

English Phonetics-II

11. English Rhythm

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Lecture outline

- What is rhythm?
- Stress vs. syllable-timed rhythm
- Stress in connected speech
- English rhythmic unit
- Quantitative metrical rhythm
- How to achieve rhythm in English
 - Strong vs. weak forms
 - Doublets
 - Avoidance of two consecutive stress syll.
 - Word order
 - Vowel length
 - Pitch variation.

1. DEFINITION

What is rhythm?

DEFINITION: The sound **pattern** made by

- a. rise & fall of stresses (=accentual rhythm or speech rhythm),
- b. time (=quantitative rhythm).

The pattern can be a) **regular** (usually recurrent) and b) **irregular** (case of prose).

- ▶ "prose is rhythmic but not metrical".
- ▶ It is 'prosaic', not musical, so you don't need good ear (Abercrombie, 1965), and
- ▶ it is 'muscular' rather than a rhythm or sound, hence its recognition in silent reading.

1.1 SAMPLE (Tench, 2003)

- ▶ Ten green bottles
- ▶ Hanging on the wall
- ▶ And if one green bottle
- ▶ Should accidentally fall
- ▶ There'd be nine green bottles
- ▶ Hanging on the wall

2. STRESS VS. SYLLABLE-TIMED RHYTHM

Theories on conversational linguistic rhythm: the **stress-timed vs. syllable-timed rhythm hypothesis** (Pike and Jones)

- **Syllable-timed rhythm** (French, Spanish, Japanese, etc.). Also informally called machine-gun rhythm

- ▶ Chest pulse theory (Stetson, 1951): air speech flow is pulse-like (produced by intercostals)
- ▶ No more than 5 elements in Spanish: *He estudio hoy y he oído...*
- ▶ In Spanish, all syllables same length (are isochronous) irrespective of whether they are stressed or not. As a result:

NO VOWEL WEAKENING

EMPHATIC RHYTHM: imporTANte.

3. STRESS-TIMED RHYTHM

- **Stress-timed rhythm** (English, Dutch, Russian, etc)

- ▶ Feet begin with a **stressed** syllable
- ▶ Feet contain from 0 to several **unstressed** syllables
- ▶ All feet last the same (are *isochronous*) irrespective of the number of syllables they contain –a 'tendency' (Classe, 1989)
- ▶ To maintain isochrony, in unstressed syllables...
 - ▶ typically contain short, weak, central vowels
 - ▶ elided/assimilated sounds are common

Is English really a stress-timed language? (see next screenshot)

4. EVIDENCE

Phonetic evidence:

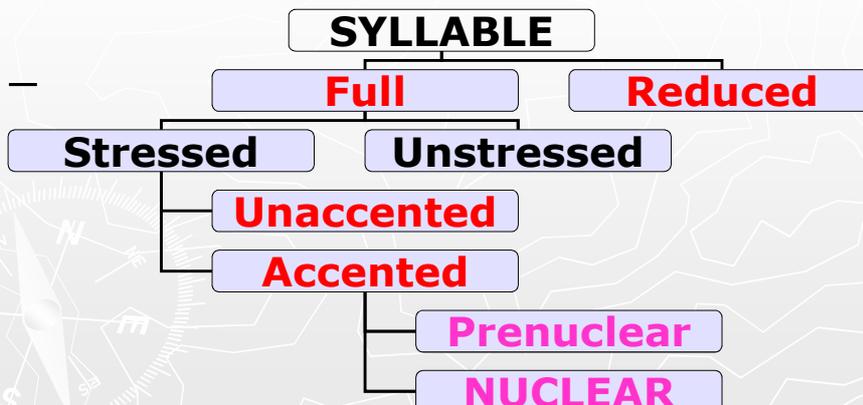
- Such rhythm does exist in careful, controlled English speech
- It is usually a 'syncopated rhythm' (pattern from syllables of diff. shapes –Ashby,2000))
- And there is 'rhythmic crushing' (Pike) or regular alternation bt. stressed and unstressed syll. (Bolinger, 65), so stress is pivotal. Remember it is the result of
 - Pitch (a most important cue –Fry, 1987)
 - Loudness,
 - Quality and syll.
 - Length (most important –Bolinger (1975))

5. STRESS IN CONNECTED SPEECH

A stressed syll is a **beat**; an accented syll is prominent by **pitch**.

(We've decided to buy ourselves a new home)

R R-A- RR S F F R N F



6. THE RHYTHMIC UNIT

The **FOOT** " is the rhythmical unit of prose and verse"
(Aberc.,)

The foot consists of **ictus** (stressed) and **remis** (unstressed)

Foot extension: variable:

- Words: no more than three unstressed: e.g. *competitiveness*

W s s w w w w w s w w

- Utterance: the | main | weaknesses of the con | servatives

- ▶ Only a selection of potentially stressable syll are retained as beats. The unstressed are clustered around the preceding or the following stressed syll. to make 'rhythm units' and their duration depends on their position. (a stressed syll is made shorter if followed by any unstressed :

e.g man –manage – manager (=‘isochronising clipping’ –it tends to produce isochrony – equal to Pike’s ‘rhythmic crushing’

E.g John phoned Bill = Few of them /tried to phone/ Bill’s mother

7. QUANTITATIVE METRICAL RHYTHM

- ▶ Well established in English by XVI₄ (B.Jonson chiding of Donne. Manley Hopkins ‘sprung rhythm’ (feet from 1 to 4 syll.)

- ▶ The **foot**, the unit of E. rhythm. It goes from one stress pulse (not stresses syll.) up to the next, but The **DIPODE IS "the measure of verse in English"** (Aber, 23), and if a line has an odd number= silent stress:

- ▶ S S Silent S S
to // be or // not to be/ / that is the / question

- ▶ Many different types of **metrical units** exist in verse, depending on its internal composition: trochee, iam, anapest, dactyl, etc.

Trochee or trochaic foot s w (e.g. coffee)

Iamb or iambic foot w s (e.g. support)

Anapest or anapestic foot w w s (seventeen)

Dactyl or dactylic foot s w w (carefully)

7.1 TROCHEE VS. IAMB

- ❖ A **trochee**: one long/stressed syllable followed by a short/unstressed syllable
E.g. Children's rhyme:
 - ***Peter, Peter pumpkin-eater***
 - ***Had a wife and couldn't keep her***
- ❖ An **iamb/ iambus**: a short/unstressed syllable followed by a long/stressed one (the reverse of a trochee)
E.g. Alfred Tennyson's "Ulysses", written in iambic pentametre
 - To **strive**, to **seek**, to **find**, and **not** to **yield**.

7.2 ANAPEST VS. DACTYL

- ❖ An **anapest**: two short syllables/unstressed syllables followed by a long/stressed one
E.g. William Cowper's "Verses Supposed to be Written by Alexander Selkirk" (1782), composed in anapaestic trimetre:
*I am **out** of humanity's **reach***
*I must **finish** my **journey** **alone***
- ❖ A **daetyl**: one long/stressed syllable followed by two short/unstressed syllables (the reverse of an anapest)
E.g. The Beatles' "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" (first two lines written in dactylic tetrametre; the word *skies* takes up a full three beats)
***Picture** your **self** in a **boat** on a **river** with*
***tangerine** **tree**-ees and **marmalade** **skii**-ii-es*

8. PROSE RHYTHM

Almighty God who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common suplications unto Thee, and dost promise that when two or three are gathered together in Thy name Thou wilt grant their requests. Fulfil now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of Thy servants as may be most expedient for them granting us in this world knowledge of Thy truth and in the world to come life everlasting.

9. SPEECH RHYTHM

Speech rhythm is in the speaker and shared by the listener (they share stress, L. specific =phonetic empathy. We find in speech a "variable" rhythmic pattern

- In E., we have **LEXICAL ACCENT** (primary stress, responsible for isochrony; also secondary and tertiary: *superficiality*), and **PROSODIC ACCENT** (full lexemes –Ns, Vs, Adjs, Adv- .
- Similarly, in Spanish: lexical accent (primary and secondary stress), and prosodic accent. Although not common, it may affect empty words: **A Nise adoro y aunque /la dije mi frenesí /ni sé si me quiere ni/ por qué ha de quererme sé** (Calderón).
- Stylistic prominence: English vs. Spanish: LA razón DE una acción así EN estas circunstancias...

10. HOW TO ACHIEVE RHYTHM IN ENGLISH-1

Remember: Almost all rhythmical movement is more or less emotional, so no black & white stress patterning:

I. Stress shifting: many words have variable stress (*sardine, Waterloo, Piccadilly ...*). Stress marks the difference bt Nouns and V s in cases where the N derives from a V: to 'take 'off, to 'run a'away, etc. but 'handout, 'getaway, 'sit-in, etc.

II. Introducing pauses: God help me= God/ / help me

10.1 STRONG AND WEAK FORMS-1

III. Function words

Function words have a grammatical meaning and belong to the group of close-class words

- ✓ Prepositions (e.g. at, for, from, of, to, etc.)
- ✓ Personal/relative pron. (e.g. me, who, that, you, us, etc.)
- ✓ Auxiliaries/Modals (e.g. do, are, can, have, would, etc.)
- ✓ Conjunctions & articles (e.g. and, as, but, that, a, the)
- ✓ Others (e.g. his, just, some, than, there(is/are))

Word	SF	WF
<i>a</i>	eɪ	ə
<i>and</i>	ænd	ənd, ən, n
<i>can</i>	kæn	kən kn
<i>for</i>	fɔ:	fə
<i>from</i>	fɾɒm	fɾəm
<i>has</i>	hæz	həz əz
<i>must</i>	mʌst	məst
<i>of</i>	ɒv	əv
<i>that</i>	ðæt	ðət
<i>the</i>	ði:	ði ðə
<i>to</i>	tu:	tu tə

10.2 DOUBLETS AND WORD ORDER

IV. Doublets: On/upon, till/until, round/around (e.g. *he threw his arms Around my neck; Once upon a time*).

V. Word order:

- You never can tell (B. Shaw)
 - He has not dared TO do it vs. How dare you do it?
 - To boldly go where no man has gone before (TV Star Trek)
 - To boldly split sentences where none were split before
 - Money makes the mare TO go (but the proverb: without TO)
- Why is the split infinitive frowned upon? You do not split 'amare'

VI. Vowel lengthening

VII. Pitch variation

10.3 AVOIDANCE OF TWO CONSECUTIVE STRESSED SYLLABLES

Rhythmical options

- Use of silent pause: (see *God help me* example)
- Vowel lengthening: *Goood ...*
- Pitch variation: *all gone!*
- De-stressing 1-2-1 (a *'waste* , paper *'basket*)
- Use of glottal stop
- Use of semivowels
- Avoidance of vowel fusion by means of linking /intrusive r, etc. E.g. *Viva r España*
- Dropping of /h/ in unaccented words, etc.

10.4 THE THREE SYLLABLE LAW and SENTENCE STRESS

If three stressed syllables follow each other, the middle loses its stress

- ☞ This weather may not **last much longer**
- ☞ **John went away** (vs. He went away)
- ☞ She was sitting in a **huge armchair** (vs. armchair strategy)
- ☞ They were **running downhill** (vs. a downhill slide)

Sentence stress: varies depending on

- ☞ Emphasis: He **wanted** so sell it for three **pounds**
- ☞ What/such: What **beautiful** weather, Such **huge** mob
- ☞ When/ After: **When** he phones...**After** they left..
- ☞ **A repeated word, is not stressed: To be or not to be.**

REFERENCES

Compulsory reading:

- ▶ – Cruttenden, A. 2001. *Gimson's Pronunciation of English*. London: Edward Arnold. Chapter 11, Section 11.3. Weak forms

Recommended readings:

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