



An Animated and Narrated Glossary of  
Terms used in Linguistics  
*presents*

# Assimilation



*Try saying ...*

- *football*      foopball
- *Don't be silly*      dombe silly
- *10 kings*      teng kings

If you said these words quickly, you're likely to have made the pronunciations in **blue**.

What's going on?





## Summary

- In phonology, assimilation is the process where two entities become identical/similar.
- Assimilation can affect vowels, consonants and even other phonological entities like tone.
- Assimilation can happen
  - Leftward, where something changes to become more like its left neighbor (e.g. Sundanese nasal assimilation)  
This typically happens by the left neighbor spreading a particular (set of) feature(s) rightwards.
  - Rightward, where something changes to become more like its right neighbor (e.g. English *football* as “foopball”)  
This typically happens by the right neighbor spreading a particular (set of) feature(s) leftwards.

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## Further Reading

- Cohn, Abigail C. (1993) The Status of Nasalized Continuants. In Marie K. Huffman and Rena A. Krakow (eds.) *Phonetics and Phonology 5: Nasals, Nasalization and the Velum* (pp. 329-368). San Diego: Academic Press.
- Cohn, Abigail C. (1993) Nasalisation in English: Phonology or Phonetics. *Phonology* 10:43–82.
- Kenstowicz, Michael J. (1994) *Phonology in Generative Grammar*, pp. 150-158. Blackwell Publishers.
- Odden, David (2005) *Introducing Phonology*. Cambridge University Press.

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## The End

Wee, Lian-Hee and Winnie H.Y. Cheung (2009)  
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