n/ assimilates to /m/ before /b/, /p/ and /m/.
Ten boys /tem bɔɪz/. /ʃ/ assimilates to /m/ before /b/.
Ten players /tem pleɪəz/. /n/ assimilates to /m/ before /p/.
Ten men /tem men/. /n/ assimilates to /m/ before /m/.
6. /n/ assimilates to /ŋ/ before /k/ and /g/.
Ten cats /teŋ kæts/. /n/ assimilates to /ŋ/ before /k/.
Seven gates /sevəŋ geɪts/. /n/ assimilates to /ŋ/ before /g/.
7. /s/ assimilates to /ʃ/ before /ʃ/ and /j/.
This shop /ðɪʃ ʃɒp/. /s/ assimilates to /ʃ/ before /ʃ/.

1.This young man /ðɪʃ jʌŋ mæn/. /s/ assimilates to /ʃ / before /j/.

2.I miss you so much /ai mɪʃ jə səʊ mʌtʃ/.

8. /z/ assimilates to /ʒ/ before /ʃ/ and /j/.

Was she angry? /wɒʒ ʃi æŋri/. /z/ assimilates to /ʒ/ before /ʃ/.

(/z/ assimilates to /ʒ/ before /j/.

Was your friend happy? /wɒʒ jɔ: frend hæpi/.

9. /t/ and /j/ coalesce to form /tʃ/.
You went to France last year, didn't you?
/ju went tə fræns lɑːstʃ jiə/ didntʃ ju/.

10./d/ and /j/ coalesce to form /dʒ/.
Would you like a cup of tea?
/wʊdʒ jə laik ə kʌp əv tiː/

These exercises can be used for practicing assimilation. Students say them orally first and then write their phonetic transcriptions as follows:

1. Can you see that girl over there?
- /kæn jə siː ðæk gɜːl əuvə ðeə/
2. She's got an apartment in Manhattan.
- /ʃiːz gɒt ən ə pɑːpmənt ɪn mænˈhætᵊn/
3. He's a very good boy.
- /hiːz ə veri gud bɔɪ/
4. Where has the cat been all night?
- /weə əz ðə kæp bɪn ɔːl nait/
5. 6. I've been going out too much lately.
- /aɪv bɪŋ gəuɪŋ əut tuː mʌtʃ leɪtli/
6. He's bringing his own car.
- /hiːz brɪŋgɪŋ ɪz əuŋ kɑː/7.
7. I really love this lovely little cheese shop in Paris.
- /aɪ rɪəli lʌv ðɪs lʌvli tʃiːʒ ʃɒp ɪn pærɪs/
8. You went to France last year, didn't you?
- /ju went tə frɑːnts lɑːstʃ jɪə/
9. Would you like a piece of cake?
- /wʊdʒ jə laik ə piːs əv keɪk/
10. Has she sent the parcel to her mother?
    /hæʒ ʃi sent ðə pɑːsəl tə ə mʌðə/ /hæʃ ʃi....) is also used.
11. I think this shop sells raincoats.
    /aɪ θɪŋk ðɪʃ ʃɒp selz reɪnkəuts/
12. What's your weight at the moment?
    /wɒtʃ ju weɪt əᵗ ðə məumənt/
13. They said he won't come today at all.
    /ðeɪ sed i wəuŋk kʌm tᵊˈdeɪ ət ɔːl/
14. He found both pens in his pocket.
    /hi fəum bəuθ penz in ɪz pɒkɪts/
15. She like football more than tennis.
    /ʃi laɪks fʊbɔːl mɔː ðən tenɪs/

7.2. Elision

1. The most common elision in English are /t/ and /d/, when they appear within a consonant cluster. Teachers could introduce them as follows:

/t/ elided between /ks/ and /d/.

We called them the nex<u>t</u> day.

/wi kɔːld ðəm ðə neks deɪ/

/t/ elided between /tʃ/ and /p/, and between /p/ and /f/.

When we reache<u>d</u> Paris, we stop<u>ped</u> for shopping

/wen wi riːtʃ pærɪs wi stɒp fə ʃɒpɪŋ/

/d/ elided between /v/ and /st/.

We bought a lovely carve<u>d</u> statue.

/wi bɔːt ə lʌvli kɜːv stætʃuː/

Once students mastered the above sounds in their English, teachers can introduce these exercises in their classes as follows:

1. When we arrived Paris, we stopped for lunch.
- /wen wi ə raɪ<u>v</u> pærɪs wi stɒ<u>p</u> fə lʌntʃ/
2. We bought a lovely carved statuette.
- /wi bɔːt ə lʌvli kɑːr<u>v</u> ˌstætjuˈet/
3. She acts like she owns the place!
- /ʃiː æ<u>ks</u> laɪk ʃiː əʊnz ðə pleɪs/
4. Teachers use authentic texts to teach from.
- /tiːtʃəz juːz ɔːˈθentɪk te<u>ks</u> tə tiːtʃ frɒm/

B
- /dʒɔːdʒ ðə sɪ<u>ks</u> θrəʊn/
6. I think we should call the police.
- /aɪ θɪnk wi ʃət kɔːl ðə p(ə)ˈliːs/
7. It's a matter of collective responsibility.
- /ɪts ə mætər əv k(ə)ˈlekɪv ˌrespɒnsəˈbɪləti/
8. Are you coming tonight?
- /ɑː jə kʌmɪŋ t(ə)ˈnaɪt/
9. That's an interesting idea.
- /ðæts ən ˈɪntr(ə)stɪŋ aɪˈdɪə/
10. Have you got any vegetables.
- /hæv jə gɒt eni ˈvedʒt(ə)bᵊlz/

Elision appears to take place most readily, in rapid speech, in the sequence continuant consonant + /t/ or /d/ (e.g./, -st, -ft, -ʃt, - nd, -ld, -zd, -vd) followed by a word with an initial consonant. Examples:

-st: next day /neks deɪ/, last chance /lɑːs tʃæns/, first light /fɜːs laɪt/ raced back /reɪs bæk/, west region /weɪs reɪdʒn/.

-ft: soft centre /sɒf sentə/, drift by /drɪf baɪ/, soft rose /sɒf rəʊz/, left wheel /lef wiːl/, cough<u>ed</u> badly /kɒf bædli/.

-ʃt: smashed potatoes /smæʃ /pəˈteɪtəuz/, finished late /fɪnɪʃ leɪt/ finished now /fɪnɪʃ nəu/, pushed them /puʃ ðəm/.

-nd: bend back /bem bæk/, tinned meat /tɪm miːt/ lend-lease /len liːz/, found five /fəun faɪv/, send round /sen rəund/.

-ld: hold tight /həul taɪt/, cold lunch /kəul lʌntʃ/, bold face /bəul feɪs/. called before /kɔːl bɪˈfɔː/, fold gently /fəul dʒentˀli/.

-zd: refused both /rɪˈfjuːz bəuθ/, gazed past /geɪz pæst/, caused loses /kəuz luːzɪz/, raised gently /reɪz dʒentˀli/.

-vd: moved back /muːv bæk/, loved flowers /lʌv flauəz/, saved runs /seɪv rʌnz/, shaved slowly /ʃeɪv sləuli/.

Similarly, word final clusters of plosive or affricate + /t/ or /d/ e.g. / -pt,

-kt, -tʃt, -bd, -gd, -dʒd/ may lose the final alveolar stop when the following word has an initial consonant.

-pt: kept quit /kep kwaɪət/, helped me /help mi/, stopped speaking /stɒp spiːkɪŋ/, jumped well /jʌmp wel/.

-kt: looked like /luk laɪk/, liked jam /laɪk dʒæm/, thanked me /θæŋk mi/, picked one /pɪk wʌn/.

-tʃt: fetched me /fetʃ mi/, reached Rome /riːtʃ rəum/.

-bd: robbed both /rɒb bəuθ/, rubbed gently /rʌb dʒentˀli/, grabbed them /græb ðəm/.

-gd: lagged behind /læg bɪˈhaɪnd/, dragged down /dræg daun/, begged one/beg wʌn/.

-dʒd: changed colour /tʃeɪndʒ kʌlə/, urged them /ɜːdʒ ðəm/, arranged roses /əˈreɪndʒ rəuzɪz, judged fairly /dʒʌdʒ feəli/.

The following are the most common 'weak form' words that could be taught in the course of Spoken English of level one at the tertiary level:

Grammatical category	Word	Full form	Weak form	Example of weak form
	am	æm	m	That's what I'm trying to say.
	are	ɑː	ə	Where are your from?
	is	ɪz	əz/z/s	Where's he form? Where is he from?
	was	wɒz	wəz	That's where he was born.
	were	wɜː	wə	That's where my children were born.
	do	duː	də	Where do you live?
	does	dʌz	dəz	Where does he live?
	have	hæv	əv/v	He wll have left by now. They've gone.
	has	hæz	həz/əz z/s	The baby has swallowed a stone. He's go ne
	had	hæd	həd/əd/ d	He had already gone. He'd already gone.
	can	kæn	kən/kn/	I'm not sure if I can lend it to you.
	could	kʊd	kəd/kd	Well, what could I say?
	would	wʊd	wəd/əd	Well, what would you have done?
	should	ʃʊd	ʃəd/ʃd	Well, what should I have siad.
Personal pronouns	you	juː	jə	How do you do?
	your	jɔː	jə	What does your boss think?
	he	hiː	hɪ/ɪ	Where does he work?
	him	hɪm	ɪm	I'll give it to him later.
	she	ʃiː	ʃɪ	She's leaving tomorrow.
	her	hɜː	hə/ə	I'll give it to her later.
	us	ʌs	əs	They'll give it to us later.
	them	ðem	ðəm	I'll give it ot them later.
Prepositions	to	tuː	tə	He's already gone to work.
	at	æt	ət	He's at work, I think.
	of	ɒv	əv	That's the last of the sugar!
	for	fɔː	fə	He's away for two weeks.

Grammatical category	Word	Full form	Weak form	Example of weak form
	from	frɒm	frəm	She comes from Scotland.
Conjunctions	and	ænd	ən/ənd	She's tall and fair.
	but	bʌt	bət	She's here, but Susan isn't.
	than	ðæn	ðən	She's older than you.
Articles	a	eɪ	ə	He's a doctor.
	an	æn	ən	She's an architect.
	the	ði:	ðə	She's is the person I told about.
ındefinite adjectives	any	eni:	eni:/ni:	Have we got any biscuits?
	some	sʌm	səm	There's some tea in the pot.
	such	sʌtʃ	sətʃ	It's not such a big deal, really.

Theses 'weak forms' should be taught explicitly by using different examples. Moreover, students should have an intensive practice of these 'weak forms' as kind of prerequisite training before introducing them in the actual lessons of 'Spoken English'.

Students of English should be familiar with the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) as that will help them to associate the different sounds with their phonetic symbols easily:

The following dialogues are examples of teaching 'assimilation, elision, and weak forms' in the course of "Spoken English" at the first and second level of English. Teacher first reads out the dialogue while students follow up in their texts and after that he/she can ask them to read silently in order to make sure that they have picked up the new aspects of connected speech. If they have no questions, they can act out the dialogue in pairs. The teacher should make sure that students have mastered those sounds and can say them easily:

Approaching a stranger

Nashwan:	Excuse me, would you mind if I put the A.C. on? It's very cold this morning.
Stranger :	Not at all. It's chilly and damp in here. Isn't it?
Nashwan:	That's right. Actually, it's raining outside.
Stranger :	It was absolutely pouring down last night.
Nashwan:	I think this rain won't last long; it's only a shower.
Stranger :	Last year, we got torrential rain and most roads

	got flooded. We had many serious accidents.
Nashwan:	Were these accidents due to the heavy rain?
Stranger :	Yes, and the storm damaged several houses.
Nashwan:	Oh, yes. I remember we had many blustery days.
Stranger :	That's right. We had also many gale warnings.
Nashwan:	Were there any hurricanes last year?
Stranger :	Probably we had one or two in the Midlands.
Nashwan:	My first experience of summer weather was when I arrived
	in London three years ago.
Stranger :	Are you student in this country?
Nashwan:	Yes, I am a student in Birmingham University.
Stranger :	What are you studying?
Nashwan:	I'm a student in the School of Education.
Stranger :	Oh, that's very interesting. I did my M.Ed. there.
Nashwan:	I'm glad to hear that. When did you finish?
Stranger :	I finished my M.Ed. in 2004.
Nashwan:	Oh, by that time I was already in the University.
Stranger :	I'm very glad to have met you.
Nashwan:	I'm very glad too.
Stranger :	Well, here is my station, perhaps we'll meet once again. Good bye.
Nashwan:	Good bye.

/əˈprəʊtʃɪŋ ə ˈstreɪndʒə/

/næʃwæn :	ɪkˈskjuːz mi wədʒ jə maɪnd ɪf aɪ pʊt ði eɪˈsiː ɒn/
	ɪts ˈveri kəʊld ðɪs mɔːnɪŋ/
/streɪndʒə:	nɒt ət ɔːl ɪts ˈtʃɪli ən dæmp ɪn hɪə/ ɪznə/
/næʃwæn :	ðəts raɪt ˈæktʃuli ɪts reɪnɪŋ aʊtˈsaɪd/
/streɪndʒə:	ɪt wəz æbsəˈluːtli pɔːrɪŋ daʊn lɑːs⁽ᵗ⁾ naɪt/
/næʃwæn :	aɪ θɪŋk ðɪs reɪn wʊn⁽ᵗ⁾ lɑːs⁽ᵗ⁾ lɒŋ ɪts ˈəʊnli ə ʃəʊə/
/streɪndʒə:	lɑːtʃ jɪə wi gɒʔ təˈrenʃᵊl reɪn əm məʊst rəʊdz
	gɒʔ flʌdɪd wi əd meni sɪərɪəs ˈæksɪdᵊnts/
/næʃwæn :	wɜː ðiːz ˈæksɪdᵊnts dju tə ðə ˈhevi reɪn/
/streɪndʒə:	jes ən ðə stɔːm ˈdæmɪdʒd ˈsevᵊrᵊl haʊzɪz/
/næʃwæn :	əʊ jes aɪ rɪˈmembə wi əd ˈmeni ˈblʌstəri deɪz/
/streɪndʒə:	ðæts raɪt wi əd ˈɔːlsəʊ ˈmeni geɪl ˈwɔːnɪŋz/
/næʃwæn :	wə ðeə⁽ʳ⁾ ˈeni ˈhʌrɪkənz lɑːtʃ jɪə/
/streɪndʒə:	ˈprɒbəbli wi əd wʌn ə tuː ɪn ðə ˈmɪdlənd/
/næʃwæn :	maɪ ˈfɜːst ɪkˈspɪərɪəns əv ˈsʌmə ˈweðə wəz wen aɪ
	əˈraɪvd ɪn ˈlʌndən θriː jɪəz əˈgəʊ/
/streɪndʒə:	ɑː jə ˈstjuːdᵊnt ɪn ðɪs ˈkʌntri/
/næʃwæn :	jes aɪm ə ˈstjuːdənt ɪm ˈbɜːmɪŋəm ˌjuːnɪˈvɜːsəti/
/streɪndʒə:	wɒt ə jə ˈstʌdiɪŋ/

/næʃwæn :   aɪm ə 'stjuːdənt ɪn ðə skuːl əv ˌedʒʊ'keɪʃən/
/streɪndʒə: əʊ ðəts 'veri 'ɪntrəstɪŋ aɪ dɪb maɪ em 'ed ðeə
/næʃwæn :   aɪm glæd tə hɪə ðət wen dɪdʒ jə 'fɪnɪʃ/
/streɪndʒə: aɪ 'fɪnɪʃt maɪ em'ed ɪn tuː 'θaʊzᵊnd fɔː/
/næʃwæn :   əʊ baɪ ðʔ taɪm aɪ wəz ɔːl'redi ɪn ðə ˌjuːnɪ'vɜːsəti/
/streɪndʒə: aɪm 'veri glæd tə əv metʃ ju/
/næʃwæn :   aɪm 'veri glæd tuː/
/streɪndʒə: wel hɪə⁽ʳ⁾ɪz maɪ 'steɪʃən pə'hæps wiːl miːt wʌnts ə'gen
                 gʊb baɪ/
/næʃwæn :   gʊb baɪ/

Asking the way

Mary: Excuse me, could you tell me how to get to Princess Garden?
Lady: Princess Garden? It's not far from here. Go along this road, when you
         reach the first traffic light, turn right. Pass the North Bridge and you'll
         see the gate of the garden on your left. You can't miss it.
Mary: When I reach the first traffic light, I should turn right, after passing the
         North bridge I'll see the gate of the garden on my left.
Lady: That's right. It's a walking distance.
Mary: Which buses go to Princess Garden?
Lady: You want a number twenty bus to Princess Garden.
Mary: Sorry, did you say a number twenty bus?
Lady: Yes, exactly.
Mary: Thank you very much. how long does it take?
Lady: Oh! It takes about ten minutes. You can wait here for the bus,
         but you should keep the exact change. This is the new system
         on buses these days.
Mary: Oh! I see. How much is it?
Lady: It's ten pence.
Mary: Highly appreciated.
Lady: Not at all.
Mary: Have a nice day.
Lady: Same to you.

/ɑːskɪŋ ðə weɪ/

/'meəri: /ɪk'skjuːz mɪ kʊdʒ jə tel haʊ tə geʔ tə prɪn'ses 'gɑːdən/
/'leɪdi: /prɪn'ses 'gɑːdən/ ɪts nɒʔ fɑː frm hɪə/ gəʊ ə'lɒŋ ðɪs
            rəʊd wen jə riːtʃ ðə 'fɜːs 'træfɪk laɪt tɜːn raɪt/ ɑːftə
            pɑːsɪŋ ðə nɔːθ brɪdʒ juːl siː ðə geɪt əv ðə 'gɑːdən ɒn
            jə left/ jə kɑːm mɪs ɪt/
/'meəri: /wen aɪ riːtʃ ðə 'fɜːs 'træfɪk laɪt aɪ ʃət tɜːn raɪt/ 'ɑːftə
            pɑːsɪŋ ðə nɔːθ brɪdʒ aɪl siː ðə geɪt əv ðə gɑːdən ɒm

	<u>ma</u>ɪ left/
/'leɪdiː	/ðæts raɪt/ ɪts ə wɔːkɪŋ 'dɪstənʦ/
/'meəriː	/wɪtʃ bʌsɪz gəʊ tə prɪn'ses 'gɑːdən/
/'leɪdiː	/jə wɒnt ə 'nʌmbə 'twenti bʌs tə prɪn'ses 'gɑːdən/
/'meəriː	/'sɒri dɪdʒ jə seɪ ə 'nʌmbə 'twenti bʌs/
/'leɪdiː	/jes ɪg'zæktli/
/'meəriː	/θæŋk jə 'veri mʌtʃ/ haʊ lɒŋ dəz <u>ə</u> teɪk/
/'leɪdiː	/əʊ/ ɪt teɪks ə'baʊʔ tem 'mɪnɪts/ jə kən weɪt hɪə fə ðə bʌs bətʃ jə ʃəg <u>k</u>iːp ði ɪg'zæk⁽ᵗ⁾ tʃeɪndʒ/ ðɪs z ðə njuː 'sɪstəm ɒm <u>b</u>ʌsɪz ðiːz deɪz/
/'meəriː	/əʊ aɪ siː haʊ mʌtʃ ɪz ɪt/
/'leɪdiː	/ɪts tem <u>pen</u>ʦ/
/'meəriː	/'haɪli ə'priːʃɪeɪtɪd/
/'leɪdiː	/nɒt ət ɔːl/
/'meəriː	/hæv ə naɪs deɪ/
/'leɪdiː	/seɪm tə ju/

Making an apology

Father:	Hello! Double four seven nine double two.
Sami:	May I speak to Faisal, please?
Father:	May I know who's speaking?
Sami:	I'm Faisal's friend. My name's Sami.
Father:	I'm sorry. Faisal's already asleep. Is it something urgent?
Sami:	Not exactly, but I think I hurt him today. So I'd like to apologise. I feel uneasy I couldn't go to bed.
Father:	Ok, I understood what you mean. I'll wake him up.
Faisal:	Hello Sami. Are you all right?
Sami:	Yes, I'm but... I'm awfully sorry Faisal. I didn't mean to hurt you. Believe me.
Faisal:	What do you mean Sami? I didn't get you.
Sami:	I mean.... I was somehow aggressive today.
Faisal:	Aggressive? How? What do you mean?
Sami:	About the film. I think I hurt you. I'm very sorry.
Faisal:	Not at all. I think you are only hypersensitive.
Sami:	You mean that you are not upset or angry!
Faisal:	Why should I be upset or angry? Nothing deserves.
Sami:	You are telling me that you are not upset.
Faisal:	I've told you Sami. What's the big deal?
Sami:	I promise not to behave in that way again.
Faisal:	Ok! I accept your apology. Have a good night.
Sami:	Thanks a lot. Good night.

/meɪkɪŋ ən əˈpɒlədʒi/

/fɑːðə :	həˈləʊ ˈdʌbl fɔː ˈsevᵊn naɪn ˈdʌbl tuː/
/sæmi :	meɪ aɪ spɪːk tə faɪsl pliːz/
/fɑːðə :	meɪ aɪ nəʊ huːz spɪːkɪŋ/
/sæmi :	aɪm faɪslz frend maɪ neɪmz sæmi/
/fɑːðə :	aɪm sɒri faɪslz ɔːlˈredi əˈsliːp ɪz ɪt sʌmθɪŋ ˈɜːdʒᵊnt/
/sæmi :	nɒt ɪgˈzæktli bət aɪ θɪŋk aɪ hɜːt ɪm təˈdeɪ səʊ aɪd laɪk tə əˈpɒlədʒaɪz/ aɪ fiːl ˌʌnˈiːzɪ aɪ ˈkʊdᵊn gəʊ tə bed/
/fɑːðə :	əʊˈkeɪ aɪ ʌndəˈstuːd wɒtʃ jə miːn aɪl weɪk ɪm ʌp/
/faɪsl:	həˈləʊ sæmi ə ju ɔːl raɪt/
/sæmi :	jes aɪ jəm bət aɪm ˈɔːfᵊli ˈsɒri faɪsl aɪ dɪdᵊm miːn tə hɜːtʃ ju/ bɪˈliːv mi/
/faɪsl:	wɒt dʒ ju miːn sæmi aɪ ˈdɪdn getʃ ju/
/sæmi :	aɪ miːn aɪ wəz sʌmhaʊ əˈgresɪv təˈdeɪ/
/faɪsl:	ægˈresɪv haʊ/ wɒtdʒ jə miːn/
/sæmi :	əˈbaʊʔ ðə fɪlm aɪ θɪŋk aɪ hɜːtʃ ju aɪm ˈveri sɒri/
/faɪsl:	nɒt ət ɔːl aɪ θɪŋk ju ər əʊnli ˌhaɪpəˈsensətɪv/
/sæmi :	jə miːn ðətʃ jə ə nɒt ʌpˈset əˈr ˈæŋgri/
/faɪsl:	waɪ ʃəd aɪ bɪ ʌpˈset ər ˈæŋgri ˈnʌθɪŋ dɪˈzɜːvz/
/sæmi :	jə ə telɪŋ mɪ ðətʃ ju ə nɒt ʌpˈset/
/faɪsl:	aɪ əv təʊldʒ ju sæmi wɒts ðə bɪg diːl/
/sæmi :	aɪ prɒmɪs nɒʔ tə bɪˈheɪv ɪn ðət weɪ əˈgen/
/faɪsl:	əʊ ˈkeɪ aɪ ækˈseptʃ jəˈr əˈpɒlədʒi/ həv ə gʊd naɪt/
/sæmi :	θæŋks ə lɒt/ gʊd naɪt/

8. Conclusion

The findings of the study indicate that the Yemeni students of English encounter serious difficulties in understanding the native speakers of English in real communicative situations. These difficulties were reflected in their failure of understanding the native speakers of English in the interview. Besides, their performance in the recorded dialogue which proves that Yemeni students of English are not aware of the most important aspects of connected speech. The samples of the study resort their difficulty to the rapid speech of the native speakers of English to the extent they could not grasp the main idea of their conversation. Moreover, students feel that they did not get enough exposure to listening and speaking in their English classes. This means that the departments of English in all the Yemeni universities should re-evaluate the syllabuses taught in these departments. When students of English graduate and establish their career in different fields, they feel they are not fully equipped with the needed language skills to communicate with

other proficient speakers of English (let alone) the native speakers of the target language.

Therefore, the lecturers of 'Spoken English' course should try to help their learners to overcome these difficulties by using 'authentic' materials in their classes whenever possible because that may compensate for the lack of their students' exposure to the real environment of the target language. Students should be trained to transcribe the dialogues/conversations taught in the class and read their transcriptions. However, this method may help the students to realize the aspects of connected speech in English. In other words, these aspects should be taught explicitly in their classes because they cannot be acquired naturally by the Yemeni students where English is taught in formal settings by 'unauthentic' materials.

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