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## CHAPTER 8

# Features of Connected Speech

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### 8.1 Accent in Connected Speech : Rhythm

When words are combined into sentences in English, it is found that the accented syllables tend to recur at regular intervals of time. Thus, in the sentence, "That's not the book I wanted" / ðæt̩s 'nɒt ðə 'bʊk aɪ 'wɒntɪd /, the time intervals between the beginning of the strong syllables /'nɒt/, /'bʊk/ and /'wɒnt/ will be roughly the same. It is this phenomenon that gives to English its characteristic rhythm, and any neglect of this feature results in lack of intelligibility.

The important thing from the learner's point of view is to know which words are to be accented in the sentence. The first point to make is that the syllables of words which receive primary accent when the word is pronounced in isolation are *potentially* those which will receive the accent when the word occurs in a sentence. Thus in the two-syllable word *about* /ə'baʊt/ the first syllable is unaccented and the second accented; when *about* is found in connected speech, the first syllable could not be accented and the second might or might not be, *depending on the rhythmic balance of the sentence and the relative importance ascribed by the speaker to its different semantic constituents*. In the sentence 'They're coming about nine,' R.P. /ðeɪə 'kʌmɪŋ əbaʊt 'naɪn /, the second syllable of *about* is not accented, because the most important parts of the sentence from the point of view of meaning are the fact that some people are *coming*, and the *time* at which they are coming. In the sentence "She doesn't know what she's about" R.P. /ʃi 'dʌznt 'nəʊ wɒt ʃi:z ə'baʊt/, the second syllable of *about* receives the primary (or *tonic*) accent, because the word is semantically important and because it occupies a position in the sentence where, given the position of the other two strong syllables, another strong syllable would become necessary because of the rhythm of the sentence as a whole. Accent at the level of the sentence is therefore much freer than

in the word. However, certain kinds of words by the very nature of their function, in that they are likely to be more important in conveying the meaning of the whole utterance, are more likely than others to receive accent in the sentence. These are nouns, main verbs, adjectives, adverbs and demonstrative and interrogative pronouns.

### Examples:

1. He <sup>1</sup>came <sup>1</sup>late to the <sup>\</sup>office.
2. <sup>1</sup>Nobody <sup>1</sup>took any <sup>\</sup>notice of him.
3. There's <sup>1</sup>nothing to be <sup>\</sup>done about it.
4. I'd <sup>1</sup>like to <sup>1</sup>know who <sup>\</sup>broke it.
5. He's <sup>1</sup>going to <sup>1</sup>meet us at the <sup>\</sup>station.

In these sentences, tonic accent is indicated by an oblique bar pointing downward.

Words that are normally accented in native English are sometimes left unaccented in Indian English. This is one reason why Indian English is sometimes unintelligible to native English speakers. This feature is particularly noticeable in noun phrases, where either the headword or one of the modifiers is sometimes left unaccented by Indian speakers.

### Examples:

- |       |  |    |  |
|-------|--|----|--|
| (i)   | <sup>1</sup> several other <sup>1</sup> things       | .. | <i>other</i> not accented;<br>close juncture<br>between <i>several</i> and<br><i>other</i> . |
| (ii)  | <sup>1</sup> chemical engineering                    | .. | <i>engineering</i> not<br>accented   |
| (iii) | <sup>1</sup> Indian Students'<br><sup>1</sup> Hostel | .. | <i>Students'</i> not<br>accented.  |
| (iv)  | <sup>1</sup> urban centres                           | .. | <i>centres</i> not<br>accented.  |
| (v)   | <sup>1</sup> eighty-nine                             | .. | <i>nine</i> not accented   |
| (vi)  | a <sup>1</sup> great need of                         | .. | <i>need</i> not<br>accented  |

- (vii) Bi'har State 'Transport .. State not accented.
- (viii) 'East Godavari  
'District .. Godavari not accented; close juncture between East and Godavari
- (ix) 'Central Institute of  
'English .. Institute not accented.
- (x) 'Arts College .. College not accented

## 8.2 Weak Forms

Another important feature of English accentual patterns is that unaccented syllables *between* the accented syllables tend to become reduced. This phenomenon has become steadily more marked as the language has developed. The speaking voice seems almost to *take aim* at each successive strong syllables, and to glide over the intervening weak syllables. The reduction is most marked in quick and informal speech. For the learner of the language as well as for the student of phonetics, alterations in vowel quality as between the strong and the weak forms of the same word must be noted.

### Examples:

	Weak form in British R.P.	Example
Articles		
a	/ ə /	/ ə'bu:k /
an	/ ən /	/ ən'eg /
the	/ ðɪ /	before a vowel / ðɪ'a:mɪ /
	/ ðə /	before a consonant / ðə'teɪbl /
Verbs		
am	/ əm, m /	/ aɪm'kʌmɪŋ /
are	/ ə /	/ wɪə'kʌmɪŋ /
can	/ kən /	/ ju:kən'gæʊ /
does (aux..)	/ dəz /	/ 'wɒt dəzhi: 'wɒnt /

<i>had</i> (aux.)	/ həd, əd, d /	/ wi:d'fɪniʃt /
<i>has</i> (aux.)	/ həz, əz, z, s /	/ hi:z'left /
<i>have</i> (aux.)	/ həv, əv, v /	/ aɪv'təuldʒu: /
<i>is</i>	/ z, s /	/ hi:z'hɪə /
<i>shall</i>	/ ʃl /	/ 'wɒtʃl wi: 'du: /
<i>was</i>	/ wəz /	/ hi:wəz 'preznt /
<i>were</i>	/ wə /	/ ju:wə 'leɪt /
<i>will</i>	/ l /	/ aɪl 'help ju: /
<i>would</i>	/ əd, d /	/ aɪd 'rɑ:ðə 'steɪ ɪn 'bed /
<i>Conjunctions</i>		
<i>and</i>	/ ənd, ən, n /	/ 'ʌp ən 'daʊn /
<i>as</i>	/ əz /	/ 'traɪ əz 'ha:d əz ju:'kæn /
<i>than</i>	/ ðən /	/ hi:z 'tɔ:lə ðən mi: /
<i>that</i>	/ ðæt /	/ hi: 'təʊld mi: ðæt hi: wəz 'kʌmɪŋ /
<i>Prepositions</i>		
<i>at</i>	/ ət /	/ lʊk ət ðə 'blækbɔ:d /
<i>for</i>	/ fə /	/ ðɪs ɪz fə 'ju: /
<i>from</i>	/ frəm /	/ hi: 'kʌmz frəm 'delɪ /
<i>of</i>	/ əv /	/ ə 'kʌp əv 'ti: /
<i>to</i>	/ tə /	before a consonant / aɪm 'geʊɪŋ tə 'delɪ /
	/ tu /	before a vowel / aɪm 'geʊɪŋ tu 'ɑ:sk hɪm əbaʊt ɪt /

Weak forms are not always used in Indian English. Sometimes the weak form used is different from that in British R.P., The common Indian pronunciations of some of the words listed above are as follows:

*a* [ e ], *an* / ən /, *the* / ðə / even before vowels.

*are* / ər /, *can* / kæn / *had* / həd /, *is* / ɪz / *shall* / ʃəl /

*and* / ənd /, *as* / əz /, *that* / ðæt /, *at* / ət /

*for* / fɔr /, *from* / frəm /, *of* / əv /, *to* / tu / in all positions.

#### *Practice in Weak Forms*

Here is a list of phrases and sentences for pronunciation practice. Each contains one or more weak forms, and, naturally, one or more stressed syllables.

Five rupees a kilo. / ə /

I want *an* old one. / ən /

The old men. / ðɪ /

I'm not coming. / m /

Mohan's not staying here. / z /

They're all stupid. / ə /

He was brilliant even as a boy. / wəz /, / əz /, / ə /

They were eating. / wə /

I've never met *him*. / v /, / ɪm /

Sita's got a pleasant manner. / z /, / ə /

D'you like *her*? / d /, / ə /

We shall come *and* see you / ʃ /, / ənd /, / ju /

Tell *them* if you should see *them*. / ðəm /, / ʃəd /, / ðəm /

They'll never do it. / l /

I'd go if I could / d /

You can leave at twelve. / ju /, / kən /, / ət /

Curry *and* rice. / ənd /

Did you know *that the* train was derailed? / ju /, / ðət /,

/ ðə /, / wəz /

I won't / nt /

There's a lot to eat. / z. / / ə /, / tu /

At five to seven. / ət /, / tə /

The same *for* all. / ðə /, / fər /

From time to time. / frəm / / tə /

He can't / hɪ /, / nt /

Is *his* father rich? / ɪz /

Catch *him*. / ɪm /

She won't. / ʃ /, / nt /

Watch *them*. / ðəm /

The one *that* you can see. / ðə / / ðət / / ju / / kən /

We won't / wɪ /, / nt /

You didn't. / ju /, / nt /

Ron's got some money. / z /, / səm /

As old as I am. / əz /, / əz /

Bigger *than* me. / ðən /

No weak forms should be used in accented positions. Also the verbs and prepositions listed above do not take weak forms in the final position.

### 8.3 Intonation

When we listen to someone speaking, we can distinguish continual variations in the levels at which the voice is pitched. In this way the speaking voice to some extent resembles the singing voice. These *intonation* patterns, as they are called, are different in different languages, but, as the use of the word 'pattern' perhaps indicates, changes in vocal pitch are not haphazard. The factors that chiefly determine the choice of one pattern as against another are both objective and subjective, objective in that the type of utterance (statement vs. question, command vs. request, even simple vs. complex sentence) is important, and subjective in that the speaker's mood and his attitude to what he is saying are also significant.

Intonation can be used with great subtlety, sometimes to convey information that is not overtly expressed by the words themselves. Thus if a speaker says 'She's very beautiful' with a falling intonation, then he means precisely that; if, however, he says the same sentence with a falling-rising intonation, he probably means that although the lady in question may be beautiful, her character is defective in some other way.

Stress and intonation are linked phenomena; they work together to give the effect of 'prominence' or accent. Accented syllables can be said with level pitch, high or low, or with a change in pitch. An accented syllable said on level pitch is described as having a *static tone*, whilst an accented syllable on which a pitch change takes place has a *kinetic tone*. The syllable which initiates a kinetic tone is called the *nucleus* and said to have the primary, nuclear, or *tonic accent*. Thus the sentence

They <sup>1</sup>came at <sup>\</sup>night

would normally be said in British English with a high level (static) tone on *came* and a falling nucleus, or falling kinetic tone, on *night*. A more detailed classification of nuclei follows.

Another factor which affects intonation is the speaker's emotions, the degree of intensity he brings to bear on what he is saying. Generally speaking, the more a speaker is involved with what he is saying, by way of anger, grief, excitement, self-

importance and so on, the greater will be the range of pitch and the amount of pitch change he uses; everyday speech, on the other hand, with little emotional content, or even fatigued speech (tiredness acting as an emotional suppressive) is said within a more limited pitch range.

It must be admitted that the system of intonation patterns used by a native speaker of English, as of any other language, is complex. A foreign learner of the language would need years of study and practice before he could use the total system with the same facility as one born to it. It is possible, however, to learn and use a simplified system which will be completely intelligible and enable the learner to avoid conveying false impressions.

### The Tones

#### (i) Level (Static)

(a) A high level tone will be marked with a symbol <sup>ˈ</sup> above and in front of the syllable to which it refers:

<sup>ˈ</sup>Those

<sup>ˈ</sup>Have

(b) A low level tone will be marked with a symbol <sub>ˌ</sub> below and in front of the syllable to which it refers:

<sub>ˌ</sub>Now

<sub>ˌ</sub>Then

This mark is also used to indicate stressed syllables after a rising nucleus.

#### (ii) Moving (Kinetic)

(a) A falling tone will be marked with a symbol <sup>ˋ</sup> in front of the syllable to which it refers. The symbol will be above the line for a high falling tone and below the line for a low falling tone.

<sup>ˋ</sup>Then    <sup>ˋ</sup>Look

<sup>ˋ</sup>Do        <sup>ˋ</sup>Tell

(b) A rising tone will be marked with a symbol <sup>ˊ</sup> in front of the syllable to which it refers. The symbol will be above the line for a high rising tone and below the line for a low rising tone.

ˈYours      ˌCar  
 ˈ Three     ˌThese

(c) A falling-rising tone will be marked with a symbol ˈ above and in front of the syllable to which it refers.

ˈTry  
 ˈSoft  
 ˈSleep

### Placing the Nucleus

When a foreign learner is confronted with a passage to be read, or indeed asked to speak, the most difficult problems of intonation he has to face are where to place the nuclear tones and in what direction they should move. Correct habits have first to be learned mechanistically at the conscious level so that later the speaker can use the system instinctively.

The golden rule for the correct placing of nuclear accent is that a pitch change will very often take place on that syllable of the group (for division of an utterance into groups see the next section) which the speaker wishes to make the most *prominent*. A few examples will illustrate this point.

I ˈhate \women. (I may, however, like men or children.)

I \hate ˌwomen. (I'm insisting on my emotion.)

\hate ˌwomen. (Although my brother is very fond of them.)

Many utterances are of course much less dramatic than these. Some syllables may be made prominent merely to indicate completion. The speaker has either finished what he has to say and will wait for a reply, or has at least reached an intermediate conclusion and will pause for a moment before going on to say something else.

Good \morning.

It's ˌsix o'ˌclock... Shall we ˌgo?

Thus if no special prominence is intended, the nucleus is on the last accented syllable in the group.

### Division into Groups

Given that a foreign learner may know that the most 'important' syllable of a group will take the nuclear accent,



how is he to know what precisely constitutes a group, where it begins and where it ends?

(i) The absolute limits in the length of a group are obviously physiologically conditioned, in that no speaker can prolong a group for longer than he has breath to speak. In practice, we will prolong no group for longer than seems comfortable. Division into groups is therefore linked with breath control. In the sentence 'When I went to see them, they were out' it is natural to make a slight pause, to cut off the outgoing air stream after the word *them* and before the word *they*.

When I went to see them / they were out. (A line / is used to mark off one group from another.)

This same sentence could be said as one group, although it is less likely, and that is about as far as one could go. Any additional clause would almost inevitably lead to another group.

When I went to see them they were out, / so I went back home.

or

When I went to see them, / they were out, / so I went back home.

If we look again at the first simpler sentence, we note that the most significant word in the first group is *see* and in the second *out*. These are therefore the syllables which take the nuclear accent. A likely rendering of the sentence is:

When I<sup>1</sup> went to / see them, / they were<sup>1</sup> out /

(ii) Punctuation, which also correlates fairly closely with breath pauses, is a useful though not infallible guide to the beginnings and ends of groups. A full stop, colon or semi-colon will always mark the end of a group, and a comma usually will.

<sup>1</sup>Even though I've<sup>1</sup> never<sup>1</sup> met him, / I<sup>1</sup> feel I<sup>1</sup> know all a<sup>1</sup> bout him. /

(iii) Many groups, however, can *not* be divided precisely according to punctuation marks, and then the learner must look for clues in the distribution of meaning in the utterance, or in its grammatical structure. Consider the following passage:-

There's a city in South India called Hyderabad. I shall always remember it, firstly because I lived there happily for almost two years, and secondly because it was hotter there than at any place I'd ever been before, or have visited ever since.

In the first sentence the information about where the city is seems as important as its name. The sentence therefore has two groups.

There's a <sup>1</sup>city in <sup>1</sup>South India / called \Hyderabad./

The first group has a rising nucleus to signify an incomplete utterance. The second has a falling nucleus.

The first comma of the second sentence marks off the end of the next group, and again there is a rising tone for incomplete utterance. There are, of course, grammatical reasons for making a break here in that the main clause ends and a subordinate clause begins:

I shall <sup>1</sup>always re,member it /...

The next group would in British English normally take a falling-rising nucleus on the word *years*. This helps to convey an atmosphere of warmth and the speaker's pleasure in remembering his experiences. (There might also be a falling nucleus on the word *happily*, a word important here from the point of view of meaning. This would make for a livelier reading):

...<sup>1</sup>firstly because I <sup>1</sup>lived there ( ` )<sup>1</sup>happily for <sup>1</sup>almost <sup>1</sup>two years /

In the next clause the words *there* and *before* are contrasted and made prominent and both take nuclear tones, the first falling, the second rising:

...and <sup>1</sup>secondly because it was <sup>1</sup>hotter \there / than at <sup>1</sup>any place I'd <sup>1</sup>ever been be,fore, /

The last group, making the end of the statement, takes a falling tone:

...or have <sup>1</sup>visited <sup>1</sup>ever <sup>1</sup>since. /

An utterance can therefore be divided into groups by noting carefully structural and semantic clues.

Indian speakers sometimes do not divide their sentences into groups correctly. Sometimes they place the intonation nucleus on the wrong word, e.g.,

1. <sup>1</sup>Good evening.  
(The normal English pattern is to make *evening* the nucleus.)
2. <sup>1</sup>In addition to / this.  
(Ordinarily there would be a falling-rising nucleus on the second syllable of *addition*.)
3. It is <sup>1</sup>four o'clock.  
(In native English the nucleus is ordinarily on the second syllable of *o'clock*.)
4. <sup>1</sup>I / didn't / <sup>1</sup>ask you <sup>1</sup>to.  
(Ordinarily there should be only one group with a falling nucleus on *ask*.)
5. I <sup>1</sup>fared well, / I / think.  
(Ordinarily the falling nucleus should be on *well*.)
6. <sup>1</sup>I know <sup>1</sup>what you mean.  
(The normal pattern would be:  
I <sup>1</sup>know what you <sup>1</sup>mean)
7. <sup>1</sup>as far / as I / could.  
(The normal pattern would be  
as <sup>1</sup>far as I / could)
8. The <sup>1</sup>tour / was / <sup>1</sup>very <sup>1</sup>pleasant.  
(The division should come after *tour*, not after *was*.)
9. The <sup>1</sup>woman / was / / dressed / in <sup>1</sup>woollens.  
(The division should come after *woman*, not after *was*.)
10. I <sup>1</sup>want to <sup>1</sup>get a <sup>1</sup>few more <sup>1</sup>details from <sup>1</sup>you.  
(Ordinarily the nucleus would be on *details*.)

Having considered the problems of where to place nuclear accents in an utterance, and how to divide it into groups, the

question still remains of which tone to use (falling, rising or falling-rising) in a given context.

### The Uses of the Tones

#### 1. *Falling*

A falling tone is used as follows:

(a) In ordinary statements made without emotional implications:

It's <sup>1</sup>seven o' <sup>1</sup>clock.

I have a <sup>1</sup>lot of <sup>1</sup>students.

The <sup>1</sup>house is <sup>1</sup>empty.

The <sup>1</sup>water's <sup>1</sup>warm.

(b) In questions beginning with a question word such as *what*, *why* or *how*, (whose interrogative nature is therefore clear), which are said in a neutral and sometimes unfriendly way.

<sup>1</sup>Why did you <sup>1</sup>do it?

<sup>1</sup>When are they <sup>1</sup>coming?

<sup>1</sup>How will they <sup>1</sup>get here?

<sup>1</sup>What are they <sup>1</sup>muttering about?

(c) In commands:

<sup>1</sup>Do as I <sup>1</sup>say.

<sup>1</sup>Come <sup>1</sup>here.

In British R.P. the typical intonation contour of a 'tune' in which a falling tone occurs is that the first accented syllable of the group is said on a high level note and each successive accented syllable on a slightly lower note, until the fall on the last accented syllable, which has the nuclear tone. Unaccented syllables, before the first accented syllable and after a falling nuclear tone are normally said on a low note. Whether the nuclear tone takes a high or a low fall usually depends on the degree of intensity which the speaker imparts to his utterance.

#### 2. *Rising*

The rising tone is used as follows:

(a) In incomplete utterances, very often as the first clause of a sentence:

It's 'seven o' , clock (but she hasn't got up yet).

I have a 'lot of , students (and some are quite bright).

The 'house is , empty (and has been for years).

The 'water's , warm (so why don't you come in).

Compare these sentences with those under 1 (a) above.

(b) in questions which demand an answer *yes* or *no*:

'Are they , coming?

'Will you , do it?

Has the 'lecture , started yet?

Have you 'seen my 'younger , brother?

(c) In questions which begin with a question word such as *what*, *why* or *how*, and which are said in a warm friendly manner (cf. 1 (b) above):

'How's your , mother?

'Why didn't you 'come and , see me?

'What , time is it?

(d) In polite requests:

'Would you 'open the , window?

'Please sit , down.

As may be seen from a study of the examples under 1 and 2 above, whenever there is a *choice* between a rising and a falling tone, a rising tone indicates involvement as opposed to neutrality, friendliness as opposed to hostility.

The beginning of the intonation contour in a 'tune' in which a rising tone occurs is the same as for a falling tone, in that the first accented syllable is said on a high level note and any following accented syllable on successively lower notes. The last accented syllable, having the nuclear tone, is said on a rising note, any following accented syllables continuing the rise. Whether a rising tone goes up to mid or high pitch is again largely a matter of the degree of emotional intensity involved.

### 3. Falling - Rising

The falling-rising tone is typically used for special implications, and gives the impression that the listener should

understand more than a literal interpretation of the words. Its use in statements can be contrasted with that of a falling tone, where nothing extra is meant to be read into the remarks uttered. The term 'special implication' can cover insinuation, veiled insult, apology, unpleasant news, happiness, reassurance, or doubt on the part of the speaker as to the validity of his remark. Here are some examples of the use of this tone. The fall-rise may take place on one syllable, or it may be spread over several, in which case it is referred to as 'divided'.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| I'm <sup>1</sup> going there this <sup>v</sup> evening.                 | (Even though you may have expected me to go earlier, this is the best I can do.) |
| I'didn't see you at the <sup>v</sup> theatre.                           | (I saw you somewhere else, and you didn't realise it.)                           |
| The <sup>v</sup> houses are <sub>1</sub> nice.                          | (but perhaps the people in them aren't so pleasant.)                             |
| His <sup>v</sup> brother will <sub>1</sub> come.                        | (which is just as good for our purposes, so don't worry.)                        |
| He's <sup>1</sup> not as <sup>1</sup> stupid as I <sup>v</sup> thought. | (which, even though he's still quite stupid, is a good thing.)                   |
| <sup>ˋ</sup> Do it at <sub>1</sub> once.                                | (I know that a person of your type won't do it unless I tell him to.)            |