

# 15 Changing sounds 1

## Elision

In normal, fast spoken English, certain sounds may disappear. Listen to the following sentences and spot the times when the sounds /t/ or /d/ may disappear.

Example: Let's face the fac~~t~~s. This company is going bus~~y~~ quickly.

- 1 My landlady bought a new handbag the other day.
- 2 The first girl earned twenty pounds.
- 3 The second boy waited for half an hour.
- 4 I don't know when they finished work yesterday.
- 5 I don't like fast food as a rule.
- 6 It was a perfect afternoon, perfectly marvellous.
- 7 Raise both your hands slowly into the air.
- 8 I watch TV most evenings; in fact I watched for five hours last night.



This disappearance of sounds is known as elision; the sounds are elided. The two sounds /t/ and /d/ are frequently elided, especially when they are found between two other consonants. So:

- we will hear the /t/ in *fact*, but not in *facts*, and
- we will hear the /d/ in *land*, but not in *landlady*.

This means even negative /t/ and the final /d/ or /t/ in past tenses and passives, may disappear as in:

- I don't know
- I watch(ed) TV last night



# 16 Changing sounds 2

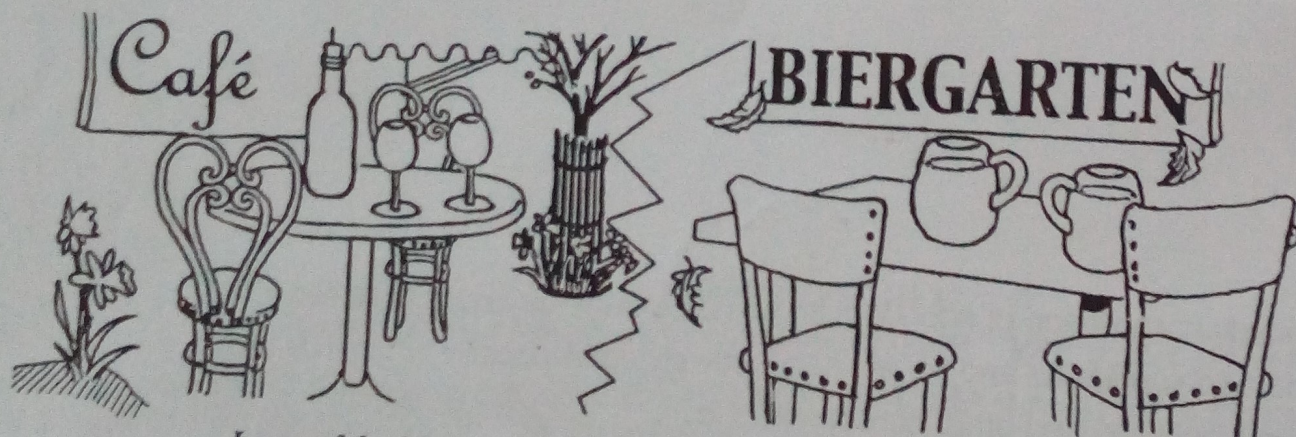
## Assimilation

In normal, fast speech some consonant sounds may change so that we can pass easily from one word to another.

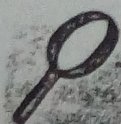
Example: /n/    *ten boys*    sounds like    *tem boys*  
                   *ten girls*    sounds like    *teng girls*

Read the following sentences and try to spot the consonants which are likely to change when spoken fast. Then check with the recording.

- 1    Make sure everything's in place, in case they arrive early.
- 2    Instead of taking the bus, let's walk through Green Park and Hyde Park.
- 3    That's the third person I've seen wearing a red coat this morning.
- 4    Would you prefer eggs and bacon or sausages and mashed potatoes?
- 5    I spend half the year in Paris and the rest in Berlin.
- 6    The only thing I keep in my handbag is a purse and a handkerchief.



*I spend half the year in Paris and the rest in Berlin.*



This type of change of sound is known as **assimilation**. In the examples we see how /n/ may change to /m/ (in front of /m/, /p/, /b/ and /w/) or to /ŋ/ (in front of /k/ and /g/). But other consonants may also change. In the test you will hear that /d/ becomes /b/ or /g/ depending on the following sound.



## 17

# Changing sounds 3

## Elision and assimilation

In the following sentences, the words in **bold** show how certain words or phrases sound in ordinary, fast speech. Work out how they should really be written.

Example: A Hollywood studio wants to film my **scream-play**!  
= *screenplay*

- 1 Tonight there are likely to be some **miss patches** in the North.
- 2 The **pry minister** is due to visit Russia within the next few weeks.
- 3 Careful on that street. There's a lot of **bag guys** there.
- 4 The **neck strain** will be arriving at platform 2 in five minutes.
- 5 I **wooden** chews that one if I were you.
- 6 I'm not hungry. I'll just have a **letter salad**, I think.
- 7 I really ought to buy some new **close**.
- 8 He was blown up by a **lamb-mine**.
- 9 There were **sick students** waiting for the teacher.
- 10 You shouldn't stay under a **sum-bed** too long or you'll burn.
- 11 The prisoner was taken away wearing **hang-cuffs**.
- 12 Their goods were kept in coal **storage** for months.
- 13 No, I don't want a burger. I don't like **farce food**.
- 14 I'm not really a **cap person**. I much prefer dogs.
- 15 I think England last won the **Whirl Cup** over 30 years ago.
- 16 We'd better **face the fax**. They're not going to accept our offer.
- 17 We've got to go ahead. Now's not the time to get **coal feet**.
- 18 Hey, **mine the gap**! It's really wide on this platform.
- 19 Sorry, this is a private party. If you're not on the **guess list** you can't get in.
- 20 The defendant pleaded **knock guilty**.
- 21 Can you lend me **sick squid** till Friday?
- 22 There were **ache girls** and **ape boys** at the party.
- 23 (Of course, these things only happen in **farce peach**.)