

Unit 3: Aspects of connected speech

Lesson 2: Assimilation

Assimilation is the influence of a sound on another neighboring sound to the extent that the two become similar. "It is more likely to be found in rapid, casual speech and less likely in slow, careful speech" (Roach, 2009, p.110).

1. **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**).
2. **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 /laɪp blu:/, bright color /braɪt 'kʌlə/ is pronounced /braɪk 'kʌlə/, and that person /ðæt 'pɜːsn/ is pronounced /ðæp 'pɜːsn/.

Types of assimilation:

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
Secret police	/ 'si:kri:t pə'li:s/
Put back	/pʊt bæk/
Foot brake	/fʊt breɪk/

/d/ changes to /b/ before the bilabial /p, b, m/	
Phrases	Transcription
Bad pain	/bæd peɪn/
Blood pressure	/blʌd 'preʃə/
Hold back	/həʊld bæk/

/n/ changes to /ŋ/ before the velar /k/ or /g/.			
Phrases	Transcription	Phrases	Transcription
Golden gate	'gəʊldən geɪt	Iron curtain	'aɪən 'kɜːtn

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

Progressive: /ð/ follows the preceding plosive or a nasal sound	
Phrases	Transcription
Get them	/gettəm/
Read them	/riːdðəm/

Regressive: /θ/ changes to /s/ before /s/			
Phrases	Transcription	Phrases	Transcription
Both sides	bəʊθ saɪdz	Earth science	ɜ:θ 'saɪəns
North south	nɔ:θ saʊθ	Fourth season	fɔ:θ 'si:zn
Both sexes	bəʊθ 'seksɪz	Fifth set	fɪfθ sɛt

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
Dogs and cats	dɒgz ænd kæts
Happened	'hæpənd

Regressive	
Words	Transcriptions
Has (s) to	hæz tu:
Have (f) to	hæv tu: