

ASSIMILATION:

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In continuous speech, some sounds lose their original quality in terms of any of these variables like place of articulation, manner of articulation, and voicing, under the influence of preceding or following sound. This process of change in quality of a sound under the influence of another sound is called assimilation. We can understand it better with the help of some examples. The sound /t/ in the word 'tenth' changes from alveolar to dental under the influence of the following sound /θ/ that is dental. Likewise, the sound /m/ that is originally a bilabial sound changes into a labio-dental sound in the word 'comfort' under the influence of /f/ sound that is labio-dental. In both of these examples, we find that the following sounds /θ/ and /f/ change the preceding sounds /t/ and /m/ respectively. Such assimilations are called regressive where a preceding sound acquires the feature of a succeeding sound. On the other hand, some preceding sounds change the feature of succeeding sounds, as for example, the sound /p/ in the word 'play' changes the sound /l/ from voiced into voiceless under its influence. Such assimilations are called progressive.

This assimilation takes place within a word as well as between the words. Let us pronounce the words in the taxi, where we find that /s/ sound of 'is' changes into

a dental sound under the influence of the initial /ð/ sound of the word ~~broom~~. So far, we have seen the cases of assimilation in consonant sounds only, but vowels also undergo such changes. For instance, all the vowels preceded and followed by nasal sounds especially in monosyllabic words like *man*, *bomb*, *more*, *room*, etc. become nasalized sounds under the influence of nasal sounds that follow them. Thus assimilation as a phonological phenomenon is widely realized in connected speech and its awareness helps us sound natural in our speech.