Effective Teaching of English Stress and Rhythm

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Introduction

Traditionally, the teaching of English pronunciation equals the teaching of English sounds : vowels and consonants. It basically concentrates on the segmental aspects of English: the practice of phoneme contrasts and phoneme sequences. For English learners, many of them also believe that if they want to get good English pronunciation, they just need to work on individual sounds. Learning these sounds ,indeed, is essential for learners, especially for beginners. Yet, mastering individual sounds of English does not guarantee that a learner's pronunciation is good because these speech sounds are meaningless in isolation. According to our teaching experience at the Collage of Education / Misan University, quite a large number of students , though having fairly good control of individual speech sounds, still speak in a way that it sounds choppy, foreign, or sometimes even not comprehensible. A major factor resulting in this is the improper English stress and rhythm.

An appropriate stress and rhythmic pattern is more important for intelligibility than the correct pronunciation of isolated speech sounds in English.

The present paper examines the role played by stress and rhythm in teaching English pronunciation. This paper will also attempt to explore the effects of stress on the phonetic realization of individual speech sounds, the morphological and syntactic function of elements and the structuring of information in the sentence. English rhythm is studied and the factors that contribute to maintain a regular stress-timed rhythm are presented. A rhythmical approach to English pronunciation is proposed which involves the practice of pronunciation in terms of stressing, unstressing and weakening function

words in longer utterances. Finally, some material for practicing English rhythm and stress is presented.

Stress and rhythm are suprasegmental aspects that give the overall shape to the word or sequence. If easy intelligibility is to be achieved, it is important to give words their correct accentual pattern and rhythm. Thus, the pronunciation of a word with the inappropriate accentual and rhythmic pattern, for example:

vocabulary [vəˈkæbjʊləri] as [vɒkæˈbjʊlæri]

profitable [ˈprɒfɪtəbəl] as [prɒfɪˈteɪbɒl]

makes the word unintelligible not only because the misplaced main stress distorts the shape of the word, but also because there is no unstressing of the other syllables with the consequent phonetic reductions. The inappropriate pronunciation of a single word, however, is not vital for intelligibility since in most cases the right form of the word can be reconstructed from the context. This issue becomes more important at the phrase level. If an English sentence is pronounced without the appropriate weakening of unstressed syllables and unaccented grammatical words, a serious loss of intelligibility results. Thus, the sentence *"you should have come to the library"* is less easy to understand when pronounced [ˈjuː ˈʃʊd ˈhæv ˈkʌm ˈtuː ˈðiː ˈlaɪbrəri] than if it is pronounced [ju ʃəd əv ˈkʌm tə ðə ˈlaɪbrəri]. In other cases, a misunderstanding might result from the lack of weakening of unstressed syllables. Thus, if a foreign speaker pronounces the sequence *These books are mine* with no unstressing [ˈðiːz ˈbʊks ˈɑː ˈmaɪn], this sentence will be heard as *these books aren't mine* since only negated auxiliaries can be stressed in English (in non-contrastive pronunciation). Thus, the sequence will be interpreted as the result of the dropping of the final interconsonantal [t] (1), assimilation of the alveolar nasal to the following labial (2), and reduction of the labial closure duration (3):

(1) [ðiːz ˈbʊks ˈ ɑːn(t) ˈmaɪn]

(2) [ð¡ːz ˈbʊks ˈ ɑːm ˈmaɪn]

(3) [ðiːz ˈbʊks ˈ ɑː(m) ˈmaɪn]

Consequently, assigning the right stress pattern—at the word and phrase level—and learning to produce unstressed syllables is the most productive single device for achieving an adequate pronunciation of English.

In this paper we propose a rhythmical approach to English pronunciation which involves the practice of pronunciation in terms of stressing and unstressing and in longer stretches of speech which will contribute to more meaningful communication. This will help to instil a sense of English rhythm in the learner and to improve his/her overall pronunciation of English. Since no English word or sentence can be uttered without a stress and rhythmic pattern, we suggest that teachers should practice the appropriate realization of the stress and rhythmic pattern of the sentence right from the first pronunciation sessions. Since stress and rhythm determine the pronunciation of consonants and vowels as will be shown below many segmental problems will not come up if stress and rhythmic exercises are practised in the early stages. Brown (1977:51) points out the problems involved in practising segmental aspects prior to practising stress and rhythm. Thus, it proves to first acquire the appropriate stress pattern and then deal with the segmental problems that might still persist. In fact, this approach correlates with the way in which the first language is acquired. Children at early stages tend to repeat and produce from the stressed syllable onwards, which shows that they acquire the stress pattern and intonational pattern before the actual realization of segments.

In the following sections we will first consider the effects of stress at different levels of the language—segmental, morphological, syntactical and lexical—which will make clear the pervasive effect of stress and the importance of teaching English pronunciation in terms of stressing and unstressing. In section 2 we will consider the physical nature of stress and unstress and the distribution of word stress and sentence stress in English. Section 3 will concentrate on English rhythm and in the last section we will suggest some exercises to practise stressing and unstressing in English.

1. Linguistic Phenomena Sensitive to Stress

Stress and rhythm are the backbone of English pronunciation. The role of stress, however, goes far beyond the segmental and suprasegmental levels. English stress has a bearing on syllable structure, morphology, grammar and meaning. We will next consider briefly the different areas which are sensitive to stress.

1.1. Segmental Effects of Stress

The phonetic realization of segments largely depends on their position with respect to stress. The clearest case is the relationship between stress and vowel quality. Stressed vowels have their full vowel quality, while the same vowels in unstressed position will be reduced to [ə] or the reduced vowels [i, u], e.g. *'present*

['prezant] vs *pre'sent* [prɪ'zent]. Stress affects not only vowels but the whole syllable. Consequently consonants in unstressed syllables will suffer important reduction processes. Next we illustrate some regular phonological processes due to stress.

The voiceless stops /p, t, k/ are *aspirated* in the words *apart, take* and *come* [ə'pʰɑːt , 'tʰeɪk, 'kʰʌm], but not in the words *polite, tonight* and *baking* [pə'laɪt, tə 'naɪt, 'beɪkɪŋ]. The realization of /p, t, k/ in the two sets of words differs because of stress, /p, t, k/ are aspirated if they occur as the initial element in a stressed syllable and they are unaspirated in an unstressed syllable. Thus, the determining factor for aspiration vs lack of aspiration is stress.

The fricatives [v, f] in the words *divine, fine* have more friction noise than in the words *ivy* or *dolphin,* because in the first set of words they occur in a stressed syllable. Similarly, the fricatives [v, ð] can lose their friction completely, and even disappear altogether in unstressed syllables of very frequent sequences, e.g. *cup of tea* [kʌpə 'tiː], *what's the matter* ['wɒtsə'mætə] .

1.2. Syllable Structure and Stress

English syllable structure is a controversial issue, however, most current theories recognize the role played by stress in determining syllable structure and syllable boundaries. Stressed vowels attract adjacent consonants to their syllable. Thus, English consonants tend to be syllabified with the more strongly stressed syllable:

attic ['æt-ɪk]   *attain* [ə-'teɪn]

sister ['sɪst-ə]   *astound* [ə-'staʊnd]

Observe how the stress shift involves a change in syllable boundary and syllable affiliation of /t/ and /d/ in the following words:

(1)   (2)
atom   ['æt-əm]   *atomic* [ə-'tɒm-ɪk]

adaptation   [æd-əp-'teɪ-ʃən]   *adapt* [ə-'dæpt]

In the words in the first column /t, d/ syllabify with the stressed syllable and consequently they occur in syllable final position. In the words in the second column, / t,d / syllabify with the following stressed syllable, and they are initial elements in the

syllable. / t /   is shown to be syllable initial since it is aspirated, [ə'tɒmɪk] while there is no heavy aspiration in *atom.* Thus, stress can be said to determine the grouping of sounds into syllables in English.

1.3. Morphological, Syntactical and Lexical Variation Due to Stress

There are a number of morphological alternations that affect stress and, consequently, the pronunciation of the whole word. Morphological derivation might involve a change in stress since many of the suffixes which are added to derive words have an effect on stress. The words:

'politics   po'litical   poli'tician

illustrate how the adjectival suffix *-al* moves the stress to the second syllable, and the nominal suffix *-ian* shifts the stress to the syllable preceding it. There are also suffixes that attract the stress of the word on to themselves, such as *-aire* in *'question, 'questio'nnaire,* or *-ette,* in *'usher, 'ushe'rette* . The effect of suffixes on stress can be predicted by a finite set of rules (see Roach, P.).

Another function of stress is to indicate the syntactic function of the word. The stress and subsequent phonetic changes are the only indicator of the syntactic category of words such as *a 'present(noun), pre'sent (verb); 'frequent (adjective), fre'quent (verb); a 'record (noun), re'cord(verb).* Most two-syllable nouns and adjectives have the stress on the first syllable while two-syllable verbs , with identical spelling as nouns and adjectives, have the stress on the second syllable.

Stress also differentiates between phrasal verbs, which function together as a unit and have the main stress on the particle (e.g. *the 'driver pulled 'up [stopped], the 'car went 'by [passed])* and prepositional verbs which have the stress on the verb and the preposition is unstressed: *he 'pulled his 'trousers up, he 'went by the 'highway.* Stress also plays a role in differentiating between nouns derived from phrasal verbs and verbs. In the nouns and adjectives the first element only is stressed: *a 'handout, a 'runaway, a 'dropout.* In the corresponding verbs the particle has more prominence than the verb: *to hand 'out, to run a'way, to drop 'out.*

The difference between compounds, such as *a 'loud speaker* (sound amplifier), and noun phrases, *a loud 'speaker* (a person who talks loud), is also indicated by stress alone. Noun phrases have the main stress on the most important element, the noun. Compounds have the main stress on the first element; in fact, stress welds together the two elements in the compound into a single lexical category with a special meaning and function. In

fact, the degree of compounding of a frequently used phrase is indicated by the stress pattern.

Still another aspect of a slightly different nature is that concerning the grammatical difference between the strong and weak forms of some words. In this case it is the presence or absence of stress which indicates the syntactic function of the word. For example, *that* as a demonstrative always has the full form, e.g. *I 'want 'that 'book* [**ðæt**], whereas the relative *that* or the conjunction *that* always have the weak form (if not followed by a pause), e.g. *'This is the 'one that* [**ðət**] *I 'want* (relative); *I 'think that* [**ðət**] *he's 'right* (conjunction). Other examples are *there* [ðeə] as an adverb, *Let's 'go 'there* [**ðeə**] vs [ðə(r)] as an empty subject, *there* [ðə(r)] *are 'two of them)* and *some* [səm] as an indefinite adjective, *I'll have some* [səm] *biscuits* vs [sʌm] as a pronoun: *I'll 'have some* [sʌm], or when it means 'a certain quantity of ': *'Some* [sʌm] *'students were 'there, but 'not 'all).*

The effects of stress at the segmental and lexical level show the importance of stress not only for what it contributes to the correct pronunciation of English at the segmental and suprasegmental level, but for its effects on intelligibility due to its lexical and syntactic function. It follows from this that practising English pronunciation in terms of stressing and unstressing should be a rewarding task.

2. Stressing and Unstressing

The physical correlates of stress are *pitch, duration* and *loudness*. These three factors interrelate in the production and perception of stress. The pitch of stressed vowels is usually higher than that of unstressed vowels. Nevertheless, a syllable with a lower pitch than the rest is likely to be heard as stressed. Thus, the primary cue for stress perception seems to be that the stressed syllable *stands out* in pitch from the rest. Stressed vowels also tend to have a longer duration and to be louder than unstressed vowels. In English there is an extra cue for stress which is *vowel quality,* in particular the reduced quality ([ə, i, u]) of unstressed syllables. Thus, stress is a *relational* feature. A syllable is identified as stressed because it is relatively more prominent than the rest. In English, stress is cued not only by how we use the features of pitch, duration, loudness and vowel quality in the stressed syllables, but also by how these features are used, in a reduced manner, in background or unstressed syllables. Thus, Iraqi learners at a university level should practice reducing unstressed syllables in order to make the stressed syllables prominent. Roach (2000: 95)

2.1. Word Stress and Sentence Stress

Stress is present at the word level and at the sentence level. Every word said in isolation has a stress. *Word stress* has a fixed distribution; it is a lexical feature of the word and consequently word stress is related to the *lexicon.* English stress is a distinctive feature in a word. If stress changes, meaning might change, e.g. *a 'present(gift),to pre'sent (show).* Recent work in generative phonology has stated rules for predicting stress assignment in words based on (1) the morphological structure of the word whether it is simple or complex as a result either containing one or more affixes or of being a compound word (2) what the grammatical category of the word is (noun, verb, adjective ,etc.) (3) how many syllables the word has, and(4) what the phonological structure of those syllables is. ibid. (2000:97). The rules, however, are complex and have exceptions, so it seems more adequate for the foreign learner to learn the stress pattern of the word when the word is learned (i.e. as a lexical feature of the word). As the learner advances in his mastering of English he will be able to abstract the general rules of stress assignment and correctly stress most new words he might come across.

Every word said in isolation has a stress; however when words are put together in a sentence only some words are stressed. Sentence stress emphasizes the portion of the utterance that is more important for the speaker or that the speaker wants the listener to concentrate on. Stress in a sentence has no fixed distribution. It is related to semantics. The words which are likely to be more prominent and to carry a stress in connected speech are those which are most important for meaning, i.e. content words or lexical words, such as nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs. Grammatical or function words, such as articles, pronouns, prepositions, auxiliaries and conjunctions, tend to be unstressed.(Kingdon 94) Thus, in the sentence: *'Mary would have 'liked to a'ttend the 'meeting* the content words *Mary, liked, attend, meeting* are likely to be stressed and the function words unstressed. Thus, the function of stress in sentences is to highlight the information—bearing words in the utterance.

Note that this general rule—content words are stressed, grammatical words unstressed—applies to normal stressing. It does not apply when contrastive or emphatic meaning is intended. In fact, any word or syllable might be stressed (in fact, bear the intonational nucleus) when used contrastively *(but she 'was here* [she hadn't left]; *I said that word was 'un*stressed [not stressed] or emphatically *(She's 'very nice).*

2.1.1. Stressing and Meaning

There is no one right way of stressing an English sentence. The choice to stress some words rather than others depends on the context of the message and on the

particular meaning the speaker wants to convey. Consider, for example, the following sentence which can have many levels of meaning based on the word that a speaker stresses.

> a) 'I 'don't think he should get the job.
> b) I 'don't 'think he should get the job.

The stressing in these alternatives is equally acceptable. The choice of one or the other pattern depends on the attitude of the speaker towards some aspect of the message; for example, in (a) it is the personal pronoun that is most stressed giving the sentence a meaning " Somebody else other than the speaker thinks … ." In (b) ,by stressing "*think"* rather than "*don't"* alone the speaker softens the negative, suggesting that he is not sure. Therefore, whereas there are certain words which one would expect to find stressed in this message—*don't, do*—there might be different possibilities of stressing some of the words in different contexts.

Since stress has the function of signalling to the native speaker the most important words in the utterance, it is very difficult to understand speech in which every single word is stressed or made equally prominent, just because nothing is made prominent. That is why in English it is very important for *intelligibility* what you do to the unstressed syllables to make the stressed syllables—those of meaningful words—stand out.

2.1.2. Stressing and Speaking Rate

Another factor that might affect sentence stress is speaking rate or tempo, which is related to speaking style. The more careful the style, the slower the tempo and the more stresses. The more informal the style, the faster the tempo and the fewer stresses. Consider the sentence:

> a) I 'would have 'liked to a'ttend the 'meeting
> b) I would have 'liked to attend the 'meeting

(a) involves a very slow and deliberate speaking rate whereas (b) demands a very fast speaking rate which accounts for the missing stresses. In fact, the more stresses you have in an utterance, the more weight you are assigning to each part of the utterance. Compare the angry and weighty tone conveyed by stressing every single word in the utterance: *'you 'will 'do 'as 'I 'say.*

Since informal fast speech has fewer stresses and consequently more unstressed syllables , it is most probably the most difficult style to master for the foreign student.

In his attempt to sound clear, the foreign student tends to overstress words in sequence. It is consequently very important to practise unstressing if foreign speech is to sound not only intelligible but also *adequate* to the situation.

3. English Rhythm

Speech is highly rhythmical; it tends to have a regular beat. But what marks the beat differs is various languages. Pike distinguished two kinds of rhythm in languages: (i) *syllable-timed rhythm,* where *syllables* tend to occur at regular intervals of time, and consequently all syllables tend to have the same length (e.g. French, Telugu ,Yoruba ,etc.) and (ii) *stressed-timed rhythm,* where *stressed* syllables tend to occur at regular intervals (e.g. Arabic, Russian and English). That means that the syllables might vary in length since there might be a varying number of syllables between stresses. English is a stress-timed language. In the following English sentence syllables vary in length but stressed syllables occur regularly:

I 'want you to 'come with me to the 'doctor's to'morrow

In English, rhythm is organized into feet (Abercrombie 1964). The foot begins with the stressed syllable and includes all the unstressed syllables up to the next stress where a new foot begins. The above English sentence has four stresses and consequently four feet. Using slashes to indicate foot boundary we could represent feet as follows: I / 'want you to / 'come with me to the / 'doctor's to / 'morrow.

The basic differences between syllable-timed languages and stressed-timed languages are:

syllable-timed	*stressed-limed*
1. weak vowel reduction	1. strong vowel reduction
2. simple syllable structure	2. complex syllable structure
3. proportional effect of tempo	3. non-proportional effect of tempo
4. absence of secondary stress	4. presence of secondary stress

1.In syllable- timed languages, unstressed vowels suffer a weak vowel reduction since every syllable is allotted virtually the same amount of time to be produced. In English unstressed syllables have little time to be produced in order to keep the rhythmic beat on the stressed syllables.
2. The reduction and subsequent elision of unstressed vowels have resulted in a

large amount of consonant clusters and a complex syllable structure in English.

3. In English, speaking rate (fast vs slow speech) does not affect the duration of stressed and unstressed syllables proportionally. In syllable-timed languages, speaking rate effects on the duration of stressed and unstressed vowels is roughly the same.

4. Stress-timed languages tend to have secondary stress in words (or to introduce rhythmical stresses in longer sequences) to avoid long sequences of unstressed syllables and to keep the rhythmic beat. In English no stressed syllable in a word can be preceded by more than two unstressed syllables in succession, a secondary stress is introduced (e.g. ,clarifi'catión, re,conside'radon ,varia'bility). After the stressed syllable there may be up to three unstressed syllables, but only in words with certain suffixes (e.g. ad'ministrative, 'candidacy).

3.1. Timing

In English, stresses occur at roughly regular intervals of time, and therefore all feet tend to be of equal duration or isochronous. Since feet take roughly the same amount of time to be produced and the number of syllables in a foot might vary, it follows that the length of syllables must also vary. If a foot with, say, 4 syllables takes the same amount of time to be pronounced as a foot with one syllable, then each one of the four syllables must be shorter than the one. Thus, if there are no intervening syllables between two stresses (1 below), the syllable which stands alone in a foot will tend to be stretched in time. If there are a number of intervening unstressed syllables (2 below), the stressed syllable will be made shorter, and the unstressed syllables will be squeezed together between stresses and they will suffer important phonetic reductions such as vowel weakening, elision, assimilation, etc.

The time adjustments in syllable length due to stress can be graphically represented as follows:

(1) / 'A   l   i / 'works
(2) / 'Ali was at / work

All feet in (1) and (2) will tend to have the same duration, irrespective of the number of syllables. In order for that to be the case **Ali** in (1), which stands alone in its foot, will be longer than **Ali** in (2), which will be pronounced with a shorter vowel to allow more time for the unstressed syllables in the foot. Notice also the phonetic reductions of the unstressed syllables in (2), [wəzət], to keep the beat on the following stress. Even though isochrony, or the regular occurrence of stresses, might not be

perfect, there is evidence that English speakers unconsciously aim at isochronicity in the production of speech since they make adjustments in the length of sounds, as has been demonstrated.

Another consequence of the stress-timed and isochronous nature of English rhythm is the existence of weak forms. Since content words are usually given prominence in the utterance, grammatical words will tend to be unstressed. As unstressed syllables they cluster around a stressed word or syllable within a foot or rhythmic unit. Thus, grammatical words are squeezed in order to fit into the constant time interval between two stressed syllables. This is so common in English that many grammatical words are said to have a strong form when the word is stressed for rhythmical, emphatic or contrastive reasons, and a weak form used when the word is unstressed and must be fitted between stresses. Consider the following grammatical words in stressed and unstressed position:

stressed	*unstressed*
'Yes, we *'are* [ɑː]	'What *are* you 'doing? [ə]
He's the 'person [hiː]	I 'don't 'know who *he* 'is [i]
'Yes, you *'have* [hæv]	I 'must *have* 'missed him [əv]

3.2. Rhythmic Alternation

English rhythm, apart from being conditioned by the principles of isochrony and stress-timing, is characterized by the principle of rhythmic alternation; that is, in English weak and strong syllables alternate with one another. How is it that regular alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables results, if speakers do not choose their words according to their lexical stress pattern, but to the meaning they want to express and the form in which they want to couch this meaning? It seems that once the lexemes of an utterance have been selected, a set of rules (syntactical, morphological, phonetic and rhythmic) are applied to the utterance to determine its phonetic realization. Thus, a structure which does not observe the stress alternation principle (because too many stresses appear next to each other, or there are long sequences of unstressed syllables) will be modified by the rhythm rules to conform more closely the ideal rhythmic alternation.

 1. If a series of content words appear next to each other, some stresses are dropped. There is a stress on each of the following content words: *'John's / 'friend / 'wants /'get*

/ 'home / be'fore / 'midnight ; but some of these stresses, usually stresses on alternate words, are dropped when these words occur in a sentence such as: *'John's friend 'wants to get 'home before 'midnight*. Similarly, if an utterance contains a succession of three stresses, as in *; 'big /'blue/'eyes ; 'five /'eight /'two* , the intermediate stress tends to be dropped in order to achieve a more regular alternation: *'big blue 'eyes, 'five eight 'two.*
2. If an utterance consists of a succession of unstressed function words, e.g. *he should have been here 'earlier,* stresses are added to produce a more regular rhythm: *'he should have 'been here 'earlier.* Similarly, the rhythmical stressing of *if* and *as* in initial position when followed by unstressed syllables, as in:

'If you are 'right, we should be 'getting there 'soon
'As a 'child he 'studied 'English

but not in medial position when next to another stress:

'We should be 'getting there 'soon if you are 'right
He 'studied 'English as a 'child

shows the tendency to distribute stresses rhythmically. Note that *if* and *as* are not likely to be stressed when immediately followed by a stressed syllable:

As 'Head of De'partment, I 'can't a'llow you to 'do
If 'worse comes to 'worse, we'll 'just 'drop it

There are constraints on stress addition and deletion. Stresses cannot be deleted just anywhere. Thus, in the above utterance *John's friend wants to get home before midnight,* the stresses on *John/home / midnight* cannot be deleted though others can. Similarly, stresses cannot be added just anywhere. If an extra stress is to be added in *'leave it in the 'car,* due to a very deliberate and slow speaking rate, it cannot be added on the determiner, but must be added on the preposition: *'leave it 'in the 'car.*
3. If two stresses are next to each other in a phrase, e.g. *a ,Japa'nese 'student; after'noon 'tea ,*the first stressed syllable is moved to the preceding strong syllable: *'Japanese 'student; 'afternoon 'tea*, to space out the stresses and to avoid stress clash.

4. Practising Stress and Rhythm

The materials for practicing stress and rhythm will necessarily involve longer stretches of speech. It is convenient that the words and phrases used for practice should be well within the capacity of the learner and communicatively meaningful. Although it is the case that various degrees of stress can be distinguished, for the

practice of rhythm it is only necessary to consider two types of syllables, stressed and unstressed. Some basic exercises which encourage the adequate pronunciation of stressed and unstressed syllables will be considered here.

1. *Word stress and phrase stress.*

The following pairs of words and phrases should have the same rhythmic structure:

Two syllable words:

'David - 'take it   city - 'give me   'over - 'told her
 o'bey - the 'boy   a'shamed - a 'name   u'nique - you 'need

Three syllable words:

'passages - 'come with me   'beautiful - 'look at it

be'lieving - I've 'seen him   con'sider - at 'Christmas

ciga'rrette - at the 'door   under'stand - switch it 'on

Four syllable words:

'category - 'give it to me   'characterize - 'Sarah did it

cer'tiflcate -I 'wanted to   pho'tography -I 'told them to

expla'nation - you should 'do it   uni'versal - he was 'cheating

this after'noon - I've got to 'go   superim'pose - I would have 'come

2. Find phrases that have the same stress pattern as the following words:

Example: im'pression (_ '_ _): to 'get it, at 'random, be'tween us

'Wednesday ('_ _)   per'haps (_ '_)   nine'teen (_ '_)
'country ('_ _)   a'gain (_ '_)   al'though (_'_)

'pcacefully ('_ _ _)   e'leven (_ '_ _)   scien'tific (_ '_ _)
'manual   ('_ _ _)   im'portant (_'_ _) am'bitious (_'_ _)

'accuracy ('_ _ _ _)   hi'larity (_ '_ _ _)   demons'tration (_ _ '_ _)

'admirably ('_ _ _ _)   ca'tholicism (_ '_ _ _) cafe'teria (_ _ '_ _)

3. Find phrases or sentences with the same distribution of stresses as the following:

'What's the 'time?   I 'couldn't go.

'Mary's 'here.   He 'didn't 'know.

He's 'learning 'English.   The 'phone is 'ringing.

The 'man is 'coming.   They 'couldn't 'get it.

'What would you 'like to 'do?

'This is a 'nice old 'book.

4. *Practising unstressing in function words.*

 Read the following strings of content words with an even rhythm. Then supply function words to turn them into full sentences and read them again with the same rhythm. Be sure to use weak forms where appropriate for your added function words. Alternate the two versions, making sure that the function words do not alter the rhythm:

1. 'think 'like 'dress
2. 'wait 'John 'hour
3. sub'let 'house 'month 'summer
4. 'lake 'children 'school every 'morning
5. 'make 'date 'Pat 'week
6. a'rrive 'Spain week 'end
7. 'want 'left a'lone
8. 'possible 'go 'bike
9. 'think get 'on 'well
10. 'have 'meeting '10 o'clock 'Tuesday

7. *Stress-timing.* Each of the following sentences has two stresses, even though the number of unstressed syllables varies. As you say each sentence tap a table twice on the stressed syllable, keeping the strokes at a regular beat.

A	B	C
The 'cat is 'big	The 'cat is 'big	The 'cat is 'big
The 'tiger is' big	The 'cat is happy	The' tiger is 'happy
The 'elephant is 'big	The 'cat is 'happier	The 'elephant is 'happier

D

'Peter 'talks   'Mary 'studies
'Peter would 'talk   'Mary is 'studying
'Peter would have 'talked   'Mary will be 'studying
'Peter would have liked to 'talk   'Mary should have been 'studying

8. Provide pairs of sentences that show how the following words can have two different stress pattems:

Example: after'oon

I'11 'see you this after'noon
I have an 'afternoon 'class

outside
upstairs
sixteen
absolutely
bad - tempered

Conclusions

We expect to have shown the importance of stress and rhythm in determining the realization of segments, indicating the morphemic and syntactic function of elements, and structuring information in the sentence. It follows from this that stress and rhythm are basic for intelligibility, adequacy and fluency in speech and that they should be consistently practiced by foreign learners if possible in the early stages. We have concentrated on the production side of English stress and rhythm, which will contribute to more intelligible speech. There is another aspect which we have not considered, which is how the practice of stress and rhythm helps to understand connected speech. Since stress highlights the most important words in the message, a rhythmical approach to English pronunciation will help the foreign listener to concentrate on the meaningful words in the message and to strengthen the links between pronunciation on the one hand and grammatical structure and meaning on the other. This

approach encourages the understanding of language as communication rather than a set of isolated segments.

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