

Phonetics and Phonology

summer 2007

Lecture 7

ASPECTS OF CONNECTED SPEECH II

ASSIMILATION

- **Assimilation**

= one sound made similar to another, “spodoba” in Czech

- sounds belonging to one word can cause changes in sounds belonging to neighbouring words
- it is the natural result of the various speech organs ‘cutting corners’ as they perform their complex sequence of movements, and this occurs mostly at word boundaries and affects mainly consonant sounds
- however we must not think that 1 consonant is the ‘attacker’ and the other the ‘victim’ – it is rather a case of MUTUAL influence
- although it follows fairly regular patterns, assimilation is different in different languages; we cannot therefore simply apply the assimilations from eg Czech to English
- learners who do not assimilate at all may sound over-precise, too careful, and this can inhibit the use of English rhythm and intonation patterns, resulting in a loss of both fluency and clarity of meaning!

Discovery activity:

Here are examples of the main kinds of assimilation in English. Say the following phrases first as isolated words and then several times as connected speech. Do you change any of the sounds at the word boundaries? (Try to transcribe the words in the space provided and then check it with the last column).

	said in isolation	as connected speech you try	assimilation in con.speech
ten pin bowling	/ten pɪn bæʊlɪŋ/	/	/tem pɪm bæʊlɪŋ/
in bed	/ɪn bed/	/	/ɪm bed/
good bye	/gʊd baɪ/	/	/gʊb baɪ/
hit man	/hɪt mæn/	/	/hɪp mæn/
tin man	/tɪn mæn/	/	/tɪm mæn/
good girl	/gʊd gɜ:l/	/	/gʊg gɜ:l/
this shop	/ðɪs ʃɒp/	/	/ðɪʃ ʃɒp/
these shops	/ði:z ʃɒps/	/	/ði:z ʃɒps/
have to go	/hæv tə gəʊ/	/	/hæf tə gəʊ/
how d’you do	/haʊ dʒu du:/	/	/haʊ dʒu du:/
don’t you know	/dəʊnt ju nəʊ/	/	/dəʊntʃə nəʊ/

- **Types of assimilation**

2 basic types are distinguished according to the direction of influence between neighbouring sounds :

- 1) **regressive assimilation** : one sound influences the preceding sound (C1 ← C2)
- 2) **progressive assimilation**: one sound influences the following sound (C1 → C2)

- Assimilation affects consonants and their three distinctive features:
 - a) assimilation of place of articulation
 - b) assimilation of manner of articulation
 - c) assimilation of voicing

REGRESSIVE ASSIMILATION

1. Place of articulation

o alveolar consonant /t,d,n/	← non-alveolar C /p,b,m,k,g/
↓	
non-alveolar C	

/t/	that person,	that bag,	that man
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↓

/p/	/ðæp pɜːsn/	/ðæp bæɡ/	/ðæp mæn/
-----	-------------	-----------	-----------

/d/	good person,	good bye,	good man
-----	--------------	-----------	----------

↓

/b/	/ɡʊb pɜːsn/	/ɡʊb baɪ/	/ɡʊb mæn/
-----	-------------	-----------	-----------

/n/	ten people,	ten bags,	ten minutes
-----	-------------	-----------	-------------

↓

/m/	/tem piːpl/	/tem bæɡz/	/tem mɪnɪts/
-----	-------------	------------	--------------

/t/	that colour,	that garden
-----	--------------	-------------

↓

/k/	/ðæk kʌlə/	/ðæk ɡɑːdən/
-----	------------	--------------

/d/	good girl,	red colour
-----	------------	------------

↓

/g/	/ɡʊɡ ɡɜːl/	/reg kʌlə/
-----	------------	------------

/n/	in case,	ten couples,	ten girls
-----	----------	--------------	-----------

↓

/ŋ/	/ɪŋ keɪs/	/ten kʌplz/	/ten ɡɜːlz/
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o alveolar C /s,z/	← non-alveolar C /j, ʃ/	} assimilation
↓		
non-alveolar C		

/s/ this year, this ship, this young man

↓

/ʃ/ /ðɪʃ jɜ:/ /ðɪʃ ʃɪp/ /ðɪʃ jʌŋ mæn/

/z/ those years, those ships, as you know

↓

/ʒ/ /ðəʊz jɜ:z/ /ðəʊz ʃɪps/ /əz ju nəʊ/

○ alveolar C ← non-alveolar C

/t,d/

/j/

} affrication

↓
non-alveolar C

/t/ don't you, won't you

↓

/tʃ/ /dəʊntʃ ju/ /wəʊntʃ ju/

/d/ would you, could you

↓

/dʒ/ /wʊdʒ ju/ /kʊdʒ ju/

Examples in Czech:

pan král /paŋ kra:l/ sedni si /sed'ni si/ hanba /hamba/

2. Manner of articulation

○ plosive C ← nasal C

↓

nasal C

/d/ good night

↓

/n/ /gʊn naɪt/

○ plosive C ← fricative C

↓

fricative C

/t/ that side

↓

/s/ /ðæs saɪd/

Examples in Czech:

dětský /d'ɛcki:/ bohatství /bohactvi:/ kanadský /kanacki:/

3. Assimilation of voice (only regressive!)

C lenis=voiced ← C fortis=voiceless

↓

no voicing (eg. *leaD through the crowd, oF course, etc*)

!!! if C1= fortis + C2 =lenis --> C1 remains VOICELESS!!!

Unlike in many other languages, assimilation of voice in English NEVER takes place in this case:
eg. *I like that black dog.*

/aɪ laɪk ðæt blæk dɒg/ not */aɪ laɪg ðæd blæg dɒg/

Examples in Czech:

svědek byl /svjedeg bil/ kdo /gdo/ kresba /krezba/ trubka /trupka/ led /let/

PROGRESSIVE ASSIMILATION

○ C/V + 's': /kæt - kæts/ /dɒg - dɒgz/ /pleɪ - pleɪz/ /wɪʃɪz/

○ C/V + 'ed': /stɒp - stɒpt/ /pʊʃ - pʊʃd/ /pleɪ - pleɪd/ /sta:tɪd/

Examples in Czech:

/ř/ třeba - /ř/ is unvoiced because of /t/

dřevo - /ř/ is voiced because of /d/