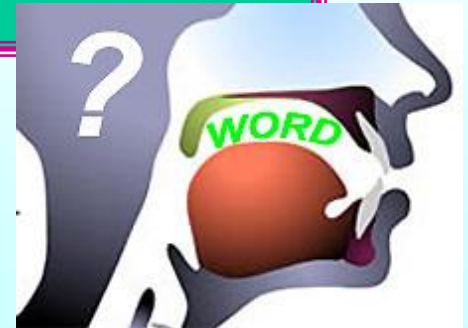


Pronunciation for integration – stress, rhythm and intonation

City of Glasgow conference
13th June 2018

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Session objectives

In this session, participants will:

- consider some of the pronunciation difficulties learners may experience and how this can affect their comprehension and intelligibility
- take part in a range of interactive, experiential activities to investigate stress, rhythm and intonation
- share strategies and techniques to use in the classroom



Phonology: terminology and key points

- **Segmental**: individual sounds (phonemes) i.e. vowels, diphthongs, consonants
- **Suprasegmental (prosody): stress, intonation and rhythm**
- **Stressed syllables**: Higher in pitch, louder, longer, have a different vowel quality
- **English is a very rhythmical language**: key aspects are sentence stress and features of connected speech

Emergency!

- **Fire**
- **Police**
- **Ambulance**



'Comfortable intelligibility'*

A learner's pronunciation is affected by his or her first language and how similar or different the pronunciation system of their first language is to English. **In the vast majority of cases, adult learners will not be able achieve native-speaker 'perfect' pronunciation** and the goal should be **'comprehensible intelligibility'**.

(Joanne Kenworthy, 1987)

* *Adrian Underhill*

<p://www.adrianunderhill.com/2015/11/14/comfortable-intelligibility-1/>

Why is it important for learners to be aware of unstressed vowels?

- it affects their comprehension
- it can affect grammatical knowledge and accuracy, e.g. not hearing the unstressed indefinite article ('a' or 'an'), which becomes apparent especially in writing
- the relationship between stressed and unstressed syllables and words helps to construct the rhythm of talk

The significance of stressed & unstressed syllables in stretches of talk

Working with learners:

- awareness-raising activities
- count words using fingers
- identify 'hard to hear' words
- demonstrate unstressed vowel, e.g. by gesturing 'very small' (*N.B. don't stress an unstressed word while demonstrating it!*)
- drills and beating the stresses (including substitution activities)
- back-chaining

Rhythmicality 1

Accents of English have different rhythmicalities; there's no right/wrong; there are debates about how rhythm is constructed in language

Earlier view: stress-timed or syllable-timed

Stress-timed languages: *He's gone to look for a larger size*

- equal time between stressed syllables
- unstressed syllables 'squashed up' to fit between stressed syllables

Example: *a pound of ... please* (grapes, carrots, tomatoes)

Syllable-timed languages: *He's gone to look for a larger size*

- equal time to all syllables
- when extra syllables added – takes more time to say

Rhythmicality 2

Later view: a continuum from more stress-timed to more syllable-timed

Examples of languages at either end of the continuum:

Arabic

Some varieties of English

Greek

Russian

Bengali

French

Spanish

Urdu



more stress-timed

more syllable-timed

Rhythmicality 3

Key issues:

The idea of the continuum:

- o “deeply rooted in ... linguistics”
- o “has dominated approaches to teaching rhythm”

but

- “little hard evidence for it” from research
- natural conversation - no regularity of rhythm - but has rhythmicality
(*McCarthy, 1991*)

Recommendations:

- raise awareness of rhythmicality (e.g. activities to notice relationship of stressed & unstressed syllables)
- substitution drills – use as appropriate for rhythmicality – emphasize **meaning** not regularity
- provide opportunities for learners to explore how rhythmicality creates meaning in conjunction with intonation

Stress: strategies and activities

- **Introduce stress in words and short phrases:** Names / address / key words / phone numbers
- **Practise stress in words and short phrases:** Matching games / Stepping stones (*Pronunciation games, Hancock*)
- **Practise stress in connected speech:** Jazz chants / *I went shopping and I bought ...*
- **Introduce and practise stress to change meaning:** *You can carry my bag, but ... / I'm not going*
- **Receptively,** learners need to recognise/understand a wide range of accents and pronunciations – use video clips, speakers, dialogues, songs, etc.

Intonation

- pitch
- range
- tone

Functions of intonation:

- discoursal
- grammatical
- attitudinal

Implications for working with bilingual learners

- awareness raising activities to notice stress and intonation (*by listening to dialogues on audio and video clips*)
- important to recognise common patterns, *e.g. politeness*
- learners can experiment with copying stress, intonation and rhythmicality, *e.g. reading natural dialogue aloud, playing with it, making new dialogues and trying out ways of saying them to create different meanings*
- support learners with self-evaluation of their pronunciation, stress and intonation, *e.g. recording themselves*

A three-fold approach to pronunciation teaching

Integrated: teach pronunciation with all new language; teacher constantly aware of pronunciation dimension

Focussed: focus on pronunciation - regular slots, little and often

Troubleshooting: deal with problems as they arise

sounds
stress
rhythm
intonation

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Resources

- Kelly, G. (2000) *How to Teach Pronunciation* Pearson Longman
- Underhill, A. (2005, 2nd ed) *Sound Foundations* Macmillan Heinemann
- O'Connor, J.D. & Fletcher, C. (1989) *Sounds English* Longman
- Baker, A. (2006) *Ship or Sheep?* Cambridge University Press
- Baker, A. (2006) *Tree or Three?* Cambridge University Press

Useful websites and links

General

- Teaching English intonation and stress patterns
<http://www.tedpower.co.uk/esl0108.html>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/multimedia/pron/>
- <http://englishagenda.britishcouncil.org/seminars/tricks-and-techniques-better-spoken-english-0>
- <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/rhythm>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/grammar/pron/>
- <http://englishagenda.britishcouncil.org/seminars/jungle-listening-high-and-low-tech-approaches-teaching-stream-speech>
- <http://www.macmillanenglish.com/pronunciation-skills/>

Jazz Chants videos (Carolyn Graham)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sotUp32mp0I>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0bMxj_p7Az4

For the phonemic chart

- <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/try/resources/pronunciation/phonemic-chart>

Discourse intonation

<http://www.speechinaction.org/teacher-education/discourse-intonation/>

Glasgow English

- differs from RP English in its frequent use of nuclear rises and a distinctive pitch pattern: **'rise-plateau-slump'**
- pitch rises at the accented syllable, then remains high (or slightly declines) and does not fall until near the end of the phrase

https://www.internationalphoneticassociation.org/icphs-proceedings/ICPhS1999/papers/p14_1989.pdf

'How to do a Scottish accent' video (Erin)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M8UrrVnmZQE>

Scottish pronunciation

- British Library sounds archive
<https://sounds.bl.uk/Search>
- IDEA (International dialects archive)
<http://www.dialectsarchive.com/scotland>
- BBC voices archive
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/voices/recordings/individual/scotland-inveraray-clark-donald.shtml>
- How to speak with a Scottish accent (v. RP)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mALkCGVA2BU>