

## Lecture 19: Assimilation

### 1. Definition of Assimilation

The most common aspect of connected speech is assimilation. Notice the pronunciations of the consonants at the word boundaries.

- ten mice /tenmaɪs/ pronounced as /te**mm**aɪs/
- good boy /gʊdbɔɪ/ pronounced as /gʊ**bb**ɔɪ/
- good girl /gʊdgɜ:l/ pronounced as /gʊ**gg**ɜ:l/
- credit card /kredɪtkɑ:d/ pronounced as /kredɪ**k**kɑ:d/
- that soup /ðætsu:p/ pronounced as /ðæ**ss**u:p/

Assimilation is a process whereby a sound (assimilated sound) is influenced by an adjacent sound (the conditioning sound) and becomes more similar to it. More specifically, assimilation occurs when a sound takes on the characteristics of an adjacent sound and so becomes more similar to it.

### 2. Types of Assimilation

Assimilation can be of several different types corresponding to the direction of assimilation, the extent of assimilation and the nature of change assimilated sounds undergo.

#### 2.1. Types according to the extent of assimilation

Assimilation can be partial or complete.

- **Complete assimilation:** occurs when the assimilated sound changes to become identical to the conditioned sound.

*ten mice* /te**mm**aɪs/      *good girl* /gʊ**gg**ɜ:l/      *that soup* /ðæ**ss**u:p/

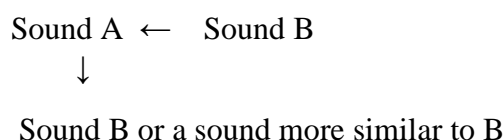
- **Partial Assimilation:** occurs when the assimilated sound changes to become the same as the conditioned sound.

*That girl* /ðæ**k**gɜ:l/      *Ten cars* /te**ŋ**kɑ:z/      *brown bear* /bra**ʊm**bɛə/

## 2.2. Types according to the direction of assimilation

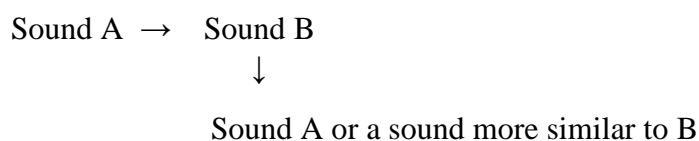
In English, there are three types of assimilation according to the direction of assimilation: Regressive assimilation, progressive assimilation and coalescence.

- **Regressive assimilation** is the most frequently occurring type of assimilation. It occurs when the assimilated sound precedes the conditioning sound :



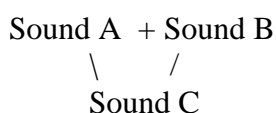
This type is also called right to left assimilation or anticipatory assimilation. All the examples above in 5.1.1. are examples of regressive assimilation.

- **Progressive assimilation:** It is also called perseverative assimilation or left to right assimilation. In this type, the assimilated sound follows the conditioned sound:



Examples of types of assimilation are the regular plural /s/vs/z/ alternation and the regular past tense /t/vs/d/in which the final consonant conditions the voiced/voiceless form of the suffix.

- **Coalescence (coalescent assimilation):** It is a type of reciprocal assimilation: two sound influence each other, they fuse completely and create a new sound. In other words, the first sound and the second sound in a sequence influence each other and mutually condition the creation of a third sound which features from both original sounds.



### Example:

*Could you help me:* /kʊd ju help mi / → /kʊdʒu help mi /

Here, the two sounds /d/ and /j/ influence each other and produce /dʒ/.

### 2.3. Types according to the Nature of the Sound Change

Assimilation involves a change in one or more features of a phoneme. According to the nature of this sound change, three main types of assimilation are distinguished: assimilation of place, assimilation of manner, assimilation of voicing. Coalescence is also considered a special type of assimilation in this classification.

- **Assimilation of Place**

Assimilation of place is the most common and the most frequently occurring type of assimilation in English. It occurs mainly when a word final alveolar /t, d, n, s, z/ assimilates to the place of the following consonant that is not alveolar whilst retaining the original voicing. Provided below are some rules of assimilation of place.

- /t,d,n / are replaced by bilabials before the bilabials /p,b, m/. more specifically,

/t / → /p/    *that pen / that boy / that man*

/d/ → /b/    *bad pain / red bag / good man*

/n/ → /m /    *ten players / brown bear / ten men*

- / t,d,n / are replaced by velars before the velars /k, g /. More specifically,

/t / → /k/    *that cup / that girl*

/d/ → / g /    *good concert / bad girl*

/n/ → / ŋ /    *ten cups / green grass*

- / s,z / are replaced by palato-alveolars before consonants containing a palatal feature

/ʃ, tʃ, dʒ, j /

/s / → / ʃ /    *this shirt / cross channel / this judge / this year*

/z/ → / ʒ /    *those young men / cheese shop/ those churches/ Has she?*

- /θ , ð/ may assimilate to /s,z/ before /s / in fast speech:

*bath salts / earth science / birth certificate / both sides / fifth set /*

*I loathe singing*

- When there are two alveolar stops at the end of a word, and they are followed by a word starting with a bilabial or velar, they can both assimilate.

*I can't go* / aɪ kən k ɡəʊ/

*Don't move!* /dəʊmp mu:v/

- **Assimilation of Manner**

In this type of assimilation, which is rare, the assimilated sound changes its manner of articulation to become similar to a neighbouring sound. In the sentence *Get some of that soup*, the expected normal pronunciation is /get sʌm əv ðæs su:p/ ; however, the pronunciation /ges sʌm əv ðæs su:p/ is heard in fast speech. In this pronunciation, the /t/ of *get* changes to /s/ before /s/ of *some* and /t/ of *that* changes to /s/ before /s/ of *soup*. Other examples :

*same night* pronounced as /sem naɪt/

*good night* pronounced as /ɡʊn naɪt/

- **Assimilation of voicing**

Assimilation of voicing takes place only in a limited way. More specifically, it occurs in set phrases. The latter are words that occur together on a very frequent basis, such as *have to* , *has to*, *used to* and *supposed to*. In this case, the following voiceless consonant /t/ affects the voicing of the previous sound and causes it to change its voicing from a voiced to a voiceless consonant.

- **Have to:** /hævtu:/ → /hæftə/ - **Has to:** /hæztu:/ → /hæztə/

*I have to go!* - *He has to go!*

- **Used to:** /ju:zd tu:/ → /ju:stə/

*He used to smoking.*

- **Supposed to:** /səpəʊ zd tu:/ → /s əp əʊstə/

*You were supposed to leave!* / j u wə səpəʊstə li:v/

## Lecture 20: Elision

### 1. Definition of Elision

Elision (also known as deletion or omission) is another important aspect of connected speech. It is a process whereby a sound is dropped in a certain context. More specifically, it is a process where one or more phonemes are ‘dropped’ within a word (word internal elisions) or phrase (at word boundaries), usually in order to simplify the pronunciation.

#### Examples:

Words/phrases	Transcription	Pronunciation with elision
<i>facts</i>	/fækts /	/fæks /
<i>comfortable</i>	/kʌmfətəbl/	/kʌmftəbl/
<i>listless</i>	/lɪstles/	/lɪsles/
<i>Last night</i>	/lɑːstnaɪt/	/lɑːsnaɪt/
<i>Six students</i>	/sɪksstjuːdnts/	/sɪkstjuːdnts/
<i>Risked prison</i>	/rɪsktprɪzn/	/rɪstprɪzn/

The process is pervasive. It is normally unintentional (many native speakers may be unaware of the process or where it occurs), but it may be deliberate.

### 2. Common Cases of Elision in English:

#### - Weak forms elisions

- **h-dropping:** the most important case of elision associated with weak forms is h-dropping. The /h /of function words can be dropped but not at the beginning of an utterance or when stressed.

*Give her the book.* → /gɪvə ðə bʊk/

*Tell him the truth.* → /telɪm ðə truːθ/

*You could have performed better.* → /ju kʊdəv pəf ɪnd betə/

*It is his birthday today.* → /ɪts ɪz bɜːθdeɪ tədeɪ/

**BUT** *His birthday is today.* → /hɪz bɜːθdeɪ ɪz tədeɪ/

*Then he went to the shop.* → /ðen i went tə ðə ʃɒps/

**BUT** *He went to the shop.* → /hi went tə ðə ʃɒps/

• **Loss of other consonants:** The consonants of *and, will, must, them* can also be elided when unstressed.

*John will have finished by now.* → /dʒɒn əl əv fɪnɪʃt baɪ naʊ /

*Tables and chairs.* → /teɪblz ən tʃeəz / *You must work hard.* → /ju məs wɜ:k hɑ:d /

**BUT** *You must eat more.* → /ju məst i:t mɔ: /

• **Consonant cluster reduction**

When two or more consonants come together, there is a tendency in English to simplify such a cluster by eliding one of them. Cluster reduction can occur in between as well as inside words and mainly involves the deletion of alveolar plosives. Some of the most common rules are provided below:

- When /t / or /d / occur second in a sequence of three consonants: *Next day* /nekst deɪ / → /neks deɪ /

*Raced back* /reɪst bæk / → /reɪs bæk /

*Mashed potato* /mæʃt pətetəʊ / → /mæʃ pətetəʊ /

*last chance* /lɑ: st tʃɑ:ns / → /lɑ: s tʃɑ:ns /

*kept quiet* /kept kwaɪt / → /kep kwaɪt /

*hold tight* /həʊld taɪt / → /həʊl taɪt /

*found five* /faʊnd faɪv / → /faʊn faɪv /

- In the sequence /-skt/, /k / rather than /t / is often elided. *Asked them* /ɑ:skt ðəm / → /ɑ:st ðəm /

*Desktop* /deskɒp / → /destɒp /

*Risked prison* /rɪsktprɪzn / → /rɪstprɪzn /

- Elision of final /t / or /d / is rare before / h /.

In the following examples, the alveolar plosives are more regularly retained:

*Kept hold, worked hard, East Ham, reached home, round here, raised hands*

- Final /t / or /d / followed by a word beginning with /j /are usually kept in a coalescent form.

*Helped you, liked you, lost you, left you, lend you, grabbed you, told you.*

- The /t / of the negative /-nt/ is often elided , particularly in disyllables (elision is less common in monosyllables), before a following consonant , sometimes before a vowel.

*You mustn't lose it* → / ju mʌsn lu:z it /

*Doesn't she know?* → /d ʌzn ʃi nəʊ /

*Wouldn't he come?* → / wʊdn ɪ kʌm /

*you mustn't overeat.* → / ju mʌsn əʊvər i:t /

*I won't do it.* → / aɪ wəʊndu : it /

- Clusters of word final /t /and word initial /t / or /d / are sometimes simplified in informal speech

*I've got to go.* → /aɪv ɡɒtə ɡəʊ /

*What do you want?* → / wɒdə ju wɒnt / (note also / wɒdzu wɒnt/

- **Loss of unstressed medial vowel (or syncope)**

In English a short, unstressed vowel / ə/ or /ɪ/ optionally drops out in some multisyllabic words following the strongly stressed syllable.

*potato* /pə'teɪtəʊ/ → /ptɛɪtəʊ/

*chocolate* /tʃɒkələt/ → /tʃɒklət/

*bicycle* /baɪsɪkl / → /baɪsɪkl

Other examples: *Battery/ camera /mystery/ aspirin /Vegetable /interesting / Emerald /*

*Favourite / restaurant/ family/ traveller*

Elision occasionally occurs in two syllable words, which are reduced to the one syllable:

*Correct* /kə'rekt /→ /krekt

*Parade* / pə'reɪd /→ /preɪd /

*Police* /pə'li:s /→ /pli:s /

*Suppose* /sə'pəʊz/ → /spəʊz/

- **Elision of one of a boundary cluster of two consonants**

The elision of one of a boundary cluster of two consonants sometimes occurs in casual speech, but is usually considered as substandard.

*He went away.* → / hi wenəweɪ /

*I want to come.* → / aɪ wɒnə kʌm / (/ aɪ wɒntə kʌm / frequently occurs)

*Give me a cake.* → /gɪmi ə keɪk /

*Let me come in.* → /le mi kʌmɪn /

*Get me some paper.* → / gɛmi səm peɪpə /

- **Loss of unstressed initial vowel or syllable (or aphaesis)**

In highly informal speech, an unstressed vowel (particularly when followed by a continuant and preceded by a word-final consonant) or syllable is elided. This process is known as aphaesis:

Not alone /nɒt ələʊn / → /nɒt ləʊn /

Get another /get ənʌðə / → /get nʌðə /

Run along /rʌn ələŋ / → /rʌn ləŋ /

He was annoyed / hi wəz ənɔɪd / → / hi wəz nɔɪd /

Because /bɪkɒz / → / kɒz /

- **Loss of final /v/ in *of* before consonants**

This type of deletion is very common in English. The pronunciation of the preposition *of* can be reduced to the schwa before words with initial consonants.

*lots of money* / lɒts ə mʌni /

*lots of them* / lɒts ə ðəm /

*waste of money* / weɪst ə mʌni /

*hearts of palm* / hɑ:ts ə pɑ:m /



## Lecture 21: Linking

### 1. Definition of Linking

Linking (or Liaison) is another way to make adjustments in sounds at word boundaries in connected speech. It means the linking of words when they are used in connected speech. Particularly, it is the way in which the end of one word is linked to the following sound. Linking entails the smooth movement from the final sound of one word to the initial sound of the next. In some cases, this involves the addition of a sound that does not exist in the individual words. In other words, to help one word flow to the next, other sounds may be added.

Dog\_eat dog. / dɒgi:t dɒg / - Black\_and gray. / blækən greɪ /  
Blue\_wink / blu:ˈwɪŋk / - Be\_able / biːəbəl /  
My car\_is there. / maɪ kɑ:ˈrɪz / - how\_ˈold / haʊwɔːld /  
day\_in\_ and day\_out / deɪ ɪnən deɪ ɔʊt /

### 2. Common Types of Linking

There are many kinds of linking: consonant to vowel linking, [j, w] linking, linking /r/ and intrusive /r/.

#### 2.1. Consonant to Vowel Linking

A word ending with a consonant sound is linked to a word beginning with a vowel sound. This may involve a consonant at the end of one word moving to the beginning of the next word or being shared by both words.

an\_aim → / əneɪm / (it may sound like *a name*)  
Pets\_enter → /petsentə/ (it may sound like *pet centre*)

**Other examples:** This\_is an\_apple → / ðɪsɪzənæpl/

keep\_on where's\_Ann where's\_Andrew think\_it\_over first\_of\_all  
look\_at\_it where's\_Ann not\_at\_all pick\_it\_up not\_as\_tall\_as

## 2.2. [j , w] Linking

When a word ending with a tense vowel or diphthong meets a word starting with a vowel, they are linked with a [j] or a [w] sound. If the lips are round (the case of high back vowels /u:, əʊ, aʊ/), a linking [w] is inserted and if they are spread (the case of /i:/, or a diphthong which finishes with /ɪ/), a linking [j] may follow.

Linking [j]	Linking [w]
Be <sub>j</sub> able Say it My <sub>j</sub> own Say <sub>j</sub> it They <sub>j</sub> often Toy <sub>j</sub> airplane My <sub>j</sub> arms The day <sub>j</sub> after	Though <sub>w</sub> I no <sub>w</sub> art blue <sub>w</sub> ink how <sub>w</sub> is too <sub>w</sub> old you <sub>w</sub> and me now <sub>w</sub> and them go <sub>w</sub> inside

### Other examples:

I really <sub>j</sub> appreciates your help!
At least he <sub>j</sub> asked for permission / Kids grow <sub>w</sub> up so quickly!
try <sub>j</sub> again after lunch. / My car is very <sub>j</sub> old.
It's two <sub>w</sub> o'clock now. /

## 2.3. Linking / r /

For speakers of non-rhotic accents (e.g. RP) /r/ is not pronounced unless it is followed by a vowel. While a speaker of a rhotic accent (American English) pronounces all r letters, a speaker of a non-rhotic accent does not pronounce the letter *r* or *re* before consonants or in word final positions:

Word	Non-rhotic pronunciation	Rhotic pronunciation
Read	/ri:d/	/ri:d/
Carry	/kæri/	/kæri/
Port	/pɔ:t/	/pɔ:rt/
Bore	/bɔ:/	/bɔ:r/
Boring	/bɔ:riŋ/	/bɔ:riŋ/

When words ending with the letter(s) *r* or *re* combine with words beginning with vowels, the /r/ is pronounced by the speakers of non-rhotic accents. Such an /r/ is called linking /r/. It is a phonological phenomenon that occurs when the speakers who do not pronounce the final *r* or *re* (speakers of non-rhotic accents) will add it when the next word begins with a vowel.

<b>Word</b>	<b>Word in connected speech</b>
Far / fɑ:/	Far away / fɑ:rəweɪ / (the /r/ here is Linking /r/)
More / mɔ:/	More ice / mɔ:raɪs / (the /r/ here is Linking /r/)

**More examples:**

after\_ all      better \_off      for\_ instance      more \_or less      four\_ eyes  
 under\_ age      here \_and there      a clever \_escape      a number\_ of

**2.4. Intrusive /r/**

A word ending in a vowel can be linked to a word beginning with a vowel by inserting an /r/ sound which is non-existent in the spelling of both words. This /r/ , which is historically unjustified, is called intrusive /r/. It usually occurs when the first word ends in the schwa or a centring diphthong. Less common is the insertion of /r/ after the non-high vowel /ɑ:, ɔ:/.

- the idea of →the idea[r] of /ðiɑɪdɪər ɒv/
  - law and order →law [r] and order /lɔ:rənɔ:də/
  - China is →China[r] is /tʃaɪnəɪz /
  - a banana and an apple →a banana [r] and an apple /əbənɑ:nənæpl/
  - Asia and Africa →Asia [r] and Africa /eɪzəʔənæfrɪkə /
  - Cuba and Brazil →Cuba [r] and Brazil /kju:bərəm bræzɪl /
  - papa and mama →papa[r] and mama /pəpɑ:rəm məmɑ:/
- (Note assimilation in the last two examples).

