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## PREFACE

I have been interested in teaching connected speech in English as a second or foreign language (ESL or EFL) since 1980. At that time, I was teaching advanced EFL for the specific purposes of science and technology at the Guangzhou English Language Center in China. My students were in the first wave of scientists to go abroad from China in the early 1980s. They were bright, hard-working, and very observant. One day, one of them asked why it was that he could understand me when I talked in class, but could not understand when I talked with other American teachers. Clearly, the student was okay with my English when I was using the relatively clear and precise version often called *teacher talk*, but he was unable to understand when I used natural, relaxed, informal North American English (NAE) with my American colleagues. This is how I came to understand the need for teaching the connected speech of NAE.

In the process of trying to do a good job of teaching connected speech, I have returned repeatedly to the literatures on ESL/EFL pronunciation, speaking, and listening. I have found a bit here and a bit there on topics related to connected speech but with only one exception (a fairly technical linguistic treatment by Shockey, 2003), nothing that pulls the topic together in a single place. Certainly nothing that would be comprehensive and yet directly relevant to instructors interested in teaching connected speech. Because I found so little in the literature and because I had the training and willingness to do so, I decided to try to fill this gap in the resources available to ESL/EFL teachers. I began this process by editing a collection of articles on the topic of connected speech with my wife (Brown & Kondo-Brown, 2006a). The current book extends my efforts to provide resources to teachers on teaching connected speech by providing a collection of lesson-sized modules that are directly useful and applicable to teaching various aspects of connected speech in the ESL/EFL classroom. These modules were created by teachers for teachers, and I hope they will be applied widely for the benefit of ESL/EFL students everywhere.

I would like to finish this Preface by dwelling for just a bit on the notion of connected speech by defining it here in terms of what connected speech *is* and what it is *not*. Then I'll present some of the arguments I've worked out elsewhere for why we should teach connected speech in our ESL or EFL classrooms.

### What Connected Speech Is and Is Not

To many linguists and teachers, connected speech is the colloquial speech that native speakers use in everyday informal situations. However, I argue that connected speech is used in all native speaker talk, however to a lesser degree in very formal speech, to a greater degree in normal conversation, and to an even greater degree in colloquial or intimate conversation. Connected speech is based on a set of rules



used to modify the citation, or dictionary, pronunciations of words so they connect and flow more smoothly in natural speech. These rules have to do with word and utterance stress, the use of strong and weak forms of words; vowel and consonant reduction; syllable and word linking; the dropping of sounds, syllables, and words; inserting sounds; assimilation of sounds; contractions; and so forth. Readers will see in this book that such rules can (and should) be explained and taught, and that fun and interesting ESL/EFL lessons can be based on them. Note that, in the language teaching literature, connected speech is also known as *colloquial speech*, *casual speech*, *colloquial speech*, *fast speech*, *informal speech*, *reduced speech*, *reduced forms*, *relaxed speech*, *sandhi variation*, and probably many other names. Regardless of what it is called, the definition and the importance of the concept are the same.

What connected speech is not is *lazy*, *sloppy*, *careless*, *slovenly*, *substandard*, *nonstandard*, *illiterate*, *low-class*, *low-status*, or *vulgar*. These would all be types of speech that are noticeably different from the accepted standard. In contrast, when used in the appropriate situations, connected speech is not noticed at all by native speakers of English. This is why I have chosen to call it connected speech rather than some of the other labels listed above, and why I am completely non-judgmental about it.

### **Why ESL/EFL Instructors Should Teach Connected Speech**

In my view, there are at least a dozen reasons that ESL/EFL instructors should teach connected speech:

1. Connected speech is a very real part of the English language.
2. Students need to learn more about pronunciation than the phonemes, which we traditionally teach in isolation, that is, they need to learn connected speech.
3. Teaching pronunciation by discussing only the phonemes is like giving the students a pile of bricks and expecting them to be able to put them together and make a building; it is important to teach the phonemes but explaining how they change in different contexts is also important.
4. To use pragmatically appropriate English, students need to be able to adjust to various sorts of contextual constraints; understanding and using appropriate connected speech is a part of making such adjustments.
5. Connected speech is not just a sign of lazy, sloppy, careless, or slovenly English.
6. Connected speech is used in English at all levels formality (Hartmann & Stork, 1976, p. 136, after M. Joos, 1966) even very formal speech.

7. Connected speech plays an important “accentuation” role (Gimson, 2001, p. 249) and non-native speakers (NNS) of English need to understand that fact in order to appropriately comprehend and produce comprehensible spoken English.
8. The research shows that NNS have problems both comprehending and producing connected speech (Bley-Vroman & Kweon, 2002; Brown & Hilferty, 1986a, 1986b, 2006; Carreira, 2008; Henrichsen, 1984; Ito, 2001, 2006a; Kim, 1995; and Kweon, 2000).
9. Research also shows that connected speech can be taught to NNS (Brown & Hilferty, 1986a, 1986b, 2006; Carreira, 2008; Ito, 2006b, Crawford, 2005; Matsuzawa, 2006; Melenca, 2001).
10. Native speakers of English tend to feel that connected speech is friendlier, more natural, more sympathetic, and more personal. Is there any reason why NNS would prefer to be viewed as unfriendly, unnatural, unsympathetic, and impersonal?
11. Certain types of English may sound prissy, cold, or just plain ridiculous when spoken in a precise disconnected, English-textbook manner.
12. Perhaps most interesting to teachers, students actually enjoy learning about connected speech (Carreira, 2008).

Surely, one or more of these 12 reasons for teaching connected speech will resonate with any ESL/EFL teacher. If so, continue reading because you may find the teaching modules in this book very useful indeed. If not, continue anyway because the modules themselves may convince you of the usefulness of teaching connected speech. *Mahalo*.<sup>1</sup>

James Dean Brown  
 Kāne‘ohe, Hawai‘i, February 1, 2012

<sup>1</sup> n.b., I think *mahalo* in Hawaiian means: “I live in Hawaii and you don’t, nani nani boo boo!” But I could be wrong