

AAE103

## L11 : Weak Forms / Reduced Vowels

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### weak forms of monosyllabic function words

- many monosyllabic function words have a weak form
- the weak form is used in most situations

### prepositions

word	strong form	weak form
to	tu:	tə
of	ɒv	əv
at	æt	ət
as	æz	əz
for	fɔ:	fə

### a few have no weak form

word	pronunciation
off	ɒf
on	ɒn
up	ʌp

### articles

word	strong form	weak form
a	eɪ	ə
an	æn	ən
the	ði:	ðə/ðɪ

weak form of *the*:

- /ðə/ before consonants
- /ðɪ/ before vowels

### auxiliary verbs

word	strong form	weak form
can	kæn	kən
could	kʊd	kəd
be	bi:	bɪ
is	ɪz	s/z
are	ɑ:	ə
am	æm	əm/m
was	wɒz	wəz
were	wɜ:	wə
have	hæv	həv/əv

### weak form of *have*

- only when *have* is perfective
- /əv/ after consonants
- /həv/ elsewhere

### have/of

- weak form of both is /əv/
- many people confuse them:

?? I could of finished.

### pronouns

word	strong form	weak form
he	hi:	hɪ/ɪ
she	ʃi:	ʃɪ
his	hɪz	hɪz/ɪz
her	hɜ:	hə/ə

### some have no weak form

word	pronunciation
I	aɪ
my	maɪ
they	ðeɪ

### initial /h/ in *he, him, his, her*

- can be omitted after consonants:

Could he [ɪ] go?  
He [hɪ] could go.

Let her [ə] go.  
Her [hə] back hurts.

### omission of initial /h/

- /h/ can always be omitted in unstressed syllables

an historical novel

### reduced vowels in polysyllabic words

- the citation form of many polysyllabic words has a reduced vowel (schwa) in unstressed syllables
- this is NOT a weak form

control	/kən'trəʊl/
collapse	/kə'læps/
abroad	/ə'brɔ:d/
advantage	/əd'vɑ:ntɪdʒ/
about	/əbaʊt/

### NVEs and reduced vowels

- Many New Varieties of English do not have reduced vowels in all these words
- Yorkshire English also does not have reduced vowels in all of them

### 'o' : which have reduced vowel?

official	control
oppose	consider
original	compete
forget	commission
collect	commercial
donation	connection

### 'a' : which have reduced vowel?

advantage	apply
abroad	appropriate
adore	adventure
around	arouse
absorb	against
accuse	about
according	absurd
admire	abuse
approximate	abrupt

### reduced vowels and rhythm

- reduced vowels enhance stress-based rhythm
- full vowels lead to syllable-based rhythm

### Reading

- SoE 130-131 (note: *then* does not have a weak form)
- ESPROC ch 7
- Deterding, D (2005) 'Emergent patterns in the vowels of Singapore English'. *English World-Wide*, 26:2, 179-198