

First Year (second Course)

Third Lecture

4.2 Final Sequences (P. 67-68)

In the last two lectures, we talked about sequences of two and three consonants in initial position, now we will talk about final clusters of consonants.

Let's us start with this question?

- Why do we have more detailed and various consonant clusters in final position of English words?

We have various and more detailed final clusters in English because we normally add suffixes to the end of words to change them from one word to another. Examples:

- The addition of (e)s to make plural nouns: book—books, car—cars, watch—watches.
- The addition of (e)s to verbs to change them into third person singular form: take—takes, phone—phones, change—changes.

The addition (e)s can be pronounced in three different ways and this gives more variety to final clusters. They can be pronounced as /s/, /z/, or /iz/ as in the above examples respectively.

- The addition of (e)d to verbs to change them into past or past participle form such as: cook—cooked, clean--cleaned, want—wanted.

The addition (e)d can also be pronounced in three different ways (/t/, /d/, and /id/, which makes final clusters more detailed and more varied.

- The addition of (th) to some nouns and to change numbers into ordinal forms such as "strength" (n) and "fifth, sixth, seventh" (ordinal numbers).

Stop+ stop

If you remember, the pronunciation of a stop sound requires a **complete closure** in the vocal tract i.e. two articulators are in complete contact and the air flow is trapped for a short time behind these organs of speech. We also need to release the air flow after a short time otherwise we will not be able to breathe. This is called the **release stage**.

To summarize, a stop sound requires a **closure stage** (the air is stopped), and a **release stage** (the air is pushed out of the mouth).

Now the question is:

- What if we have two stop consonants one after the other without a vowel between them, do we have a closure for each one of them? What about the release, do we have a release for each one of them?

To answer this question, we need to talk about two cases of stop+ stop clusters.

1. A cluster like /p+/t/ in the word "kept".

Here we need to make the closure for the stop sound /p/ by pressing the lips together for a short time, and while we are still closing our lips we prepare for the second closure for the sound /t/ which is made by raising the tongue-tip to be in contact with the alveolar ridge. After we make the closure for /t/ for a short time, we have the release stage and the air bursts out of the mouth.

So, we have a closure for /p/ and another closure at a different place for /t/ (two closures), and then we have one release only after the /t/ closure.

- Question: Explain the pronunciation of the stop+ stop (k+ t) in the word "act".