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ENG507 Assignment 1 Solution

Fall 2026

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Fall 2026 | Total Marks: 20 | Due Date: 15 November 2026

Name: VU Learning Hub

Question

Read extensively on the topic Overlapping Gestures and Co-articulation and answer the following questions. (i) Explain the concept of overlapping gestures in speech production and discuss how articulatory gestures of neighbouring sounds overlap during pronunciation. Support your answer with TWO relevant examples. (ii) Define co-articulation and explain how it influences the realization of phonemes and leads to variations in their allophones. Give TWO relevant examples to justify your answer. (10+10=20)

(i) Overlapping Gestures

Speech is not made one sound at a time. In normal speech the sounds run into each other. The reason is that the organs of speech move in a smooth flow. They do not stop and start for each sound.

In articulatory phonology speech is made of gestures. A gesture is a movement of one speech organ to make a sound. The lips move to make /p/ and /b/. The tongue tip moves to make /t/ and /d/. The tongue body moves to make /k/ and /g/. The velum moves to open or close the nose. The glottis moves to start or stop the voice.

Each gesture has a time. It starts and it ends. But the gestures do not follow one after the other in a neat line. The gesture for the next sound starts before the gesture for the present sound ends. This is overlapping of gestures. So the sounds blend into each other.

Overlap makes speech fast and smooth. Without overlap each sound would stand alone and speech would sound slow. Overlap is more in fast speech. In slow speech the overlap is less and each sound is more clear.

Overlap also changes the sounds. A sound may lose some part of its own gesture because the next gesture starts early. A sound may take some part of the next sound. This is why sounds change when they come next to other sounds. It explains assimilation. It also explains why some sounds are not fully pronounced.

The first example is the phrase ten bikes. The word ten ends with /n/. The /n/ is made with the tongue tip on the ridge behind the teeth. The word bikes starts with /b/. The /b/ is made with the two lips. When we say ten bikes fast the lips close for /b/ before /n/ ends. The nose is still open. So /n/ is made with the lips and it changes to /m/. We hear tem bikes and not ten bikes. The /n/ has taken the lip gesture of /b/.

The second example is the phrase good girl. The word good ends with /d/. The /d/ is made with the tongue tip. The word girl starts with /g/. The /g/ is made with the tongue body. When we say good girl fast the tongue body moves up for /g/ before /d/ ends. The /d/ is not fully released. We

hear goog girl and not good girl.

Lip rounding gives one more clear case. In the word string the sound /r/ needs round lips. The rounding starts during /s/ and /t/ which come before /r/. So the lips are already round before /r/ starts. This is overlap of the lip gesture.

(ii) Co-articulation

Co-articulation means that a sound is pronounced in a different way because of the sounds next to it. No sound is made alone in real speech. Each sound is shaped by the sound before it and by the sound after it.

A phoneme is one unit of sound in a language. It is an abstract unit. In real speech a phoneme does not have one fixed sound. It appears in different forms in different places. These forms are called allophones. One phoneme can have many allophones. Co-articulation is the main reason for this change.

There are two kinds of co-articulation. The first kind is anticipatory co-articulation. In this kind a sound changes because of the sound that comes after it. The speaker plans the next sound early. The second kind is perseverative co-articulation. It is also called carryover co-articulation. In this kind a sound changes because of the sound that came before it. The mouth is still in the position of the last sound.

Co-articulation changes the place of a sound. It can also change the shape of the lips and the state of the velum. So the same phoneme sounds different in different words. The change is small and the meaning stays the same.

The first example is the phoneme /k/. It is made in two words. In the word key the sound /k/ comes before the front vowel /i/. The tongue body moves forward for /i/ so /k/ is made further forward. In the word car the sound /k/ comes before the vowel /a/. The tongue body stays back for /a/ so /k/ is made further back. The phoneme is the same /k/ in both words but the two sounds are two allophones of /k/. The place of the next vowel decides the place of /k/.

The second example is the phoneme /l/. It is made in two words. In the word leaf the sound /l/ comes at the start of the word. It is a clear /l/. The tongue tip touches the ridge. In the word feel the sound /l/ comes at the end of the word. It is a dark /l/. The back of the tongue is high. The phoneme is the same /l/ in both words but the two sounds are two allophones of /l/. The place of /l/ in the word decides its form.

Nasalization gives one more clear case. In the word man the vowel comes before /n/. The velum opens early for /n/ and the vowel becomes nasal. In the word mat the vowel comes before /t/. The velum stays closed and the vowel is not nasal. The same vowel has two forms because of the next sound.