

A Phonetic Classification of Past-Tense Markers in English

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ABSTRACT

Recent researches and data analysis reflect an imminent need of intelligibility in the language communication. English as a language enjoys the status of international link language because of its wide use and significance. For the target language speakers of English there are certain challenges in its acquisition mostly prevalent in our traditional school system. To combat the challenges of the language acquisition, the current research paper attempts to explore certain vistas to examine scientifically some pronunciation problems among the target language speakers of English, which have certainly affected the intelligibility of language communication. Spoken English is getting more and more focus now-a-days in contrast to written English in everyday life of common masses. The current issue is a phonetic analysis of past tense makers in English. A common target language speaker of English is expected to acquire basic knowledge and skills of spoken English in a simple and lucid manner. The reader is supposed to have an elementary knowledge of phonetic symbols, a deeper understanding and comprehensive delicacy of accent and intonation. We are supposed to learn how and why the past tense markers make a difference in the syllabic structure after such addition.

Introduction

The reasons that Spoken English is getting more focus and importance on every sun rise are manifold especially due to the bourgeoning of science and technology. The most glaring fact is that the English as a target language is being learnt across the globe, demanding a significant need of intelligibility in understanding a written text by means of extracting the required information from it and is efficiently becoming improbable for non-natives of English. Proper pronunciation accent and intonation has become a hurdle for the intelligibility of language communication in English. Let us try to understand reading comprehension. According to Francoise Grellet:

What is reading comprehension?

“Understanding a written text means extracting the required information from it as efficiently possible. For example, we apply different reading strategies when looking at a notice board to see if there is an advertisement for a particular type of flat and when carefully reading an article of special interest in a scientific journal. Yet locating the relevant advertisement on the board and understanding the new information contained in the article demonstrated that the reading purpose in each case has been successfully fulfilled. In the first case, a competent reader will quickly reject the irrelevant information and find what he is looking for. In the second case, it is not enough to understand the gist of the text; more detailed comprehension is necessary.” P3

Let us try to understand the difference between learning and acquisition as George Yule quotes:

Acquisition and learning

“Perhaps the primary difficulty for most people can be captured in terms of a distinction between acquisition and

learning. The term acquisition, when used for language, refers to the gradual development of ability in a language by using it naturally in communicative situations. The term ‘learning’, however, applies to a conscious process of accumulating knowledge of the vocabulary and grammar of a language. (Mathematics, for example, is learned, not acquired.) Activities associated with learning have traditionally have been used in language teaching in schools, and tend, when successful, to result in knowledge ‘about’ the language studied. Activities associated with acquisition are those experienced by the young child and, analogously, by those who ‘pick up’ another language from long periods spent in social interaction (daily use of the language) in another country. Those learners whose L2 experience is primarily a learning one tend not to develop the proficiency of those who have had an acquiring experience.” Page no. 191

For the acquisition of any language we imitate sounds or phonemes as quoted by Dr.N.S.Sahu:

Phonemic types

“Every language has a phonemic system. Certain features are common to all phonemic systems-the exclusive use of certain tract of the human vocal organs for sound-production.”p.49

We have three different final endings in the following three categories of words:

- Round, sound, bound, wound, load and repeat, defeat greet, grant etc.
- Peep, kick, express, flash and preach.
- Rub, breathe, freeze and beg.

Let us transcribe all the words of these three categories:

1. /**raond**/ There are four sounds or phonemes in this monosyllabic word. The syllable structure is CVCC. The first element is marginal then obligatory then marginal and marginal but /d/ is at the last marginal position.
2. /**saond**/ Again the word is monosyllabic with CVCC structure.
3. /**baond**/ Monosyllabic word, CVCC structure with final /d/ ending marginal element.
4. /**wu:nd**/ Monosyllabic word, CVCC structure with final /d/ ending marginal element.
5. /**læod**/ Monosyllabic word, CVCC structure with final /d/ ending marginal element.
6. /**ripi:t**/ Polysyllabic word, CV and CVC structure with final /t/ ending marginal element.
7. /**difi:t**/ Polysyllabic word, CV and CVC structure with final /t/ ending marginal element.
8. /**gri:t**/ Monosyllabic word, CCVC structure with final /t/ ending marginal element.
9. /**gra:nt**/ Monosyllabic word, CCVCC structure with final /t/ ending marginal element.
10. /**pi:p**/ Monosyllabic word, CVC structure with final /p/ ending marginal element.
11. /**kik**/ Monosyllabic word, CVC structure with final /k/ ending marginal element.
12. /**ikspres**/ Polysyllabic word, VC and CCCVC structure with final /s/ ending marginal element.
13. /**flæf**/ Monosyllabic word, CCVC structure with final /f/ ending marginal element.
14. /**pri:tʃ**/ Monosyllabic word, CCVC structure with final /tʃ/ ending marginal element.
15. /**rʌb**/ Monosyllabic word, CVC structure with final /b/ ending marginal element.
16. /**bri:ð**/ Monosyllabic word, CCVC structure with final /ð/ ending marginal element.
17. /**fri:z**/ Monosyllabic word, CCVC structure with final /z/ ending marginal element.
18. /**beg**/ Monosyllabic word, CVC structure with final /g/ ending marginal element.

Let us now look at these eighteen words carefully. The final marginal elements are /d/, /d/, /d/, /d/, /d/, /t/, /t/, /t/, /t/, /p/, /k/, /s/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/, /b/, /ð/, /z/ and /g/. By nature of articulation /d/ is voiced, the manner of articulation is plosive and the place of articulation is alveolar. Thus for the pronunciation of the words after the addition of past tense marker- ed under the final element of the stem word will be /did/ e.g. /**raondid**/, /**saondid**/, /**baondid**/ /**wu:ndid**/, /**læodid**/.

Next is /t/ sound which by nature of articulation is voiceless, in manner it is plosive and by place of articulation it is alveolar so after the addition of past tense marker- ed the final pronunciation will be as- /**ripi:tid**/, /**difi:tid**/, /**gri:tid**/, /**gra:ntid**/

Thus we came to know that in such cases there is the same addition of syllabic structure like VC. There is one more addition of syllable in such cases because the past tense marker itself is of the similar sounding phoneme. In order to keep its prominence alive we add a different syllabic structure in the way of /id/. Similar sounding means place, manner and nature of articulation which is alveolar plosive voiceless or voiced.

Then the next stem word is /**pi:p**/ where /p/ is at the final position. We have to consider its nature of articulation which is

voiceless. Thus the pronunciation will be after the addition of the past tense marker as- /**pi:pt**/ . There is not any addition in its syllable division but there is only a change in its syllabic structure e.g. CVCC earlier it was CVC.

The next stem word is /**kik**/ where /k/ is at the final position. We have to consider its nature of articulation which is voiceless. Thus the pronunciation will be after the addition of the past tense marker as- /**kikt**/ There is not any addition in its syllable division but there is only a change in its syllabic structure e.g. CVCC earlier it was CVC.

The following stem word is /**ikspres**/ where /s/ is at the final position. We have to consider its nature of articulation which is voiceless. Thus the pronunciation will be after the addition of the past tense marker as- /**iksprest**/ . There is not any addition in its syllable division but there is only a change in its syllabic structure e.g. CV. CCCVCC earlier it was CV.CCCVC.

The next stem word is /**flæf**/ where /f/ is at the final position. We have to consider its nature of articulation which is voiceless. Thus the pronunciation will be after the addition of the past tense marker as- /**flæft**/ . There is not any addition in its syllable division but there is only a change in its syllabic structure e.g. CVCC earlier it was CVC.

Then there is the stem word is /**pri:tʃ**/ where /tʃ/ is at the final position. We have to consider its nature of articulation which is voiceless. Thus the pronunciation will be after the addition of the past tense marker as- /**pri:tʃt**/ . There is not any addition in its syllable division but there is only a change in its syllabic structure e.g. CCVCC earlier it was CCVC.

From these above cited examples we came to the conclusion that the final position of the stem sound is to be considered as a rule for the proper pronunciation of the final word in case of past tense markers. Voiceless ending carries voiceless addition.

Now follows the next group of words with voiced ending phonemes. The stem word is /**rʌb**/ where /b/ is at the final position. We have to consider its nature of articulation which is voiced. Thus the pronunciation will be after the addition of the past tense marker as- /**rʌbd**/ There is not any addition in its syllable division but there is only a change in its syllabic structure e.g. CVCC earlier it was CVC.

The next stem word is /**bri:ð**/ where /ð/ is at the final position. We have to consider its nature of articulation which is voiced. Thus the pronunciation will be after the addition of the past tense marker as- /**bri:ðd**/ . There is not any addition in its syllable division but there is only a change in its syllabic structure e.g. CCVCC earlier it was CCVC.

The following stem word is /**fri:z**/ where /z/ is at the final position. We have to consider its nature of articulation which is voiced. Thus the pronunciation will be after the addition of the past tense marker as- /**fri:zd**/ . There is not any addition in its syllable division but there is only a change in its syllabic structure e.g. CCVCC earlier it was CCVC.

The then next stem word is /**beg**/ where /g/ is at the final position. We have to consider its nature of articulation which is voiced. Thus the pronunciation will be after the addition of the

past tense marker as-/**begd**/.There is not any addition in its syllable division but there is only a change in its syllabic structure e.g. CVCC earlier it was CVC.

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