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JAPANESE ESL STUDENTS' USE
AND PERCEPTION OF ENGLISH
LINKING AND INTRUSIVE
SOUNDS.

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Abstract

This study investigates the use of linking and intrusive sounds in English by Japanese students studying university preparation English as a Second Language (ESL) courses at a tertiary institution in New Zealand. Such students covet a native-like accent, which in part comes from the ability of native English speakers to resolve the interruptions in the constant stream of language that they are producing. Producing a constant stream of English sounds more “natural” and “fluent”. Native English speakers have options to help them do this, which are called *sandhi*. This study focuses on six such features of connected speech: linking /j/, /w/ and /r/ sounds which are only pronounced when the following word begins with a vowel; and the intrusive versions of the same three sounds used to remove hiatus (interruptions in the flow of speech) between two vowel sounds. The purpose of this study is to investigate potential links between the usage of sandhi techniques and the current proficiency level of learners to see how teachers can best encourage the use of these “natural-sounding” features. By collecting speech samples from 38 participants and comparing them to the linking patterns of native English speakers as reported by other studies, this study endeavours to draw some conclusions about the usage of sandhi in Japanese ESL students.

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