

# STUDY ENGLISH

IELTS PREPARATION

TRANSCRIPT

EPISODE 23: ECO-SYSTEMS

Hello. I'm Margot Politis. Welcome to Study English, IELTS preparation.

Today we're going to practice our *pronunciation*.

We'll see how pronunciation can change when linking consonants, and then we'll practice pronouncing words beginning with 'h'.

Let's begin by taking a look at the story. It's about an area in Melbourne that used to be home to the growling grass frog.

This really would have been a fantastic, biodiverse area. It's a situation where you've got the Yarra River outflow meeting the bay. So you've got the freshwater eco-system and the marine eco-system coming together at that point.



These growling grass frogs were here in their millions, hundreds of millions of them probably, living in Melbourne, and they have disappeared very, very dramatically.

Doing conservation with an animal that people recognise and where they've had a personal experience of an animal disappearing, they really, they understand the reality of what's happening around them and they want to help, and we can get lots of people to come along to a habitat like this and say, "I want growling grass frogs back here for my kids and my grandkids because when I come down I want to be able to find some tadpoles to show them."

Spoken English can be quite different from written English.

When you listen to someone speaking English, their words will often flow together.

This is because native speakers will connect *unstressed words* with *stressed words*. Where these links occur, sentences might sound different to what you'd expect.

Have a look at this sentence.

"He's gone out to dinner."

We stress 'he's', 'gone', 'out' and 'dinner'.

The 'to' is unstressed.

When we link 'out' (which is stressed) and 'to' (which is unstressed), the final /t/ sound in 'out' is held slightly longer.

"He's gone out to dinner."

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The /t/ sound is pronounced only once.

“He’s gone out to dinner.”

Now, let’s listen to Gerry from the amphibian research centre talking about the grass frog’s habitat.

We can get lots of people to come along to a habitat like this and say, “I want growling grass frogs back here for my kids and my grandkids because when I come down I want to be able to find some tadpoles to show them.”



Gerry says: ‘I want to’.

The final /t/ sound in ‘want’ is held slightly longer on the tongue. Then, ‘to’ is pronounced.

The /t/ sound is pronounced only once: ‘I want to’.

This type of linking is called *consonant plus same consonant linking*.

Let’s see what happens when a final consonant is linked with a consonant that is similar.

Listen to how Gerry links the words ‘around them’.

Doing conservation with an animal that people recognise and where they’ve had a personal experience of an animal disappearing, they really, they understand the reality of what’s happening around them and they want to help.

Gerry says ‘around them’.

The final /d/ sound in ‘around’ is similar in pronunciation to the first sound in the word ‘them’. This means the sounds are articulated very close to the same position in the mouth.

When you articulate /d/, you can feel your tongue against your tooth ridge, like this: /d/.

And when you say /th/, your tongue is between your top and bottom teeth, like this: /th/.

When you are linking words with similar sounds, the final consonant and the first consonant will be pronounced very close to each other in the mouth.

This is the case with the final /d/ and initial /th/ sound in ‘around them’.

This type of linking is called *consonant and similar consonant linking*.

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You'll notice that 'around' is stressed but 'them' is unstressed.

Gerry also uses the words 'show them'.

Here, 'show' is stressed and 'them' is unstressed, so we say 'show them'.

This is *vowel and consonant linking*.

In this example, Gerry clearly pronounces the /th/ in 'them'.

Listen again.

We can get lots of people to come along to a habitat like this and say, "I want growling grass frogs back here for my kids and my grandkids because when I come down I want to be able to find some tadpoles to show them."

In spoken English, changes also occur when a word begins with the sound /h/.

Let's listen to Neil Blake. He's talking about an area they'd like to return native animals and plants to.

You'll hear Neil say 'would have been fantastic'. Listen to his pronunciation of 'would have'.

You won't be able to see Neil as he's talking, but it's good practice for the IELTS listening test.

See how you go.

This really would have been a fantastic, biodiverse area. It's a situation where you've got the Yarra River outflow meeting the bay.

Neil says: 'would 'ave'.

When unstressed words begin with the sound /h/, the /h/ sound is often dropped in connected speech.

Here's another example:

"I think he's in a meeting."

The word 'think' is stressed in this sentence, and 'he's' is unstressed.

When these words are linked, the /h/ is dropped.



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In spoken English, we would say:

“I think ‘he’s in a meeting.”

Some common words that begin with the /h/sound and are weak forms, include:

the *pronouns* - ‘he’, ‘her’, ‘him’ and ‘his’.

There’s also these *auxiliary verbs* – ‘have’, ‘had’ and ‘has’.

These *pronouns* and *auxiliary verbs* have both strong and weak forms.

When they are unstressed the /h/ sound is dropped.

But when stressed, the /h/ sound is pronounced.

Now let’s listen to Gerry.

When he says ‘they have’ does he pronounce the /h/?

These growling grass frogs were here in their millions, hundreds of millions of them probably, living in Melbourne, and they have disappeared very, very dramatically.

Because Gerry stressed the auxiliary verb ‘have’ the /h/ sound is pronounced.

He says: ‘they have’.

So, we’ve seen that when native speakers connect speech or link sounds in spoken English, changes occur.

Being aware of these changes will help you in both the IELTS Listening Test, and also in the Speaking Test.

Let’s practice the pronunciations we’ve talked about today.

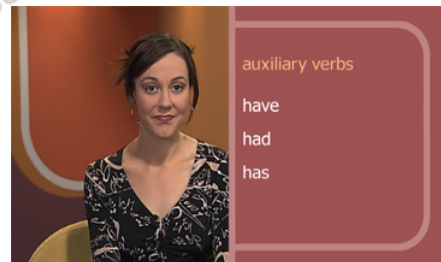
I’ll show you a sentence, and see if you can pronounce the highlighted words.

Here’s the first one:

“What did you send her?”

‘Send’ is the strong form and ‘her’ is weak.

Because ‘her’ is not stressed, we drop the initial /h/ sound.



So it's pronounced 'send er'.

"What did you send her?"

And finally:

"I told them not to be late."

'told them'

"I told them not to be late."

That's all we have today.

Let's review what we've learned about linking words.

First we talked about *consonant and same consonant linking*. The example we saw was 'want to'.

Then, we looked at *consonant and similar consonant linking* - 'around them'.

And finally, we saw how the pronunciation of the initial /h/ sound can change when we link words in spoken English.

Don't forget to listen out for these changes when you talk with native speakers.

And if you'd like some more pronunciation practice, you can find help on our [Study English website](#).

And I'll see you next time for more.

