

## **English and Arabic Juncture**

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### **Abstract:**

Juncture is the relationship between one sound and the sounds that immediately precede and follow it. It is a para-phonotactic unit which refers to the boundaries between phonological entities. It is a morphophonemic phenomenon with double signification, a suprasegmental phoneme which changes the meaning and is important for phonological descriptions of languages. The aim of this study is to see how juncture affects the meaning of words and sentences. Slow or rapid speech can also determine the use of juncture which marks the break between sounds and the phonological boundary of words, clauses or sentences. However, the ambiguity of meaning resulting from the placement of juncture can be solved by context. Stress placement on certain words also affects the use of juncture and leads to a change in meaning. In this study English and Arabic junctures were identified within words, phrases and sentences. The place of juncture affects the length, shortening of sounds and the

Aspiration of plosives. Arab learners of English usually tend to insert a glottal stop at the beginning of every word speaking hesitantly. Therefore, it is useful for students to practise juncture and it is also valuable to do exercises related to juncture and linking. Besides, learners of English should be aware of the problems that they will meet in listening to connected speech.

## الوقف في الإنجليزية والعربية

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### ملخص البحث:

الوقف هو العلاقة بين صوت معين والاصوات التي تسبقه والتي تتبعه مباشرة والوقف هو وحدة شبه صوتية parophonotactic تشير الى الحدود بين الكيانات الصوتية والقطع بين الكلمات والعبارات والجمل وهي ظاهرة فونيمية صرفية morphophonemic ذات دلالة ثنائية

فوق الصوتية تغير المعنى ومهمة للوصف الصوتي للغات .وتهدف هذه الدراسة الى معرفة تأثير نقطة اتصال (او قطع) الصوت على معاني الكلمات والجمل حيث ان وضع التشديد على كلمات معينة يؤثر ايضا على استخدام الوقف و يؤدي الى تغيير المعنى فقد تم تشخيص الوقف في العربية و الانكليزية على مستوى الكلمات والعبارات والجمل ويؤثر موضع الوقف على طول وقصر الصوت و تنفس السواكن التوقفية ( الانفجارية ) كما يستطيع الكلام السريع او البطيء ان يحدد استخدام الوقف . ان غموض المعنى الناتج عن الوقف يمكن ان يحل عن طريق السياق الكلامي و يلاحظ ان الطلبة الناطقين بالعربية يميلون الى ادخال توقف في الحنجرة (همزة)

في بداية كل كلمة ويتكلمون بتردد لذلك فانه من المفيد للطلبة ان يتدربوا على الكلام المتصل ويقوموا بتمارين ترتبط بالوصل والقطع اضافة الى ان متعلمي اللغة الانكليزية يجب ان يدركوا المشاكل التي سيواجهونها عند الاصغاء الى الكلام المتواصل.

## 1. Introduction

Juncture is used to break up the whole utterance into groups. It is phonemic because it changes the meaning , and is said to be superposed on the segmental phonemes , it is called a suprasegmental phoneme. The concept of juncture has been extensively explored and discussed by English linguists. For instance, in America juncture has been an ongoing theme , an object of numerous discussion and a point of many disputes and disagreements . However, in Arabic, juncture has been little discussed

by Arab linguists . Juncture is important for phonological descriptions of languages . Science language is articulated and since articulation is a division into discrete things , we necessarily come, at every step in an analysis of a language , across points where one thing ends and another begins.(Bican,2006:2)

## 2. The Aim

The aim of the present work is to discuss the concept of juncture in both English and Arabic language and to see how it affects meaning of words and sentences.

## 3. Method

In this research, there has been an interest in identifying junctures at the word , phrase and sentence level . Arabic junctures were collected from landmarks and advertisements. Possible junctures were also tried by going through the Arabic–English Dictionary by Milton(1974). Possible meaningful junctures from the Glorious Quran and Arabic rhetoric specially at the sentence level were also identified.

## 4. Juncture

**Juncture** is " the relationship between one sound and the sounds that immediately precede and follow it ( Roach , 1988 , 110 ) Juncture is a para-phonotactic unit with a deliminative function. It refers to the boundaries between phonetic or phonological entities such as phonemes , syllables , morphemes , words , intermediate prosodic phrases, and intonational phrases ( Mannell , 200 : 3 ). Cues to juncture are acoustic features that help us determine

the boundary between two entities. Intonational phrase boundaries always include a pause. Intermediate phrase boundaries and other lower – level boundaries are realized by types of boundary then it is within, for example, a syllable. Dictionary of the English Language ( 2006 ) by Houghton Co. defines juncture as: (a) a pause or other phonological feature or modification of a feature as the lengthening of a preceding phoneme or the strengthening of a following one , marking a transition or break between sounds, esp. marking the phonological boundary of a word , clause , or sentence: it is present in such words as **night-rate** and **re-seed** and absent in such words as **nitrate** and **recede**. (b) the point in a word or group of words at which such a pause or other junctural marker occurs. (c) The transition or mode of transition from one sound to another in speech. Juncture is a term which refers to the relationship between one sound and the sounds that immediately precede and follow it. Consider the following example:

/ə greiteip / This can be understood as:

1. a grey tape / ə 'grei + 'teip/ or
2. a great ape /ə 'greit + 'eip/ ( Hassan and AL – Shayib , 1987 : 159 )

The problem lies in the relation between / ei / and /t/. This can be decided according to the position of the word boundaries. If the boundary occurs between /ei/ and /t/, the identity of the words **grey** and **tape** may be established by the full length of / ei / in **grey** ( in an open word -final syllable ) and the aspiration of / t / in **tape**. On the other hand , if the boundary occurs between /t/ and /ei/ , **great** and **ape** may be established by the shortening of / ei / in **great** and the unaspirated / t /. The juncture between /ei/ and /t/ is called open juncture.

Roach ( 1988 :110 ) gives the example " my turn " /mai t3:n/. The relationship between /m/ and /ai/, between /t/ and /3:/ and

between /3:/ and / n / is said to be of close juncture. / m / is preceded by silence and / n / is followed by silence , and so /m/ and /n/ are said to be in a position of external open juncture .The problem lies in deciding what the relationship is between / ai / and / t / , since we do not usually pause between words there is no silence ( or external open juncture) to indicate word division and to justify the space left in the transcription . But if English speakers hear / mait3:n / they can usually recognize this as 'my turn' and not 'might earn ' . This is where the problem of internal open juncture ( usually just called " juncture for short " ) becomes apparent . / t / is aspirated (being initial in 'turn' ) and / ai / is shorter in might (Roach , 1988:110)

The position of a word boundary has some effect on the realization of the /t/ phoneme. In / pi:sto:ks / , if the sound / s / is assigned to the following sound / t/ we shall have an open juncture in pea stalks / pi: + sto:ks / but if the sound /s/ is related to the preceding /i:/ ,we shall have a close juncture peace talks / pi:s to:ks / in which there is no further possible cut. Roach gives examples to show the significance of juncture:

- a. might rain /mait rein/ ( r voiced when initial in 'rain', /ai/ is short)
  - b. my train /mai trein / (r voiceless following /t/ in 'train')
  - a. He lies /hi: laiz/ (clear /l/ initial in **lies**)
  - b. heal eyes /hi:l aiz/ (dark /l/ final in **heal**)
  - a. keep sticking /ki:p stikin / (/t/ is unaspirated after /s/, /i:/ is short)
- (Roach,1988:110)

The following examples from Gimson(1978:300) illustrate various ways in which phonetic cues may mark word boundaries.

/əneim /        a 'name /ə neim/ (relatively long /n/)

                  an 'aim/ən eim/ (relatively short /n/ )

/ ðætstʌf/        can be said in two different ways to give two different meanings according to the place of juncture.

/ ðæt stʌf / that 'stuff (unaspirated/t/,strong /s/)

/ ðats tʌf / 'that's 'tough (aspirated /t/,weaker /s/)

He also gives the following examples:

/ðəweitəkʌtit/ can be understood either as:

the waiter cut it /ðə+weitə+kʌt+it/

Or the way to cut it /ðə+wei+tə+kʌt+it/

/haustreind/ how strained /hau streind/

house trained /haus treind/

/waitʃu:z/ white shoes /wait ʃu:z/

why choose /wai tʃu:z/

naitreit night rate/nait reit/

nitrate /naitreit/ (Gimson, 1978:301)

Nasr(1963 , 38-9) states that there is one internal juncture phoneme in English - a plus juncture ,symbolized by/+/ (plus sign). This is verified by citing examples , " each compared with minimally differing item having normal transition or the interruption at a different point..." "phonetic features may be retained in the speech continuum which marks word or morpheme boundaries. Thus, the phonemic sequence /aɪskri:m/ may mean:

I scream / aɪ + skri:m / with long / aɪ / , strong /s/ related to /k/ and unaspirated /k/ after /s/ or Ice cream /aɪs kri:m / with no further possible meaningful cut and /s/ is related to /aɪ/ in which /aɪ/ is weaker and /k/ is aspirated . Such phonetic differentiation depends on the speaker's consciousness of the word as an independent entity.

Stagaberg(1971:69) says that by internal open juncture we are able to make distinctions between pairs like : its praise, it sprays ; Grade A, gray day ; see mabel , seem able ; keep sticking , keeps ticking ; a nice, an ice it swing , its wing ; why choose , white shoes ; its lid , it slid . But although most native speakers have little difficulty in perceiving

internal juncture they have trouble in explaining just what gives them a sense of break or separation at the junctural point. It is only through the combined efforts of sharp-eared linguists and spectrographic analysis that we have been able to learn the conditions under which internal juncture occurs. In general, it is the nature of the sounds surrounding the juncture that serves to locate it. Staggberg gives the example " /itswingz/ which can be understood as

/it + swingz / or / its + wingz/. The initial / s/ of swings is longer than the final / s / of **its** . In **wings** the / w / is voiced , but in **swings** the /w/ is wholly or partially devoiced because of the preceding voiceless /s/ (Staggberg,1971:70)

## 4.1 Types of English Juncture

There are four types of English juncture:

1. Open or plus juncture represented by the symbol /+/. It stands in contrast to " close " transition i.e. lack of potential pause. In the utterance:

Sue came home. / su: keim houn / , the transition between /s/ and /u:/ is " close " but the transition between /u:/ and /k/ is open. The speaker can pause between /su:/ and /keim/ and between came/keim/ and /houn/ but not between /k/ and /ei/. (AL-Hammash,1984:125)

2. The second type of juncture separates word groups inside a sentence. it is potential ( optional) and it is called "single bar' usually represented as:

/ . For example the following sentence can be said in three different ways:

The boy who came here is Ali.

The boy / who came here/ is Ali.

The boy who came here/ is Ali.

3. If the pause within a sentence is obligatory it is represented by a double bar //. For example:

Ali//who is a friend of mine//needs it.

He//I think// is a poor man.

4. The terminal juncture that ends the utterance represented by a double cross ++. Linguists, however, distinguish three types of terminal juncture:

a. falling as in :

I 'am going 'houm.++

Go to your room.++

Who is your friend? ++

It is characterized by a rapid fadeaway of the voice into silence and by a prolongation of the preceding word with pitch level

b. Rising terminal

Are you there?++

c. Level pause (sustained terminal)

All the passengers > seemed unwell.++ (AL-Hammash, 1984:127-28)

All the occupants of the 'car > seemed dazed by the sh'ock^. It is heard at the end of a long sentence-subject (Stagaberg, 1981:55)

## 4.2 Juncture and Stress

Stress placement on certain words for a certain purpose leads to pause and accordingly to a change in meaning, e.g.,

**Every'day** passengers enjoy a meal like this = Passengers enjoy the meal **everyday**.

**Everyday** p'assengers enjoy a meal like this = **Ordinary** passengers enjoy a meal like this.

I consider **'these 'errors** = I consider these things to be errors.



I consider these **'errors** = I **think** about these errors.

Stagaberg(1981,66,315) gives the following examples:

He gave the 'library 'books = He gave the books belonging to the library.

Library the He gave the library **'books** = He gave books to

Another example is /gri:nhaus/ which means either 'green+'house(a house which is painted green ) or 'greenhouse (a house with glass sides used for growing plants).

### 4.3 Arabic Juncture

There are two juncture phonemes in Arabic:

- 1.a plus juncture , symbolized by / + / and
- 2.a minimal juncture , symbolized by /-/

In a sentence with only plus junctures ,as in:

/sæ'iqu+lqita:r+lqadi:m/

سائق القطار القديم

We cannot tell whether it is the driver of the old train or the old driver of the train.In the same sentence without any juncture signs,

/sæ'iquqlqita:rlqadi:m/

- 1.the glottal stops are eliminated
- 2.the utterance is still ambiguous ,and
- 3.the syllabic structure for the placement of stress is not clear.

With the minimal junctures,

/sæ'iqu-lq'ita:r-lq'adi:m/ the utterance is still ambiguous but the placement of stress is clear.The use of minimal juncture would do three things:

- 1.eliminates the glottal stops,
- 2.gives specific meaning to the utterance,and
- 3.makes clear the syllabic structure for the placement of stress

Thus,/ sæ'iqu lqita:r + lqadi:m/ = The old driver of the train

/sæ'iqu+ lqita:r lqadi:m/ = The driver of the old train

In very slow speech one would expect many more plus junctures than in rapid or even normal speech. Note the following examples;

/kafi:fɪdam/ خفيف الدم Can be either /kafi + fɪdam/ hidden in blood

Or /kafi:f + dam / Light blooded with long /i:/

This depends on whether we relate the last /f/ of /kafi:f/ to the preceding or the following sounds , if we relate it to the following sounds it becomes a preposition /fi:/ and accordingly the meaning will be changed.

2./aʃha:blbeit/ اصحاب البيت which means either /aʃha:b + lbeit/ (owners of the house ) or /aʃha bilbeit/ (I wake up in the house) with the sound /b/ is either assigned to /aʃha/ or to /lbeit/. In the second case the sound /b/ functions as a preposition and /a:/ is longer in /aʃha:b/ than in /aʃha/

3./da'i:flqalb/ means either /da'i:f + lqalb/ (weak hearted) ضعيف+القلب

or /da'i: + flqalb/ (put in the hear) ضعي + في القلب

4./alhummaʃʃafræ'/ can be understood as

/alhumma+ʃʃafræ'/ (yellow +fever) الحمى+الصفراء

/alhummaʃ+ʃafræ'/ (Yellow+chickpea) الحمص+صفرا

This depends on whether /ʃ/ is assigned to the following /ʃ/ or the previous /a/. The meaning is changed accordingly.

5./hæmilquræn/ is understood as /hæmi+lquræn/ the defender of the Quran with longer /i/ in /hæmi/ and light /l/ in /lquræn/ ( /l/ is always light in Arabic except in **Allah** )

Or /hæmil+quran/ holding Quran (with shorter /i/ in /hæmil/ and strong /q/ in /quran/)

6./ bilædihin / means either

/ bilæ+dihn / without oil

بلا + دهن

or / bilædihn/ their country

بلادهم

7./alax̣bar/ means either

/alaḳba:r/ the news

or /alaḳ+ba:r/(brother +faithful) الاخ + بار

8./kallamatni/ means either

/kalla+matni/my shoulder got tired كل + متني

or/kallamatni/ She spoke to me. كلمتني

9.The sound sequence /masæ'i:d/ مساعد can be either:

/masæ' +i:d/ Ead evening

Or /masæ'i:d/ plural of /mas'u:d/ where there is no further meaningful possible cut.

10./salsabi:l/ means either

/sal+sabi:l/(ask+ the way) سل + سبيل

or /salsabi:l/ (spring or well) سلسبيل

11./d3æmu:sa/ means either:

/d3æ+mu:sa/ Moses came.

جا (ء) + موسى

or /d3æmu:sa/buffalo

جاموسة

12./kafan/ means either:

/k+fan/as an art لك + فن

Or /kafan/coffin

كفن

13/fahæma/ either/f + hæma/ then he wandered

Or /fahæma/ understanding or intelligence

14./shaifalhafla/ can be understood as

/ʃai+filhafla/(tea+ at the party) شاي + في الحفلة

or/ʃaif+lhafla/Do you see the party? شاي ف + الحفلة

/ai/ in /ʃai/ is longer than /ai/ in /ʃaif/ and /f/ in /filhafla/ is stronger than /f/ in /ʃaif/. The change in meaning is due to the assignment of the sound /f/ to the previous or to the following sounds.

15./ʃailwazza/ means either

/ʃai+lwazza/ (goose mark tea) شاي + الوزه

or/ʃail+wazza/(holding a goose) شاي ل + وزه

It depends on whether /l/ is related to /shai/ or to /wazza/

16.The sound sequence /d3awfileil/ can be understood as

/d3aw+fileil/(They came+ at night) جو (جاؤا) + في الليلة

Or/d3awf+leil/(mid+ night) جوف + الليل

17./kalfilbait/ can be understood either as

/kal+filbait/(vinger+in the house) خل + في البيت

Or /kalf+l bait/(behind+the house) خلف + البيت

depending on whether the sound /f/ is assigned to the previous sound group or to the following one.

**A word within a sentence** can also belong to the following group or the preceding one ,and this results in a change of meaning,e.g.,

١. وما يعلم تأويله الا الله/ والراسخون في العلم/ يقولون امنا به (ال عمران ٧)

" But none knows its hidden meaning except Allah/ and those who are firmly grounded in knowledge/say:"we believe in it."(AL-'imran 7,AL-Hilali and Khan,1996,p.84 ).If the juncture is placed after Allah , it

means that only **Allah** knows the interpretation of the Quran , but if it is placed after the word knowledge it means that **Allah and those who are grounded in knowledge** know its interpretation.

٢. قالوا ياويلتنا من بعثنا من مرقدنا /هذا/ ما وعد الرحمن وصدق المرسلون (يس ٥٢)

"Woe to us ! Who has raised us up from our place of sleep /this/ is what Allah had promised , and the messengers spoke truth!"(Ya-sin,52, AL-Hilali and Khan ,1996,P.631)

The word **this** is read either as "**this** place of sleep"or with the following sentence,"**This** is what Allah had promised"

٣. انما يستجيب الذين يسمعون/ والموتى/ يبعثهم الله ثم اليه يرجعون(الأنعام ٣٦)

"It is only those **who listen will respond** and the dead Allah will raise them up , then to Him they will be returned."(AL-An'am 36, AL-Hilali and Khan,1996,P.196). If the word " **الموتى** " (the dead ) is related to the previous sentence then it means that those who listen and the dead will respond , but if it is assigned to the following clause then it means that the dead will be raised up and returned to Allah.

٤. سلام هي/ حتى مطلع الفجر(القدر ٥) It is peace. until the appearance of dawn

سلام/ هي حتى مطلع الفجر Peace.It is until the appearance of dawn.

(AL-Qadr,5,AL-Hilali and Khan,1996,P.879)

٥.كلوا من رزق ربكم واشكروا له/ بلدة طيبة ورب غفور(سبأ ١٥)

كلوا من رزق ربكم واشكروا له بلدة طيبة/ ورب غفور

"Eat of the provision of your lord and **thank him**/ a fair land and an oft-forgiving lord!"(Saba',15,AL-Hilali and Khan,1996,P.612). If the juncture is placed after **him**, it means thank Allah but if it is placed after "a fair land" then it means "**thank for the fair land**"which is not intended in this context.The thanks are only directed to Almighty Allah.

٦. ذلك الكتاب لا ريب / فيه هدى للمتقين (البقرة ٢)

"This is the book(The Quran) there is no doubt/ in it there a guidance to the pious believers" or

ذلك الكتاب لا ريب فيه / هدى للمتقين

"This is the book no doubt in it / it is a guidance to the pious believers.

(AL-Baqarah,2,Al-Hilali and Khan,1996,P.13)

The meaning of the following verse of poetry , whether it is praise or satire, depends on the place of juncture.

دع المكارم لا ترحل لبغيتها واقعد فأنت انت الطاعم الكاسي(ديوان الحطيئة؛ ص ٢٨٤)

The meaning can be understood in two ways:

دع المكارم / لاترحل لبغيتها

Leave the noble traits / don't go seeking for them(You are not fit for noble traits.The poet is mocking the Ameer),or

/دع المكارم لاترحل لبغيتها/

/Don't let the noble traits go where they want/(Let them stay with you because you are fit for them,praising the Ameer).The second part of the verse is also ambiguous but not because of the placement of juncture.

## 4.4 Conclusion

Juncture is a morphophonemic phenomenon with double signification . It refers to the relationship between the preceeding and the following sounds which can be decided by the position of word boundary. However, word division should be meaningful and the space in the transcription should be justified. The recognition of the native speaker of meaningful pauses is determined by the context. The

position of juncture in /hi:laiz/ is realized by the native speaker as /hi: + laiz/ and not as /hi:l + aiz/. The place of juncture affects the length and shortening of sounds and the aspiration of plosives. On the other hand, native speakers of Arabic and English have little difficulty in perceiving internal juncture. The nature of the sounds that surround juncture serve to locate it. They have trouble in explaining the sense of break or separation at the juncture point. The fade away of voice into silence and prolongation of the preceding word affects intonation, fall, rise and level pause. The use of stress and pause also leads to a change in meaning. In Arabic it is related to the elimination of glottal stop, stress placement and meaning of the utterance. Slow, rapid speech also determines the use of juncture. It is phonemic because it changes the meaning. It is a supra-segmental phoneme. It is a paraphonotactic unit with a delimitative function which helps us to determine the boundary between two entities and marks break between sounds. It marks the phonological boundary of a word, clause, or sentence. Though juncture is a source of lexical or syntactic ambiguity, the ambiguity can be solved by the context.

The English plus juncture phoneme in itself constitutes no problem to the Arab students, it can be easily heard and produced by them. However, since the use of both juncture phonemes in Arabic does not eliminate all the glottal stops in initial word positions, an Arab student will be heard using glottal stops at the beginning of every word in English utterances speaking hesitantly instead of liaising words.

There is also a great deal of difference between the way words are pronounced in isolation and in the context of connected speech. Practice in making junctures is useful and it is valuable to do exercises related to juncture and linking. Learners of English should, therefore, be aware of the problems that they will meet in listening to connected speech.

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