

42. *Practical course of English pronunciation*4.13 **Accentuation in connected speech (IPE 10.01-10.04)***Notes:*

(a) Variations of accentual prominence, similar to those found in words, also occur in connected speech. The main accented syllables tend to occur at roughly equal intervals of time, giving the utterance a strongly rhythmical nature.

(b) Unlike the accentual patterns of words, which are generally unalterable, the accented words of a sentence may be varied according to the sense, as may be the situation of the primary accent (see also section 5, *Intonation*).

(c) However, the words which are most likely to carry a strong accent are those which are most important for the meaning, e.g. verbs, adverbs, nouns, adjectives (*lexical items or content words*). Other, *grammatical words* (often called *form words*) such as articles, prepositions, pronouns, auxiliary verbs, etc., tend to be unaccented. Thus, typically, in 'He wants a cup of tea', 'wants, cup, tea' attract strong accents, whereas 'he, a, of' are unaccented and have their quality very much obscured. Note, however, that grammatical words may often carry a strong accent when appropriate to the sense. Thus, 'he' in the above sentence may be strongly accented when an opposition with, for instance, 'she' is intended.

4.14 **Types of rhythmic groups**

*Note:* Alternations of strong and weak syllables, similar to those found in words, may also occur in connected speech.

4.14.1 *Alternation weak and strong syllables:*A52 *Listen and repeat*

(. \) the man a dog at last of course

A53 *Listen and repeat*

(\ .) take them can it leave us

A54 *Listen and repeat*

(. \ .) at Christmas an apple the table

A55 *Listen and repeat*

(. . \) six fifteen this alone leave it there

**A56** Identify the accented syllables in the following sentences; check in Appendix p. 76.

- (1) Of course we want to come.
- (2) The children like to run about.
- (3) That's the way to do it.
- (4) He couldn't come on Tuesday night
- (5) She came in time for tea.

*Listen again and repeat the sentences in A56.*

*Additional practice drills (not recorded):*

Tra'falgar 'Square.

We 'thought you'd 'gone a'broad.

'When you 'get to 'London, 'take a 'taxi.

'All the 'women 'wore their 'summer 'dresses.

4.14.2 2 intervening weak syllables:

**A57** Listen and repeat

(. . \) the police a machine it depends

**A58** Listen and repeat

(\ . .) look at it wait for them come with us

**A59** Identify the accented syllables in the following sentences; check in Appendix p. 76.

- (1) It was all we could find.
- (2) Everyone thought it was terrible.
- (3) There was one of the books on the table.
- (4) When we arrived, it was dark.

*Listen again and repeat the sentences in A59.*

*Additional practice drills (not recorded):*

'What did you 'put in it?

The po'lice had a'rrested the 'culprits.

In the 'summer, the 'colours are 'wonderful.

In a 'way, it's a 'blessing for 'all of them.

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4.14.3 *3 or more intervening syllables:*

A60 *Identify the accented syllables in the following sentences; check in Appendix p. 77.*

- (1) A hundred and eleven.
- (2) How can it be proved?
- (3) Some of us were surprised.
- (4) See if you can find it in the kitchen.

*Listen again and repeat the sentences in A60.*

*Additional practice drills (not recorded):*

It was the 'only one he could 'find.

'Then there was a 'deafening ex'plosion.

The 'quality of the 'candidates was de'plorable.

4.14.4 *Juxtaposed strong syllables:*

A61 *Listen and repeat*

(• \) not now how long good luck

A62 *Listen and repeat*

(• • \) Can John come? two black pens

A63 *Listen and repeat*

(• • • \) Why can't Jack go? Most men like dogs.

4.14.5 *Irregular combinations of strong and weak syllables:*

*Note: Make sure that the strong syllables occur at roughly equal intervals of time, the degree of compression of the weak syllables depending upon their number.*

A64 *Identify the accented syllables in the following sentences; check in Appendix p. 77.*

- (1) It's all very well.
- (2) He gave us ten days' notice.
- (3) It's no good crying over spilt milk.

*Listen again and repeat the sentences in A64.*

*Additional practice drills (not recorded):*

It's 'that 'big 'house over 'there.

When 'Mary 'got 'back 'home, she 'found the 'door 'locked.

'Some 'people 'thought 'John 'Brown had 'won.

4.14.6 *Expanding sentence:*

*Note:* The basic sentence *the car stopped* (. • ↘) is expanded to give changing rhythmic patterns.

**A65** *Listen and repeat*

- The 'car 'stopped.
- And the 'car 'stopped.
- The 'black 'car 'stopped.
- The 'car in 'front 'stopped.
- The 'car 'stopped 'suddenly.
- The 'car had 'almost 'stopped.
- The 'car be'hind 'stopped at the 'corner.

**4.15** *Weak and strong forms (IPE 10.04)*

*Notes:*

- (a) As has been mentioned, it is important to weaken and obscure those grammatical words which may be totally unaccented. If such words are pronounced with their full forms when unaccented, a serious loss of intelligibility for the English listener may result. Thus, 'We have come for the books' is less easy to understand when pronounced /wɪz hæv kʌm fɔː ðɪz buks/ than if it is pronounced /wɪz kʌm fə ðə buks/.

**A66** *Listen*

/wɪz hæv kʌm fɔː ðɪz buks wɪz 'kʌm fə ðə 'bʊks/

- (b) The words most commonly reduced in this way are: *a am an and are as at be been but can could should would do does for from had has have he her him his is me must not of shall she some than that the them these to us was we will who whose you*
- (c) In ordinary colloquial English, these words occur much more frequently in their weak forms than in their accented forms. Thus, *at, of, the, to, as, and, a, his, an, but, been, for, her, we, shall, was, then, them* are found to occur in their weak form in over 90 per cent of occurrences.
- (d) However, all words having weak forms are said with the strong form when spoken in isolation, and may be given the strong form in cases where a special meaning related to strong accentuation is involved. In the following examples, weak and strong forms are illustrated.

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4.16 Words usually weak (strong form in brackets)

a—/ə/(eɪ/); an—/(ə)n/(æn/);  
and—/(ə)n(d)/(ænd/); as—/əz/(æz/);  
but—/bət/(bʌt/); than—/ð(ə)n/(ðæn/);  
that (*rel. pron. or conj.*)—/ðət/(ðæt/);  
the—/ðɪ+V, ðə+C/(ðɪz/).

A67 *Listen and repeat (weak)*<sup>1</sup>

'John 'ate an 'apple and a 'pear.  
'George is 'older than 'Mary, but the 'same 'age as 'Pat.  
'This is the 'only 'one that I 'found.  
'John 'said that 'Mary ,took it.

A68 *Listen and repeat (occasional strong forms when accented)*

'John 'and /ænd/ ,Mary ,came (i.e. insisting that *both* came)  
'As /æz/ the 'car 'drew 'near ('the crowd began cheering'—  
possible rhythmic accent on initial 'As')  
'This is 'the /ðɪz/ ,Mr ,Jones (accented 'the' implying the  
'special, famous')

4.17 Prepositions usually weak (but with strong forms contrastively accented, when final or when followed by a weak pronoun)

at—/ət/(æt/); for—/fə(r)/(fɔ:(r)/);  
from—/frəm/(frɒm/); of—/əv/(ɒv/).  
to—/t+Vɪ, tə+C/(tu:z/).

A69 *Listen and repeat (weak)*

'Look at 'Mary.  
'This is for 'Alice, and 'this is for 'me.  
He 'took it from 'John.  
It's 'made of 'wood.  
'Jane 'went to 'London and to Aber'deen.

A70 *Listen and repeat (strong when contrastively accented)*

'Not 'at /æt/ ,London, 'in ,London.  
I 'voted 'for /fɔ:(r)/ the ,motion.  
He ,said 'of /ɒv/, 'not 'in.  
She's 'coming 'to /tu:z/ ,London, 'not 'from /frɒm/ ,London.

<sup>1</sup> Primary sentence accents are shown with ' ; secondary accents with , .

**A71** *Listen and repeat* (strong when final)

- 'What are you 'looking at /æ:t/?
- 'What's 'that for /fə:/?
- 'Where does it 'come from /frɒm/?
- 'What's it 'made of /ɒv/?
- 'Where's 'Jack ,going to /tu:/?

**A72** *Listen and repeat* (optionally strong when before a weak pronoun)

- 'Look at /æ:t/ me.
- He 'kept it for /fə:/ me.
- She 'took it from /frɒm/ me.
- He 'found 'ten of /ɒv/ them.
- 'Give it to /tu:/ me.

**4.18** Forms most often weak (but having the strong form when accented or final; 'us, them' do not have a strong form when final and unaccented)

- am—/(ə)m/(/æm/); are—/ə(r)/(/ɑ:(r)/);
- can—/kən/(/kæn/); could—/kəd/(/kʊd/);
- should—/ʃəd/(/ʃʊd/); would—/(w)əd/(/wʊd/);
- does—/dəz/(/dʌz/); is—/s, z/(/ɪz/ when accented or final and also after /s, z, ʃ, ʒ, tʃ, dʒ/);
- must—/məst/(/mʌst/); not—/nt/(/nɒt/); shall—/ʃl/(/ʃæl/);
- them—/ð(ə)m/(/ðem/); us—/əs/(/ʌs/); was—/wəz/(/wɒz/);
- were—/wə(r)/(/wɜ:(r)/); will—/l/(/wɪl/);
- had (*aux.*)—/(h)əd/(/hæd/);
- has (*aux.*)—/s, z/—/əz/ after /s, z, tʃ, dʒ, ʃ, ʒ/(/hæz/);
- have (*aux.*)—/(hə)v/—/(h)əv/ after C (/hæv/)

**A73** *Listen and repeat* (weak)

- I'm 'coming. The 'boys are 'here, but the 'girls are 'out.
- I can 'see it. They could 'come to'morrow.
- I'd (= would) 'like it.
- 'Jack would 'like it, and 'so would 'they.
- 'Sarah should be 'here. 'What does it 'cost?
- 'John's 'here, and 'Jack's 'there. 'Mary must 'go.
- I 'couldn't 'come. 'I shall 'come. I 'want them 'now.
- He 'told us to 'come. 'Mark was 'there. They were 'late.

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They were 'all 'late. 'Jack will 'come.  
The 'boys had 'found it. They'd 'found it.  
'Jack's (=has) 'found it. 'John's (=has) 'found it.  
'Alice has 'gone. I've 'lost it. I 'must have 'lost it.

A74 *Listen and repeat* (strong when contrastively accented)

I 'am /æm/ ,coming. 'Am /æm/ I?  
The ,boys 'are /ɑ:/ ,here. 'Are /ɑ:/ they?  
I 'can /kæn/ ,see it. They ,said they 'could /kʊd/ ,come.  
I 'would /wʊd/ ,like it. He 'should /ʃʊd/ be 'there.  
,What 'does /dʌz/ it ,cost? ,John 'is /ɪz/ ,there.  
We 'must /mʌst/ ,go. 'Must /mʌst/ we 'go?  
He's 'not /nɒt/ 'coming. I 'shall /ʃæl/ ,go.  
'Shall /ʃæl/ I 'go? I ,want 'them /ðem/ to ,have it.  
She'd ,like 'us /ʌs/ to ,come. I 'was /wɒz/ ,there.  
'Was /wɒz/ he 'there? He 'will /wɪl/ ,come.  
'Will /wɪl/ he 'come? They 'were /wɜ:/ ,late.  
'Were /wɜ:/ they 'late? They 'had /həd/ ,seen it.  
'Had /həd/ they 'seen it? We 'have /hæv/ ,got it.  
'Have /hæv/ you 'got it? He 'has /hæz/ ,come.  
'Has /hæz/ he 'come?

A75 *Listen and repeat* (strong when final, unaccented)

He's 'taller than 'I am /æm/. I 'think 'they are /ɑ:/.  
I'll 'see if 'John can /kæn/. They 'said 'they could /kʊd/.  
I 'thought 'I would /wʊd/. I 'think 'he should /ʃʊd/.  
'See if 'he does /dʌz/. She 'told us 'he is /ɪz/.  
'John must /mʌst/. I 'thought not /nɒt/.  
I 'think 'I shall /ʃæl/. 'Yes, 'he was /wɒz/.  
I 'don't ,think 'John will /wɪl/. I 'said 'she had /həd/.  
'Yes, 'Joan had /həd/.  
'I've ,saved 'more than 'you have /hæv/.  
'You were 'later than 'we were /wɜ:/.

4.19 *Loss of /h/ in weak forms*

*Note:* Pronouns with initial /h/ commonly lose /h/ when they occur unaccented within a sense group; they retain /h/ when they are initial in a group or when they are accented (for loss of /h/ in aux. *had, has, have*, see section 4.18 of this course). Usually affected are: *he, his, him, her, who*.

- A76** *Listen and repeat* (medial, initial and accented pronouns)  
 He /hɪ:/ 'said he /ɪ:/ 'would. I ,said 'he /hɪ:/ did.  
 'What's his /ɪz/ 'name? His /hɪz/ 'name's 'John.  
 'This is 'his /hɪz/ ,book. 'Give him /ɪm/ the 'money.  
 ,Give 'him /hɪm/ the ,money. I 'gave her /ɜ:/ ə/ the 'pen.  
 I ,gave 'her /hɜ:r/ a ,pen. Her /hə/ 'father's 'here.  
 'He's the ,one who /u:/ ,told me. 'Who /hu:/ 'told you?  
 I ,can't ,think 'who /hu:/ it was.

#### 4.20 Shortening of vowel in weak forms

*Note:* The long vowels /ɪ:/, u:/, ɜ:/ are optionally shortened and relaxed when grammatical words are unaccented, e.g. /ɪ:/ → /ɪ/ in *be, been, me, he, she, we*; /u:/ → /ʊ/ in *do* (aux.), *you*; /ɜ:/ → /ə/ in *her* (see section 4.19). For reduced forms of *the*, see section 4.16; for those of *to*, see section 4.17. Often, however, the vowel, though shortened, remains tense.

- A77** *Listen and repeat* (/ɪ:/ → /ɪ/)  
 'I'll be /bɪ/ 'there. I'll 'be /bɪ/ ,there. It 'can't be /bɪ/.  
 'John's been /bɪn/ 'working.  
 'Where have you 'been /bɪn/? I 'think she /fɪ/ 'can.  
 He ,said 'she /fɪ:/ 'can. 'What can we /wɪ/ 'do?  
 'What can 'we /wɪ:/ ,do? 'John 'gave me /mɪ/ a 'book.  
 ,Give 'me /mɪ:/ the ,book.

- A78** *Listen and repeat* (/u:/ → /ʊ/)  
*Note:* Aux. *do* also has a common weak form /də/.  
 'What do /dʊ/ we 'owe you? 'What do /də/ they 'want?  
 You /jʊ/ 'don't, 'do /dʊ:/ you /jʊ/?  
 He 'told you /jʊ/ he 'could.  
 'Can you /jʊ/ 'come? Can 'you /jʊ:/ ,come?

#### 4.21 Special cases

##### 4.21.1 'Some':

*Note:* 'Some' is pronounced:

- (1) /s(ə)m/ when an unaccented determiner, e.g. 'I've 'got some 'money';



- (2) /səm/ when an accented determiner, e.g. 'I've 'got 'some 'money (but not much); or 'I 'read it in 'some 'book' (i.e. 'I'm not sure of the name of the book');  
 (3) /səm/ when a pronoun, e.g. "I've 'got some' (unaccented); or "Some of them are 'here' (accented).

**A79** *Listen and repeat*

'Would you 'like some /səm/ 'more?  
 I've 'got 'some /səm/ 'money, but 'not 'much.  
 'Could you 'give me some /səm/?

4.21.2 'There':

*Note:* 'There' is pronounced:

- (1) /ðə(r)/ when used as an unaccented existential subject, e.g. 'There's /ðəz/ 'nothing, 'is there /ðə/?'; 'There /ðər/ are a 'lot of them.';  
 (2) /ðeə(r)/ when an adverb, e.g. 'It's 'there /ðeə/.

**A80** *Listen and repeat*

There /ðə/ ,must be 'thousands.  
 Is there /ðər/ 'anyone 'in? 'There /ðeər/ it 'is!  
 I 'put it 'there /ðeə/.

4.22 **Accentuation in connected speech: recapitulation**

**A81** *Write the following sentences in phonetic transcription, using the weak forms appropriate to the accentuation shown; check in Appendix p. 77.*

- (1) They were the 'first to a'rrive at the 'entrance.
- (2) 'What are you 'going to 'bring us from 'London?
- (3) He was 'waiting at the 'corner for an 'hour.
- (4) I 'told them that there was a 'lot of it a'bout.
- (5) 'Jack's 'not 'sure if he can 'come.
- (6) 'Can I 'get to the 'Strand by 'bus?
- (7) I 'thought he would 'get 'more 'votes than he 'did.

*Now listen and repeat the sentences in A81.*

*Additional drills (not recorded)*

*Transcribe the following sentences and compare your version with that given in Appendix p. 77.*

- (1) He could have bought some of them, if he had had a basket.
- (2) As far as I know, we won't be there till ten.
- (3) What shall we do if John's late?
- (4) About when does he expect to arrive?
- (5) I thought there were some marvellous players there.