

3.2. Assimilation

3.2.1. Definition

“In cases where we find a phoneme realised differently as a result of being near some other phoneme belonging to a neighbouring word, we call this difference an instance of **assimilation**. Assimilation is something which varies in extent according to speaking rate and style: it is more likely to be found in rapid, casual speech and less likely in slow, careful speech” (Roach, 2009, p.110).

Assimilation is the influence of a sound on another neighboring sound to the extent that the two become similar. Assimilation can take two main forms, namely: regressive assimilation and progressive assimilation. **Progressive assimilation** is assimilation in which a preceding sound has an effect on a following one. For example, washed /wɒʃt/ (**d** to **t**) and loved /lʌvd/ (**d** to **d**). **Regressive assimilation**, is an assimilation in which the sound that undergoes the change comes earlier in the word than the trigger of assimilation. For example, in connected speech, light blue /laɪt blu:/ is pronounced /laɪ**p** blu:/, bright color /braɪt 'kʌlə/ is pronounced /braɪ**k** 'kʌlə/, and that person /ðæt 'pɜ:sn/ is pronounced /ðæ**p** 'pɜ:sn/.

3.2.2. Types of assimilation:

We can identify three types of assimilation: 1) Assimilation of place, 2) Assimilation of manner, and 3) Assimilation of voice.

A) Assimilation of place is when a sound changes its place of articulation to another place. This change of place depends on the place of articulation of the neighboring sounds.

Regressive /t/ changes to /p/ before the bilabial /p, b, m/.			
Phrases	Transcription	Phrases	Transcription
First base		Pocket money	
Private property		Secret police	
Mixed marriage		Fruit machine	
Direct method		Sweet potato	
Put back		White meat	
Foot brake		That man	

/d/ changes to /b/ before the bilabial /p, b, m/			
Phrases	Transcription	Phrases	Transcription
Bad pain		Gold mine	
Blood pressure		Good morning	
Command post		Hold back	
Red bag		Old man	

/t/ changes to /k/ before /the velar k/ or /g/			
Phrases	Transcription	Phrases	Transcription
Credit card		Street cry	
First class		Flat cap	
Cut glass		Smart clothes	
Short cut		That cake	

/d/ changes to /g/ before the velar /k/ or /g/			
Phrases	Transcription	Phrases	Transcription
Cold cream		Hard copy	
Hard crash		Sand castle	
Second class		Red carpet	
Highland cattle		Slide guitar	

/n/ changes to /ŋ/ before the velar /k/ or /g/.			
Phrases	Transcription	Phrases	Transcription
Action group		Tin can	
Golden gate		Town clerk	
Human capital		Open court	
Roman catholic		Iron curtain	

/s/ changes to /ʃ/ before /j/ or /j/.			
Phrases	Transcription	Phrases	Transcription
Dress shop		Bus shelter	
Nice shoes		This year	
Nice yacht		This shop	
Space shuttle			

/z/ changes to /ʒ/ before /j/ or /j/.	
Phrases	Transcription
Cheese shop	
Rose show	
These sheep	
As you	

B) Assimilation of manner refers to two neighboring sounds becoming similar in their manner of articulation.

Regressive: /θ/ changes to /s/ before /s/			
Phrases	Transcription	Phrases	Transcription
Both sides		Earth science	
North south		Fourth season	
Both sexes		Fifth set	

Plosive + fricative = fricative	
Phrases	Transcription
/t/ + /s/ = /s/: that side	
/t/ + /z/ = /z/: that zoo	
/d/ + /s/ = /s/: good song	
/d/ + /z/ = /z/: bad zone	

Plosive + nasal = nasal	
Phrases	Transcription
/t/ + /n/ = /n/: that night	
/d/ + /n/ = n: good night	

Progressive: /ð/ follows the preceding plosive or a nasal sound	
Phrases	Transcription
In the	/ɪnnə/
Get them	/gettəm/
Read them	/ri:ddəm/

C) Assimilation of voice refers to the influence of voicing quality in neighboring sounds. The vibration of the vocal cords is not something that can be switched on and off very swiftly, as a result groups of consonants tend to be either all voiced or all voiceless.

Progressive	
Words	Transcriptions
Likes	
Dogs and cats	
Lies	
Happened	

Regressive	
Words	Transcriptions
Of (f) course	
Has (s) to	
Have (f) to	
Supposed (s) to	
Used (s) to	