

NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS' AWARENESS OF ASSIMILATION IMPLEMENTATION IN THEIR PRONUNCIATION PRACTICE

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Abstract:

This study is intended to discuss the phenomenon occurring in phonological regulation, mainly assimilation. The study attempts to analyze the manners and types of assimilation that occur in non-native English speakers' pronunciation practice and to know the awareness of the students in the implementation of assimilation. This is a case study that employed a qualitative method with a descriptive approach through interviews and observation. The participant of this study is nine students of the non-English study of Garut Technology of the institute. The participants are chosen by using the purposive sampling technique. In the process of collecting data, students are given the transcript of speeches to be pronounced and the words and phrases are classified based on the manners and types of assimilation. The study reveals that the manners and types of assimilation mostly appearing in speakers' pronunciation practice are coalescent assimilation and the rest are progressive, regressive, and full assimilations. It shows that most students of the non-English study of Garut Technology of Institute have not fully been aware of the implementation of assimilation in their pronunciation practice. The implication of this study is to explore the importance of assimilation to help student lighten their English pronunciation when they speak at a rapid speed.

Keyword:

Assimilation; manner of assimilation; type of assimilation; pronunciation practice; Non-English Speaker



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INTRODUCTION

The variety of English has been generally debated as which is categorized as Standard English used among non-native English speakers. It indicates that the use of English both inner circle of the country, referring to the speakers used English as the first language, and outer circle, the countries that the speakers use English as a second or foreign language, is different to one and another especially on pronunciation, i.e. accent, intonation. It means that the difference occurs in terms of sound production. Some speakers, both normal and rapid speech, may produce different word spelling and how it is pronounced (Silva Villena, 2002). The change of pronunciation may occur if the speed of the speech turns faster (Ogden, 2011). This aspect makes English hard for many students. This phenomenon is called assimilation or connected speech. According to Demirezen (2016), assimilation becomes the prominent and important feature of connected speech in almost all languages to make the speaking process easier for all

speakers. However, not all speakers, especially non-Native English learners, are aware of the implementation of this aspect in their speech (Patang, 2018). Therefore, this research is intended to analyze the phenomenon that occurred in phonological regulation especially assimilation in non-native English speakers in the Indonesian context.

Some native English speakers, to express their feeling, sometimes speak at a very fast speed and it is resulted in a “shortcut” to make it easier in pronouncing the words. It means that they articulate a sound and make it similar to the preceding or following sound to keep the speed of the speech (Clark et al., 2007). This phenomenon is called assimilation. As Roach (2009) mentioned assimilation happened according to the frequency of the speech; it is possibly found in sudden. Furthermore, it also shows how one sound influences another one to make it more similar and it mostly happens in double consonants. For instance, in the phrase *green boats /green boots*, the /n/ at the end of green may take the labial place of the following /b/, and it is pronounced as /greem boots/.

Assimilation commonly exists in every human language and becomes the most common phonological event in the world's languages. It becomes the aspect of segmental phonology presented within autosegmental notation (Nolan, 1992). Sounds across word boundaries tend to experience phonological changes in phonological processes. In addition, there can be a possibility in how sounds have a variation to be pronounced and the listener is still able to understand what is said. Assimilation may be seen as the resource of phonetic variability in speech production and it also has the potential to lead a lexical ambiguity to the degree that it neutralized phonetic contrasts in some environments (David & McMurray, 2007). Also, in the assimilation process, the listener may respond differently either it does or does not produce a competitor.

Some previous researchers conducted a study about variation in phonological regulation, mainly assimilation. First, Dawood & Atawneh (2015) researched the assimilation of consonants in English. They tried to apply this rule to some English speakers and found that assimilations help the speakers to pronounce the words or speech easier when they talk rapidly. Furthermore, Febriyanti (2015) also studied assimilation in English song lyrics and classified them based on the phonological process. She found that the assimilation appeared across word boundaries when the singer sang in rapid. Third, Turnbull (2018) analyzed the nasal place assimilation in target and trigger words. This study used corpus data from the Buckeye speech and did some interviews by using the audio recording. After being analyzed, they found that assimilation served as both reduction and enhancement, and it can be used to handle redundancy in the speech signal. In addition, it influenced the communicative pressures in phonology. However, this study has three differences from the previous study. First, it analyses the assimilations occurring in non-native English students' speech when they talk at a very fast speed and it is classified into some categories. Second, this study does not use a full transcript but only focuses on some speeches which have been categorized based on the place, manner, and types of assimilation. Third, this study does not observe the articulation of the native speakers. Therefore, this analysis is expected to make the speakers are aware of the assimilation to help them easier to speak English.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Assimilation is the way of making them sound more similar to the next sound across word boundaries and it happens because two sounds have a common feature in a place or manner. According to Febriyanti (2015), assimilation is a process of transitioning a sound to the following sound and it happens because of the influence of the preceding sound. In addition, Dawood & Atawneh (2015) stated that assimilation occurs when a consonant takes features to another one or it usually appears in double consonants. Furthermore, Harris (1968) also stated that assimilation is the process where two sounds or segments are made to agree or have the same value in one feature. Fromkin, Rodman, & Hyams (2011) also added that assimilation makes the neighboring sound have the similarity with the preceding by adding the feature (+ nasal) to the vowel. Carr (1999) gave the example in terms of assimilation. For instance, take the example the phrase *fat thing*, it is often pronounced as [fætɪŋ], with the dental stop at the end of the word *fat*. The alveolar stop in

this word has shifted its place of articulation in anticipation of the following dental sound and it has assimilated to the following sound in terms of place of articulation.

It will be easier to articulate the sound if it adopts with the others, especially at rapid or fast speed. As Dawood & Atawneh (2015) said the articulation of speech sound will be easier if a sound becomes the features of another sound. Then, Burleigh (2011) also mentioned that assimilation gives the simplicity of articulation pressures and this is the way of making the pronunciation more effortless. Assimilation also has some functions and three of them are to save time, to anticipate other sounds, and to make articulation of speech effortlessly (Eka, Daniel, Egbokhare, & Iyere, 2010). Thus, it can be concluded that assimilation is applied to make the articulation easier. According to Jolayemi (2010), there are three manners of assimilation, those include progressive, regressive, and coalescent assimilation, and form of assimilation, full and partial assimilation.

1. Progressive Assimilation

Progressive assimilation or it is known as preservative assimilation is the process where sound changes when there is an elision of /ə/ because of a process and it results in the syllabic nasal influenced by the previous sound (Zabala, 2015). For instance, *happen* /'hæp.ən/ becomes /'hæp.əm/ or *bacon* /'beɪ.kən/ becomes /'beɪ.kəŋ/, this case is influenced by a vowel. Furthermore, Dawood & Atawneh (2015) mentioned that progressive assimilation happens where a sound is directly modified by the features of the sound before it. This manner of assimilation is created from left to right, the examples are as follows:

What is the time? /wɒt ɪz ðə taɪm/ becomes /wɒt s ðə taɪm/

The house is close /ðə haʊs ɪz kləʊz/ becomes /ðə haʊs s kləʊz/

From the example, the change occurred in the main verb 'is' from 'iz' becomes 's'. It will not happen when it is spoken at a slow speed but it only happens rapidly. Additionally, the progressive level does not only occur in the sentence but also the level of the word. For instance, the plural ending -s is assimilated to be the /z/ sound if the end of the consonant is /g/ sound such as *bags* /bægz/.

2. Regressive Assimilation

This manner of assimilation occurs when a feature changes its one character because of the influence of the following feature (Zabala, 2015). Furthermore, Febriyanti (2015) stated that regressive is also called anticipatory assimilation which the speaker does the transition to anticipate the following sound. Therefore, it can be illustrated, the sound /n/ becomes /ŋ/ due to the influence of the voiceless velar plosive /k/ or /g/ such the word *thank* /tæŋk/, *one girl* /wʌŋ ɡɜ:l/ (Jolayemi, 2010).

3. Coalescent Assimilation

Coalescent assimilation is assimilated when a fusion exists. This process changes the sound by combining two close sounds into other sounds different from two coalesced sounds (Dawood & Atawneh, 2015). Zabala (2015) also stated that coalescence is the process where two sounds combine and become a different one. Eka et al., (2010) exemplified this assimilation manner, for instance, it occurs when a word has final alveolar plosive or fricative /t/, /d/, or /s/, /z/ sounds followed by palatal velar /j/ or /i/ sounds, it results /ʃ/ or /ʒ/ sound such as *this shirt* /ðɪs ʃɜ:t/ becomes /ðɪʃɜ:t/.

4. Full Assimilation

This assimilation is considered complete assimilation. It means that the sound is changed because of the effect of the neighboring sound and it results in the preceding sound becoming similar to the following one (Dawood & Atawneh, 2015). It's also called bilabial assimilation where the alveolar /t, d, n/ sounds become bilabial if it follows by bilabial sounds /p, b, m/. For instance, *that pen* /ðæt pen/ becomes /ðæp pen/, *bad men* /bæd mæn/ becomes /bæb mæn/ or *in pairs* /ɪn peəz/ becomes /ɪm peəz/ (Ladefoged, 2006).

5. Partial Assimilation

The assimilation also occurs partially which means the sounds are just assimilated by some properties from other sounds or one sound of a segment (Ofulue et al., 2010). The change of the sound, in this case, is not identical or it does not influence the other sound to be similar such as the phrase *ten parts* /ten pɑ:t/ is assimilated to be /tem pɑ:t/. It means this assimilation only happens for alveolar /n/ sound is changes to bilabial /m/ sound because it is followed by the bilabial /b/ sound (Dawood & Atawneh, 2015).

METHODS

This study uses qualitative research with descriptive techniques. Creswell (2012) states that qualitative research is a good way to address a research problem in which you do not know the variables and need to explore. In addition, qualitative research does not use statistical data or numbering in analyzing the data. This research focused on the assimilation phenomenon that occurs in non-native English speakers. The participants are students of non-English studies at Garut Technology of the institute. In addition, this study uses a purposive sampling technique to select the participant. The participant is chosen because most of them have practiced the pronunciation technique in English subjects, mainly the assimilation. It means they indirectly know how assimilation is implemented in speech. There are some steps in analyzing the data. First, students are given some sentences and they try to read aloud at a fast speed. Second, some words regarding assimilation are observed whether the process occurs or not in the articulation. In the last step, the data is analyzed by using the description technique to broaden the discussion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For the analysis, the data are analyzed by dividing based on the category in the manner of assimilation to know on which the assimilation mostly appears.

1. Progressive Assimilation

As mentioned earlier, this manner of assimilation happens when the ending -s comes before the velar /g/ and it is assimilated to be alveolar /z/ sounds or the main verb *is* /ɪz/ becomes /s/. This assimilation is part of the assimilation of voicing mainly across morpheme boundaries. Here are some words or speeches pronounced by non-native English students that gave different results:

Excerpt 1

Can you tell me, what time **is** it? / kæn ju tel mi wɒt taɪm **ɪz** ɪt/

Excerpt 2

I go to the market and the shop **is** close. /aɪ goʊ tu ðə 'mɑ:kɪt ænd ðə ʃɒp **ɪz** kləʊz/

Excerpt 3

I bring my friends' **bags** to school. / aɪ brɪŋ maɪ frends bægs tu sku:l /

Excerpt 4

I was afraid because the **dogs** chased me. / aɪ wəz ə'freɪd bɪ'kæz ðə dɒgs tʃeɪsd mi/

Excerpt 5

People make the new bridge with some **logs**. /'pi:pl meɪk ðə nju: brɪdʒ wɪð səm lɒgs/

From the data above, the students are asked to practice pronouncing the sentences at a rapid or fast speed and it resulted in various ways. The analysis showed that nine students pronounced the sentence of excerpt 1 with / kæn ju tel mi wɒt taɪm **s** ɪt/. It indicates that the progressive assimilation occurs in this case where the sound of the main verb /ɪz/ is assimilated to be /s/ in a rapid way. This shows that most students are applied progressive assimilation to their pronunciation. Based on the interview, the students thought that it is easier to pronounce the sentence at a fast speed if the sound of /z/ is changed into /s/ sounds since their tongue will be lighter.

Then, in the sentence of excerpt 2 '*I go to the market and the shop **is** close*' which is pronounced at rapid speed as /aɪ goʊ tu ðə 'mɑ:kɪt ænd ðə ʃɒp **ɪz** kləʊz/, the assimilation also occurred for all speakers' pronunciation and it is assimilated to be /ðə

ʃɒp s kləʊz/ where the sound of /iz/ is changed into /s/ sound. This indicates that the students applied this knowledge into their pronunciation practice when they pronounce the sentence at rapid speed. The students assumed that it is hard to pronounce the sentence above at a fast speed if the sound of /iz/ is not constructed or assimilated into /s/ sound.

Last, for the words of the sentences in excerpt 3, 4, and 5 which are bags / bægs/, dogs /dɒgs/ and logs /lɒgs/, if it is assimilated, the sound is changed into / bægz/, /dɒgz/ and /lɒgz/, where the sound ending -s is changed to the sound /z/. Based on the data analysis, the phenomenon did not occur in the articulation of the speakers. This happened since they have not known how to apply this knowledge to their pronunciation. They also considered that it does not really make them difficult to pronounce the words although the sound is not assimilated. This result indicates that although the students practiced the sentences at rapid speech, the progressive assimilation did not fully occur in their pronunciation.

2. Regressive Assimilation

This assimilation occurs when the voiced alveolar nasal /n/ sound becomes voiced velar nasal /ŋ/ if it is followed by velar /k,g/ sounds. Here are some examples of regressive assimilation:

Excerpt 6

I lost **ten keys** to their houses. / aɪ lɒst ten ki:s fɔ:r ðeər haʊsɪs/

Excerpt 7

I have two motorcycles and **one car** in the garage. /aɪ hæv tu: 'məʊ.tə,sai.kls ænd wʌn kɑ:r ɪn ðə 'gær.ɑ:ʒ /

Excerpt 8

There is **one girl** who is trapped in the building. / ðer ɪz wʌn gɜ:l hu: ɪz træpt ɪn ði: 'bɪl.dɪŋ /

Excerpt 9

My mom brings a lot of **pancake** for dinner. / maɪ mɑ:m brɪŋs eɪ lə:t əv 'pæn.keɪk fɔ:r 'dɪn.ər /

From the data above, in the sentence of excerpt 6 'I lost **ten keys** to their houses' which is pronounced as /aɪ lɒst ten ki:s fɔ:r ðeər haʊsɪs/, the assimilation occurs in the words *ten keys* /ten ki:s/ which is changed into /teŋ ki:s/ because of the influence of the following velar sound /k/ when the speed of articulation is increased. It shows that the alveolar /n/ is changed to velar /ŋ/. Based on the observation, this knowledge is not fully applied by all speakers in their pronunciation practice. As the result, they still seem difficult to pronounce the sentence when the speed is increased. It is similar to the sentences of excerpts 7 and 8, the phrases of these sentences *one car* / wʌn kɑ:r/ and *one girl* /wʌn gɜ:l/ are assimilated to / wʌŋ kɑ:r/ and /wʌŋ gɜ:l/ but those also did not occur in the articulation of the speakers. On the other hand, the last sentence of excerpt 9 'My mom brings a lot of **pancake** for dinner.' which is pronounced as /maɪ mɑ:m brɪŋs eɪ lə:t əv 'pæn.keɪk fɔ:r 'dɪn.ər /, for the word / 'pæn.keɪk/ is assimilated to / 'pæŋ.keɪk/ where the sound /n/ is also changed into /ŋ/ sound because of the influence of the following velar sounds. In this case, only five of the students applied this knowledge to their pronunciation practice. Based on the interview, the students believed that it is still difficult for them to pronounce the sentences above quickly since they have not known how to apply the regressive assimilation to their pronunciation.

3. Coalescent Assimilation

As explained above, coalescent occurs when a word has final alveolar plosive or fricative /t/, /d/, or /s/, /z/ sounds followed by palatal velar /j/ or /i/ sounds, it results /ʃ/ or /ʒ/ sound. Here are some examples pronounced in rapid by the speakers:

Excerpt 10

Can I use **this shirt** for a while? /kæn aɪ ju:z ðɪs ʃɜ:t fɔ:r ə waɪl/

Excerpt 11

I bring **this shoe** for my friend. / aɪ brɪŋ ðɪs ʃuː fɔːr maɪ frend /

Excerpt 12

Those years are very memorable for us. / ðoʊz jɪrs ɑːr 'ver.i 'mem.ər.ə.bl fɔːr ʌs /

Excerpt 13

I make **this shop** cleaned by Siska. / aɪ meɪk ðɪs ʃɑːp kliːnd baɪ sɪska /

The data above shows that the phrases of the sentences in excerpts 10, 11, 12, and 13 **this shirt** /ðɪs ʃɜːt/, **this shoe** /ðɪs ʃuː/, **those years** /ðoʊz jɪrs/ and **this shop** /ðɪs ʃɑːp/ are assimilated to /ðɪʃɜːt/, /ðɪʃuː/, /ðoʊjɪrs/ and /ðɪʃɑːp/. In this case, the alveolar /s/ and /ʃ/ sounds are combined to be one sound because there is a fusion between them and it becomes /ʃ/ sound. After applying to the students on their pronunciation practice, only seven of the student applied this knowledge into the practice. It means that this manner of assimilation mostly occurred in the speakers' pronunciation. The students stated that although they do not know this knowledge before, they unconsciously applied it into their pronunciation practice and it is easier to pronounce the sentences in this way.

4. Full Assimilation

It is called bilabial assimilation where the alveolar /t, d, n/ sounds become bilabial if it is followed by bilabial sounds /p, b, m/. The examples are as follow:

Excerpt 14

Put the books in the **right place**, please. / put ðə bʊks ɪn ðə raɪt pleɪs, pliːz /

Excerpt 15

The **right man** always keeps the appointment. / ðə raɪt mæn 'ɔːl.weɪz kiːps ðə ə'pɔɪnt.mənt /

Excerpt 16

You have to choose the **right book** as you need. / juː hæv tuː tʃuːz ðə raɪt bʊk əz juː niːd /

Excerpt 17

Could I just **sit back** and listen? / kʊd aɪ dʒʌst sɪt bæk ænd 'lɪs. ə n /

Regarding the data above, the phrase *right place* /raɪt pleɪs/ in the sentence 'Put the books in the **right place**, please!' of the excerpt 14 is assimilated to /raɪp pleɪs/ where the alveolar sound /t/ is changed to /p/ when it is followed by bilabial /p/. Additionally, in the next phrases of the sentences in excerpt 15, 16, and 17, the phrase *right man* /raɪt mæn/ in excerpt 15 can also be articulated to /raɪm mæn/ where the alveolar sound /t/ is changed into bilabial sound /m/ because of the influence of the following bilabial sound. Then, the phrase *right book* /raɪt bʊk/ becomes /raɪb bʊk/ where the alveolar sound /t/ is changed into bilabial sound /b/. Next, the phrase *sit back* /sɪt bæk/ becomes /sɪb bæk/ where the alveolar sound /t/ is also changed into bilabial sound /b/. After being pronounced by nine students, this knowledge did not apply to their pronunciation practice of the sentences in excerpts 14, 15, 16, 17. The students stated that it did not influence their ability to pronounce the words quickly although this knowledge did not apply in their speaking. They considered that it still felt convenient to pronounce the phrases in normal ways.

5. Partial Assimilation

As mentioned above, in partial assimilation, the change of the sound is not identical or it does not influence the other sound to be similar. It only happens for alveolar /n/ sound is changes to bilabial /m/ sound because it is followed by the bilabial /b/ sound. Here are some examples:

Excerpt 18

I give you **one minute** to finish the work. / aɪ gɪv ju wʌn 'mɪn.ɪts tuː 'fɪn.ɪʃ ðə wɜːk /

Excerpt 19

Stay with me and I **can make** you happy. / steɪ wɪð mi ænd aɪ kæn meɪk ju 'hæp.i /

Excerpt 20

She only has **one man** in her life. / ʃi 'əʊn.li hæz wʌn mæn in hɜ:r laɪf /

Excerpt 21

They run away about **ten miles**. / ðeɪ rʌn ə'wei ə'baʊt ten maɪls /

The data shows that the phrase *one minute* /wʌn 'mɪn.ɪts/ in the sentence 'I give you **one minute** to finish the work' of the excerpt 18 is pronounced as /wʌm 'mɪn.ɪts/ since the alveolar sound /n/ undergoes the bilabial process because of the influence of consonant sound /m/. This example belongs to the nasalization process especially in the manner of articulation since the alveolar nasal is changed to bilabial nasal sound. In addition, this process also occurs when the airstream comes out through the nose. As the phrases *can make* /kæn meɪk/ in the sentence 'Stay with me and I **can make** you happy' of the excerpt 19, the sound is changed to /kæm meɪk/ where the alveolar sound /n/ is assimilated into bilabial nasal sound /m/ because of the influence of the following sound. Then, the phrase *one man* /wʌn mæn/ in the sentence 'She only has **one man** in her life' of excerpt 20 is changed into /wʌm mæn/ and the phrase *ten miles* /ten maɪls/ in excerpt 21 is assimilated into /tem maɪls/. This assimilation occurs because of the influence of the following sound. For all the processes, after all of the speakers produced it on their pronunciation practice, it showed that none of this phenomenon appeared in the process of speakers' articulation when they pronounced it at a very fast speed. As the result, it is still difficult for them to pronounce quickly. They stated that they are not fully aware of the application of this knowledge into their pronunciation.

CONCLUSION

For the findings and discussions above, the writer draws up some essential points as the conclusion. Assimilation refers to a phonological phenomenon in which a feature or sound is changed or it becomes similar to another sound because of the influence of either preceding or following the sound. Assimilation has some types and forms including progressive, regressive, coalescent that can be either full or partial assimilation and it can occur in the word level or word boundaries. Furthermore, this phonological rule also occurs because of the effect of the surrounding sounds. Therefore, it can be concluded that the types or forms of assimilation that mostly appeared in the non-native English speaker at Garut Technology of Institute are coalescent assimilation and some phrases of progressive, regressive, and full assimilations. It indicated that most students haven't fully been aware of the implementation of assimilation in their pronunciation practice especially at a rapid speed so it is still hard for them to speak fast as native speakers do. The implication of this research is expected to provide insight for the English learner of the importance of assimilation on their speech to help them speak easier mainly in the very fast speed of the articulation.

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