

# Unit 7

## Syllables & Rhythm (1):

linking, stress, weak forms

Print version of the  
*Phonetics with Listening Practice (British)*  
 presentation given on  
 11 / 13 frimaire, an CCXXVIII de la République  
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7.1

English Phonetics: Unit 7:  
 /'ɪŋ ɡlɪʃ/ /fə 'net ɪks/ /'juːn ɪt/ /'sev ən/  
 ['ɪŋɡlɪʃfə'neɪtɪks | 'juːnɪt'sevən]

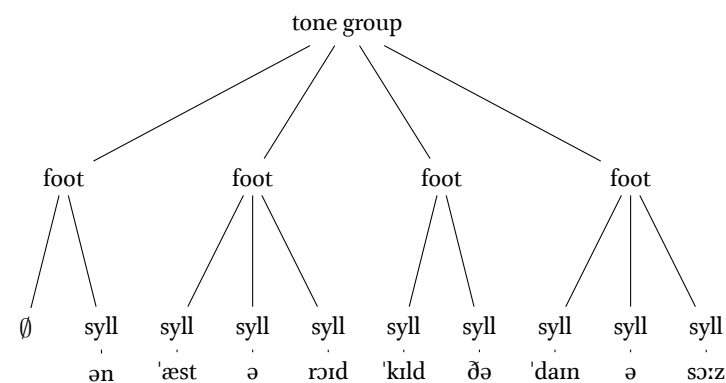
Syllables & Rhythm (1)  
 /'sɪl əb əlz/ /ən/ /rɪð əm/ /wʌn/  
 ['sɪləbəlzən'ɪðəm | 'wɛn]

linking, stress, weak forms  
 /'lɪŋk ɪŋ/ /stres/ /'wiːk fɔːmz/  
 ['lɪŋkɪŋ | 'stɹɛs | 'wiːkfɔːmz]

11 / 13 frimaire, an CCXXVIII de la République  
 (02 / 04 December 2019)  
 [ɔ̃z / tʁɛz fʁi.mɛːʁ | ɑ̃ dɔ̃.sɑ̃.vɛt.ɥit də la ʁe.py.blik]  
 ([ 'sɛkʊdɔ̃v / 'fɔːθəvdi'sembə | 'twɛnti.nɑ̃n'tɪɪn])

7.2

### 1 The phonological rank scale for English



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

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## 2 Linking

### Linking (Liaison)

- **Why Germans sound so strange (!):** [ʔam ʔastɛʁo'i:t] ('ein Asteroid')
- **Consonant-Vowel Linking:** VC V → VC<sub>1</sub>V not VC<sub>2</sub>V /ən/ /'æst ə ɪd/ → [ən\_ 'æstəɪd]
- **r-linking:** V<sub>1</sub>(r) V<sub>2</sub> → V<sub>1</sub>rV<sub>2</sub> (V<sub>1</sub> = ə ə ɔ ə ɪ ə e ə ə ə ə) /pɔə(r)/ + /ɪt/ → ['p<sup>h</sup>ɔə<sup>ɪ</sup>ɪt] (pour it)
- **Intrusive r:** V<sub>1</sub> V<sub>2</sub> → V<sub>1</sub>rV<sub>2</sub> (V<sub>1</sub> = ɑ: ɔ: ə) /pɔ:/ + /ɪt/ → ['p<sup>h</sup>ɔə<sup>ɪ</sup>ɪt] (paw it)
- **Intrusive j:** V<sub>1</sub> V<sub>2</sub> → V<sub>1</sub>jV<sub>2</sub> (V<sub>1</sub> = i: eɪ aɪ ɔɪ) /si:/ + /ɪt/ → ['si:ɪɪt] (see it)
- **Intrusive w:** V<sub>1</sub> V<sub>2</sub> → V<sub>1</sub>wV<sub>2</sub> (V<sub>1</sub> = u: əʊ əʊ) /səʊ/ + /ɪt/ → ['səʊ<sup>w</sup>ɪt] (sew it)

7.4

## 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 'æstəɪd **kɪld** ðə 'daɪnəsɔ: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

7.5

### 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

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## 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 / **c**an't / **w**rite re- / **p**orts in Hun- / **G**ARian but  
I / **c**an / **f**ind 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 / **C**AN / **w**rite re- / **p**orts in Hun- / **g**arian!  
can = POLARITY: positive: marked: contrastive  
[kʰæn] ('strong form') (eine trotzige Bejahung)  
(rhythmisch *und melodisch* hervorgehoben)

7.7

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 \* / dæm ə sɔːz //
- (5) stressed syllable, melodically prominent: dam
- (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>

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