

#### 4.4.5. HISTORICAL AND LIVING ASSIMILATION

Assimilation may be of the historical and living.

When the articulation of a sound was changed under the influence of the neighbouring sounds in the course of the development of the language assimilation is termed **historical**. For example: *impossible* [Im'pɒsɪbl̩] where once negative prefix **in-** became **im-** under the influence of [p]; *illegible* [ɪl'edʒɪbl̩] where [n] became [l] under the influence of [l]; *irregular* [ɪr'regjuːlə] where [n] was changed into [r] under the influence of the following [r].

These changes are reflected in the present spelling.

Other cases of more recent historical assimilation are *picture* ['pɪktʃə], *nation* [neɪʃn], which were pronounced as [pɪk'tʃʊr], [na'sjʌn], the Ukrainian word *соняшник* [CÓH'AШНИК], the spelling and pronunciation of which used to be *сонячник* [CÓH'AЧНИК].

In Ukrainian, cases of historical assimilation are usually reflected in spelling.

When the articulation of a sound is changed under the influence of the neighbouring sounds in the living spoken language at the given period of its development, the assimilation is termed **living**.

All examples of assimilation described in the book except those illustrating historical assimilation are instances of living assimilation.

The tabular analysis of the cases of living assimilation in English given in the book shows clearly all types of assimilation (see table 4.2, pp. 147, 148).

The scheme is based on the principles of the classification of assimilation given by A.A. Reformatsky (1951, 1955), L.A. Bulahovsky (1951).

The phenomenon opposite to assimilation in which one of two similar phonemes is changed as a result of their interaction is called **dissimilation**. Dissimilation may be vowel or consonant, distant or contact (more often distant than contact), regressive or progressive and always complete.

Table 4.2.

Models of analysis of cases of active assimilation in English

Examples		Result of assimilation	Group of speech sounds
1.	filth [fɪlθ]	Forelingual alveolar [l] becomes dental under the influence of dental [θ]	consonant
2.	fivepence ['faɪfpeɪns]	Voiced [v] becomes voiceless under the influence of voiceless [p]	»
3.	Pete's a boy [ˈpi:tɪs ə ɒɪ]	Voiced [z] is changed into voiceless [s] under the influence of voiceless [t]	»
4.	horseshoe ['hɔːshuː]	[s] is changed into [ʃ] under the influence of [ʃ]	»
5.	does she [dʌs ʃi]	[z] is changed into [ʃ] under the influence of [ʃ]	»
6.	does she [dʌz ʃi]	[z] is changed into [z] under the influence of [ʃ]	»
7.	print [prɪnt]	[r] is slightly devoiced under the influence of [p]	»
8.	news [njuːz]	[uː] becomes more advanced under the influence of [j]	vowel
9.	bags [bægz]	Voiceless [s] becomes voiced under the influence of the preceding voiced [g]	consonant
10.	looked [lʊkt]	Voiced [d] is devoiced under the influence of the preceding [k]	»

Table 4.2.  
(continued)

Assimilation may affect		Degree of assimilation	Direction of assimilation	Distance between the assimilated and assimilating sound
1.	place of obstruction	partial	regressive	contact
2.	the vocal chords	intermediate	»	»
3.	»	»	progressive	»
4.	place of obstruction, manner of the production of noise	complete	regressive	»
5.	the vocal chords, place of obstruction, manner of the production of noise	»	»	»
6.	place of obstruction, manner of the production of noise	partial	»	»
7.	the vocal chords	intermediate	progressive	»
8.	the tongue	partial	»	»
9.	the vocal chords	»	»	»
10.	»	»	»	»

Dissimilation is of great importance for the development of the language.

The Ukrainian words *плету* [ПЛЕСТЇ], *месту* [МЕСТЇ] which were pronounced [ПЛЕТТЇ], [МЕТТЇ] may serve as examples of dissimilation. One of the two similar stop consonants [Т] was changed into the fricative [С].

In English the phenomenon of dissimilation is not yet investigated.

Students whose native language is Ukrainian often meet with difficulties in pronouncing English sounds in connected speech as the rules of assimilation in English differ from those in Ukrainian.

The following types of assimilation often occur in English: consonantal, partial, regressive, contact and living. The same types of assimilation are characteristic of Ukrainian.

Examples of full and intermediate assimilation are met more often in Ukrainian than in English. Progressive assimilation is not characteristic of either of the two languages, though in Ukrainian it occurs more often than in English.

Vowel and historical assimilation are met both in English and Ukrainian very seldom. Intermediate and full assimilation occur rarely in English.

Most often assimilation in English and Ukrainian involves the work of the vocal chords, but owing to the specific phonetic and grammatical structures of the two languages assimilation acts in different ways.

Thus, at the beginning of the word voiceless consonants in Ukrainian become voiced if they are before voiced consonants and vice versa voiced consonants are devoiced if they are before voiceless consonants. In the middle of the word Ukrainian voiced consonants are not devoiced when the adjoining sound is a voiceless consonant, e.g.

казка [КАЗКА],  
стежка [СТЕЖКА].

In English this phenomenon is not observed. English voiced consonants remain voiced when followed by voiceless consonants, e.g.

absent ['xbsqnt],  
good time ['gVd 'talm].