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THE MANIFESTATION OF ASSIMILATION IN ENGLISH *Olimpia CARACAȘ, lector universitar*

Summary

Articolul redă unele secvențe referitor la asimilare, ce reprezintă procesul de modificare a sunetelor limbii engleze, din cauza învecinării lor. În vorbirea curentă organele vorbirii trec repede de la o poziție la alta. În această trecere rapidă sunetele înlănțuite suferă modificări în articularea lor, așa încât sunetele învecinate, ușor recunoscute ca fiind diferite, devin asemănătoare sau identice. Asimilarea joacă un rol important în evoluția unei limbi. Fenomenul acesta este important și în limba engleză, atât pe plan istoric cât și pe planul limbii actuale.

Each sound pronounced in isolation has three stages in its articulation. During the first stage the organs of speech move to the position which is necessary to pronounce the sound. It is called differently by different authors: *initial stage*; which represents the beginning of the sound, when the organs of speech take up the position for its pronunciation. During the second stage the organs of speech are kept for some time in the position necessary to pronounce the sound. This stage is called *medial stage*. During the third stage the organs of speech move away to the neutral position. This stage is called *final stage* [3, p. 196].

There are two ways of joining the sounds:

a) Merging of stages – when the final stage of the first sound merges with the initial stage of the second sound, loose type of articulatory transition.

b) Interpenetration of stages – when the final stage of the first sound penetrates not only the beginning but also the middle of the second sound – close type of articulatory transition.

When phonemes are pronounced in sequences, we observe the phenomenon of adaptation, also called assimilation – the speech organs adjust themselves to make a more convenient transition from one articulation to another, they display, as it were, a certain “economy” of effort. Of course, this “economy” may vary in different languages. The type of adaptation depends on the articulation basis as well as on the concrete phonetic laws functioning in every language. As a result of such adaptation of one articulation to another, we have combinative phonemic variants [7, p. 60].

Adaptation or assimilation may be: historical and living, obligatory and non-obligatory assimilation.

“Uttering or articulating sounds” is an activity of our speech organs and it is governed by the central nervous system. When we are speaking, our speech organs are at rest only during pauses; between pauses they are active, one articulation following another without interruption. The term “assimilation” includes all changes in the characteristic features of phonemes as a result of adjustment of articulations in sound – sequence. The term “assimilation” usually denotes the result, while the term “adaptation” denotes rather the method by which this result is achieved.

Assimilation is the chief factor under the influence of which the principal variants of phonemes are modified into subsidiary ones. It is a modification of a consonant under the influence of a neighboring consonant [5, p. 145].

Assimilation which occurs in every day speech in the present day pronunciation is called living, but if it took place at an earlier stage in the history of the language is called historical [1, p. 174].

Daniel Jones defines assimilation as “the process of replacing a sound by another sound under the influence of a third sound which

is near to it in the word of sentence. The term may also be extended to include cases where a sequence of two sounds coalesces and gives place to a single new sound different from either of the original sounds: this type of change may be termed “coalescent assimilation” [4, p. 217].

Assimilation may affect the work of different articulating organs: the tongue, the lips, the soft palate, the vocal cords. It may also affect the place of articulation, the manner of articulation. The articulation of consonants may be affected by vowel articulation.

In assimilation there is an assimilating phoneme and an assimilated one, though in many cases there exists a reciprocal influence between the phonemes [1, p. 200].

In the adaptation of articulations to each other one of two principles is generally involved: 1) either the speech organs are prepared beforehand for the articulation of a sound or sounds that follow, or 2) the activity of one or some of the speech organs is continued after the sound for which they were prepared has been articulated. The first type of adaptation is called “regressive” assimilation; the second type is called “progressive” assimilation. Speaking about the “regressive assimilation” we denote that the influence works backwards, “progressive assimilation” denotes that the influence works forward.

Regressive assimilation is more common in languages than progressive assimilation; evidently it is more usual that the speech organs should be prepared beforehand for any articulation that follows. In English, the regressive type of assimilation is also more common. However, the progressive type is also frequently used [6, p. 66]

In the words *please*, *clay* the phoneme [l] is assimilated by the preceding phoneme [p], losing some of its voicing, becoming only partly voiced. In *pray*, *tray* [r] is devoiced under the influence of [p], [t]. In the words *absorption* and *absurdity* the voiced phoneme [b]

has the effect of voicing the following [s] in both words, the pronunciation being [IbszA: pEBn] and [Ib'zB: diti].

The past tense ending – *ed* is pronounced [d] after voiced sounds: *begged* [begd], and it is assimilated to the voiceless [t] after voiceless consonants: *baked* [beikt].

The –s is pronounced [z] after voiced sounds: *begs* [begz] but assimilates to the voiceless [s] after voiceless consonants *bakes* [beiks].

Regressive assimilation is characterized by the anticipation of the following sound in such a way that the sound uttered is influenced by the approaching sound, because the organs of speech while articulating a certain sound anticipate and assume the position necessary for the following one.

In *news* [nju: z] the phoneme [z] is replaced by [s] under the influence of the voiceless phoneme [p] in the word *newspaper* ['nju: speipB]. In the sequence *this shelf* the tongue approaching the alveolar ridge to articulate [s] of *this* anticipates the approach to the palate for the production of [E] in *shelf*, the result is that [s] becomes [E] in [CiEEelf] the palatal characteristic of [E] has reached backwards of regressively.

The Latin preposition *cum* occurs in English with all three nasal consonants [m, n, H] as a result of a fact that its final consonant [m] was influenced by the following consonant in words like: *Combine, compare, contact, constant, congress, conquest*.

A word like *open* may be heard as [Bupm] because in the pronunciation [BupBn], the central vowel [B] may be lost and thus [n] is in close proximity with the bilabial consonant [p] therefore it is likely to assimilate to [m] in rapid speech.

Reciprocal assimilation represents the mutual modification of two adjacent sounds.

In the word *tree*, [r] is partially devoiced under the influence of the preceding consonant becomes post – alveolar, because of the influence of [r].

In *twice*, the [w] is devoiced under the influence of [t], and [t] is rounded because of [w].

In *used* to the verb *use* [ju: z] has been assimilated to [ju: st] by the following [t] and has acquired the meaning “formerly accustomed”. Final [t] is lost.

The bicycle he used to ([ju: s tB]) *ride in London* means: *The bicycle he utilized for riding.*

Have to is pronounced [hIf tB] to express obligation:

This is the book I have to use ([hIf tB]) and [hIv tB] in the sentence *This is the book I have to use* ([hIv tB]) with the meaning that this is the book I have at hand.

The same phenomenon occurs with *has to* pronounced [hIs tB] when it shows obligation, and [hIz tB] when it refers to possession.

In double assimilation two sounds may influence each other to such an extent that both sounds disappear and a third sound emerges. This type of assimilation is called coalescence.

The phoneme [d] and [j] in the sequence *did you* give birth to a new sound [dG] [didju:] [3, p. 201].

According to its degree, we have “partial assimilation”, which gives rise to different combinative phonemic variants (substitutes). When all the features are adapted, we have a case of “complete assimilation”. Assimilation is called complete in the case the two adjoining sounds become alike or merge into one. It always take place when the two sounds differ only in one articulator feature. We find cases of complete assimilation within words, example *cupboard* [‘kDpbBd>‘kDbBd]; and at the word junction in fluent speech, example *less shy* [‘lesEai>‘leEEai].

Assimilation is called incomplete when the likeness of the adjoining sounds is partial as the assimilated sound retains its major articulatory features. For example, the sonorant [w], [h], [r], are partly devoiced when preceded by the voiceless forties [p, t, k, s, f, J] within words: *sweet* [swi: t], *place* [pleis], *try* [traɪ].

Many assimilatory phenomena of older stages in the development of the language have become obligatory in Modern English; They may or may not be reflected in spelling. Such changes which have taken place over a period of time within words are called historical, eg. *orchard* (ort+yard) – [A:tjBd > ‘A:tEBd]

Non obligatory assimilations are characteristic of fluent or careless speech and should be avoided by public speakers (lecturers, teachers, etc.) [6, p. 68].

Assimilation is a phonetic process continually taking place. Many results of the assimilation process have been accepted on the standard level, some have remained in the substandard and might be accepted as standard in the future.

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ENTWICKLUNG DER KOMMUNIKATIVEN KOMPETENZ DURCH UNTERRICHTSSPIELE. RATSCHLÄGE FÜR DAS SCHULPRAKTIKUM

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Rezumat

Didactica comunicativă înseamnă că în centrul învățării limbilor străine trebuie să fie nu doar cunoștințele teoretice a limbii, ci și abilitățile comunicative, adică abilitățile de a pune în practică limba studiată în situații concrete. Aceste situații îi orientează pe cei