TEACHING NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS TO COMPREHEND REDUCED SPEECH

by

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B.A., University of North Texas, 2007

A thesis submitted to the

Faculty of the Graduate School of the

University of Colorado in partial fulfillment

of the requirement for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Linguistics

2014

This thesis entitled:
Teaching Non-native English Speakers to Comprehend Reduced Speech
written by Chelsea Denise Kirk
has been approved for the Department of Linguistics

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The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we
Find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards
Of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

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Teaching Non-native English Speakers to Comprehend Reduced Speech

Thesis directed by Professor David Rood

Abstract

As an English teacher I have noticed that many students struggle with listening comprehension, especially when they hear casual speech from native-speakers. How much of this is due to native-speaker use of reductions in rapid and connected speech? I believe that using authentic listening materials that feature reduced pronunciation might better prepare English language learners for encounters with native-speakers. This study sets out to test what English learners think they hear in rapid, reduced speech in contrast to what is actually being said. Following an action research model within my own classroom at an intensive summer camp for teens, I attempted to assess learner comprehension of reduced speech by means of a dictation exercise followed by explicit instruction of form. I then tested my students' comprehension of reduced speech with a second dictation a few days later. My results suggest that dictation exercises are useful assessment and learning tools for developing listening comprehension. Analysis of the data was unable to prove that dictation exercises and explicit instruction are enough to help students improve their listening skills; rather, there is evidence to suggest that students benefit from dictation exercises that are combined with other forms of input and practice, i.e. diagrams, songs, and video clips. The results of this study are intended to encourage instructors to use authentic audio materials that feature rapid speech styles and to suggest that instructors include lessons on reduced speech, especially in the EFL setting where students may not have much exposure to native-speakers.

For this study I include a review of some current textbooks and resources for instructors teaching listening comprehension. I conclude that language learners benefit in many ways when made aware of and are exposed to authentic speech patterns early in their learning, if the lessons are properly scaffolded and include clear explanations and practice.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

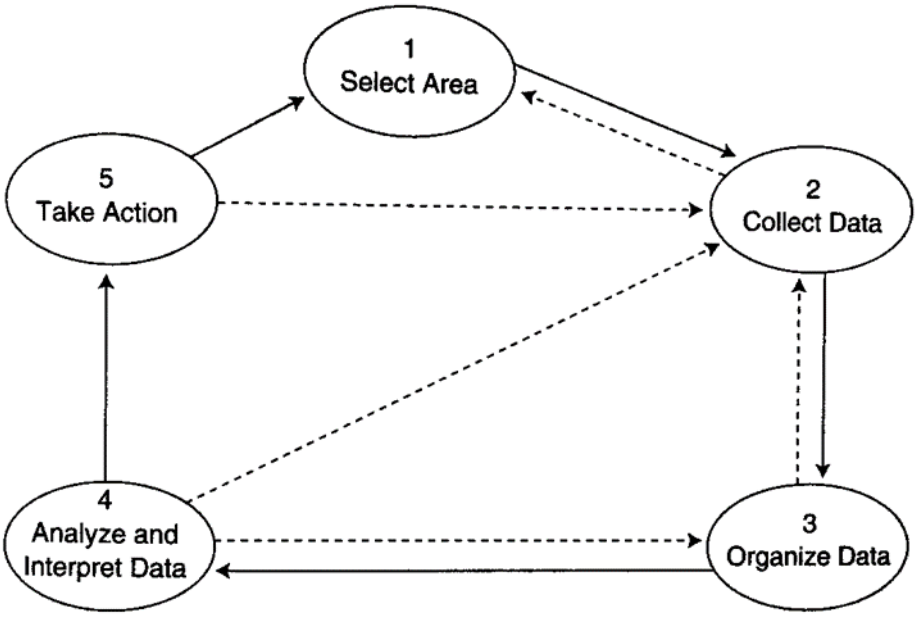
1.1 The research model

Throughout the following paper, you may notice some inequities between my methods of research and traditional models of research. The model of research I followed is what is called "Inquiry" or "Action research". Action research is defined as:

> …any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers … to gather information about how their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how well their students learn. This information is gathered with the goals of gaining insight, developing reflective practice, effecting positive changes in the school environment (and on educational practices in general), and improving student outcomes and the lives of those involved (Mills, 2007:5).

My own inquiry and research revolves around a specific issue in teaching listening comprehension, namely the inclusion of reduced speech in listening materials and whether or not explicit teaching of reduced speech is necessary for the overall success of English language learners. I collected samples from two of my own classes that I taught for a brief, but intensive period. The pool of participants is smaller than those used for traditional research, and I, as a teacher researcher, acted autonomously. I noticed a need among my students and decided to delve deeper into what I perceived was a problem for learners in listening comprehension and test out some of my own methods to address this issue, specifically in the form of a dictation exercise. I chose to gather my data from normal classroom activities that took place within the closed environment of my classroom. Figure 1.1 on the next page outlines the research model I followed.

Figure 1.1 *The Action Research Cycle* (taken from Calhoun, 1994, pg. 2)



Mills (2007) defines this type of inquiry as "research done by teachers for teachers" (11). It is my hope that this study will heighten teacher awareness in the area of teaching listening comprehension, as my own awareness was inevitably heightened while undertaking the study.

Since the data was collected from a typical classroom assignment and these were normal classroom activities, this type of research does not qualify as human research and no informed consent was required. To protect the identity of my participants and the characters in my anecdotes, I have changed names and not included the name of the camp where the data was collected or the names of the students who were in the class.

Because there are innumerable factors that might contribute to the patterns in the data, it is impossible for me, operating alone in my query, to isolate contributing factors and collect a sample large enough to make convincing and finite conclusions. Therefore, the following paper will leave a lot of questions unanswered, and I will be unable to make definitive generalizations

about what is happening in the data and why the participants may have responded the way they did. I strove to make the process of data collection as reliable as possible by conducting my research in the most dependable and competent manner I could. Since this was my first time doing research in this capacity, I hope I will be forgiven of any inconsistencies or oversights.

While I attempted to measure the data as systematically as possible, the nature of my data is more qualitative rather than quantitative. I endeavored to be as unbiased as possible in my interpretation of the data, and I encourage my readers to use their own insights and knowledge of language learning and classroom practices to explain any patterns in the data.

The following sections of this introductory chapter will outline the reasons I became interested in this topic, as well as my background as a teacher and researcher. This chapter will conclude with the research questions that helped me to focus my inquiry. Chapter 2 will summarize other investigations into listening comprehension as well as current materials available to teach listening skills, including my own analysis of the content of a few student textbooks and the accompanying audio. Chapter 3 outlines the study and presents the data with explanations. The data is analyzed in terms of my research questions in Chapter 4. My thesis will conclude with Chapter 5, which contains a final anecdote and a personal action plan.

1.2 Listening comprehension: a struggle

The scene on the next page is what I imagine it is like for learners of English when they encounter native-speakers for the first time and hear how fast they actually talk. They are tangled in the string of sounds, which native ears can separate and understand, but which can cause non-native ears a lot of confusion.

Figure 1.2 *Connected Speech by Bryan Kelly Illustrations* ©

I have worked with many English language learners over the past few years, many whose main complaint to me is often, "Native speakers talk too fast!" I found that my market-value as an English tutor increased dramatically when I began to offer services in listening comprehension and pronunciation. I began to get so many calls from English learners on this subject that I soon had to start turning them away. It seemed there was a gap in the market. Were there just not enough tutors who specialized in this area? Not enough adequate books or materials that covered this niche? Perhaps the learners were just aware of their inadequacies in

their perception and speech, and they felt a need to reach out to someone who was offering help that focused on these areas specifically.

1.3 The one that got me thinking

The first learner that opened my eyes to this issue was Sun, a 16-year-old high school exchange student from Thailand. I met Sun in October of 2012, two and half months into the school year. I had been hired as a tutor, sought out by her American host-mother Gloria. After a series of email exchanges, I finally got to speak with Gloria face-to-face, right before my first lesson with Sun. As I entered the house, Gloria complained to me, "Sun doesn't try. I talk to her, but most of the time she tunes me out. All she does is nod. I know she doesn't understand me and yet she just nods. She's been here two months. Her grades are falling. She hasn't made any friends. I don't know what else to do."

Among other things, I had a feeling that part of the problem was listening comprehension. Gloria's speech was filled with "*wanna*"s and "*hafta*"s, "*innit*"s and "*dunnit*"s. She called Sun downstairs to meet me, and I listened to how Gloria spoke to her host daughter. "I'm *fixna* pull my hair out *wichoo*! *Dja* hear me?" Sun nodded her head with a glazed over expression but said nothing. Gloria looked at me, "See *wud* I *hafta* deal with?"

I took Sun downstairs into the basement where we would work together twice a week on her English skills. "Everyone speaks too fast!" Sun complained. "I just can't understand." Sun told me that she had attended English classes since elementary school, mostly taught by native-Thai speakers. Sun's American high school counselor had enrolled her in an Economics and Art

History class, where the hurdles included not only new, content-specific vocabulary, but also teachers that spoke too quickly for Sun's untrained ears.

Sun was experiencing reduced and connected speech (Browne & Dauer, 1992; Gilbert, 2000; Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 2010) and without prior exposure she was struggling. I was not surprised. According to Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin (2010), when "confronted by authentic native-speaker discourse, learners are often initially frustrated by issues such as the rapidity of native-speaker speech and by their inability to decipher word boundaries and/or recognize words or phrases" (175).

"Frustrated" is putting it lightly. Sun was exhausted from trying to understand and failing. She was lonely due to social isolation. High school is tough even when you are able to understand what your teachers and peers are saying. Even in passive listening, Sun admitted that she was only able to understand about fifty percent of what her peers were saying around her, even less with certain teachers. I had no problem communicating with Sun. I asked her if she could understand me. She gave me an enthusiastic and relieved nod. Of course, I was making sure to speak slowly and avoid slang and idioms. I had a feeling that the majority of people that Sun interacted with during her day made no such concessions. This assumption is supported by Gebhard (2006) who states that "teachers who are untrained in teaching ESL students… at least in middle and high school settings… seldom adjust their language to accommodate comprehension, other than speaking louder and perhaps a little slower" (93). In Sun's case it was sink or swim. Currently, she was sinking, and I was there to provide a life raft.

1.4 Study considerations

Listening is one of the four main component areas of learning a language. While many English users may not need much practice in this area, many others rely heavily on their ability to understand aural English – whether they work in international business, are immigrants or visitors to an English speaking country, or are international or exchange students. Even if English users are not using English in speaking or on a daily basis, improved listening comprehension could increase their enjoyment of TV and movies in English, and allow them to better understand radio broadcasts and music with English lyrics. Perhaps, for many non-native English users, improved listening comprehension is not essential but surely advantageous!

1.4.1 My audience

The target audience for this study are educators of students in EFL settings, whose only source of listening materials featuring native-speakers may be the CDs and online resources that accompany the textbook, and teachers of students who have recently come from the EFL setting to find themselves surrounded by native-speakers and their pronunciation habits for the first time.

1.4.2 The learner

The type of learner that I am considering in this study is one whose main experience with learning English has mostly been in the EFL context – those who have mostly studied English outside an English-speaking country with teachers who speak English as an additional language and mostly use English as a lingua franca. Many of these learners have switched or will switch over to an ESL context and will need to be prepared to interact with native-English speakers in some capacity. They may be participating or planning to participate in a student-exchange

program; perhaps the learners are currently pursuing or planning to pursue a degree at an American university; some learners have immigrated to the United States for job opportunities or are spouses of those who have; some learners may plan to visit the USA one day for vacation; or they may simply be learners who want to feel more confident when speaking with native speakers in their home countries, whether the native speakers are tourists or expatriated residents.

One of my current private students is from Korea, and she says that there are many native-speakers that come to her city as tourists. I asked her if she practices her English with them when she is at home in Korea, what a great chance that would be to practice and improve her conversation skills. She emphatically shook her head no. "I'm afraid. It's hard to understand them, and I am embarrassed." How many English-users around the world understand her fears? I propose that she is not alone in feeling this way and that this fear is not entirely unfounded. Penny Ur (1984) states in her book *Teaching Listening Comprehension* that students who do not receive instruction or exposure to authentic discourse are "going to have a very rude awakening when [they try] to understand native speech in natural communicative situations" (10). What a shame such fear and frustration should keep learners from opportunities to practice their English.

1.5 Learner affect

Although my study focuses mainly on English learners' comprehension of reduced speech, my analysis would not be complete without giving some attention to issues that may stem from inadequate exposure to rapid speech styles. While the following areas may fall outside the immediate scope of the study, I feel they support my main argument and relate to my

assessment of a greater need for authentic listening materials in the early levels of language learning.

1.5.1 Anxiety

Fear is not an uncommon reaction that learners experience when they know they will have to listen and comprehend something in a foreign language. In a study of Arabic learners, Hussein Elkhafaifi (2005) found that learners struggled with anxiety concerning listening comprehension and that their anxiety was even greater in their second year of study. There is no reason to believe that a study of anxiety in English language learners would be any different. The anxiety that students at higher levels admit feeling could be attributed to a number of factors including the increasing complexity of grammatical forms and sentence structures that learners encounter as they progress further in the language. Another reason why learners at higher levels may feel more anxious than their lower-level counterparts is that they are presented with more authentic listening materials which tend to feature conversation at a faster pace and with more natural pronunciation than they are used to hearing at earlier stages of their learning. It might be prudent for English instructors to introduce authentic listening material early in student learning, presented in small chunks with lots of support, so that students do not find the learning curve quite as steep as they progress from level to level. A learner who has been trained with authentic, even if challenging, materials might experience less anxiety when listening to native-speakers than learners who have received no training with such materials.

1.5.2 Social isolation versus acceptance

In some cases, better listening comprehension is also crucial so as not to feel so isolated. In the case of Sun, a high-school student living far away from home, she was experiencing both

culture shock and homesickness. One of the best remedies for homesickness is to make friends. But how was Sun going to break the social barriers at her high school? Teenagers can be mean and form tight cliques. Sun was too shy to try to approach anyone herself, so she relied on her peers to be the first ones to speak. Unfortunately, Sun was having a hard time keeping up with the speed of conversation, and therefore, felt very left out at times.

It is tough to find a social niche in high school, one that defines you and accepts you. In order to fit in, not only do you have to dress like the group, but you have to talk like them, too (Eckert, 1989; Bucholtz, 2011). Eckert (1989:68) asserts that school children acquire their pronunciation and speech styles "from their peers". Sun could not understand her peers, much less imitate them. She could not conform to the linguistic style set by her classmates. No doubt those who had attempted to be friendly and talk with her during her first few days had quickly realized they would need to alter their style of speech, to talk slower and avoid slang. This type of "self-monitoring" takes effort. Speakers tend to feel most comfortable in situations where they do not have to work at monitoring their speech style, especially teenagers (Bucholtz 2009). One can therefore conclude that native-speakers might avoid situations in which they predict they will have to work harder to make themselves better understood.

1.5.3 Intelligibility

As listeners, most native-speakers prefer to interact with those whose speech is easy to understand. Native-speaker ears are cued to listen for a certain rhythm and stress pattern. Sun's own English was halting and harsh; she attempted to articulate every sound as it is written. "Our students need language not just to survive, but to succeed. Therefore, the goal is not simply 'intelligibility', but a pleasant, natural style of speaking that does not place a severe cognitive

load on the listener" (Browne and Dauer, 1992). My goal, therefore, was not only to help Sun comprehend the speech-styles she was hearing at home and at school, but to make her aware of how reductions reduce articulatory effort. By explaining to her how reduced speech lends itself to a more natural sounding prosody, I was able help Sun express herself in a way that her native speaking peers would appreciate.

Since working with Sun, I have met many more learners who are frustrated at their inability to understand and communicate fluently with native-speakers. This study aims to provide evidence that by teaching learners to recognize, comprehend, and possibly produce reduced speech, learners will be more prepared for the many contexts where they may come into contact with native speakers. As learners' comprehension increases, I propose that their confidence will increase, such that they will be more likely to embrace the opportunity to socialize and interact successfully with native speakers.

1.6 The background of the researcher

I became interested in native-speaker pronunciation and reduced speech when I was teaching in China at an American intensive English program. Even though I attempted to speak clearly in the classroom, there were times when I vocalized a train of thought at rapid speed and noticed blank faces staring back at me. I had also noticed a gap in comprehension from the conversations that took place inside the classroom to interactions with teachers outside the classroom. Students seemed to have trouble understanding the teachers when they were not within the four walls of the classroom. There could be many reasons for this, but one of the possibilities came to me when I was giving an in-class presentation of the grammar structure of

future-tense *going to + verb*. The footnote in the textbook mentioned that some native speakers will reduce *going to* to *gonna.* As I was passing out a worksheet, I realized that I did not have enough for everyone in the class. I said, "I'll be right back. **Imuna* go make a couple more copies." I heard myself say [amə̃rə] and not [aim gʌnə]. I called the students attention to what I had just said, including the pronunciation with no /g/. A saw a few light bulbs register in student expressions. One of the students nodded enthusiastically and said that he had heard this quite often during a trip to the USA, but admitted he had not known what it had meant until just now. I became very interested in how native speakers reduce their speech in conversation, and began to wonder if teaching English-learners the pattern of reduced speech might aid them in their listening comprehension and better prepare them for interactions with native speakers outside the classroom.

1.7 The experiment setting

The setting for my study was at an English-immersion summer camp for adolescents, which took place from July to August of 2013. Students received 3 hours of classroom instruction every weekday. They were also taken on daily excursions or led through other activities guided by English-speaking activity-leaders. Many of the activity-leaders and a few of the other teachers were not ESL trained. Though many of them attempted to be sympathetic to the communication level of the students, most of them spoke with the students at normal speed with natural pronunciation. On the weekends, the students were taken on all-day outings to amusement parks or to the beach. Many of the students came in groups from their home country, and would collect together in their free time, speaking their native language. During the breaks

between classes and at the lunch hour, I heard very few students speaking English unless they were speaking to an adult staff member.

1.8 The participants

As students arrived, their writing samples were collected and evaluated by the academic director, and the students were placed into five general categories – beginner/elementary, low intermediate, intermediate, high-intermediate, and advanced. The group of students I was assigned to teach were those who had tested into the "lower-intermediate" level. The students who participated in the study had been in the USA for seven days and had attended four classes with me as their teacher. Data was collected from a total of 18 students. They ranged in age from 12-18 and came from various countries, though most of them were from Russia and elsewhere in Europe or South America.

1.9 Study aims

The goal of the study was to observe which reductions the students found to be easier and which reductions the students found to be more difficult through a dictation exercise. I considered three main types: reduced articulations, such as a /t/ or /d/ reduced to a flap and vowels reduced to schwa, an example being "What do you" becoming [waɾəjə]; deletion of sound, examples include "want to" becoming [waɾ̃ə] or the /h/-drop in words like "he" and "him"; and finally the palatalization of alveolar stops and their merger with a glide, as when "what you" becomes [wʌt͡ʃə]. Throughout this paper I will be using broad transcription within brackets, including more careful transcription only where it is pertinent.

Another consideration of the study was whether or not student comprehension improved after participating in a dictation exercise and receiving a lesson on how native-speakers' utterances may be reduced in rapid speech. I wondered if learners who were made aware of reduced speech in English would be able to go forth from the classroom with a better understanding of how native speakers produce sounds in rapid speech. My ultimate aim is to point out that some reductions must be explicitly taught, that learners are capable of comprehending rapid speech if they are shown what to listen for, and to encourage the producers of listening comprehension materials to include recordings and audio-scripting recorded at a more natural speed and with more authentic pronunciation. I argue that many of the actors recorded for ELL listening materials speak very slowly and articulate unnaturally and this does not prepare learners for real-life interactions with native speakers, and, in fact, may give them false expectations. This will be discussed further in Section 2.1 and in my conclusion.

1.10 Research Questions

The following research questions influenced the collection and analysis of data:

RQ1: Which types of reductions are more difficult for language learners to comprehend in rapid speech?

RQ2: Are dictation exercises useful tools for building awareness and comprehension of reduced speech in native-speaker pronunciation?

RQ3: Can learners generalize the patterns of reduced speech, such as stop-deletion or palatalization, even if they have not received training on a specific reduction?

1.11 Chapter summary and thesis overview

Much research has been done and continues to be done in the field of English-learner listening comprehension and reduced speech among native speakers. The fields are not mutually exclusive and, in fact, there are many textbooks and learner resources that aim to bridge the gap, as will be discussed in Chapter 2. It is my strong belief that in order to better prepare learners for all possible listening and interaction opportunities, teachers and material makers should not give learners false expectations with listening materials that are slow-paced and highly articulated as this is unnatural in connected speech. Instead, learners would benefit from being made aware of the tendencies of native speakers to reduce high-frequency phrases (Bybee, 2003), including the patterns of deletion, palatalization, and prosody, as this will better prepare them to comprehend real-time interactions with native-speakers.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Teaching Listening Comprehension

As with any area of ELL, one must consider who the audience is (What is their level? For what purpose are they learning English?), and what types of information are relevant to how they will be using English. There are many course books on the market that focus on listening comprehension for general English. Others target learners who have more specific needs, such as academic listening. The following chapter will review current materials that are available to students and educators, as well as common listening activities that learners may encounter in the classroom and at home. I will then focus my attention on materials that specifically teach reduced speech in listening comprehension and the advantages it offers learners. This section will attempt to point out any shortcomings in the available resources for teaching and practicing listening comprehension.

2.1.1 Various Methods Overview

The first thing one should consider when teaching listening comprehension is what the listening focus should be. There are two types of comprehension strategies that listeners use – that of *top-down processing* which focuses on the main idea or gist, and that of *bottom-up processing* in which the learner listens for specific words and pronunciations (Ur, 1984; Gebhard, 2006; Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 2010). While this thesis will focus attention on listening exercises that activate bottom-up processing, it is worth mentioning that reduced speech bleeds into both types of listening processing. One function associated with reduced speech is to deemphasize certain parts of the utterance. Typically high-frequency function words are reduced in rapid speech, while the content words are usually emphasized and spoken clearly

(Miller, 2006; Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 2010). In activities that ask the listener to use top-down processing, learners are asked to listen for main ideas. Types of activities like this usually include listening to a monologue or conversation and then answering general questions about it. While the listeners may not understand every word, these types of activities aim to point out that understanding every word of the utterance is not always necessary to have successful interactions or understand a stream of speech. According to Ur (1984) the listener who expects to understand every word will be "handicapped" and should take the "gap in its stride" (15).

Some learners are frustrated when they cannot understand every word of an utterance and feel they are missing out on vital information (Ur 1984:14-15). Hasan (2000:145) discovered that 59.4% of Arabic language learners agree that they listen for "every detail" to understand the meaning of an utterance. "They are thus under the false impression that they must understand every word they hear and this exacerbates their anxiety as they panic when they are not able to hear or understand every single word" (Hasan, 2000:145). These learners may appreciate activities that focus on bottom-up processing skills that help them narrow down exactly what they are hearing. Activities like this tend to include fill-in-the-blank exercises and dictations (the latter of which will be discussed later in this section). These are excellent ways to focus learner attention on specific words that may change the meaning of an utterance, new vocabulary, and pronunciation. Both top-down and bottom-up listening activities can be used to point out the natural prosody patterns of native speakers, how the parts that are usually too fast or difficult to hear tend to be the function words and are so reduced in order to keep the stress and emphasis on content words. In order to be fluent, a listener must be able to comprehend both function and content words which work together to contribute to meaning.

Good textbooks for listening comprehension include a mix of exercises that activate both top-down and bottom-up processes. Since I am chiefly interested in learners' ability to perceive reduced speech, the next section of my review will focus on textbooks that specifically teach reductions for listening and conversational purposes.

2.2 Teaching Reductions – Current materials

The writers and editors of English language textbooks are aware of the need for students to understand natural speech styles, and many books now include lessons on reduced speech. This is a good first step, but in my opinion, they are not taking it far enough.

I was graciously allowed to spend an afternoon in the teacher-resource room at a local intensive English program. I focused my search mainly on Elementary and Intermediate level books and titles which conveyed a focus on listening practice and communication. I was interested to see how authentic and natural the recordings were on the CDs that came with the book. Unfortunately, I could not find CDs for every publication, therefore, my list is not exhaustive, and only includes the titles for which I was able to listen to the recordings. I listened and looked for three specific things. First, do the speakers on the CDs talk at a natural pace that is challenging enough for the level the book is intended for? Second, do the speakers use natural pronunciation, i.e. reductions and connected speech? And finally, does the book include explicit explanations of reduced speech? On the next page is a table of my findings.

Table 2.1

A review of textbooks that include CDs for listening practice

Title and Author	Publisher	Year	Speed	Speakers Use reductions	Reductions explicitly taught
Future Intro, English for Results, by Jennifer Asp, Kate Mueller	Pearson Longman	2010	Very slow		
Future 2, English for Results, by Linda Butler	Pearson Longman	2010	Slow		
Listening Advantage 1 & 2, by Tom Kenny, Tamami Wada	HEINLE Cengage Learning	2008	Normal	✓	Some
NorthStar Listening and Speaking, Level 1, by Polly Merdinger, Laurie Barton	Pearson Longman	2009	Normal	✓	No
Open Forum 2, Academic Listening & Speaking, by Angela Blackwell, Therese Neber	Oxford University Press	2007	Normal	✓	Some
Active Skills for Communication 2, by Chuck Sandy, Curtis Kelly	HEINLE Cengage Learning	2009	Slow		
Tapestry 2: Listening & Speaking, by Mary McVey Gill, Pamela Hartman	HEINLE Cengage Learning	2000	Normal	✓	Extensive
Tapestry 4: Listening & Speaking, by Helen Kalkstein Fragiadakis, Virginia Maurer	HEINLE Cengage Learning	2000	Natural	✓	Some
Interactions 1: Listening & Speaking, by Judith Tanka, Paul Most	Cambridge University Press	2007	Normal	✓	Extensive
Interactions 2: Listening & Speaking, by Judith Tanka, Lida Baker	Cambridge University Press	2007	Slow	✓	Extensive

It appears that there are two titles that incorporate extensive instruction and practice with recognizing and understanding reduced speech. The series *Interactions: Listening and Speaking*

focuses on more general English, while the *Tapestry* series is intended for academic preparation. *Tapestry 4,* intended for advanced students, contains recordings of interviews and news reports that sound very much like something you would hear on NPR, in other words, very authentic. In order to prepare students to understand sound bites of this caliber, the early books of the series do a great job of providing lots of explanation and recordings that include rapid and reduced speech. I personally use *Interactions 1: Listening and Speaking*, by Judith Tanka and Paul Most with my private students. Learners studying with this book can listen to a conversation from the accompanying CD, after which they are asked to focus their attention on the reduced pronunciation used by the speakers of the dialog. A chart is always provided. On the left side you see a column with the unreduced forms, and in the right column the forms are reduced.

Table 2.2

Comparing Unreduced and Reduced Pronunciation (taken from Tanka & Most, 2007, pg. 45)

Unreduced Pronunciation	**Reduced Pronunciation***
1. Let's see what you have here.	Let's see whatcha have here
2. Why do you have all these cookies?	Why d'ya have all these cookies?
3. Don't you like them?	Dontcha like 'em?
4. I don't know.	I dunno.

Students can listen to the list and follow along. An asterisk guides students to a footnote: "The underlined forms are not acceptable spellings in written English." After students have had a chance to listen to the reduced forms and see them written out, the next activity is a fill-in-the-blank exercise. While I believe that the exercises are very useful practice, I feel that the speakers on the recordings still speak much too slowly. Sometimes the speakers will not fully reduce the reduced phrase, so that there is no perceivable difference from the "reduced pronunciation" to

the “unreduced”. Even though I recommend and use this textbook in my own lessons, I often have to offer further explanation and produce the reductions myself, in order for my students to hear the fully reduced version at typical speed. Recently, in a private-session with one of my students, we were doing the fill-in-the-blank exercises from the reduced speech section in Chapter 5 of *Interactions1: Listening & Speaking*. She only had to listen to it once to get all the blanks filled in correctly. After noticing the look on her face, I asked her how she felt about the exercise. She said, “It’s too slow.” When I first began working with her, a month prior to that comment, she had had to listen to the dialogs several times in order to catch all the words. After a month and a half of listening and speaking practice, she had outgrown the speed of the recordings. In the second level of the book *Interactions 2: Listening and Speaking*, by Judith Tanka and Lida Baker, the dialogs are still very slow, especially considering that it is intended for a more advanced audience. Shouldn’t the book makers take into account improved comprehension ability and make each chapter a little bit harder? Speed should increase incrementally with every section, so that by the time you finish the final book of the series, the speed and articulation are what you would expect to hear from a native speaker interview.

Barron’s *American Accent Training* (Cook, 2000) has an excellent chapter on reduced speech. The book includes some heavily reduced phrases such as *Jeet yet.* It appears to be the most comprehensive resource for learners who are interested in studying reduced speech. The only problem I see with the book, and the reason I did not include it in the chart on page 19, is that *American Accent Training* advertises itself as a pronunciation training guide, not a guide for improving listening comprehension. Although one can argue that pronunciation training and listening comprehension go hand in hand, and in studying pronunciation, one can surely expand listening comprehension, a book labelled strictly as a guide for accent training may be passed up

by someone who is searching specifically for a book to improve listening skills. This is a drawback to categorizing textbooks and segregating them into different genres, since, in my opinion, most of the audio materials that accompany textbooks that claim to guide listening practice feature speakers who talk slowly and do not articulate the way most native-speakers would in natural settings.

Lack of exposure to authentic listening materials may not be a problem if the learner is in an ESL setting and has a native-speaking population outside of the classroom with which to interact and practice. But what about the learners in the EFL setting? Many learn English from teachers who are second-language speakers themselves and have a different pronunciation than that of native speakers. Often, the only resources these teachers have to introduce the learners to native-speaker pronunciation are the CDs that come with the textbook, which I contend are not accurate portrayals of the typical speed and pronunciation patterns used by native speakers. Even native-English speaking instructors may use a highly articulated form of speech "especially in the EFL context…in an attempt to facilitate learner comprehension" (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 2010:175). Teachers who use highly articulated, modified English with their students are not adequately preparing them for English they might hear from other native-speakers. In fact, it is beneficial for students to hear their teachers speaking to and with the students as they naturally would in an informal setting outside the classroom (Ur, 1984:62; Nunan, 1991:190).

2.3 Spoken English and orthography

Many English learners have not had the opportunity to hear English spoken by native speakers at a natural speed. They often learn English out of a textbook. In fact, in many areas of

the world focus on bookwork may be favored over communicative practice as many language teachers, who are second-language speakers themselves, do not feel confident enough in their speaking and pronunciation to lead more interactive lessons (Brown, 2000:44). This being the case, learners may tend to listen for orthographic patterns in spoken conversation, and ultimately have a hard time distinguishing the different segments. More than likely, students will be very confused when their expectations of how words are written do not match up with what they actually hear (Langacker, 1987; Ohala & Ohala, 1995). Judy Gilbert (2000) proposes that many students "have learned English through print and depend on 'white space' between words". Unfortunately for English learners, native-speakers do not pause between every word and, instead, link words, reduce sounds, and delete whole syllables, so that an utterance is often completely incomprehensible to non-native ears. Having little to no exposure to authentic speech patterns of native-English speakers, many students are at a disadvantage the moment they encounter a native-speaker.

2.4 Why learners should be aware of reduced speech

Clearly there is an information gap due to learners' inability to make sense of what they are hearing. This could be due to an infinite number of problems, from lack of vocabulary to interference from background noise. However, the most common complaint I have received from learners is that native speakers simply speak *too fast*. As teachers, we are not able to go out into the world and turn down a knob. People are going to speak at a speed which they feel is most comfortable and efficient. Sympathetic conversation partners might understand where the difficulty lies and slow down and articulate their speech, but teachers cannot guarantee this will

happen in the interactions their students have outside the classroom. If students have been trained to perceive segments in rapid speech, to focus on content words, understand that function words tend to be reduced and how they are reduced, then learners will be better prepared to have real-time interactions with native speakers.

2.4.1 Reduced speech is typical among native speakers

It is true that many non-native English speakers use English as a lingua franca (ELF), and may not encounter native-speakers often enough to worry about native-speaker pronunciation patters. These users of English may not be interested in reduced speech styles as it is more important for them to maintain clarity of speech in order to be understood by the wide majority of ELF speakers. However, there are many English learners who may or plan to visit, study in, or immigrate to an English speaking country. Before doing so it would be extremely beneficial for these English learners to be aware of the patterns of reduced speech among native speakers. In a 2007 study, Keith Johnson found massive reduction to be extremely common within "the conversational speech of (generally) college educated white folks from the heart of the United States." This type of speech pattern in native speakers is common among all social classes, regions, and education levels (Buck, 1995; Pullum, 1997; Guillot, 1999; Shockey, 2003); even our politicians who make their living on their ability to articulate clearly have been found to occasionally lapse into a "blurred and rapid style of speaking" (Jakobson & Halle, 1968: 413-4).

2.4.2 Reduced speech should be taught along with listening comprehension

While phonological tendencies like palatalization and /h/-drop are common (Trask, 1996; Gussenhoven & Jacobs, 2011) many language learners do not expect these occurrences and will listen for the sounds written on the page (recall section 2.4). However, I have heard arguments

against teaching students highly reduced speech. Some say that it is more important that students learn formal, articulate speech so that they may be able to communicate with their professors, employers, and give formal presentations. My response is to ask why they would not be able to do this in the first place. The first grammatical forms students usually learn are the complete, non-reduced forms straight from the textbook (Dauer & Browne,1992; Gilbert, 2000). I am not saying that we should encourage learners to substitute the reduced forms for the unreduced forms, only that a priority for the students is simply the ability to understand what is being said to them and respond to it. From Gimson's English Pronunciation (1994), Alan Cruttenden writes:

> …whether or not [the student] uses such forms himself, he must know of their existence, for otherwise he will find it difficult to understand much of ordinary colloquial English. This knowledge is particularly important because a second language is often learnt on the basis of isolate word forms; in the speech of the native, however, the outline of these words will frequently be modified or obscured… (266).

An opponent might therefore respond that Cruttenden asserts that reductions are "colloquial English" and it might be more pertinent to leave such teachings to learning situations outside the classroom – let the student learn such pronunciation from his or her friends. What if you have a student like Sun, who is unable to understand most of the language of her peers and is too intimidated and embarrassed to ask them to repeat themselves or explain what they have just said? I have heard the argument that, surely, if learners spend enough time here in the United States, they will eventually pick up on it on their own, both perceptually and productively. This is not necessarily the case. Phonetic elements such as reduction and linking and sentence stress are "an important part of normal spoken English that many students are not aware of." (Browne

and Dauer, 1992). We cannot assume that learners will just be able to "pick up" reduced speech without explicit teaching. Many *native* speakers are not aware of their own use of these colloquial forms (Ur, 1984:8). If native speakers are unaware of the nuances of their pronunciation, then how can we expect non-native learners to be otherwise?

Another argument against explicit teaching of reductions is that they are informal and it might be imprudent to teach them to students as they may choose to use them in situations where they are uncalled for, such as written in an academic paper. First of all, the argument that reductions are "informal" does not hold. There have been studies that have found that reductions are used in "all registers of speech" (Kaisse, 1985; Rogerson, 2006) Secondly, I believe that we owe learners more credit than to say that they will throw all of their previous learning of formal speech and writing out the window once they are shown another style. Most learners understand that there are registers one uses in formal settings and in writing, and that there is an alternate pattern one can use in email and texting. Most languages have a scale of formality that one must master in order to achieve fluency. English is no exception. Teachers who decide to teach reduced forms need to make clear that these forms are for spoken English only. Most textbooks that teach reduced forms usually include a footnote that states that the reduced forms are not acceptable in writing (Tanka & Most: 2006). It is ultimately up to the instructor to enforce writing standards in classroom assignments. Learners may claim that they have seen written forms such as *wanna* and *gonna* in emails and text messages. The instructor should make clear that emails and text messages are an informal style of communicating and have their own unique rules and exceptions that do not apply in the academic world.

2.5 Better preparing our students

If the goal is to prepare learners for conversation with native speakers, they should be aware of how native speakers typically pronounce and reduce common phrases. When I listen to the people around me, listen to what people say to me, or catch how I pronounce certain things when I speak, I am amazed at just how many sounds are lost. For example, in *Interactions*, the writers note that speakers will often reduce "Did you" to [dɪd͡ʒə]. This is often the case. However, I have found myself deleting even more and just saying [d͡ʒə], as in [d͡ʒu goʊ] (Did you go?). Furthermore, native speakers do not limit their usages of reductions to just one per sentence. It is common to hear speakers combine reduced phrases, such that "I am going to have to let you go" becomes [amə̃rə hæftə lɛt͡ʃə goʊ].

2.5.1. It's not *I'm gonna*; It's *Imuna*

Where in the textbooks do the writers warn the learner that native speakers tend to drop the /g/ in "I'm going to"? They don't. I have not found one textbook or published resource that points out that native speakers may not articulate the /g/ when they use the first person pronoun with the future form "am going to". In many dialects, including British English, "I am going to" becomes [aimə̃rə] or [amŋənə] or even [amnə] (Bybee, 2002; Cruttenden, 1994; Johnson, 2004). Not only is the /g/ dropped in these instances, but occasionally the diphthong is reduced to a monophthong. Some speakers reduce the utterance even further to [aimə] or [amə] (Cruttenden, 1994) in which the only remaining piece of *gonna* is the final schwa. The American band *The Black Eyed Peas* called attention to this form in their song "Imma Be". When I teach this reduction to my students, I will often play a clip from this song as evidence of this pronunciation. It is a rap song and in its entirety the song contains inappropriate language for younger learners.

Given the explicit nature I usually only play selected clips from the song. Below are some of the lyrics I play for students.

Imma be, Imma be, Imma be, Imma be

Imma be livin' that good life, Imma be livin' that good, good life (www.metrolyrics.com)

I disagree with the spelling that the Black Eyed Peas have used in their lyrics since typically a vowel followed by a double consonant is pronounced as lax. Since there is no standard spelling of this pronunciation, I will henceforth adopt the spelling *Imuna* for the pronunciation [amə̃rə] / and *Ima* for [aimə] or [amə]. Watch any movie or TV show that features native English speakers and more often than not you will hear the actors say [amə̃rə] for "I am going to". The song "One Way or Another" by Blondie contains some excellent examples of heavily reduced phrases including *Imuna* and *getcha*. I have heard this pronunciation of "am going to" in interviews broadcast on TV as well as the radio. There also appear to be dialectal variations, such as [ai mon] which seems to be popular in Black American Vernacular. Are learners supposed to just realize on their own that native speakers drop the /g/ in "going to", that it does not show up as [gʌnə] like many textbooks promise? Research has found that "if predictable properties are taken away from objects, they become unrecognizable" (Langacker, 1987; Ohala & Ohala, 1995, Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 2013). I highly doubt that an English learner who has never been exposed to native pronunciation, who has primarily heard English from the CDs that come with the textbook, will be able to trace the pronunciation of [amə] back to its original orthographic form of "I am going to", in which roughly 80% of the original form is lost. This can be seen in Table 2.3 below.

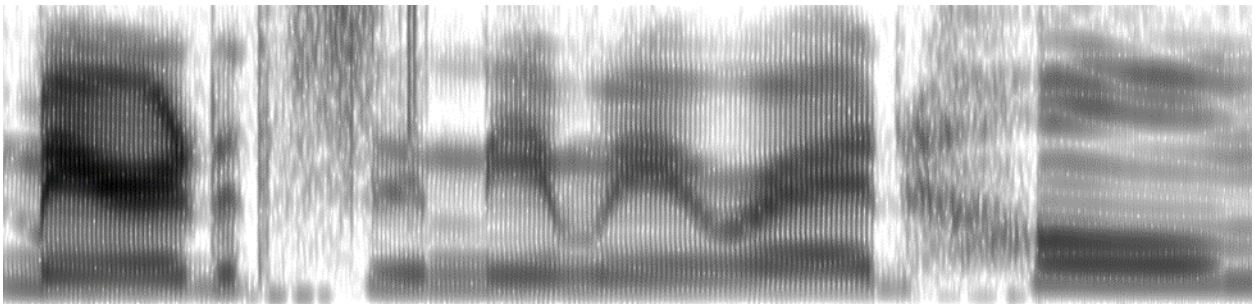
Table 2.3

Increasing reduction of the phrase "I am going to"

I am going to	→	[aim goʊiŋ tu]	
I'm *gonna*	→	[aim gʌnə]	-4 articulations (a loss of 40%)
**Imuna*	→	[amə̃ə]	-2 articulations (a loss of 20%)
**Ima*	→	[amə]	-2 articulation (a further loss of 20%)
			Estimated sound loss: 80% of original

I also have evidence that some native-speakers sometimes drop the /g/ even when referring to a third person. I recorded a classmate of mine, a fellow graduate student in the Linguistics program say the following: "Meredith is going to give me a ride home." She produced the utterance as [mɜɹədɪθs ən ɪmi əɹaɪd hoʊm]. In this utterance "is going to" is reduced to simply [s ən] and the only evidence remaining of "give" is the vowel /ɪ/. The spectrogram and transcription can be seen below in Figure 2.5.

Figure 2.5 *Meredith's gonna give me a ride home.*



After taking the recording, I asked my Phonetics TA for assistance in transcribing it. She was from Brazil, a native-Portuguese speaker, but I felt her English was at a high enough level to be able to comprehend rapid speech. When she listened to the recording she could not pick out

the individual words enough to help me transcribe it. She simply shook her head and handed the headphones back to me.

It is unlikely that native-speakers will insist on speaking at rapid speed after realizing their listener is a non-native speaker. Most people will adjust their speed and pronunciation if the listener requires it. But in some cases, the listener may not be able to request such consideration. What if the learner is one of many among the audience of a lecture, theater or other such performance? What if the learner encounters someone who speaks a particular dialect or vernacular and is unaware that their prosody patterns are difficult (Ur, 1984:8) and may not be able to make concessions to lighten the cognitive load for their listener? What if the learner is at a social event with native speakers who are in such a relaxed mood they may not wish to alter their speech stream for the benefit of a sole non-native speaker. There are a multitude of ‘”real-life” listening scenarios that learners may find themselves in, many more examples of which can be found in Penny Ur’s *Teaching Listening Comprehension* (1984: 2). It is for these situations that we must prepare our students.

2.6 The use of dictation exercises

Dictations not only provide great bottom-up processing practice for listeners, they are also excellent assessment tools. Dictation exercises force the listener to divide the “speech stream into separate words” (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Goodwin, 2013: 366), thereby calling attention to connected speech and chunks that may be ambiguous without proper context. Research has shown that frequent dictation exercises help students to better their grammar and spelling, assist learners in noticing the differences between what was said and what they heard,

and help them understand the reason for the discrepancy (Kiany & Shiramiry, 2002; Wilson, 2003).

2.6.1. Using dictations to teach reduced speech

Some pronunciation textbooks use dictations as a practice and assessment tool when asking the learner to listen for reduced speech, (Yates, 2005; Miller, 2006), in which the learner listens to a sentence and must write what is being said word for word. However, most of the sentences on the recordings contain only one reduced phrase per sentence, and not one of the textbooks I have found uses heavily reduced phrases as [d͡ʒə] (did you) and [amnə] (I'm going to) in dictation exercises. Why is this? It is certainly not because the learners will not hear it when they listen or have conversations with native speakers. Perhaps the creators of these listening materials felt that massive reductions such as these would be too difficult for the learners, or they were unaware that this phenomenon might cause problems in communication and would need to be explicitly taught. My research is to show that students can be taught to comprehend highly reduced phrases and that using dictations is one method of doing so.

2.7 Chapter conclusion

I propose that the current resources for teaching listening comprehension as well as those for self-study are inadequate. I feel that learners should be challenged and prepared for possible interactions with native speakers in which they can expect to hear reduced speech. The main idea is that by teaching students to hear and interpret reduced speech through dictation exercises they will be more confident when interacting with native speakers, more confident in their listening ability, and set up for greater overall success in their learning. The rest of my thesis will outline

my methods, and present an analysis of the data. I will conclude with a discussion of my findings.

CHAPTER 3. THE STUDY AND THE DATA

I believe that being able to comprehend reduced speech and understand the articulatory reasons for it aids overall comprehension in listening tasks. The following study examines what one class of students already understood about reduced speech. I looked for any gaps in comprehension due to lost acoustic signals in reduced speech. I wanted to know if some types of reductions were more difficult than others and why. Finally, this study looks at using dictations not only as an assessment, but as a learning tool as well.

3.1 The who, what, and where

3.1.1 The where

I collected my data at an intensive-English summer camp in California in July and August of 2013. Students and teachers were housed in the dorms of Pepperdine University in Malibu. Every day Monday through Friday, students were required to attend English language classes in a separate classroom building. I had my own classroom and was free to structure my lessons as I saw fit.

3.1.2 The who

As mentioned previously, the participants consisted of students from various countries, ranging in ages from 12 to 18. Some of the students came to my class in the morning; the other half came for lessons in the afternoon. There were some slight differences in the dictations the students received, however, these differences were judged not to affect the validity of the data. On Monday of the second week, when the first dictation was given, all of the students had just had a two-day weekend break, where, presumably they were practicing their listening and

speaking skills while attending day-time excursions and nightly mixers. Table 3.1 below is a sample of a typical student schedule for Shift A. The schedule for Shift B would involve switching the morning and afternoon activities, so that Shift B would take their excursion in the morning and have English classes after lunch.

Table 3.1

A sample of a student's weekly schedule

Shift A	**Mon**	**Tues**	**Wed**	**Thurs**	**Fri**	**Sat**	**Sun**
Morning	Breakfast/ **English Class**	Breakfast/ **English Class**	Breakfast/ **English Class**	Breakfast/ **English Class**	Breakfast/ **English Class**	ALL DAY Excursion (Disney Land/Six Flags/Etc.)	ALL DAY Excursion (Shopping, bus tour, beach trip)
Afternoon	Lunch/ Excursion	Lunch/ Excursion	Lunch/ Excursion	Lunch/ Excursion	Lunch/ Excursion		
Evening	Dinner/ Evening activity	Dinner/ Evening activity	Dinner/ Evening activity	Dinner/ Evening activity	Dinner/ Evening activity		

3.1.3 The what

Rather than use the CDs and dictations provided with current textbooks, I decided to create my own dictation using phrases that I frequently used myself or heard others say to me. The dictations would serve not only as an assessment as to what the students could understand, but also as a teaching tool. The dictations would be used to help me point out to the students the differences in what they were hearing and what was actually being said. My hypothesis was that after learning the patterns that native speakers tend to use when reducing chunks of words, students would better understand native-speakers and feel more confident when communicating with them outside the classroom.

3.1.4 The procedure

I prepared 10 sentences, consisting of different types of reductions that I had heard myself, other teachers, or the activity-leaders use with each other and with the students. While

some of the teachers were particularly careful with the way they articulated their utterances around the students, a few of the teachers and most of the activity-leaders spoke at normal speed, linking and connecting segments as was natural. I was careful to choose sentences that included grammar and vocabulary that students should be familiar with at the low-intermediate level, commonly used modal and auxiliary verbs, present tenses and simple past and future. I attempted to include reductions from the three categories mentioned in Chapter 2 (reduced, deleted, and palatalized, as well as combinations of these).

When the students came to class on Monday, I asked them to take out a sheet of paper and number it 1 through 10. I explained the exercise. I would say a sentence at normal speed with typical native-speaker pronunciation. They would hear each sentence three times. They were to listen and write the acceptable written form of the sentence as they would see it written in a textbook. I gave them the example:"I don't know how to swim" pronounced as [aidʌr̃oʊ haʊɾə swɪm]. Even though they might have heard "*dunno*", I instructed them to write the full form "don't know". I asked if everyone understood and made them repeat the instructions back to me to check comprehension.

Table 3.1 lists the sentences as the students heard me say them. As I repeated each sentence, I was careful to remain at the same speed and pronounce it the same way each time.

Table 3.2

Sentences for Dictation 1

Orthographic Representation	My spoken version
1. Let me see it.	[lɛmi siʲɪt]
2. Did you like the concert?	[d͡ʒə laik ðə kansɜɹt]

3. Give me a second.	[gɪmiə sɛkənd]
4. I can let you go first.	[aikn̩ lɜt͡ʃə goʊ fɜɪst]
5. I am going to have to do it later.	[aməmə hæftə duʷit leɪɾɨ]
6. I can't talk right now.	[ai kæ̃nʔ tak raɪt naʊ]
7a. Did you see that movie?	[d͡ʒu si ðæt muvi]
7b. Did you ride a roller coaster?	[d͡ʒu raidə rolɜɪ koʊstɜɪ]
8a. What did you see?	[wʌd͡ʒə si]
8b. What did you do?	[wʌd͡ʒə du]
9. I am going to see her later.	[aməɾ̃ə si ɜɪ leɪɾɨ]
10. Did you see him?	[d͡ʒu si ɪm]

After the students completed the dictation, I collected their papers. I put the complete sentences on the board, so the students could see the written forms. I then did a quick lesson on reductions, using the examples from the dictation.

After students received the lesson on reduced speech, I moved forward with the other subject matter I needed to cover for the day. I then allowed three days to pass and tested the students again on the following Friday. Some students who were present on the first day were not present for the second dictation. You will notice that some of the student numbers are missing from the data. The missing numbers/students are the ones who did not show up to class on Friday and therefore did not participate in the second dictation at the end of the week. Since I was measuring the increased accuracy from the first dictation to the second dictation, I chose to use only data from students who were present for both dictations.

The next section will explain how the data was analyzed and measured. The rest of Chapter 3 will consist of an analysis and discussion of the student responses.

3.2 How responses were measured and "graded"

Below you will find student responses that have been converted into typed, easy-to-read tables. Copies of some of the originals may be found in the appendix. Any spelling or grammar errors were copied from the original responses.

Only the reduced part of the utterance was measured, the part that I felt the students might have the most trouble perceiving. I did not penalize students for misspellings or incorrect responses in the parts of the sentence that do not contain the reduction I was examining. For example, if I uttered the sentence, "I don't what to do" pronouncing it as [ai dʌr̃oʊ wʌt tu du], the reduction within the utterance would be worth two points. The students would earn 1 point for including some form of the negated operator *do*, such as *do not* or *don't.* The students would then earn a second point for including the main verb *know* in their response. If the students wrote the reduced form of the spelling "*dunno*", I accepted it and gave them the full 2 points. Even though this form is not acceptable in formal writing, it is an accepted form of the written reduction and most people understand what it means. The 2-point scale was then converted to a 100% scale. If a student wrote: *I don't go what to do*, he would earn 1 out of 2 or 50%. If a student wrote: *I don't know water do*, I would not count off any points for writing "water" instead of "what to", as I was only interested in how well they were able to comprehend the reduced verb phrases. A response like *I don't know water do* would earn 2/2 or 100% because it includes a correct analysis of [dʌr̃oʊ] as "don't know." In my analysis, I will look at some notable problem areas in the student responses in other parts of the sentence, but all of the measurements will come from the reduced verb phrases only.

3.3 Student Responses and Data Analysis – The First Dictation

Table 3.3.1

Let me see it.

Student	Sentence: Let me see it. [lɛmi siʲɪt]	let me
1.	Let me see it.	100
2.	Let me see it.	100
3.	Let me see yet.	100
5.	Let me see it.	100
6.	Let me see yet.	100
8.	Let me see it.	100
10.	Let's me see it.	100
12.	Let me see it.	100
13.	Let me see it.	100
15	Let me see it.	100
16.	Let me see it.	100
17	Let me see it.	100
19.	Let me see it.	100
20.	Let me see it.	100
21.	Let me see it.	100
22.	Let me see it.	100
23.	Let me see it.	100
24.	Let me see it.	100
	Average Accuracy	100

The students seemed to have no problems hearing and understanding this particular reduction. I did not penalize student 10 for writing “Let’s” instead of “Let”. I imagine he or she is overgeneralizing and recalling the frequently used form of “Let’s go.”

An interesting thing to note here are the responses of student 3 and student 6. It appears that they heard a glide linking s*ee* and *it* and decided that I was saying *yet.* In fact, using a glide

to link vowels is a very common strategy that native speakers use. At the time I was unaware that I was pronouncing a glide between *see* and *it*, nor had I taken a course or seen any textbooks that introduced linking tactics. The transcription with the glide is a mixture of hindsight and probability based on what I know now, as well as the evidence provided by students 3 and 6. As I was not concerned about responses outside of the reduction, I did not count the mistake against them. Instead, I am humbled by what the students were able to perceive that I was oblivious to.

Table 3.3.2

Did you like the concert?

Student	Sentence: Did you like the concert? [d͡ʒə laik ðə kansɜɹt]	did you
1.	Did you like the concert?	100
2.	Joe like a concert.	0
3.	Do you like a concert?	50
5.	Do you like a consert?	50
6.	Do you like the concert?	50
8.	Do you like the concert?	50
10.	Do you like the concert?	50
12.	Do you like a concert?	50
13.	Do you like the concert?	50
15.	Do you like the concert?	50
16.	Do you like the concert?	50
17.	Do you like the concert?	50
19.	Do you like the concert?	50
20.	You like the concert?	50
21.	Do you like the concert?	50
22.	Do you like the concert?	50
23.	You like a concert?	50
24.	Do you like the concert?	50
	Average Accuracy	50

Only Student 1 wrote the question in past tense. I heavily emphasized the affricate /d͡ʒ/ that remains when the /d/ of *did* meets the /j/ of *you.* The affricate sound must have been heavy enough for Student 2 to hear something closer to *Joe* instead of *Did you.*

The problem with this sentence is that it is lacking context and, therefore, is ambiguous. After some consideration I have come to the conclusion that even though certain textbooks caution learners that *Do you* might be pronounced as "D'ya" (Tanka & Most, 2007: 7) some speakers pronounce *Do you* as [d͡ʒə], as in the high frequency phrase [d͡ʒə wanə goʊ]. This is evidenced by Jesse Vaughan's 2002 movie title *Juwanna Mann*, clearly a pun on the colloquial pronunciation of *Do you want a man?* I was tempted to give full credit to those students who wrote "Do you". However, since the question intended to ask information about the past, I went ahead and counted it against them.

Another thing to note about this reduced sentence is the reduced vowel in *the*. Some students may not have been aware of this pronunciation and instead decided I was saying ***a*** *concert,* and not ***the*** *concert* (Students 2, 3, 4, 12, and 23).

Table 3.3.3

Give me a second.

Student	Sentence: Give me a second. [gɪmiə sɛkənd]	give me
1.	Give me a second.	100
2.	Give me a second.	100
3.	Give me a second.	100
5.	Give me a second.	100
6.	Give me a second.	100
8.	Give me a second.	100
10.	Give me a second.	100

12.	Give me a second.	100
13.	Give me a second.	100
15.	Give me a second.	100
16.	Give me a second.	100
17.	Give me a second.	100
19.	Give me a second.	100
20.	Give me a second.	100
21.	Give me a second.	100
22.	Give me a second.	100
23.	Give me a second.	100
24.	Give me a second.	100
	Average Accuracy	100

This sentence was clearly an easy one for them. All of the students wrote out “give me”, even though I pronounced it *gimme.*

Table 3.3.4

I can let you go first.

Student	Sentence: I can let you go first. [aikn̩ lɛt͡ʃə goʊ fɜɹst]	can	let you
1.	I can let you go first.	100	100
2.	I can let you go first.	100	100
3.	I get lunch to go first.	0	0
5.	I can let to go first.	100	50
6.	I can let you go first.	100	100
8.	I can let you go first.	100	100
10.	I can let you go first.	100	100
12.	I can let you go first.	100	100
13.	I can let you go first.	100	100
15.	I can let you go first.	100	100
16.	I can let you go first.	100	100

17.	I can let you go first.	100	100
19.	I can let you go first.	100	100
20.	I can let you go first.	100	100
21.	I can let you go first.	100	100
22.	I can let you go first.	100	100
23.	I can let you go first.	100	100
24.	I can let you go first	100	100
		94.4	91.66667

The majority of the students heard and wrote the sentence correctly. This particular sentence contained two reductions, so the students were graded on whether or not they understood *can* from [kn̩] and *let you* from [lɛt͡ʃə]. I was actually surprised that the students did so well on this one. I expected more of them to write responses closer to the one given by Student 3. He or she heard the palatalization when the /t/ in *let* combined with the /j/ in *you* to create the affricate /t͡ʃ/. What word starts with /l/ and ends in a "ch" sound? *Lunch* of course!

Table 3.3.5

I am going to have to do it later.

Student	Sentence: I am going to have to do it later. [aməɾ̃ə hæftə duwit leɪtɻ]	I'm going to	have to
1.	I'm have to do it later.	50	100
2.	I'm wanna have to do letter.	50	100
3.	I want to have to do later.	0	100
5.		0	0
6.	I wanna have to do later.	0	100
8.	I have to do it later.	0	100
10.	I am have a	50	50
12.	I'm have to do it later.	50	100
13.	I have to do it later.	0	100

15.	I'm gonna have to do it later.	100	100
16.	I'm have to do it later.	50	100
17.	I'm going have to do it later.	100	100
19.	I am have to do later.	50	100
20.	I am what I have to do *leater.	50	100
21.	I am have to do it later.	50	100
22.	I'm wanna go later.	50	0
23.	I'm ma have to do later.	50	100
24.	I'm have to do a leader.	50	100
		41.67	86.11

Notice the dramatic drop in comprehension of the pronunciation of [amə̃fə]. I graded this reduction out of 2. One point for *I am/I'm.* I did not accept the pronoun without the auxiliary verb. The only sound that separates **Imuna* from *I wanna,* is the articulation of the /m/, the only remaining evidence of the be-verb that "going to" requires. If the students did not indicate that they had heard the /m/, I withdrew 1 point. It could be that some students decided they heard *want to* and knew that *want to* does not require the be-verb. However, some students did write *I'm wanna,* see students 2 and 22. By including the instance of *am* with the pronoun, the students earned at least 50%. The other 50% accounts for the inclusion of *going to.* I accepted *gonna* as correct spelling (student 15) and did not count off for the exclusion of the preposition (student 17). Most students, however, did not indicate they understood the meaning *going to,* so few of them earned more than a 50% understanding of this reduction. The class average on this particular reduction was much lower than the other reductions – 41.67%.

Most of the students did much better with *have to,* scoring an overall 86%. In this case I did count off for the lack of *to* in *have to* since the phoneme /t/ remains even in the reduced form.

Table 3.3.6

I can't talk right now.

Student	Sentence: I can't talk right now. [ai kæ̃nʔ tak raɪt naʊ]	can't
1.	I can't talk right now.	100
2.	I can't talk right now.	100
3.	I can't talk right now.	100
5.	I can not talk right now.	100
6.	I can't talk *wright now.	100
8.	I can talk right now.	0
10.	I can talk right now.	0
12.	I can talk right now.	0
13.	I can't talk right now.	100
15.	I can't talk right now.	100
16.	I can't talk right now.	100
17.	I can't talk right now.	100
19.	I can't talk right now.	100
20.	I can't talk *write now.	100
21.	I cannot talk right now.	100
22.	I can talk right now.	0
23.	I can't talk right now.	100
24.	I can't talk right now.	100
		77.78

Scoring for the reduced version of *can't* was all or nothing. The students did not get credit if they did not include the negation of *can* in their sentence. Students overall average was much lower for recognizing the reduced version of *can't* than its reduced counterpart *can*, where the average score was 94.4%.

Table 3.3.7

Did you ride a roller coaster?

Student	Sentence: Did you ride a roller coaster? [d͡ʒu raidə rolɜɹ koʊstɜɹ]	Did you
1.	Do you like a rollercoster?	50
2.		0
15	Do you ride a rollercoaster.	50
16.	Do you like the coaster.	50
17	Do you ride a roller coste	50
19.	Do you ride a rollercoaster?	50
20.	Do ride a rollercoasters?	0
21.	Do you ride rollercoaster?	50
22.	Do you ride on rollercoaster?	50
23.	Do u ride a rollercoster?	50
24.	Do you ride a rollercoaster?	50
		40.91

This is the first instance in the data in which the morning class received something slightly different than the afternoon class. I was attempting to include in the dictation some of the new vocabulary we had previously learned in class, as well as use the sentence to help them practice listening for the kinds of questions they might hear the camp staff ask them. All of them had just been on an excursion to Disney Land where they had the opportunity to ride rollercoasters. However, the students in the morning class had such a hard time trying to spell *rollercoaster* that I decided to change the direct object to an easier item. The afternoon class, therefore, received the sentence "Did you see that movie?" The same reduction was used, and since I only graded the responses based on whether or not the students heard and wrote "Did you" I felt that the difference in content did not affect the scoring.

Table 3.3.8

Did you see that movie?

Student	Sentence: Did you see that movie? [d͡ʒu si ðæt muvi]	Did you
3.	Do you see right movie	50
5.	Do you see that movie.	50
6.	Do you see that movie.	50
8.	Do you see that movie?	50
10.	Do you see that movvie?	50
12.	Do you see that movie?	50
13.	Do you see that movie?	50
	Average Accuracy	50

None of the students in either the morning class or afternoon class responded with the past tense *Did you.* Again, it is entirely possible that the pronunciation is ambiguous without context, but I had hoped that the students who were asked about riding a rollercoaster would have been primed to expect a past tense question, since it was relevant to what they had just done over the weekend. I intended to use some reductions more than once during the dictation, especially the ones I expected to be more difficult, to make sure student responses were not drastically changed by the content of each sentence. Student understanding of [d͡ʒu] as *Did you*, remained around 50% (the same as results in Table 3.3.2).

Table 3.3.9

What did you see/do?

Student	Sentence: What did you see/do? [wʌd͡ʒə si] [wʌd͡ʒə du]	what did you
1.	What you see?	66.7
2.	What just see?	33.3

3.	What did you do?	100
5.	What to do?	33.3
6.	What did you do?	100
8.	What you do?	66.7
10.	What you do?	66.7
12.	What do you do?	66.7
13.	What do you do?	66.7
15.	What is you see?	66.7
16.	What do you see?	66.7
17.	What do you see?	66.7
19.	What do you see?	66.7
20.	What's I see?	33.3
21.	What did you see?	100
22.	What do you see?	66.7
23.	What do you see?	66.7
24.	What do you see?	66.7
	Average Accuracy	66.68

Once again we have a slight change in the sentence that the morning class received versus the afternoon class. Even though I had the paper right in front of me as I was reading the sentences, I slipped up and said *do* when I meant to say *see.* Rather than change the sentence after the students had already heard it once, I decided to continue with the sentence that came out of my mouth. I chose to group all of the answers together into one table since the difference in the verb at the end of the sentences did not affect the outcome of the scoring.

Interestingly, the addition of *what* in front of *did* seems to change how the students interpret the sentence. More of them responded with the past tense than in the examples without the Wh- wording.

Table 3.3.10

I am going to see her later.

Student	Sentence: I am going to see her later. [amə̃rə si ɜɪ leɪtɻ]	I am going to	her
1.	I'm gonna see you later.	100	0
2.	I'm wanna see you later.	50	0
3.	I want to see you later.	0	0
5.		0	0
6.	I want to see you later.	0	0
8.	I am going to see you later.	100	0
10.	I'm want to see you later.	50	0
12.	I'm see you later.	50	0
13.	I want to see you later.	0	0
15.	I'm see you later.	50	0
16.	I'm a cheerleader.	50	0
17.	I'm going to see you later.	100	0
19.	I am gonna see you later.	100	0
20.	I am see you *leoter.	50	0
21.	I'm gonna see you later.	100	0
22.	I'm see you later.	50	0
23.	Imma see u later.	50	0
24.	I'm gonna see you later.	100	0
	Average Accuracy	55.56	0

The first glaringly obvious thing is that none of the students heard and wrote *her* from /ɜɪ/. Almost all of them assumed I had said *you.* This suggests that students expect to hear the /h/ in third person pronouns.

The scores for recognizing the *I'm going to* part are fairly consistent with the responses in Table 3.3.5 There was an increase of 14% from the first reduction containing *Imuna* to this one in Table 3.3.10 It is possible that the students ears were better tuned for the later instance of it, or

it made more sense in the context of this particular sentence. There are still quite a few students who decided it must be *want to/wanna* since they could not hear the /g/. The responses for Student 5 were consistent from Table 3.3.5 to Table 3.3.10, i.e. no response. This tells me that he or she was unable to get any information from the sentence as it was too reduced.

My favorite response of the entire data set has to be that of Student 16 – "I'm a cheerleader." That is not what I said at all, but it is somewhat consistent with my pronunciation. This student at least made an effort to include the [ɜɹ] from *her.*

Table 3.3.11

Did you see him?

Student	Sentence: Did you see him? [d͡ʒu si ɪm]	did you	him
1.	Did you him?	100	100
2.	Joe see them.	0	0
3.	Do you see him?	50	100
5.	Do you see him?	50	100
6.	Do you see him?	50	100
8.	Do you see him?	50	100
10.	Do you see him?	50	100
12.	Do you see him?	50	100
13.	Do you see him?	50	100
15.	Do u see him?	50	100
16.	Do you see him?	50	100
17.	Do you see him?	50	100
19.	Do you see him?	50	100
20.	Do you see him?	50	100
21.	Do you see him?	50	100
22.	Do you seen?	50	0

23.	Did you see them?	100	0
24.	Do you see him?	50	100
	Average Accuracy	52.78	83.33

I decided to throw one more *did you* sentence into the mix for good measure. Student 2 is holding strong with the belief that someone named *Joe* is the subject of the sentence. At least he/she is making concessions for the palatalization he/she heard. In this final sentence, now at least two students (1 and 23) decided they heard it as a past tense question. The class average for this reduction still held steady around 50%.

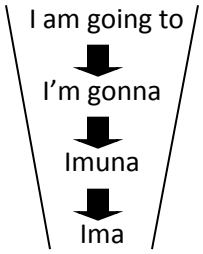
Strangely, the class scored higher on the reduction of *him* [ɪm] (83.3%) in comparison to *her* reduced to [ɜɪ]. Maybe students were not aware that the /h/-drop reduction can apply to the other pronouns. Or perhaps it was easier to hear the /m/ of [ɪm] than the /ɹ/ of [ɜɪ].

As I stated before, after the dictation the students received a short lesson on reductions. I put all of the sentences on the board and went over the pronunciations again. I began with the ones the students did not have much difficulty with. We went over how the /v/ in *give me* is dropped and the two words are linked as if they are one. The same thing happens in *let me* and *don't know* in which the /t/ is dropped. I pointed out how native speakers will drop the /h/ in *him, her,* and *his,* as well as the /ð/ in *them*. I explained palatalization – how when a /t/ meets a /j/ as in *Nice to meet you,* it may be pronounced as *meecha*. I used the example in Table 3.2.8 [wʌd͡ʒə], to point out the palatalization when /d/ meets the /j/ of *you.* I explained how native speakers will shorten *Did you* to just [d͡ʒə]. I showed the students how *can* is reduced to [kn̩] and how the /t/ in *can't* is often articulated as simply a glottal stop. I pointed out that native speakers will often drop the final /t/ and use a glottal stop instead, so that words like *late* will be pronounced as [laiʔ]. I received a lot of head-nodding at this explanation, which led me to believe that the

students had frequently heard this when interacting with native speakers. Finally, I used my diagram to show the steps that *I am going to* takes to become [amə̃rə] or [amə]. I like to draw it like a funnel, as seen in my diagram below.

Figure 3.1

Reduction of "I am going to" to "Ima"



Some of the students were so flabbergasted that this could possibly be what happens to words in native pronunciation that many of them took out their phones and took pictures of the board. Use of technology in the classroom is a case for another paper, however.

After I gave the lesson on reductions, I asked the students which sentences had been the easiest and which the hardest. The answer was more or less unanimous. They told me that reductions like *wanna*, *lemme*, and *dunno* were the easiest because they had seen them written in books, song lyrics, and subtitles in movies and television. This made perfect sense.

They also told me that a strategy they used with some of the more difficult reductions was to use the context of surrounding words to help narrow down the possibilities.

Four days after the first dictation I tested them again, allowing time for the information to soak in and for students to test their knowledge by listening for the reductions when interacting with their teachers and activity-leaders throughout the week. I did not review reduced forms again during the classes between the first dictation and the second one. The only direct

instruction the students received on reduced speech was during the lesson after they participated in the first dictation exercise. I wanted to see if receiving a single lesson on reduced speech patterns was enough to heighten learner awareness, so that they might be able to make their own generalizations when interacting with native-speakers outside the classroom. My intention was the test how much of the information would my students would retain and apply to their listening comprehension strategies during the time between the first dictation and the second. When they came into class on Friday, I had another dictation prepared. During the second dictation I used some of the same reductions from the first; I attempted to pick the ones the students had difficulty with the first time. I also included reductions that the students had not heard during the first dictation, to act as a control.

3.4 Student Responses and Data Analysis – The Second Dictation

Below is the complete list of sentences spoken during the second dictation.

Table 3.4

Sentences for Dictation 2

Orthographic Representation	My spoken version
1. She can tell them.	[ʃi kn̩ tɛləm]
2. I'll have to leave soon.	[aɪl æftə liv sun]
3. I'm going to go eat.	[amə̃ə goʊ it]
4. I don't know what to do.	[ai dʌ̃oʊ wʌt təɾu]
5. What are you doing tomorrow?	[wʌt͡ʃə duɪn təmaroʊ]
6. I saw him yesterday.	[ai sa ɪm yɛstɜɪdeɪ]
7. I want to give her more time.	[aɪ wanə gɪvɜɪ mɔɪ taɪm]
8. What did you do that for?	[wʌd͡ʒə du ðæt fɔɪ]
9a. I'm going to do it later.	[amə̃ə duʷɪt leiɾɻ]

9b. What did you do?	[d͡ʒə it yɛt̩]
10. What are you doing?	[wʌɾəjə duɪn]

Table 3.4.1

She can tell them.

Student	Sentence: She can tell them. [ʃi kn̩ tɛləm]	can	Them
1.	She can tell them.	100	100
2.	She can't tell them.	0	100
3.	She can tell him.	100	0
5.	She can tell him.	100	0
6.	She can tell them.	100	100
8.	She can tell him.	100	0
10.	She can't tell him.	0	0
12.	She can tell him.	100	0
13.	She can tell him.	100	0
15.	She can tell them.	100	100
16.	She can't tell him.	0	0
17.	She can tell him.	100	0
19.	She can tell him.	100	0
20.	She can tell him.	100	0
21.	She can tell him.	100	0
22.	She can't tell him.	0	0
23.	She can tell them.	100	100
24.	She come tell him.	0	0
	Percent Accurate	72.22	27.78

What is interesting here is the decrease in accuracy of understanding [kn̩] as *can* from its occurrence in the first dictation. Compared with the comprehension results of this reduction from the first dictation Table 3.3.4, there was a 21.3% decrease in comprehension of this particular

reduction. It seems like a lot, but the way this reduction is measured is as all or none; in other words the only possible scores were 0 or 100. On the first day (Table 3.3.4) only 1 student out of 18 did not write *can.* On the second day of the dictation, 4 out of the 18 students missed it. When viewed this way, it is still a decrease, but the numbers are not as striking.

There are a number of possible explanations for the decrease. One may be that this was the first sentence of the exercise and it took a while for the students' ears to "warm up" and get into the groove. This is not a likely explanation, as the dictation was not the first thing we had done that day. Prior to the dictation exercises the students had done some other listening and speaking practice. Every day we would warm up with paired conversation for at least fifteen minutes. I always made an effort to chit-chat with each student at the beginning of every class, or have them report to me the conversation they had just had with their conversation partner. My aim was to try and get them used to listening and responding.

Another possible reason why more students missed this reduction of *can* on the second day of the exercise might be because of the surrounding words of the sentence. It is possible that the reduction is more frequently found next to the first person pronoun so the students better understand [ai kn̩] as *I can,* but they may have had trouble discerning *she can* from [ʃi kn̩].

One final reason may be that the students were guessing. I had not brought up reduced speech or pointed it out to them since the first dictation exercise. It may have been that some of the students remembered that [kn̩] stood for either *can* or *can't* but were unable to remember which one, so they just picked one. This explanation does not bode well for my hypothesis that learners will better understand reduced speech if their attention is simply called to it and the patterns for reductions are pointed out to them without lots of review and practice.

Student comprehension of *them* was at a low 27.78%. This does not surprise me since even native speakers need context to be able to clearly hear the difference between *him* [ɪm] and *them* [əm]. Again, students did not earn points if they heard the /m/ and wrote *him*. If they did not write out *t-h-e-m* they earned 0 credit for this particular reduction.

Table 3.4.2

I'll have to leave soon.

Student	Sentence: I'll have to leave soon. [aɪl æftə liv sun]	I will	have to
1.	I love to *live soon.	50	0
2.	I left a lift soon.	50	0
3.	A lot of lift soon.	0	0
5.	I	50	0
6.	I will have to leave soon.	100	100
8.	I'll have to leave soon.	100	100
10.	I have to *live soon.	50	100
12.	A lot of lift soon.	0	0
13.	I have to leave soon.	50	100
15.	I love to *live soon.	50	0
16.		0	0
17.	I have to a left soon.	50	100
19.	I left the soon.	50	0
20.	I got to *live soon.	50	0
21.	I left to *live soon.	50	0
22.	I left *live soon.	50	0
23.	I love to *live soon.	50	0
24.	I'll laugh to *live soon.	100	0
	Average Accuracy	50	27.78

I marked misspellings with an asterisk. These are misspellings of the word *leave.* I know this because it was a common theme that kept coming up over the course of the entire camp, as many of the students were from L1s in which the /i/ sound is spelled with *i.* Since the word *leave* was not part of a reduced chunk, I did not count off for the misspelling.

The group had a hard time separating *I'll* from *hafta*. After the first dictation, I had pointed out that native speakers will drop the /h/ in pronouns like *he* and *him,* but I failed to mention that the /h/ may drop out in other places. This particular reduction combining *I'll* and *hafta* is taken from the book *Interactions 1: Speaking and Listening* (Tanka, 2007:87). Most of the students heard the first person singular pronoun, therefore earning a score of 50% for that reduction, but many of them linked the /ɬ/ from *I'll* onto the following chunk, giving me responses like "I love to" (Students 1, 15, and 23). For this same reason, they did not do very well perceiving *have to* as a separate chunk, earning an overall average of 27. 78%, a decrease of 58.33% from the first dictation (Table 3.3.5).

Table 3.4.3 below shows drastic improvement of the perception of [amə̃rə] from Day 1 of the dictation to Day 2.

Table 3.4.3

I'm going to go eat.

Student	Sentence: I am going to go eat. [amə̃rə goʊ it]	I am going to
1.	I'm gonna to eat.	100
2.	I'm gonna go eat.	100
3.	I want to go eat.	0
5.	I am going to eat.	100
6.	I am going to eat.	100
8.	I am going to eat.	100

10.	I gone ago *it.	0
12.	I want to go eat.	0
13.	I want to go eat.	0
15.	I'm gonna to eat.	100
16.	I'm gonna go *it.	100
17.	I'm going to eat.	100
19.	I'm gonna go eat.	100
20.	I'm gonna go eat.	100
21.	I'm going to eat.	100
22.	I'm gonna go eat.	100
23.	I am going to eat.	100
24.	I'm going to eat.	100
	Average Accuracy	77.78

The scoring for this one was out of 2. Students earned 1 point for writing both *I* and *am*, or the contracted version *I'm*. They earned no points if they only wrote *I*. Again, I evaluated it in this way, because the /m/ that remains from the auxiliary verb is one of the only perceivable differences between *I'm going to* [amə̃ɾə] and *I want to* [ai waɾ̃ə] in the reduced versions. Students earned another point for writing out *going to.* I gave credit for *gonna* since it is a commonly written form for *I'm going to*. However, here you will begin to see some of the pitfalls for teaching reduced speech in this capacity as exemplified by Students 1 and 15, in which they write "I'm gonna to eat." This is a common mistake that learners make, not realizing that the /ə/ in [gʌnə] is the preposition *to* and that it is incorrect to repeat it.

One thing you may notice is that several of the students used the verb *go* only once in the future tense *going to*, effectively reducing the structure of the sentence to the present progressive version and not the full *going to* + V^{inf}. I did not feel that this response affected the integrity of the meaning, since both *"I am going to eat"* and *"I am going to* ***go*** *eat"* more or less hold the

same meaning of a future intention to eat. The latter one simply implies a trajectory and location change before eating can occur. Either way, most of the students would have been able to understand a future intention of consuming food from this utterance. I have a feeling that even though Student 16 wrote "it" for *eat*, it was simply a spelling error, not unlike the spelling errors in Table 3.4.2. I cannot confidently say the same thing was happening with Student 10, as I cannot make heads or tails of their response. Likely neither could they.

I am bolstered by the overall improvement in perception of [amə̃ɾə] as the first person singular future intention *I am going to.* From the first instance of it during the first dictation (Table 3.3.5) to the first occurrence of it in the second dictation (Table 3.4.3), there was an increase of 36.11% comprehension of this particular reduction. This does not surprise me, since I during the post-dictation lesson I emphasized the loss of the /g/ in [gʌnə] and provided a visual representation of it on the board, recall Figure 3.1 (pp 51). I am enthusiastic about this particular pronunciation habit of native speakers, and I am sure the students could see that during my lesson. I played a bit of the song "Imma Be", and I also played a few clips from TV shows in which the subtitles say *I'm going to* but the actors say **Imuna* = [amənə]. To summarize, I reinforced the concept of this reduction with several different activities and practice that I did not do with the other reductions. Therefore, I am not surprised that the students better comprehended the meaning of this particular reduction during the second dictation. Perhaps if I had taken the time to reinforce other reductions such as *can* [kn̩] versus *can't* [kæ̃nʔ] I would have seen better results in Table 3.4.1.

Table 3.4.4

I don't know what to do.

Student	Sentence: I don't know what to do. [ai dʌr̃oʊ wʌt təɾu]	don't know
1.	I don't know what to do.	100
2.	I don't know what to do.	100
3.	I don't know what you do.	100
5.	I don't know what to do.	100
6.	I don't know what to do.	100
8.	I don't know what to do.	100
10.	I don't *now what to do.	100
12.	I don't know what to do.	100
13.	I don't *no what to do.	100
15.	I don't know what to do.	100
16.	I don't know what to do.	100
17.	I don't know what to do.	100
19.	I don't know what to do.	100
20.	I don't *now what to do.	100
21.	I don't know what to do.	100
22.	I don't know what to do.	100
23.	I do not know what to do.	100
24.	I don't know what to do.	100
	Average Accuracy	100

This was not one of the reductions covered on the first day of the dictation, but the students did not seem to have any problems with it except for some spelling errors (Students 10, 13, and 20). This does not surprise me as it is a commonly used phrase and often seen spelled as *dunno* in lyrics, subtitles, and emails. As the students told me on the day of the first dictation, the easiest reductions to perceive were the ones they had seen in writing.

Table 3.4.5

What are you doing tomorrow?

Student	Sentence: What are you doing tomorrow? [wʌt͡ʃə duɪn təmaroʊ]	what are you
1.	What you doing tomorrow?	66.7
2.	Which you do in tomorrow?	33.3
3.	What you doing tomorrow?	66.7
5.	What	33.3
6.	What are you doing tomorrow?	100
8.	What are you doing tomorrow?	100
10.	What you do in tomorrow?	66.7
12.	What will you do tomorrow?	66.7
13.	What you do tomorrow?	66.7
15.	What's you doing tomorrow?	66.7
16.	What do you do tomorrow?	66.7
17.	What will you doing tomorrow?	66.7
19.	What do you do tomorrow?	66.7
20.	What do you do tomorrow?	66.7
21.	What will you do tomorrow?	66.7
22.	What do you do tomorrow?	66.7
23.	What to do on tomorrow?	66.7
24.	What are you doing tomorrow?	100
	Average Accuracy	68.54

Deciding how to measure this reduction was tricky. Even though the correct grammatical version of this sentence includes the auxiliary verb *are*, the spoken version drops it completely. What speakers are really saying is "What you doing?" pronounced as [wʌt͡ʃə duɪn]. The students heard this and many of them wrote the question without *are.* I counted this against them. This is ungrammatical and not an acceptable written form. If I had accepted this form and given credit for just including *what* and *you*, the adjusted average accuracy would have been 90.74%.

What is also interesting is that some of the students realized they had not heard any instance of *are,* and understood the question to be asking about the future, i.e. *tomorrow*. Students 12, 17, and 21 seem to have generalized and included *will* into their responses. It is possible that at the lower-intermediate level, the use of present progressive to convey future plans had not been introduced to them yet.

Another thing to note is that many of the students heard *do* but not *–ing* since I reduced the vowel and dropped the /g/. Two of the students wrote "do in" (Students 2 and 10) proving to me that they heard the way I pronounced it, but did not understand it to be a reduced form of *doing.* I admit that this was not one of the reductions I mentioned after the first dictation exercise. I was surprised that more students failed to write the complete form of *doing* (10 out of 18 wrote "do" without *-ing*). It is possible that since they did not hear the final /g/ in *doing* that some of the students assumed I was using the simple aspect of the verb. If I had used a simple *do* then the sentence would not require the auxiliary verb *are.* That might also explain why so few of them did not include the auxiliary verb in their responses. The loss of the /g/ from *–ing* and the change in articulation of [iŋ] to [ɪn] appears not to be intuitive to non-native speakers and therefore might confuse learners who expect to hear the form with the tense vowel and a velar nasal.

Table 3.4.6

I saw him yesterday.

Student	Sentence: I saw him yesterday. [ai sa ɪm yɛstɜɹdeɪ]	him
1.	I saw him yesterday.	100
2.	I saw him yesterday.	100
3.	I saw him yesterday.	100
5.	I saw him yesterday.	100

6.	I saw him yesterday.	100
8.	I saw him yesterday.	100
10.	I'm yesterday.	0
12.	I saw him yesterday.	100
13.	I saw him yesterday.	100
15.	I saw him yesterday.	100
16.	I saw him yesterday.	100
17.	I saw him yesterday.	100
19.	I saw him yesterday.	100
20.	I saw him yesterday.	100
21.	I saw him yesterday.	100
22.	I saw him yesterday.	100
23.	I saw him yesterday.	100
24.	I saw him yesterday.	100
	Average Accuracy	94.44

Recall the average comprehension of [ɪm] as *him* was 88.33% (Table 3.3.11) from the first dictation. Student 10 was the only student to miscomprehend this reduction in the second dictation exercise, leading to an increase of 6.11% for the class as a whole.

Table 3.4.7

I want to give her more time.

Student	Sentence: I want to give her more time. [aɪ waɾ̃ə gɪvɜɪ mɔɪ taɪm]	want to	her
1.	I wanna give one more time.	100	0
2.	I'm wonna give you more time.	100	0
3.	I want to give more time.	100	0
5.	I want to give him more time.	100	0
6.	I am going to give him one more time.	0	0
8.	I want to give him more time.	100	0
10.	I want you give one more time.	50	0

12.	I want to give more time.	100	0
13.	I want to give one more time.	100	0
15.	I wanna give her more time.	100	100
16.	I wanna give you more time.	100	0
17.	I want you give me more time.	50	0
19.	I wanna give him more time.	100	0
20.	I wanna give one more time.	100	0
21.	I wanna give them more time.	100	0
22.	I'm wanna give him more time.	100	0
23.	I want to give you more time.	100	0
24.	I want to give one more time.	100	0
		88.89	5.56

As the reduction was only on the verb *want to,* I did not count off for students writing "I'm" or "I am" instead of just "I" (Students 2 and 22). Notice that Student 6 wrote the sentence as "I am going to". I feel this may have been an issue of priming. He or she may have expected that I would be emphasizing the reduction of *I'm going to* in the dictation and heard what he/she expected. Even though I asked the students to write out *want to,* I did not penalize them for spelling it as *wanna* as this is a frequent spelling of this reduction. I did, however, take away credit if the student did not include any instance of *to* – see scores for Students 10 and 17. Overall, the classes did well on this particular reduction. I believe this is because it is a common one and often seen written in its reduced form.

The students had more trouble with the reduction of *her.* Recall from Table 3.3.10 that comprehension of this reduction was at 0 percent in the first dictation. Only one student heard and wrote *her* in the second dictation, increasing the class average to 5.56% for this particular reduction.

Table 3.4.8

What did you do that for?

Student	Sentence: What did you do that for? [wʌd͡ʒə du ðæt fɔɹ]	what did you
1.	What did you do that for?	100
2.	Which you do that for?	33.3
3.	What you do that for?	66.7
5.		0
6.	What did you do that for?	100
8.	What you do that for?	66.7
10.	What do you do that for?	66.7
12.	What you do that for?	66.7
13.	What you do that for?	66.7
15.	What did you do that for?	100
16.	What do you do that for?	66.7
17.	What did you do that for?	100
19.	What should you do that for?	66.7
20.	What do you do that for?	66.7
21.	What did you do that for?	100
22.	What did	66.7
23.	What did you do that for?	100
24.	What did you that for?	83
	Average Accuracy	74.09

On the first day of the dictation, the sentence using this reduction was *What did you do/see?* (Table 3.3.7). The class average for the reduction on the first day was 66.68%. Scores for perception of *What did you* from [wʌd͡ʒə] during the second dictation were increased by 6.64%. Even though Student 22 did not finish writing the sentence, he or she still earned a score of 66.7% since I only graded the responses for the reduced phrase, and Student 22 wrote out "What did". I only gave credit for the operator *do* if it was in past tense. I had expected the

overall score to be much higher, since palatalization was something I heavily emphasized in the dictation on the first day. Evidently these learners needed more review and practice of this type of reduction for dramatically improved scores.

The following table reflects data from only one group of students, as I presented the sentence to my morning class and not the afternoon class. You will therefore notice that several student responses are missing from the data table below. The students from the afternoon class received a different sentence than the one below; the sentence the afternoon class can be found in Table 3.4.11.

Table 3.4.9

I'm going to do it later.

Student	Sentence: I'm going to do it later. [amə̃rə duwɪt leiɾɪ]	I am going to
1.	I wanna do it latter.	0
2.	I'm gonna do it later.	100
15.	I'm gonna do it later.	100
16.	I'm gonna do later.	100
17.	I going to do it later.	50
19.	I'm do that later.	50
20.	I'm ganna do it leater.	100
21.	I'm going to do it later.	100
22.	I'm doing later.	50
23.	I'm wanna do it later.	50
24.	I'm going to do a leader.	100
	Average Accuracy	72.73

Spelling errors aside, there was still an improvement in perception of this reduction. There are still some students who believe they are hearing *want to* (Students 1 and 23). However,

this is not a consistent response for these students. Below are the scores for just this class, taken from the first and second occurrences of [amə̃rə] from Dictation 1 (Table 3.3.5 and 3.3.10 respectively) and their scores for the first and second occurrences of [amə̃rə] from Dictation 2.

Table 3.4.10

Comparison of one class's average score for the reduction [amə̃rə]

Student	1st Dictation (1)	1st Dictation (2)	2nd dictation (1)	2nd Dictation (2)
1.	50	100	100	0
2.	50	50	100	100
15.	100	50	100	100
16.	50	50	100	100
17.	100	100	100	50
19.	50	100	100	50
20.	50	50	100	100
21.	50	100	100	100
22.	50	50	100	50
23.	50	50	100	50
24.	50	100	100	100
	59.09090909	72.72727273	100	72.72727273
	Dictation 1 Average: 65.90909091		**Dictation 2 Average:** 86.36363636	

Average accuracy from Dictation 1 to Dictation 2 for just this class of 11 students shows an overall increase of 20%. Comparisons of averages of all reductions from Dictation 1 and Dictation 2 of the students from both groups will be discussed later, as well as average scores per individual.

The data in the table that follows is the sentence that the second group of students received, those who did not receive the sentence from Table 3.4.9 *I'm going to do it later.* The reduction below was given on a whim. My systematic-researcher side disappeared in this instance to be replaced by simple curiosity.

Table 3.4.11

Did you eat yet?

Student	Sentence: Did you eat yet? [d͡ʒit yɛt̪]	Did you
3.	Did you give yet?	100
5.	__	0
6.	Did you do yet?	100
8.	Did she get?	50
10.	Did yet	50
12.	Did yet	50
13.	Did yet	50
	Average Accuracy	57.14286

This particular reduction is infamous for its amount of deletion and linking. Unfortunately, there were only a few students in this class on the day I gave the second dictation. You will notice that points were not deducted for not including the verb *eat.* I was mostly interested to see if the students recalled that [d͡ʒə] was the pronunciation for *did you.* 6 out of 7 students understood *did* from [d͡ʒ] but lost points for not including the pronoun. Below is a comparison of these students' scores from of this reduction from the first dictation compared to the second dictation, which recalls data from Tables 3.3.2, 3.3.7, and 3.3.11.

Table 3.4.12

Comparison of one class's average score for the reduction [d͡ʒə]

Student	Dictation 1 (1)	Dictation 1 (2)	Dictation 1 (3)	Dictation 2 (1)
3.	50	50	50	100
5.	50	50	50	0
6.	50	50	50	100
8.	50	50	50	50
10.	50	50	50	50
12.	50	50	50	50
13.	50	50	50	50
Average Accuracy	50	50	50	57.14

Despite the difficulty of this reduction, there was still an increase of 7.14% comprehension rate of *did you* from the first dictation to the second. If Student 5 had attempted any response, he or she may have helped boost that class average even higher.

Table 3.4.13

What are you doing?

Student	Sentence: What are you doing? [wʌɾəjə duɪn]	what are you
1.	What are you doing?	100
2.	What are you doing?	100
3.	What are you doing?	100
5.	What are you doing?	100
6.	What are you doing?	100
8.	What are you doing?	100
10.	What are you doing?	100

12.	What are you doing?	100
13.	What are you doing?	100
15.	What're u doing?	100
16.	What are you doing?	100
17.	What are you doing?	100
19.	What are you doing?	100
20.	What you doing?	66.7
21.	What do you doing?	66.7
22.	What are you doing?	100
23.	What are you doing?	100
24.	What do you doing?	66.7
	Average Accuracy	94.45

This is a slightly less reduced version of the same sentence in Table 3.4.5. While the reduction in Table 3.4.5 dropped the auxiliary verb *are* and palatalized the instance of *you*, the reduction in Table 3.4.13 maintains the word *are* as a reduced schwa, simply reduces the /t/ to a flap. Even though the vowel in *you* is reduced to schwa, the glide is maintained. Overall, the students had a much easier time with this particular form compared to the palatalized version, landing at an average of 94.45% compared with the 68.5% average in Table 3.4.5. Even if I had used the adjusted averages from Table 3.4.5 (90.74%), allowing for the dropped auxiliary verb *are*, the students still scored higher on the reduction that preserves instances of the auxiliary verb and glide in the pronoun.

The data from Table 3.4.13 also shows that every single student understood [duɪn] to mean *doing.* This was not the case in Table 3.4.6 where *doing* was followed by the word *tomorrow*. It may be that students at this level do not realize that the present progressive can be used as a future marker and do not trust what they hear over their current knowledge of what the grammar allows. Or does it make a difference whether the word is sentence final? Or was this

reduction simply easier to understand and allowed the students to use context clues to fill in the rest? I cannot know the answer for this as I did not get a chance to discuss the final results with them.

Samples of student work, including tables of individual averages can be found in the appendix. The following chapter will summarize the findings of my study and attempt to respond to the research questions posed at the beginning of this chapter. Chapter 4 will conclude with discussion on incorporating lessons on reduced speech and authentic listening materials into curriculum.

CHAPTER 4. DISCUSSION

I did not get a chance to do any more dictation exercises during the course of the camp, but I feel that the dictations I was able to collect during this time were valuable input as to what teachers can expect students at this age and level to understand of reduced speech.

4.1 Results of the Data: Answering my research questions

Recall my first research question:

RQ1: Which types of reductions are more difficult for language learners to comprehend in rapid speech?

This particular group of learners showed lower scores with reductions involving palatalization and deletion versus forms that simply reduced articulation. As you can see in Table 4.1 there are more types of reductions I used that involved palatalization and deletion over reduction alone, so it may be that there were simply more chances to err. I only included data from the first instance the students heard each reduced form, as I was interested to know how well they could comprehend the reductions before I had a chance to explain them.

Students definitely scored better overall when the utterances contained reductions that included reduced sounds only, and not palatalized or deleted sounds. Even though the instance of *hafta* in the second dictation, combined with *I'll*, severely lowered the overall score for this particular reduction, it did not alter the data so much to disguise the fact the students did a much better job of perceiving reductions like *hafta* than other types of reductions.

Upon a close look at the table, you may notice the reductions that students had the least trouble with are the ones that often appear orthographically – *gimme, dunno, wanna, etc.* It may be that the reduction type has nothing to do with its level of difficulty for the learner, but instead

the frequency with which its written form appears. The explanation I received from the students seemed to point to as much.

Table 4.1 *Average Scores by Reduction Type*

Reduced		**Palatalized**		**Deletions**	
[kn̩] "can"	93.2	[lɜt͡ʃə] "letcha"	91.67	[gɪmi] "gimme"	100
[hæftə] "hafta"	86.1	[wʌt͡ʃə] "whacha"	68.54	[dʌɾ̃oʊ] "dunno"	100
[wʌɾəjə] "whadaya"	94.45	[wʌd͡ʒə] "wudja"	66.68	[wanə] "wanna"	88.89
		[d͡ʒu] "dju"	47.63	[ɪm] 'im	88.33
				[kæ̃nʔ] "can't"	77.7
				[aɪl] "I'll"	50
				[aməɾ̃ə] "imuna"	48.33
				[əm] 'em	27.27
				[ɜɹ] 'er	0
Average	***91.25***	*Average*	***68.63***	*Average*	***67.5***

RQ2: Are dictation exercises useful tools for building awareness and comprehension of reduced speech in native-speaker pronunciation?

My data is vague on this aspect. While there was improvement of perception of some types of reductions from the first dictation to the second, there was a decline in others, and perception of some reductions remained about the same from Day 1 to Day 2. Table 4.2 below shows a comparison of the results from Dictation 1 to Dictation 2.

Table 4.2

Average accuracy of comprehension of reductions from the first dictation to the second

Reduction	Dictation 1	Dictation 2	Difference
"give me" [gɪmi]	100	/	
"can" [kn̩]	93.5	72.2	21.3 decrease
"let you" [lɛt͡ʃə]	91.667	/	
"I'm gonna" [amə̃rə]	48.33	75.24	26.91 increase
"have to" [hæftə]	86.1	27.77	58.33 decrease
"can't" [kæ̃nʔ]	77.7	/	
"did you" [d͡ʒu]	47.63	57.14	9.51 increase
"what did you" [wʌd͡ʒə]	66.68	73.14	6.46 increase
"her" [ɜɪ]	0	5.56	5.56 increase
"him" [ɪm]	88.33	94.44	6.11 increase
"don't know" [dʌ̃roʊ]	/	100	
"What are you" [wʌt͡ʃə]	/	68.54	
"them" [əm]	/	27.27	
"I will" [aɪl]	/	50	
"want to" [wa̰rə]	/	88.89	
"What are you" [wʌɾəjə]	/	94.45	

The extreme improvement in perception of [amə̃rə] (*I'm going to)* in comparison to the other reductions may not be entirely attributed to the dictation exercise alone. As I stated before, I played a few song clips for the class featuring this pronunciation, as well as a video, and provided them a chart of the reduction, of which they took photos with their camera phones. It is

entirely likely that the variety of input the students received on this particular reduction is what led to the striking improvement of comprehension of *Imuna* during the second dictation. Previous research in the field of second language acquisition has, in fact, concluded that instruction which includes more than one type of input such as explicit instruction, hearing the form in context, and practicing the form, leads to more lasting retention of concepts (VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993; VanPatten, 1995; VanPatten & Sanz, 1995, de Graff; 1997; Wong, 2004). Indeed, a wise teacher once told me, "If you want students to remember what they have learned, don't teach ten different things one way, teach one thing ten different ways."

I did not follow this advice when I ran my study, and for most of the other reductions students received only the one lesson on the day of the first dictation. My intention was to simply raise awareness in the hopes that students would go forth from my classroom and listen for occurrence of reduced speech from the other teachers, activity leaders and camp staff, thereby reinforcing what they had been taught in class. Was this the case? The overall averages were not able to conclude this. Scores from the dictation exercise stayed about the same from the first dictation to the second. Table 4.3 shows a breakdown of student averages from Dictation 1 to Dictation 2. Although some students increased their scores, just as many showed decrease in theirs. There is no significant difference in the overall class averages, so I am unable to provide a definitive answer for my second research question. However, this does not mean that dictation exercises are not useful if given frequently and systematically. It is possible that if I had proceeded with the dictation exercises during the third week, scores might have improved dramatically. Further research will be need to be conducted in order to prove this conclusively.

Table 4.3

Individual averages comparing Dictation Day 1 to Dictation Day 2

Student	Averages - Day 1	Averages - Day 2	Difference
1	83.34	73.08	- 10.26
2	52.38	62.81	+10.34
3	53.57	58.98	+5.41
5	52.38	52.56	+ 0.18
6	67.86	84.62	+16.76
8	65.48	78.21	+12.73
10	61.91	47.44	- 14.47
12	65.48	55.13	- 10.35
13	65.48	66.67	+ 1.19
15	76.19	88.46	+ 12.27
16	72.62	58.98	- 13.64
17	79.76	73.08	- 6.68
19	76.19	66.67	- 9.52
20	66.66	67.95	+ 1.29
21	78.57	70.52	- 8.05
22	51.19	58.98	+ 7.79
23	69.05	74.36	+ 5.31
24	76.19	66.67	- 9.52
Total Average	67.46	66.95	- 0.51

RQ3: Can learners generalize the patterns of reduced speech, such as stop-deletion or palatalization, even if they have not received training on a specific reduction?

My conclusion is that the learners had difficulty generalizing patterns, as evidenced by the reductions that involve /h/-drop. Even though the students scored well in comprehension of

him as [ɪm] (Table 3.2.10), they did not do nearly as well with generalizing this to include the /h/-drop in *her* (Table 3.2.9) or *hafta* (Table 3.3.3). Even after explicit instruction, 17 out of the 18 students still did not recognize [ɜɪ] to mean *her*.

Further evidence for student inability to generalize deletion patterns is that even though the students are aware that the /t/ in *don't know* or *want to* gets deleted in the reduced form, most were unable to perceive that the /g/ in *am going to* is often deleted in rapid speech as well.

The learners had more difficulty with the reduced version of *can't* [kæ̃nʔ] (Table 3.2.6) than *can* [kn̩] (Table 3.2.4). Even after I explained to them that native speakers often fail to articulate the /t/ at the end of words, the students did not broaden this concept to include the /g/ in –ing, and therefore misperceived utterances that featured the reduced pronunciation of *doing* (Table 3.3.6).

4.2 What I could have done differently

Looking back on it there were several changes I would make if I could do it all over again. Firstly, I would include more variety in the first dictation. There were three sentences in the first dictation that included the *did you* reduction as [d͡ʒu], but none of the reductions tested for comprehension of the less reduced version [dɪd͡ʒə]. It was also suggested to me that it might be interesting to include native-speaking participants among the group of listeners to better judge whether or not context is truly necessary to account for ambiguities of pronunciations like [d͡ʒə] and the reduced pronunciation of *him* [ɪm] and *them* [əm].

The first dictation did not test for comprehension of the contraction *I'll* or the palatalization of *what you* into [wʌt͡ʃə]. Including these on the first day might have helped the students do better on the second dictation. I would be more systematic in my choice of which

reductions to include during the second dictation. For example, even though the students had lower comprehension of the reduced form of *can't* versus the reduced form of *can* during the first dictation, I did not include a sentence using *can't* during the second dictation. Consequently, I was not able to test whether student understanding of [kæ̃nʔ] as the reduced form of *can't* improved at all from the first dictation to the second, even after I gave a lesson on how /t/ is often reduced to a glottal stop at the ends of words.

I would like to compare student comprehension of the reductions found on CDs included in current textbooks to a more rapid and reduced version that native speakers use in relaxed conversation. During the course of the camp, there were few textbooks available to the staff and I had not brought my own, so this was not an option at the time. I feel that a comparison of comprehension of dialogs provided via textbook CDs and real-time conversations between native speakers would make good fodder for offshoot research.

Another experiment design I could have implemented that might have been more conclusive would have been to give the dictation exercise and lesson to only one group of students, while a second group served as the control group by not receiving the dictation or post-dictation lesson. Both groups of students could then have participated in an exercise that required them to answer questions about a dialog that contained reduced utterances. Results of the students who received the dictation training could then have been compared against those who did not. I decided to give the dictation to both groups of students since it was possible that the students talk to each other after class and share information about what they had learned, which would have tainted the results. But also, I felt that it was beneficial that both groups of students receive the activity and lesson since some of them would be leaving the next week and I wanted all of my students to receive input on reduced speech because it might be the only time in their

learning that they got such explicit instruction on them. In any case, adding a control group would make an excellent experiment design for future research.

4.3 Different participants may yield different results

How well the students did or did not do on the dictations could be attributed to age, first language, whether or not they spoke a third or fourth language, how long they had been studying English, whether they had ever visited the USA before, if they watch a lot of television in English, etc. The possibilities are endless. I considered including a questionnaire in my study to test for any patterns among the stronger students that might have stemmed from these factors, but decided that amount of data would have required a team of analysts and would have been too much for me alone. Furthermore, it is impossible for teachers to know and plan for every factor that affects the background knowledge of each and every student, and so instructors must make generalizations that apply to the entire group.

My sample of students did not include adults or any students from Asian or Middle Eastern countries. It is entirely possible that the results would have been completely different had the participants been adults or if it had been an entire group of Japanese L1 speakers.

Further research will need to be conducted to see if the results would differ significantly depending on any of the factors stated above.

4.4 Incorporating lessons on reduced speech

Whether or not the data from this study is irrefutable, I still believe it is important to introduce students to the concept and patterns one finds in rapid and connected speech. It is essential that students who plan to interact with native-speakers receive instruction that offers

them a wide-variety of listening materials that are appropriate for their abilities and needs and offers enough challenge to force learner growth. However, it is important to evaluate listening material carefully and judiciously select materials that will not overwhelm students.

4.4.1 Choosing appropriate listening materials

There is a current movement in language pedagogy to use more authentic materials in the classroom. While I agree this is important for preparing students and keeping their interest, it is essential that you judge materials appropriately and provide enough scaffolding to ease students into sound clips that might be more difficult than they are used to. Gebhard (2006) warns instructors, "If you decide you want to use only authentic speech in the classroom, you need to make decisions about whether or not the listening material might be too authentic. That is, is the material so authentic that it is difficult for students to understand? If so, seek out more appropriate material" (162). Ur (1984) writes that using authentic recordings has "drawbacks", one being that authentic listening materials like news clips and TV shows are usually "ungraded" and "very difficult, suitable only for the highest levels" (23). She goes on to say that using completely authentic materials is not necessary and that it is easy to make recordings that attempt to approximate the real thing by using as natural a pronunciation as possible (24).

I agree with Ur to some extent, especially after having had some unsuccessful lessons using authentic materials. However, I have also had some very effective lessons using genuine recordings from native-speakers that are unrehearsed. I like to use the website *englishlistening.com*. It contains many recordings from a variety of speakers, including non-native speakers. The speakers have been interviewed and recorded chatting without a script on a number of different topics. The segments are categorized by level of difficulty and speed of

speech. I believe that these clips make for very good listening practice because of the fact that they are unrehearsed. Speakers who have time to think about what they are going to say, also have time to decide how they want to word and pronounce their utterances. Unrehearsed speech is more realistic and allows the students to hear how native speakers will pause and rephrase and how utterances are pronounced as they are conceived.

Instructors should not shy away from using authentic materials. Rather, they should be selective about which ones they use. Do not be afraid to edit a clip or use only a very small portion. Scripts can be provided, possibly as a gap-fill exercise, or students can be asked to listen for specific information. If presented with the right amount of scaffolding, authentic materials are the perfect way to introduce students to native prosody patterns and reduced speech.

4.4.2 Encouraging students to produce reductions in their speech

Students are going to misuse reductions. This should not discourage instructors from using them in their own speech or explicitly teaching them. As with any language point, students are going to make mistakes before they achieve total accuracy. One common error that I have heard students make is saying things like, "I'm *gonna* to Mexico," in which students mistake *going to + V-ing* with the present progressive form *be +V-ing*, the latter of which does not get reduced in rapid speech. Student attention must be drawn to the differences in grammar forms and be monitored closely when practicing them. Lots of input with focus on form is essential when teaching students to use reduced speech appropriately.

4.5 Further Questions

While I do feel that it is crucial to present learners with listening materials that prepare them for the reduced pronunciation they will encounter in environments outside of the

classroom, I am still unsure at what when and how it is appropriate to begin teaching it. Would beginner students benefit from hearing reduced forms of words or would it only serve to confuse them? Should reduced pronunciation be introduced along with the grammar structures they modify, so that as students learn a new structure for the first time, they also learn how they might expect to hear it pronounced in casual speech? Does age and generation of the learner contribute to a learner's ability to understand reduced speech? Do learners who incorporate reduced forms into their own pronunciation have more successful interactions with native-speakers than learners who do not?

A final question, but certainly not the least important, is whether or not reduced speech affects learners' ability to correctly perceive content words and utterance meaning. The data in Chapter 3 offers some response to this question. Most students did very well perceiving and recording the content words of the sentence even if they misunderstood the reduced portion. There were, however, a few instances in which the utterance was so heavily reduced that it affected the students' understanding of the content words and therefore the meaning of the sentence altogether. Recall the answers given for Table 3.3.12 *Jeet yet?* Not one of the students was able to separate out the verb *eat.* While some might argue that this is a regional or very colloquial pronunciation, the /h/-drop in *her* is not and the students scored much lower on that particular form than *Jeet*. Admittedly, it is helpful to have context in order to understand reduced forms of pronouns within utterances, but I feel it says something that none of the students wrote *her* when they heard [ɜɪ] during the first dictation (Table 3.3.5) and only one student got it right the second time around (Table 3.3.8). Misperceptions like this might lead to misunderstandings that could easily be avoided if the student was aware of native speaker /h/-drop in pronouns. How much does reduced pronunciation affect perception of overall meaning? If Student 16's

response from Table 3.3.5 is any indication, it is possible that, for some students, reductions could obscure meaning of an entire sentence, not just the function words. A further question one might ask is to what extent learner misperception is attributed to reduced phrases versus lack of vocabulary or context. This, however, is a query for another research project.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

My belief in the benefits of the explicit teaching of reduced speech mostly stems from my own personal encounters with English learners. While many of my anecdotes do not have empirical data to back them up, I feel that they are no less strong arguments for a better method of teaching listening comprehension.

5.1 The effect of teacher speech on student comprehension: a final anecdote

To my knowledge, none of the other teachers at the summer camp in California focused on listening and conversation skills in their classrooms. Based on discussions that I had with the other instructors I gathered that I was the only teacher whose class revolved heavily around listening and speaking. From conversations held by both teachers and students outside of class I learned that many of the other teachers focused mostly on writing, in which half of the class time was devoted to writing about a chosen topic and the other half devoted to reporting on what they had written. This is relevant because at the end of the first three weeks, I attempted to have a conversation with one of the students that had been placed into a higher-level class than the students I worked with every day. This particular student approached me to make small talk. He told me he was tired and not feeling up to the excursion scheduled for that day. I asked him, "Did you stay up late?" He frowned and asked me to repeat myself. I asked him again, "Did you stay up late?" He gave me a puzzled look and asked, "What is *uplay*?" I had been fully aware of my pronunciation while speaking with him. My groups of students were a couple levels below this particular student. I spoke to him as I spoke to my low-intermediate students – at normal speed with normal pronunciation. By the end of the third week, my students were showing improved

listening comprehension in conversation. This particular boy from an upper-level class still expected me to enunciate. Why was this?

I noticed that my coworker who taught his class made an effort to heavily articulate her speech when speaking with the students outside of class. She always articulated a released /t/ at the ends of words and spoke very slowly and carefully, much like the speakers on the audio-recordings that come with textbooks. When I might have asked a student "*D'ya wanna go?"* this particular teacher would make an effort to articulate the same utterance as [du ju want tʰu goʊ]. She did not speak this carefully with other native-speakers, lapsing into more relaxed pronunciation habits when students were not around. I noticed that she would switch to a very articulated manner of speaking with even the most advanced students. It drove me crazy. It is careful and planned speech styles such as this that cause learners to have false expectations of what they will hear outside the classroom.

Not only can teachers more adequately prepare their learners by avoiding using unnatural articulation with their students, but they can also incorporate authentic listening materials into their lessons and choose sound bites that are challenging yet manageable. Krashen (1977) stated in his theory of Input Hypothesis that language acquisition takes place when the learner is exposed to "comprehensible input" that is on a somewhat higher level than their current level. By limiting student exposure to highly articulated and scripted listening materials, instructors effectively block input that would push the boundaries of learner comprehension and help them reach the next level. Students are not going to learn to swim unless they are forced off the dock into the water. It is our job as language instructors to teach students the skills to navigate the muddy waters of communication with native-speakers. Explicit teaching of reduced speech,

through means of dictation exercises or other tools, is one way to prepare students for real-life interactions outside the classroom.

5.2 My personal action plan

What did I learn from this study that will change how I teach listening comprehension in the classroom? For one, it has made me aware of how I speak and pronounce chunks of words. I am more aware of what students interpret from my rapid speech style. Since this study I have begun to incorporate explicit teaching of reduced speech into lessons that focus on listening and speaking. I continue to make use of dictations as an assessment and learning tool. I will often stop and ask my students to evaluate listening material I have chosen to play for them. If a sound bite is particularly difficult I have them try to focus on what might be the main reason for its difficulty? Is it the speaker's pronunciation? The vocabulary? The speed at which they are speaking? I have made discussion a big part of the listening task, and even though I may choose material that is too difficult sometimes, I attempt to elicit student feedback to learn and fine-tune which materials are manageable yet pose the right amount of challenge. I do not shy away from using authentic materials, but rather, I support it by pre-teaching vocabulary items and pointing out pronunciation patterns the learners should be aware of for optimum comprehension.

In this way I hope to continue to help students feel more confident in their listening skills and prepare them to have successful interactions with native-speakers.

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Appendix A

Individual averages from Dictation 1 ranked in order of score

Stdnt	[lɛmi]	[d͡ʒə]	[gɪmi]	[kn]	[lɜt͡ʃə]	[amə˞ə]	[hæftə]	[kæ̃n?]	[d͡ʒu]	[wʌd͡ʒə]	[amə˞ə]	[ɜɪ]	[d͡ʒu]	[ɪm]	Ttls
22	100	50	100	100	100	50	0	0	50	66.7	50	0	50	0	51.19
2	100	0	100	100	100	50	100	100	0	33.3	50	0	0	0	52.38
5	100	50	100	100	50	0	0	100	50	33.3	0	0	50	100	52.38
3	100	50	100	0	0	0	100	100	50	100	0	0	50	100	53.57
10	100	50	100	100	100	50	50	0	50	66.7	50	0	50	100	61.91
8	100	50	100	100	100	0	100	0	50	66.7	100	0	50	100	65.49
12	100	50	100	100	100	50	100	0	50	66.7	50	0	50	100	65.48
13	100	50	100	100	100	0	100	100	50	66.7	0	0	50	100	65.48
20	100	50	100	100	100	50	100	100	0	33.3	50	0	50	100	66.66
6	100	50	100	100	100	0	100	100	50	100	0	0	50	100	67.88
23	100	50	100	100	100	50	100	100	50	66.7	50	0	100	0	69.05
16	100	50	100	100	100	50	100	100	50	66.7	50	0	50	100	72.62
15	100	50	100	100	100	100	100	100	50	66.7	50	0	50	100	76.19
19	100	50	100	100	100	50	100	100	50	66.7	100	0	50	100	76.19
24	100	50	100	100	100	50	100	100	50	66.7	100	0	50	100	76.19
21	100	50	100	100	100	50	100	100	50	100	100	0	50	100	78.57
17	100	50	100	100	100	100	100	100	50	66.7	100	0	50	100	79.76
1	100	100	100	100	100	50	100	100	50	66.7	100	0	100	100	83.34

Individual averages from Dictation 2 ranked in order of score

Stdnt	[kn̩]	[əm]	[aɪl]	[æftə]	[amə̃rə̃]	[dənoʊ]	[wʌt͡ʃə]	[ɪm]	[wanə]	[ɜɪ]	[wʌd͡ʒə]	[amə̃rə̃]	[d͡ʒit]	[wʌdəjə]	Ttls
10	0	0	50	100	0	100	100	0	50	0	66.7	0		100	47.44
5	100	0	50	0	100	100	33.3	100	100	0	0	100		100	52.56
12	100	0	0	0	0	100	100	100	100	0	66.7		100	100	55.13
3	100	0	0	0	0	100	100	100	100	0	66.7		0	100	58.98
16	0	0	0	0	100	100	100	100	100	0	66.7		100	100	58.98
22	0	0	50	0	100	100	100	100	100	0	66.7		50	100	58.98
2	0	100	50	0	100	100	33.3	100	100	0	33.3		50	100	62.81
13	100	0	50	100	0	100	100	100	100	0	66.7		50	100	66.67
19	100	0	50	0	100	100	100	100	100	0	66.7		50	100	66.68
24	0	0	100	0	100	100	100	100	100	0	100	100		66.7	66.68
20	100	0	50	0	100	100	100	100	100	0	66.7	100		66.7	67.95
21	100	0	50	0	100	100	100	100	100	0	100	50		66.7	70.52
1	100	100	50	0	100	100	100	100	100	0	100	50		100	73.08
17	100	0	50	100	100	100	100	100	50	0	100	100		100	73.08
23	100	100	50	0	100	100	66.7	100	100	0	100	100		100	74.36
8	100	0	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	0	66.7	50		100	78.21
6	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	0	0	100	50		100	84.61
15	100	100	50	0	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100		100	88.46

Appendix B

Samples of student work from Dictation 1