

We shall come to know about pronunciation one by one.

STRESS

“Stress is a vital element in correct pronunciation and a great attention to it is essential.”¹ According to *P. Christopherson*², “A characteristic feature of English as compared with many African language is the use of stress.”

Stress means emphasis. If we make a sound with more energy, the sound will come out with force. If we make a sound with less energy, the sound will come out with less force. This indicates that there are degrees of stress.

“The degree of force with which sound or a syllable or a word is uttered is stress.”

Kinds of Stress

There are three kinds of stress :

1 *Teaching English—A Handbook for Teachers.*

2 *Op. cit.*

- (i) Syllable stress
- (ii) Word stress
- (iii) Sentence stress.

(i) Syllable Stress

There is variation in stress on syllable in English. The main points regarding it are as follows :

- (a) There are words of two syllables with stress on the first, e.g., doc/tor; sis/ter; fi/nish.
- (b) There are words of two syllables with stress on the second, e.g., a/gain; mis/take; be/lieve.
- (c) There are words of two syllables with stress on both, e.g., six/teen; up/stairs; un/known.
- (d) There are words of three syllables with stress on first, e.g., pho/to/graphy, ho/li/day.
- (e) There are words of three syllables with stress on second, e.g., dic/ta/tion; to/mo/rrow.
- (f) There are words of three syllables with stress on third, e.g., un/der/stand.
- (g) Words of four syllables have usually the stress on the last but one, e.g., e/du/ca/tion, pro/nun/cia/tion.
- (h) If a word of two syllables is used as a noun and a verb, the noun will have stress on the first syllable and the verb on the second syllable.

(ii) Words Stress

- (a) Content words are stressed and structural words are not stressed.
- (b) Nouns, adjectives, main verbs and adverbs are stressed, whereas articles, auxiliary verbs, prepositions and conjunctions are not stressed.

(iii) Sentence Stressed

In a sentence some words are more important than others and this is indicated by stressing the words. Difference in stress leads to difference in the meaning, for instance :

He is my uncle.

- (a) 'He is my uncle. (Not anyone else)
- (b) He is 'my uncle. (Not anybody else)
- (c) He 'is my uncle. (Why do you doubt ?)
- (d) He is my 'uncle. (Not father)

RHYTHM

Rhythm is the musical aspect of language and makes pronunciations more appealing than it would otherwise be. According to the *Oxford Dictionary*, "Rhythm is the metrical effect produced in verse, prose, music or motion by the relations in quantity, stress, time, or energy between the syllables, words, notes or movements that succeed each other."

When a person plays a harmonium, his fingers move, from one note to the other at a regular interval. This is rhythm in music. English has stress-timed rhythm. It means equal time elapses between one stressed syllable and the next. It does not matter how many or how few stressed syllables may come in between.

For instance

'Jack and 'Jill went 'up the 'hill
To 'fetch a 'pail of 'water.

INTONATION

The rise and fall of pitch in voice is intonation. In other words, intonation is the variation in pitch. It is done by, slacking or tightening our vocal-cords and the sound. In pronunciation, intonation is very important. Just a change of pitch can change the meaning. *A.W. Frisby* points out, "Much of the meaning of the spoken language is conveyed by the tune to which it is said."

English intonation can be put in two tunes—Tune I and Tune II.

Tune I. In this, pitch in voice is at a high level and falls down towards the end. The falling pitch is shown by the sign—↘
Examples are as follows :

(a) In Assertive Statements :

Ram is a good ↘ boy.

Geeta is a beautiful ↘ girl.

(b) In Commands and Orders :

Sit ↘ down.

Close the ↘ door.

(c) In Interrogative Sentences beginning with Question Words :

Where is ↘ Sita ?

What are you ↘ doing ?

(d) In Exclamatory Sentences :

What a pretty ♪ girl !

What a nice ♪ idea !

(e) In Question Tags (when the speaker hopes the listener to agree) :

You are a good ♪ boy, ain't ♪ you ?

It's a fine ♪ morning, isn't ♪ it ?

Tune II. In this, the pitch in voice acquires a high level at the end. The rising pitch is shown by this sign ↗. Examples are as follows :

(a) In Interrogative Sentences with 'Yes' or 'No' Answers :

Is he ↗ going ?

Are you ↗ coming ?

(b) In Question Tags (when the speaker seeks an information)

You are a ↗ teacher, aren't ↗ you ?

He ↗ is your son, isn't ↗ he ?

(c) In requests :

Do me a ↗ favour, please.

Please, close the ↗ door.

(d) Sentences expressing Doubt, Protest or Surprise :

The girl has ↗ gone. (doubt)

This is not what ↗ I mean. (Protest)

You have returned ↗ back. (Surprise)

FLUENCY

Fluency means, saying word group with no gaps or hesitations in the middle. It means words should be spoken without stumbling over sequences of sounds.

PAUSE

Pause means to stop for a while. In English, speaker should give pause after a comma, full stop etc. The pause can change the entire meaning of a sentence, e.g.,

Girls read nicely.

Girls, read nicely.

Thus, for proper pronunciation, a good knowledge of sound system, stress, rhythm, intonation, fluency and pause are needed. In the next chapter, the teaching of pronunciation shall be discussed.