

Unit 8

Syllables & Rhythm (2):

linking, stress, weak forms

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Phonetics with Listening Practice (British)
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8.1

English Phonetics: Unit 8:

/ˈɪŋ ɡlɪ/ /fə ˈnet ɪks/ /ˈjuːn ɪt/ /ˈeɪt/
 [ˈɪŋɡlɪʃfəˈneɪtɪks | ˈjuːnɪt eɪt]

Syllables & Rhythm (2)

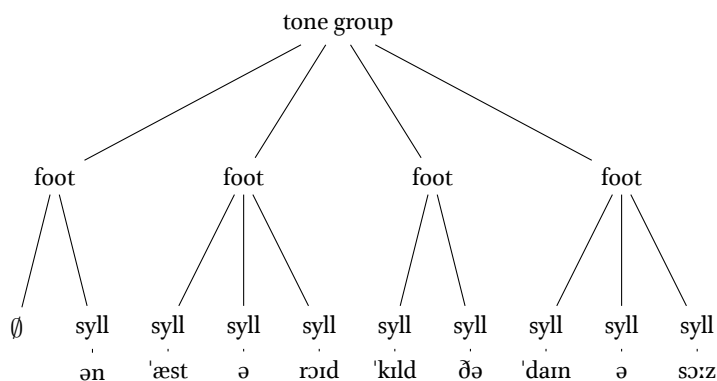
/ˈsɪl əb əlz/ /ən/ /rɪð əm/ /tuː/
 [ˈsɪləbəlzn̩ ɪðm̩ | ˈtuː]

linking, stress, weak forms

/ˈlɪŋk ɪŋ/ /stres/ /ˈwiːk fəːmz/
 [ˈlɪŋkɪŋ | ˈstɹɛs | ˈwiːkfəːmz]

8.2

1 The phonological rank scale for English



(Context: 'What happened 65 million years ago?')

8.3

2 Linking

Linking (Liaison)

- **Why Germans sound so strange (!):** [ʔaɪn ʔastɛə'ɪ:t] ('ein Asteroid')
- **Consonant-Vowel Linking:** VC V → VC_V not VC?V /ən/ /'æst ə ɪɔɪd/ → [ən_ 'æstə.ɪɔɪd]
- **r-linking:** V₁(r) V₂ → V₁rV₂ (V₁ = aə əə ɜə ə ɪə eə əə aɪə əʊə) /pɔə(r)/ + /ɪt/ → ['p^hɔə^ɪt] (pour it)
- **Intrusive r:** V₁ V₂ → V₁rV₂ (V₁ = a: ɔ: ɜ: ə) /pɔ:/ + /ɪt/ → ['p^hɔə^ɪt] (paw it)
- **Intrusive j:** V₁ V₂ → V₁jV₂ (V₁ = i: eɪ aɪ ɔɪ) /si:/ + /ɪt/ → ['si:ɪt] (see it)
- **Intrusive w:** V₁ V₂ → V₁wV₂ (V₁ = u: əʊ əʊ) /səʊ/ + /ɪt/ → ['səʊ^wɪt] (sew it)

8.4

3 Rhythm

English as a 'stress-timing' language

- French is **syllable-timing**:
 - each syllable takes as much time to say as each other syllable does
 - how would a French speaker read aloud “an asteroid killed the dinosaurs”?
- English is **stress-timing**:
 - some syllables are **stressed** – they ‘stand out’ (are ‘salient’) because they are louder and/or longer than the others: [ən 'æstə.ɪɔɪd 'kɪld ðə 'dɪnəsɔ:z]
 - the time from one stressed syllable to the next is roughly constant.
- The phonological unit of rhythm is the **FOOT**:
 - each foot starts with a stressed syllable or with a ‘silent beat’.
 - we will use a forward slash (/) to indicate a foot boundary.
- Practise making each foot the same length:
 - / John / bought / five / black / ties / _^ /
 - / Mary's / buying / seven / yellow / dresses / _^ /
 - / Jennifer's / purchasing / seventy / violet / cardigans / _^ /
 - / Nicholas is / contemplating / twenty-seven / multicoloured / carpet-slippers / _^ /

8.5

Which syllables are stressed?

- Definitions:
 - ‘Content’ words = common nouns, proper nouns, lexical verbs, adjectives, and (most) adverbs.
 - ‘Function’ words = pronouns, articles, prepositions, aux. verbs, etc.
 - Monosyllabic = has only one-syllable
 - Polysyllabic = has more than one syllable
- Monosyllabic ‘content’ words are stressed: *killed*
- Monosyllabic ‘function’ words are unstressed: *an, the*
- Polysyllabic words (including compounds) have at least one stressed syllable: 'asteroid, 'Oxford Street, 'after, be 'fore
- Polysyllabic words (including compounds) can have more than one stressed syllable: polysyl'labic, 'Oxford 'Road
- Difference between secondary or minor stress (,) and primary or major stress (') is not very important:
 - It's polysyllABic. (versus) They're polysyllabic WORDS.
 - It's POLysyllabic not MONosyllabic.
- Sometimes a syllable will be stressed just to maintain the rhythm (here: the syllable **for**):
 - Surely TOM can write it **for** us

8.6

4 Weak Forms

Weak Forms versus Strong Forms: the difference is important!

- Sally can write the report in Hungarian for us.
/ Sally can / **w**rite the re- / **p**ort in Hun- / **G**ARian / **f**or us
can = POLARITY: positive: unmarked
[kən] ('weak form') (eine einfache Bejahung)
(nicht rhythmisch hervorgehoben)
- I can't write reports in Hungarian, but I can find a translator for you
I / **can't** / **w**rite re- / **p**orts in Hun- / **G**ARian but
I / **can** / **find** a trans- / **L**ATor / **f**or you
can = POLARITY: positive: marked
[kʰæn] ('strong form') (eine stärkere Bejahung)
(rhythmisch hervorgehoben)
- You can write reports in Hungarian!
You / **CAN** / **w**rite re- / **p**orts in Hun- / **g**arian!
can = POLARITY: positive: marked: contrastive
[kʰæn] ('strong form') (eine trotzige Bejahung)
(rhythmisch *und melodisch* hervorgehoben)

8.7

How many 'degrees of stress' are there in English? Two or five?

- Context: 'What happened 65 million years ago?'
- Utterance: // . ʌ ən / æst ə rɔɪd / kɪld ðə* / daɪn ə sɔːz //
- (5) stressed syllable, melodically prominent: daɪn
- (4) stressed syllable, first stress in utterance: æst
- (3) stressed syllable: kɪld
- (2) unstressed syllable with normal vowel: rɔɪd sɔːz
- (1) unstressed syllable with reduced vowel: ən ə ðə ə
- NERD ALERT!
- cf also John C. Wells on 'Syllabification and Allophony':
<https://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/wells/syllabif.htm>

8.8

English in the future?

- Standard English = stress-timing; Indian English = syllable-timing
- Which form of English will be most important by 2122?
- Will English lose its weak forms in the future?:
- First paragraph of 'A Tale of Two Cities' by Charles Dickens (1859):
It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way—in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.
- English 1,000 years ago | English today | English in 100 years: <https://www.audible.com/blog/science-technology/hear-what-scholars-think-english-will-sound-like-in-100-years>

8.9