

Assimilation, Reduction and Elision Reflected in the Selected Song Lyrics of *Avenged Sevenfold*

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Abstract

This paper discusses the phenomena of phonological rules, especially assimilation, reduction and elision processes. In this paper, the writer conducted phonological study which attempts to find the phenomena of those processes in song lyrics. In taking the data, the writer transcribed the lyrics of the songs, along with checking them to the internet source, then observed the lyrics to find the phenomena of assimilation, reduction, and elision. After that, she classified the observed phenomena in the lyrics based on the phonological processes. From the data analysis, the results showed that there were three processes found both in the first and second songs: assimilation, reduction and elision. The difference is that in the first song, it has four kinds of assimilation, while from the second song only has three kinds of assimilation.

Keywords: *assimilation, reduction, elision*

Introduction

As English spoken by the native speakers, it sometimes undergoes simplification to ease the native speakers in expressing their feelings. That is why, it is common for them to speak English in high speed along with their emotions. As the result, they make a 'shortcut' to get ease of their pronunciation. The native speakers often do some 'improvement' in their speech to reach maximum transfer of messages with minimum efforts of articulation.

Sometimes they pronounce a sound to become similar to either preceding or following sound to keep the speed of their speech; or linguists call it as *assimilation* process. They also reduce even delete a vowel or a consonant in the unstressed position as an attempt to fasten their pronunciation in their daily speech, and it is known as *reduction* and *deletion* (also *elision*) process. All these phenomena mostly happen in the informal speeches such as in an intimate talk of best-friends,

brothers and sisters' discussion or even in songs, for which songs are considered as the media for the composer to share his feelings.

Assimilation usually happens in the double consonants. This is a phenomenon which shows the influence of one sound to another to become more similar. While for the reduction process, it can happen to the vowel which is in the unstressed position. Reduction is the substitution of a vowel to the unstressed position with a weak central vowel (called schwa /ə/). Van Bergem (1995) describes the schwa as a vowel without target so that it is completely assimilated with its phonemic context.

Meanwhile, elision (also deletion) is the complete disappearance of one or more sounds in a word or phrase as an attempt to make a word or phrase easier to pronounce. One of the most common elisions in English is the omission of /t/ and /d/ when those sounds are at the boundary of words. Apostrophe is sometimes used as the indicator of elision. In this paper, the writer

tries to recognize the phenomena of (anticipatory) assimilation, vowel reduction and consonant elision reflected in *Avenged Sevenfold's* song lyrics. Therefore, in this study, the writer tries to find the phenomena of assimilation, reduction, and elision in the selected songs of *Avenged Sevenfold* Band.

(Anticipatory) Assimilation

This is a process which speakers make a 'transition' in anticipating the following pronunciation. The 'transition' here happens because of the influence of preceding sound. That is why, this kind of 'transition' is called anticipatory assimilation. It is supported by Giegerich (1992) who defines that (anticipatory) assimilation is a common phenomenon for which a segment either fully or partially anticipates the place of articulation over the following segment (213). He also points out the characteristics of anticipatory assimilation as follows.

1. /n/ → /ŋ/ whenever /n/ comes before dental (/t/, /ð/ and /θ/), therefore it is called as *dentalization*.
2. /k/ → /k/ happens when /k/ precedes front vowels (/i:/, /e/ and /a/) and it is known as *fronting*.
3. /m/ → /m̥/ whenever /m/ comes before labiodental (/f/, /v/); it is known as *labiodental nasal*.
4. /a/ → /ä/ happens when /a/ precedes the nasal sounds (/m/, /n/ and /ŋ/) and the process is called *nasalization*.
5. /k/ → /k/ whenever /k/ comes before rounded segment such as in words 'queer', 'question', 'quack', 'quick' and 'cool'. This process is known as *labialization* or *rounding*.

Besides the requirements above, Giegerich (1992) also mentions three other conditions when assimilation can happen in an individual speech: (1) the individual speaker's habits in which a speaker has his/her own style and characteristics in speech, (2) the type of speech as well the rapid and informal speech appears greater assimilation than the slow and formal speech does, and (3) tempo for which it indicates the speed of speech. The faster a

speaker talks, less articulatory efforts he/she does (214-215).

Reduction

Reduction is a process in which speakers reduce the 'presence' of a phoneme, especially a phoneme in the unstressed position, while vowel reduction is a feature of stress timing referring to the way vowels are reduced when unstressed. In reducing a vowel, speakers can either weaken or substitute the pronunciation with another sound. It is line with Griffen (1998) who defines a vowel reduction as "a phenomenon in which the vowel in an accented syllable is shifted toward the mid-central position when the accent is removed from the syllable (17)." In reducing a phoneme, the speakers take less articulatory effort to get ease of pronunciation in speech, for instance: the central vowel in word 'and' /ænd/ becomes /ən/ [/æ → ə/] because it is in the unstressed syllable. It is line with Giegerich (1992) who argues that most of English vowels are suspended in the unstressed syllables (285).

Van Bergem (1995) also defines a schwa as a 'straight' articulatory path between two consonants. Since a path always depends upon the surrounding environment, a schwa cannot exist as a separate phoneme, but only as a phonemic which a syllable embed. Furthermore, he also proposes several core factors of vowel reduction such as stress, frequency of word's occurrence and speaking style. Giegerich (1992) mentions some examples of vowel reduction or schwa /ə/ such as in these words: *canoe* /kə'nu/, *balloon* /bə'lun/, *federal* /'fedərəl/, *catalyst* /'katəlist/ and *botany* /'bɒtəni/ (287).

Elision

Elision process happens when speakers leave or delete a phoneme out of pronunciation as an attempt to fasten and get rid of difficulties in speech. According to Giegerich (1992), elision often happens before sonorant consonants which give the consonants an opportunity to be syllabic so that they will occupy the peak of the syllable. The process is called vowel elision, for

examples are *button* /batən/ or /batn/ and *little* /lɪtəl/ or /lɪtl/ (287).

The most common elision in English words is the omission of sounds /t/ and /d/ at the word boundary: they are positioned at end of a word before go to the next word. Elision is also known as the complete dropping of a sound in a given context. If it has consonants as the target, then people know it as *consonant elision*. For instance is the elision of sound /t/ in the word *postman* /poustmən/ → /pou smən/ because of the speed of speaker. In the case of /t/, the preceding consonant must be voiceless; in the case of /d/, the preceding consonant must be voiced. In both cases, elision happens with any following consonant, except /h/ and sometimes /j/, e.g. *Christmas* /'krɪsməs/, *listen* /lɪsən/, *sandwich*: /sænwiʃ/, *kindness*: /kæməs/, *left foot* /lefʊ:t/, but it doesn't happen in *left hand* /left hænd/; *left you*: /leftjʊ/, *old man*: /ould mæn/.

Research Methodology

This study will focus on assimilation, reduction and elision in *Avenged Sevenfold's* song lyrics. This study belongs to qualitative research because it uses words as the source of data. More, it does not contain any statistical process. It is line with Moelong (1989) who states, "Qualitative research is a type of research, which does not include any calculation and numbering (2)." Therefore, hopefully this study can give further information toward those phenomena and can help the readers to understand them easily.

The source of data is the song lyrics of *Gunslinger* and *Second Heartbeat*. To make the data sure, the writer checked the lyrics to the internet sources. Those sources of data above are relevant to the data which the writer needed. She also used those sources to check the validity of the data. The steps to analyze the data were: listening to the songs, understanding the general content of the songs, transcribing the lyrics of the songs, and checking the lyrics with the internet source.

To find out the phonological processes in the lyrics, the writer applied some steps. The writer observed the lyrics of the songs carefully in order to find the phenomena of phonological processes of them. She observed the words that carried the phenomena. After observing the words that contain the phonological processes, she recognized the kind of processes that the words have. After that, the writer classified them to ease the reader in comprehending the results and providing the examples of each process.

Discussion (Anticipatory) Assimilation

Assimilation mostly appeared in *Avenged Sevenfold's* song lyrics. It is not only because of the amount of (anticipatory) assimilation types, but also because the singer's style in speech. Here are the cases of anticipatory assimilation reflected in *Avenged Sevenfold's* song lyrics.

No	Song Title	Occurrences
1.	Gunslinger	15 times of Assimilation; 6 times of Reduction; 6 times of Elision; 4 times of double processes.
2.	Second Heartbeat	14 times of Assimilation; 6 times of Reduction; 7 times of Elision; 2 times of double processes.

Nasalization

This type of assimilation happens when a vowel comes before nasal sounds /m/ /n/ or /ŋ/. The writer determined the **nasalization** process by making the letters in **bold** feature. Here are the examples of nasalization taken from the *Gunslinger* and *Second Heartbeat* lyrics:

- (1) **been**; alone; **been**; gone; long; many; things; when; strong; bring
- (2) changing; **in**; stand; alone; **been**; gone; wishing; wasting; growing

Those examples above belong to the nasalization process since the vowels are going to meet nasal sounds as the following sound. The vowels in those words are

pronounced like a nasal sound which the airstream comes out through the nose.

Dentalization

It is the process when the sound /n/ meets a dental sound such as /t/, /ð/ or /θ/. From the lyrics, the writer found three cases which belong to this process. The writer identified the dentalization process in the bold letter. Here are some cases of dentalization inside the lyrics:

- (3) **been** through; **been** true; **in** the night
- (4) when **they**; **been** there; **in** the

Those examples (3) and (4) actually complete the types of dentalization in which the first example shows the rule when /n/ meets /θ/ in the word *through*, the second example represents the dentalization process when /n/ meets /t/ in the word *true* and the last example denotes when /n/ is followed by /ð/ in the word *the*. It also happens in the words *they*, *there* and *the* for which the sound /n/ meets /ð/. The dentalization process requires a speaker to position the tip of the tongue between the upper front teeth when he/she pronounces the sound /n/. It happens because of the dental sounds' influence.

Rounding

This kind of nasalization is rare to find in the lyrics. The writer only found one case of rounding process in which the sound /k/ is followed by rounded segment. Here is the example of rounding process taken from the lyrics:

- (5) **question**

The word *question* above shows the process of rounding in which the sound /k/ meets a diphthong /ue/ in which it belongs to the rounded segment. Because the diphthong influences the pronunciation of /k/, the sound /k/ undergoes the rounding process. That is why, the pronunciation of /k/ in the word *question* is started with the rounded shape of oral cavity.

Fronting

From the lyrics, the writer also only found one case which belongs to the fronting process. The writer wrote the letter which undergoes the fronting process in bold. Here is the example of fronting process taken from *Gunslinger* and *Second Heartbeat* lyrics:

- (6) **keep**

In the example above, the sound /k/ undergoes the fronting process for which because the influence of front vowel /i/. In pronouncing the sound /k/ in the example above, the speaker needs to narrow his/her oral cavity along with the blade of the tongue raised to the hard palate.

Reduction

This process denotes when a phoneme is reduced in its pronunciation. The writer found several cases of this process. Here are the examples of reduction found in *Gunslinger* and *Second Heartbeat* lyrics:

- (7) **too**; **to**; **towards**; **matter**; **letters**; **have**
- (8) **but**; **can**; **as**; **of**; **confide**; **to**

The examples above shows the reduction process in which the vowels turn into mid-central vowel or it is called as schwa (/ə/). All the vowels above undergo the reduction process because of the speed of the speaker in speech. In that song, the singer pronounced those words in high-speed. For instance is in the word *too* /tu:/ in which the vowel is reduced and becomes /tə/. It also happens in the second word where *to* /tʊ/ turns into /tə/ as the result of vowel reduction. In the third word *toward* /tu'wɔ:rd/ turns into /tə'wɔ:rd/, then *matter* /'mætəɪ/ becomes /'mætɪ/, *letters* /'letəɪ/ becomes /'letɪ/ while for the word *have* /hæv/, it turns into /həv/.

The example (8) also show the process of reduction where all the vowels in the unstressed position turn into schwa such as in the word *but* /bʌt/ the pronunciation will be /bət/, the word *can* /kæn/ turns into /kən/. The vowel /o/ in *of* /ɑ:v/ turns into

/əv/ and so does in the word *confide* /kən'faɪd/ where the first vowel is in the unstressed position. In the last word *to* /tu/ the vowel is also reduced because of the effect of speaker's speed in speech.

Elision

This process involves the omission of a phoneme in its pronunciation. The writer found several cases which belong to Elision. Most of them are both the short form of a word (apostrophe is the indicator) and the elision of sound /t/ and /d/. Here are the found examples in *Gunslinger* and *Second Heartbeat* lyrics:

- (9) 'Cause; heart's; won't; you're
- (10) it through; It don't; helped me; just to
- (11) Left the; forget you; get to; left me; looked to

In case (9), the elision process happens since those words constitute the short form and the apostrophe as the indicator of elision. The word 'cause is the short form of *because*. While the apostrophe ('s) in the second and fourth word encode the short form of *to be* is. In the third word, the word *won't* constitutes the short form of *will not*. While the apostrophe ('re) in the example (10) means to be are

In cases (10) and (11), the elision process happens because the omission of sounds /t/ and /d/ in the pronunciation. The pronunciation of the words *it through* /ɪt θru:/ will be /ɪθru:/, while in the word *I don't*, the /t/ sound will be altered by /d/ sound and the pronunciation will be /ɪdɔː/. The words *helped me* are pronounced as /hɛlpmɪ/ while the words *died my* are pronounced as /daɪmaɪ/ then the words *lend me* will be pronounced as /lɛnmɪ/.

Furthermore, the words *left the*, the pronunciation will be /lɛfðə/ and for the words *forget you* it will be pronounced as /fəɪ'gɛtʃuː/. It also happens the words *get to* will be pronounced as /gɛtʃuː/ and *left me* is pronounced as /lɛfmɪ/. For the last example, it constitutes the omission of /d/ sound for which the words *looked to* will be

pronounced as /luːktu/. Elision is the way a speaker maintains the speed of speech in order to make their pronunciation easier.

Double Processes

Besides all the characteristics which are mentioned above, the writer also found several words from the lyrics which contain double processes as its phonological process. Here are several examples of words which denote either the double processes or the combination of the processes:

- (12) you've;
- (13) coming;
- (14) grown to;
- (15) don't matter;
- (16) and;
- (17) won't be.

In case (13), it has double process: they are elision and reduction, where its pronunciation /juːev/ undergoes both elision as well as it is a short form of *have* and the pronunciation /ev/ shows the reduction process of /hæv/. The word (13) undergoes the elision and assimilation processes. Elision since it turns from *coming* /kʌmɪŋ/ into /kʌmɪn/, while the sound /i/ undergoes the assimilation process, especially nasalization because the vowel /i/ is followed by a nasal sound /n/. In the word (14), its double assimilations as its process: nasalization and dentalization. The sound /ou/ is pronounced as nasal sound for which it is followed by a nasal /n/, while the dentalization happens because the sound /n/ is followed by a dental sound /t/. That is why the speakers need to put their tip of the tongue between the teeth when pronouncing the sound /n/.

In the word (15), three processes happen there. The first is elision in which the apostrophe denotes the short form of *not*, while the second process is reduction in which its pronunciation is changed from /dɔː/ into /dəː/ and also /mætəɪ/ into /matɪ/. The last process is assimilation for which the pronunciation of /dəː mætɪ/ turns into /dəːmætɪ/. The sound /n/ turns into /m/ as the anticipation of meeting the bilabial sound /m/. Meanwhile, the

nasalization process happens because the sound /i/ in the word *making* is influenced by the nasal sound /ŋ/ as the following sound.

In the word (16), reduction and elision processes occur. The reduction of the vowel happens for which it is reduced from /æ/ into /ə/ and the elision happens to the sound /d/, so the pronunciation will be changed from /ænd/ to /ən/. In the word (17), it involves two processes in its pronunciation: elision and assimilation. The elision is marked by the apostrophe which represents the short form of *will not* and the assimilation happens in which the sound /n/ is pronounced as /m/ for anticipating the bilabial stop as its following sound. As a result, the pronunciation is changed from /wɔ:ʔ bɪ/ into /wɔ:mbɪ/.

Conclusion

From the findings and discussions above, the writer formulated some important points as the conclusion. From the first song, the writer recognized four kinds of assimilation process namely nasalization, dentalization, rounding and fronting. While for the reduction process, she found six cases and twelve cases for elision process. She also found six cases which have more than one phonological process. In the second song, the writer found three kinds of assimilation namely nasalization, dentalization and fronting. For the reduction process, she recognized six cases and seven cases which belong to the elision process. Moreover, she found four cases which involve more than one phonological process in their pronunciations.

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