

## **First Year (second Course)**

### **First Lecture**

#### **4. Consonant Sequences (P 64-65)**

Our discussion of consonants was concerned with the actual description of consonants, and now it is time to talk about how these consonants can be combined together in syllables.

#### **Can consonants follow each other in a syllable?**

In Arabic, for example, consonants cannot be clustered together in initial position of the syllable. This means whenever we find a consonant in an Arabic word, we should have a vowel after it making a (CV) syllable type which is the most frequent in Arabic.

In English, we may have more than one consonant in sequence initially and finally as well forming a consonant cluster or a consonant sequence.

- **What is a consonant sequence/ cluster?**

A consonant cluster is a sequence of more than one consonant that are pronounced smoothly altogether without any vowels in between. The word "stay" has a sequence of two consonants in the beginning which are /st/. The word "next" has a sequence of three consonants in the end of the word which are /kst/.

## Notes:

1. Not all languages allow consonant clusters.
2. A cluster may include two, three, or even four consonants in English words.
3. The structure of initial clusters (in the beginning) is different from final clusters (in the end).

## Initial Sequences

Initial consonant sequences are two or three consonants under the onset position of the syllable that are arranged one after the other without a vowel between them.

Initial **two** consonant sequences are of two types:

1. The first one should start with /s/ and followed by **7** consonants such as /sp/, /st/, /sk/ (for more details, have a look at P. 64 in your textbook).
2. The second one can start with a set of consonants such as /p, t, k, b, d, g, .../ followed by one of /l, w, r, j/ (for more examples, have a look at P. 64 in your textbook).

## Notes:

1. Not all consonants can be part of a consonant sequence.
2. Not all clusters of consonants are practically found in English such as /pw, dl/. Theoretically speaking, they are possible but really they are not found in English.

## How to pronounce a consonant sequence correctly?

When you have a sequence of consonants, try to pronounce the first a little bit longer than usual, meanwhile try to prepare your organs of speech to pronounce the second consonant. When you pronounce the cluster /sp/ in the word "spy", say a long /s/ then gradually close the lips for the sound /p/ until the /s/ is stopped. Don't end the /s/ until you close the lips for the /p/ in order to make sure that there is no vowel in between /s/ and /p/.

- In a cluster, the second consonant is **being prepared** while the first consonant is **being pronounced**.

## Question:

There are two mistakes Iraqi speakers of English usually do when they pronounce a consonant cluster, What are they?