

## Chapter IV: Aspects of Connected Speech

### 1.1. Learning Goals and Objectives

- Understand English Rhythm
- Be familiar with weak and strong forms in English
- Know how to pronounce combinations of sounds
- Understand how sounds are influenced by surrounding sounds
- Understand how to omit sounds and syllables to make the language easier to say, and faster

### Lecture 17: Rhythm

#### 1- Definition:

Rhythm can be found everywhere in life: the sound of a clock, the beating of the heart, the strokes of a swimmer, and of course in poetry and music. But rhythm in language is less familiar because it is less obvious.

The rhythm of a language is characterized by the timing pattern of successive syllables. In some languages, every syllable is given about the same length while in others, syllables vary in length. In English, strong beats are called **stress** -- the heart of the rhythmic pattern.

In our sentence, “**Will you sell my car because I’ve gone to France**”, the 4 **key words** (**sell, car, gone, France**) are accentuated or **stressed**. Why is this important for pronunciation?

It is important because it adds "music" to the language. Indeed, sentence stress is what gives English its **rhythm** or "beat". The notion of rhythm involves some noticeable events happening at regular intervals of time.

It has often been claimed that English speech is rhythmical, and that the rhythm is detectable in the regular occurrence of stressed syllables. This does not mean, of course, that the timing is as regular as a clock; it is rather relative.

## 2- Stress-timed Rhythm Vs Syllable-timed Rhythm:

It is usually claimed that English has **stress-timed rhythm**. This implies that stressed syllables tend to occur at relatively regular intervals whether they are separated by unstressed syllables or not.

The stress-timed rhythm theory states that the time from each stressed syllable to the next will tend to be the same, irrespective of the number of intervening unstressed syllables. In other words, each syllable receives an equal amount of time or the time between each stressed words is the same. The theory also claims that while some languages (e.g. Russian and Arabic) have stress-timed rhythm similar to that of English, others (such as French) have a different rhythmical structure called **syllable-timed rhythm**.

In these languages, all syllables, whether stressed or unstressed, tend to occur at regular time-intervals and the time between stressed syllables will be shorter or longer in proportion to the number of unstressed syllables.

In the sentence: “Will you **sell** my **car** because I’ve **gone** to **France**”

There is 1 syllable between (**SELL** and **CAR**) and 3 syllables between (**CAR** and **GONE**). But the **time** (*t*) between **SELL** and **CAR** and between **CAR** and **GONE** is the same.

We maintain a constant beat on the stressed words. To do this, we say "my" more **slowly**, and "because I've" more **quickly**. We change the speed of the small structure words so that the rhythm of the key content words stays the same.

2syll                      1syll                      3syll                      1syll

Will you /sell /my/ car /because I've /gone/ to /France?

t 1      beat   t1   beat      t1      beat   t1   beat

Another example is given below. In this sentence, the stressed syllables are given numbers:

˘Walk / ˘down the/ ˘path to the / ˘end of the ca^nal  
 syll1      syll2                  syll3                  syll4      syll5

Syllable **1 and 2** are not separated by any unstressed syllables, **2 and 3** are separated by one unstressed syllable, **3 and 4** by two and **4 and 5** by three.

### 3- The Foot:

Some writers have developed theories of English rhythm in which a unit of rhythm, called the **foot**, is used. The foot begins with a stressed syllable and includes all following unstressed syllables up to (but not including) the following stressed syllable. The example sentence given above would be divided into feet as follows:

˘Walk / ˘down the/ ˘path to the / ˘end of the ca^nal  
 1          2                          3                          4                          5

### 4- Rhythmic Strong and Weak Patterns:

Some theories of rhythm go further than this, and point to the fact that some feet are stronger than others, producing **strong-weak patterns** in larger pieces of speech above the level of the foot. To understand how this works, let's start with a simple example:

The word **'twenty'** has one weak and one strong syllable, forming one foot. A diagram of its rhythmical structure can be made, where **s** stands for 'strong' and **w** stands for 'weak':

<b>S</b>	<b>W</b>
twen	ty

The word **'places'** has the same form:



rhythmically while at other times they speak arrhythmically (that is, without rhythm)- for example when they are hesitant or nervous.

### **5- The Importance of Rhythm Practice:**

Some languages do not have such a noticeable difference between weak and strong syllables as the one that exists in English. Therefore, native speakers of such languages learning English may find it helpful to practice repeating strongly rhythmical utterances since this forces the speaker to concentrate on making unstressed syllables weak.

Speakers of languages such as Japanese, Hungarian and Spanish, which do not have weak syllables, may well find such exercises of some value.

## **Lecture 18: Weak and Strong Forms**

### **Weak and Strong Forms:**

Many single syllable words that are used very frequently in connected speech are often pronounced differently from when they are stressed or said by themselves. These words have two different forms called strong forms and weak forms. For instance, the word *from* is pronounced in isolation as /frɒm/ (strong form) and in the sentence *He came from work late*, as /frəm/ (weak form).

Given below is a list of the weak forms of some common English words. The strong form is used when the word is said in isolation or is stressed. In the case of verbs and prepositions, the strong form is also used when the word comes at the end of the sentence.

The words that have **weak** and **strong** forms are:

- Articles
- Prepositions
- Auxiliary verbs
- Modal verbs

- Pronouns
- Possessive pronouns
- Possessive Adjectives
- Conjunctions

The words that have only **strong** forms are:

- Nouns
- Main Verbs
- Adjectives
- Adverbs

Word Class	Word	Strong Form	Weak Form	Examples
<b>Articles</b>	a	/eɪ/	/ə/	It's a book /ɪts əˈbʊk/
	an	/æn/	/ən/	He ate an apple /hi: ˈeɪt ən ˈæpl/
	the	/ði:/	/ðɪ/	The <b>eight</b> of June /ðɪ ˈeɪt əv dʒu:n/
			<b>Before</b>	
			<b>Vowels</b> /ðə/	The <b>book's</b> here /ðə ˈbʊks ˈhɪə/
			<b>Before</b>	
			<b>Conson</b>	
<b>Auxiliary Verbs</b>	am	/æm/	/m/	I'm going to Delhi /aɪm ˈgəʊɪŋ tə
	are	/ɑ:/	/ə/	ˈdeli/
	is	/ɪz/	/z/ or /s/	They're going /ðeɪ ə ˈgəʊɪŋ/
	was	/wɒz/	/wəz/	The <b>lock's</b> missing /ðə ˈlɒks

	were	/wɜː/	/wə/	`mɪsɪŋ/
	be	/biː/	/bɪ/	Was here there? /wəz i `ðeə/
	been	/biːn/	/bɪn/	Were they here? /wə ðeɪ `hɪə/
	do	/duː/	/dʊ/	That'd be nice /`ðæt bɪ `naɪs/
			<b>Before</b>	I've been here for for nine months
			<b>Vowels</b>	/aɪv bɪn `hɪə fə `naɪn `mʌnθs/
			/d/	
	does	/dʌz/	<b>Before</b>	How do I know? /`həʊ dʊ aɪ `nəʊ/
			<b>Conson</b>	Do you smoke? /dʒʊ `sməʊk/
			/dɜːz/	Does he know it? /dɜːz hɪ `nəʊ ɪt/
	had	/hæd/	/həd/	Had I known it? /həd aɪ `nəʊn ɪt/
	has	hæz/	/həz/	Has he come? /həz iː `kʌm/
			/əz/	The bus has gone /ðə `bʌs əz `gɒn/
			/z/	John's come /`dʒɒnz `kʌm/
			/həv/	Have they arrived? /həv ðeɪ
	have	/hæv/	/əv/ or /v/	ə`raɪvd/
				I've visited Paris /aɪv `vɪzɪtɪd
				`pærɪs/
<b>Modal Verbs</b>	Must	/mʌst/	/məs/	I must go now /aɪ məs `gəʊ `naʊ/
	Can	/kæn/	/kən/	Can I go now? /kən aɪ gəʊ `naʊ/
	Could	/kʊd/	/kəd/	Could I borrow your pen? /kəd aɪ `bɒrəʊ jə `pen/

	should	/ʃʊd/	/ʃəd/	You should help him /ju: ʃəd `help ɪm/
<b>Prepositions</b>	at	/æt/	/ət/	I met him at the post office /aɪ `met ɪm ət ðə `pəʊst ɒfɪs/
	for	/fɔ:/	/fə/	I did it for my mother
	from	/frɒm/	/frəm/	/aɪ `dɪd ɪt fə maɪ `mʌðə/
	of	/ɒv/	/əv/	The letter's from my mother
	to	/tu:/	/tə/	/ðə `letəz frəm maɪ `mʌðə/
<b>Conjunctions</b>	and	/ænd/	/ənd/	Over and above /`əʊvə ənd ə`bʌv/
	as	/æz/	<b>Before</b> <b>Vowels</b>	Butter and jam /`bʌtə nd `dʒʌm/
	but	/bʌt/	/nd/ <b>Before</b> <b>Conson</b>	As soon as I can /əz `su:n əz aɪ `kæn/
			/əz/	



			/bət/	Nothing but the truth /ˈnʌθɪŋ bət ðə ˈtruːθ/
<b>Pronouns</b>	He	/hi:/	/hɪ/ or /ɪ/	Is he here? /ɪz ɪ ˈhiə/
	She	/ʃi:/	/ʃɪ/ or /ʃ/	She wanted to help me /ʃ ˈwɒntɪd tə ˈhelp mi/
	We	/wi:/	/wɪ/	
	us	/ʌs/	/əs/	We made a mistake /wɪ ˈmeɪd ə mɪ ˈsteɪk/ Tell us a story /tel əs ə ˈstɔːri/
<b>Others</b>	Some	/səm/	/səm/	Give me some money /ˈgɪv mi səm ˈmʌni/
	Sir	/sɜː/	/sə/	Yes, sir /ˈjes sə/

**Note :**

A very important point to remember is that the weak forms of prepositions and auxiliary and linking verbs are **NOT** used when they occur at the end of a sentence.

The sentence: ***Where are you from?***

Cannot end with the weak form / frəm/. It has to end with the strong form /**frɒm**/. Similarly,

'Who's coming?'/ˈhuːz ˈkʌmɪŋ/ --'I am' /aɪ æm/ (Note the strong form of am)