Topics in Phonetics

Session 2: Transcribing connected speech

1. Read this text out loud. Pay particular attention to weak forms, assimilation, elision, coalescence and (if you have a non-rhotic accent) linking and intrusive /r/.

The Story of Arthur the Rat

Once upon a time there was a rat who couldn’t make up his mind. Whenever the other rats asked him if he would like to come out hunting with them, he would answer in a hoarse voice, “I don’t know.” And when they said, “Would you rather stay inside?” he wouldn’t say yes, or no either. He’d always shirk making a choice.

One fine day his aunt Josephine said to him, “Now look here! No one will ever care for you if you carry on like this. You have no more mind of your own than a greasy old blade of grass!”

The young rat coughed and looked wise, as usual, but said nothing.

“Don’t you think so?” said his aunt stamping with her foot, for she couldn’t bear to see the young rat so coldblooded.

“I don’t know,” was all he ever answered, and then he’d walk off to think for an hour or more, whether he would stay in his hole in the ground or go out into the loft.

1. Write out a phonemic transcription of the following two sentences:
2. Whenever the other rats asked him if he would like to come out hunting with them, he would answer in a hoarse voice, “I don’t know.”
3. “Don’t you think so?” said his aunt stamping with her foot, for she couldn’t bear to see the young rat so coldblooded.