Types of Assimilation in English as Recognized by Iraqi EFL Learners at the University Level : A Perceptual Study

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Abstract

The main problem of this research paper is that students of English find difficulties in recognizing types of assimilation . This current paper aims at assessing the students' capacity to handle the three main types of assimilation through listening to certain phrases and sentences . The results showed that the participants have a lot of difficulties in recognizing the types of assimilation. The findings are discussed in the view of statistical analysis.

Keywords: Assimilation ,Recognition , Types of assimilation , Iraqi EFL learners

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انواع الادغام في اللغة الانجليزية كما يميزها المتعلمون العراقيون للغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية في الجامعة: دراسة سمعية

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المستخلص

يهدف البحث الى القاء الضوء على مشكلة تمييز انواع الادغام في اللغة الانجليزية . يجد طلاب اللغة الانجليزية صعوبات تمييز الثلاث انواع الاساسية للإدغام في اللغة الانجليزية . يهدف من الدراسة الحالية هو تقييم قدرة الطالب على التعرف على انواع الادغام في اللغة الانجليزية من خلال الاصغاء الى عبارات وجمل معينة مأخوذة من مصادر اجنبية معينة . نتائج البحث وضحت وجود اخطاء كبيرة جدا للعينة في تحديد الانواع

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الكلمات المفتاحية: الادغام □ انواع الادغام ، التمييز ، العراقيون المتعلمون للغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية

1.Introduction

Language scientists have endeavored to improve ways that generated speech from a vocabulary of pre-recorded words .These ways have been discovered to connect the words together to produce sentences . It is important to convey in mind the differences between the way humans speak and what would be found in mechanical speech . In linguistics , joined speech is a ceaseless sequence of sounds moulding utterances or conversations in spoken language (Roach , 2009:110).

(Crystal , 2003 : 96) illustrates that "connected speech is a concept used to refer to spoken language when analyzed as a continuous sequence in normal utterances . A main difference in natural connected speech is the method that sounds belonging to one word may cause changes in sounds belonging to neighboring words" . This means that assimilation is "a feature which varies in extent according to speaking rate and style" (Roach , 2009 : 110) .

(Shockey , 2003:10) points out that the vocal tract during producing connected speech is like any other machine . Because

it runs faster , it has to cut corners . The same thing happens with the speaker when the speaker performs speech faster , the sounds become smaller , and sometimes they have to be deleted . There are several features or aspects in English connected speech : Rhythm , assimilation , elision , and linking .

2. The Concept of Assimilation

(Jones ,1957 : 217) shows that "assimilation is the process of replacing a sound by another sound under the effect of a third sound which is near to it in the word or sentence" . Assimilation is also defined by (Malmberg , 1963 : 377) as "the process of replacing one sound or changing some properties of a sound under the influence of another sound" . (Knowles , 1987 : 131) defines assimilation as a " process it might not be carried out partially . For example , if one speaks slowly and much more carefully than one normally does , he / she may produce words in their unassimilated forms , whereas in fast rapid conversation , one is likely to assimilate fully " .

(Roach ,2009 : 110) gives a clear definition of assimilation as "the process by which a phoneme is realized differently

as a result of being near some other phoneme belonging to a neighboring word".

3.Various Types of Assimilation

Assimilation could be described according to certain aspects depending on the space between the two sounds employed, the direction of the impact utilized , the special illustrious hallmark affected , and the degree to which one sound assimilates to another . The first categorization distinguishes between two main types . One is assimilation between two consecutive sounds , called contiguous assimilation (contact assimilation) and the second is assimilation between two sounds , called non-contiguous (distance assimilation) . The contiguous assimilation is shown by the two instances (te<u>n</u> <u>p</u>igs) / tem pɪgz / , and (pigs) / pɪgz / . Non-contiguous assimilation is very rare in English . An example of this type is the idiom (turn up trumps) in which / n / in / tɜːn / is articulated by the lips as / m / under the influence of the later bilabial sounds / p / and / m /

The second categorization

differentiates between three types : Progressive assimilation (perseverative assimilation) , regressive assimilation (anticipatory assimilation) , and coalescent assimilation (mutual or reciprocal assimilation) (Skandera and Burleigh , 2005 : 90).

The current study focuses on the three main types of assimilation . They are as followed :

1.Progressive assimilation caused by the effect of a preceding sound .

2.Regressive assimilation caused by the influence of a following sound .

3.Coalescent assimilation caused by the effect of two sounds upon each other .

The first type which is progressive assimilation within a word deals with the selection between the different endings for the regular plural ,the possessive case , the third person singular , the regular past tense , and the regular past participle . For example , the words (pigs) / pɪgz / , (goes) / gəʊz / , (looked) / lʊkt / , and (turned) / tɜːnd / . Progressive assimilation can be shown through the sequences like   (shut your mouth) / ʃʌt jɔː maʊθ / and (church street) / ʧɜːʧ striːt / . In the first example , / j / in (your) can become the same of the preceding / t / in (shut) concerning its intensity or articulation , and

it can become more like / t / with regard to its place and manner of articulation . / j / can be articulated with more force and with a narrow space between the articulators , thus changing form a lenis palatal approximant to a fortis palate-alveolar fricative .

/ j / can be substituted with / ʃ / as in (shut your mouth) / ʃʌt ʃə maʊθ / . In (church street) , / s / in (street) / stri:t / can become identical with the preceding / tʃ / in (church) with reference to its place articulation , while its intensity and manner of articulation remain unchanged (Skandera and Burleigh , 2005 : 91) .

(Gimson , 1989 : 290) defines regressive assimilation as a kind of assimilation in which the effect moves backwards , i. e , one sound influences the preceding one . Regressive assimilation may involve assimilation of voicing to voicelessness , and assimilation influencing the place of articulation . Assimilation of voicelessness to voicing are unfamiliar in Standard English though they are very common in other languages . In English , assimilation is regressive . Regressive assimilation across word boundaries occurs much more often . The

place of articulation of a word-final alveolar consonant is influenced by that of a following , word-initial consonant . For instance , (ten pigs) / tem pɪgz / , (that case) / ðæk keɪs / , and (good boy) / gʊb bɔɪ /. Progressive assimilation involves changes of voicing to voicelessness . Voiced consonant lose their voicing when they are followed by certain voiceless sounds .

a./ z / changes to / s / when / z / is followed by one of the following sounds / p , t , k , f , s , θ / as in (these things) . See the following table

Table (1)

Example	Transcription	The resulted words
These things	/ ði:z θɪŋgz /	/ ði:s θɪŋgz /

b./ ð / changes to / θ / when / ð / is followed by one of the following sounds / p , t , k , f , s , θ / as in (with tea) . See the following table

Table (2)

Example	Transcription	The resulted words
With tea	/ wɪð ti: /	/ wɪθ ti: /

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c./ v / changes to / f / when / v / is followed by one of the following sounds / p , t , k , f , s , θ / as in (of course) . See the following table

Table (3)

Example	Transcription	The resulted words
of course	/ əv kɔ:s /	/ əf kɔ:s /

d./ʤ / changes to / ʧ / when / ʧ / is followed by one of the following sounds / p , t , k , f , s , θ / as in (orange tree) . See the following table

Table (4)

Example	Transcription	The resulted words
orange tree	/ ɔ: rɪʤ tri: /	/ɔ: rɪʧ tri: /

(Roach , 2009 : 111) explains that assimilation of place is so clear in some cases . They are :

a. where a final consonant (c f) with alveolar place of articulation is followed by an initial consonant (c i) with a place of articulation that is not alveolar . For instance , the word (that) / ðæt / , the final consonant / t / will become / p / before a bilabial consonant in rapid casual speech as in (that person) . See the following table

Table (5)

Example	Transcription	The resulted words
That person	/ ðæt pɜ:sən /	/ ðæp pɜ:sən /

b./ n / changes to / m/ when it is followed by / p , b , m / as in (one more). See the following table

Table (6)

Example	Transcription	The resulted words
One more	/ wʌn mɔ: /	/ wʌm mɔ: /

c./ t / changes to / k / when it is followed by / k / and / g / as in (that girl) . See the following table

Table (7)

Example	Transcription	The resulted words
That girl	/ ðæt gɜ:l /	/ ðæk gɜ:l /

d./ d / changes to / g / when /d/ is followed by / k / or / g / as in (good girl) . See the following table

Table (8)

Example	Transcription	The resulted words
good girl	/ gʊd gɜ:l /	/gʊg gɜ:l /

e./ n / changes to / ŋ / when / n / is followed by / k/ or / g / as in (one cup) . See the following table

Table (9)

Example	Transcription	The resulted words
One cup	/ wʌn kʌp /	/ wʌŋ kʌp /

f./ s / changes to / ʃ / when / s / is followed by / ʃ / or / j / as in (this year).See the following table

Table (10)

Example	Transcription	The resulted words
This year	/ ðɪs jɪə /	/ ðɪʃ jɪə /

g./z / changes to /ʒ/ when / z/ is followed by / j / and / ʃ / as in (is she) . See the following table

Table (11)

Example	Transcription	The resulted words
Is she	/ ɪz ʃɪ /	/ ɪʒ ʃɪ /

Coalescent assimilation merges two sounds to constitute a single and new sound .The new sound is an affricate sound . If coalescent assimilation occurs across word boundaries , the two words involved are transcribed within a space between them . For example , (don't you) / dəʊnt jʊ / , where / t/ and / j / can change to / ʧ / , the result is / dəʊnʧ jʊ / . Another example

(could you) , /kʊd jʊ / , / d / can change to / ʤ / to be / kʊʤ jʊ/ . Coalescent assimilation within the words can be illustrated by the word (intuition) / ɪntju:ɪʃn / , where / t/ can change to / ʧ /.

In careful speech , some English speakers may use artificial uncoalesced forms within words , for example , the words (soldiers) and (unfortunate) /sə ʊldə / and / ʌnfɔ:tjʊnət / . Such speakers will avoid coalescence at word boundaries ; yet other carful speakers who use coalesced forms within words may avoid them at word boundaries (Cruttenden , 2014 : 312)

4.Experimental Design

The experiment has been made in the form of a test . The test consists of 10 assimilated phrases and sentences to measure the student's ability in recognizing types of assimilation . These words and phrases are taken to be played to the subjects in the test to listen to them while the words and phrases are also written on papers so that the students could read them and listen to them in order to write the types of assimilation . These items were taken from (O'Connor, 1980: 99) .The sample of this current research is the third year students / Department of English / College of Education / University of Misan of the academic year 2022.The total number of the students is 25 .

5.Statistical Analysis

The T-Test is the statistical test used in analyzing the results of the test . By using SPSS program , the researcher put the scores of the students , then she chose analyze , compare means , T-test for one group in order to get the analysis of the data . The researcher is used to find out the mistakes or errors of the students in recognizing the types of assimilation .

6. Findings

The findings of the analysis are shown in the following tables

Table (12)

One –sample statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std . Error Mean
Scores	25	3.22	2.231	.107

Table (13)

One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 5					
			Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	t	df			Lower	Upper
scores	-3.4 23-	19	.000	-1.320-	-1.21-	-.71-

(N) refers to the number of the students . The mean of the student achievement in the test is 3.22 and the calculated t-value is 2.411 which is higher than the tabulated t-value for the test which is 0.02 . Thus , the difference is statistically significant . The results showed that the performance of the students in the test was poor . This means that the students made a lot of errors in recognizing types of assimilation .
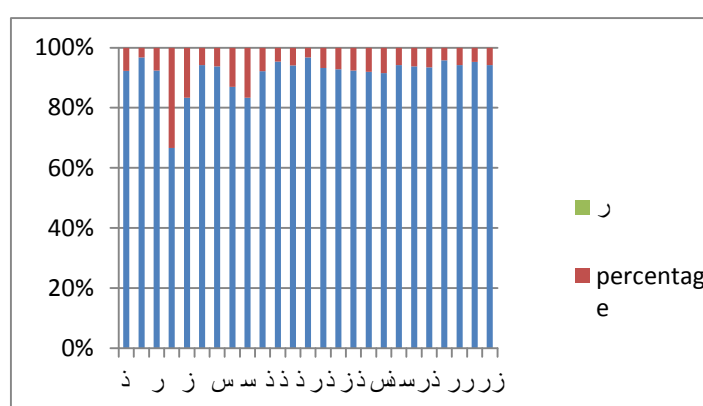
Table (14): The performance and the percentage of the subjects in the test

Subjects	Scores	Percentage
1	6	50 %

2	5	17%
3	4	33%
4	1	50%
5	2	40 %
6	6	37 %
7	6	40 %
8	2	30 %
9	2	40 %
10	4	34 %
11	7	34%
12	8	50 %
13	8	27%
14	4	29%
15	4	31%
16	4	33%
17	4	35%
18	4	37%
19	6	37%
20	6	40%
21	6	42%
22	5	22%

23	6	37%
24	7	35%
25	6	37%

Figure (1) : Histogram of the students' performance

7. Discussion

Since this work is to measure the student's ability to recognize and write the types of assimilation , so perception of assimilated forms is shown to be translated into correct performance . However , the students are foreign learners of English did not perceive assimilated consonants in English because they restored assimilated phonemes into their unassimilated and original forms . Assimilation steps must be included in English language courses by course designers . Teachers of English must also make learners to pay attention to assimilation and rules of assimilation while perceiving and producing English . This will help the learner to get a good production . Learning of the phonological assimilation will improve the correct production of assimilated forms

8.Conclusion

The current research paper has investigated the most important category of connected speech which is assimilation .From the data collected and analyzed , it is noticed that this feature is a problematic for the Iraqi EFL learners . The performance of the students in the test was

so poor . This means that the lecturers of English linguistics and the students need to pay attention to the rules of this phonological aspect either in teaching or learning .What is certain , however , is that the non-mastery of these aspects of connected speech affects the linguistic performance of the students . The mastery of this phonological aspects in the college helps to solve the problems faced by the learners .

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