

## Phonemic/Phonetic Transcription

### Phonemic Transcription

- It is a method of presenting all the sounds used in pronunciation of a word in the form of phonemes.
- Unlike phonetic transcription, only phonemes are used here to represent the sounds without the stress mark or length of sounds, etc.
- Phonemic transcription is called broad transcription, as we do not represent all the features of speech sounds here like phonetic one that is narrow transcription. Eg:

Examination	/ɪgzæmɪneɪʃn/
Advertisement	/ədʋə:tɪzmənt/
Popularity	/pɒpjʊləreɪtɪ/
Method	/meθəd/

Thus, it is clear that only the symbols of phonemes are used to represent the sounds of the words in phonemic transcription. In the initial stages of learning pronunciation, these phonemic transcription exercises are very beneficial.

## Suprasegmental Phonology: Syllable, Stress, Intonation

### Prosodic or Supra-segmental Features

- Each of these sounds is considered as distinct segments (phonemes), the smallest units of speech.
- The bigger units of speech along with some distinctive phonological features of English language realized in connected speeches or long utterances are known as the supra segmental features.
- Since these features are associated with the units larger than that of segments, we call them prosodic or supra-segmental features. It has the following features.
  1. Stress
  2. Rhythm
  3. Intonation

# Stress

- We have seen earlier that a syllable is a group of phonemes. The words of English are made up of one or more than one syllable depending on the length of a word.
- Each syllable is produced with a strong breath force, it is considered to be stressed. Thus, stress is that characteristic of sound which is realized when a particular syllable is articulated with a strong breath force.
- Usually the content words that give the main idea of a sentence are stressed, whereas the function/structure words which are required to perform grammatical function in a sentence are not stressed.
- Content words are generally nouns, adjectives and main verbs, whereas function words are articles, pronouns, prepositions, auxiliaries, conjunctions, etc.
- In English language, these stressed syllables occur at regular intervals in words and connected speeches.
- English is considered as a stress-timed language unlike Hindi a syllable-timed language where each syllable is articulated with equal force and in equal span of time./ a stressed syllable is marked with a small vertical bar above it. For examples.

Past

-Monosyllabic

/p<sup>h</sup>

City	-disyllabic	/ˈsɪtɪ/
Potato	-Trisyllabic	/pəˈteɪtəʊ/
Information	-Tetrasyllabic	/ɪnfəˈmeɪʃn/
Communication	-Pentasyllabic	/kəˈmjuːnɪˈkeɪʃn/

- We see that lone syllable is stressed in each word as it is pronounced with strong breath force.
- In multi-syllabic words, even more than one syllable is stressed but not with equal force.
- The most prominent syllables bear the primary stress (shown by vertical bars above), and less prominent syllables bear the secondary stress (shown by vertical bars below). Unstressed syllables remain unmarked.

# Rhythm

- ✓ Rhythm is a musical quality of speech that intends to create a soothing impression on the mind of the listeners.
- ✓ In order to realize this effect in a language, certain methods are evolved. The English language is marked with this rhythmic quality which is realized when we take into account the certain technicalities involved in it.
- ✓ The content words are stressed and function words are unstressed in connected speech.
- ✓ Content words are stressed to make the meaning of a sentence very clear. Look at this sentence. 'Players have' gone to 'Delhi Here, all the content words are stressed marked with vertical bars, and structure/function words-'have' and 'to' are not stressed.
- ✓ These stressed and unstressed syllables together constitute rhythm units. The division of the stressed and unstressed syllables into such units is called a foot.
- ✓ As English is a stress-timed language, during the articulation of each of these units, almost equal time should be taken by a speaker.
- ✓ This characteristic of English language gives it rhythm. The concept of rhythm is associated with time factor.

- ✓ Each of these feet is called rhythm unit or stress group. A rhythm unit is, thus, made up of one stressed syllable and all unstressed syllables that go with it.
- ✓ On this basis, it can be said that rhythm is that phonological feature of English language which is realized in connected speech when sentences are articulated with proper stress on required syllables along with the consideration of equal time span in articulation for each stress group.

## Intonation

- During the production of speech sounds, the vibration of vocal cords is a common phenomenon.
- The degree of vibration depends on the frequency with which vocal cords open and close per second.
- This relationship between frequency and vibration is directly proportional, i.e. more frequency results into more vibration.
- In continuous speech this frequency always keeps on changing. The rate of change of this frequency is called pitch.
- This change of pitch results into rise and fall of voice in continuous speech that is called intonation.
- When the pitch movement is from low to high, it causes rising tone. When the pitch movement is from high to low, it causes falling tone.
- In some cases, it falls first and then rises, and vice versa producing a falling-rising and rising-falling tone respectively.

Look at these sentences.

My father is a teacher.

(falling tone)

Are you going?	(rising tone)
I come here sometimes.	(falling-rising tone)
Is he sure it will work?	(rising-falling tone)

- ✚ The mark {·} indicates falling tone, the mark {˙} indicates rising tone, the mark {˘} indicates falling-rising tone and the mark {^} indicates rising-falling tone.
- ✚ In these sentences, the pitch movement takes place on the words teacher, going, sometimes, and sure as shown through the marks along with the nature of tone indicated in the brackets.
- ✚ Here it is important to note that pitch change takes place on stressed syllables depending on the meaning the speaker wants to convey in an utterance.
- ✚ For instance, in the first sentence the speaker wants to convey that his father is nothing else but a teacher, and so, pitch change occurs on the first syllable of the word teacher.
- ✚ Such is the case with other three sentences given above where the pitch changes on the stressed syllables of the words that the speaker wants to highlight.



- ✚ **The syllable on which the pitch change occurs is called tonic syllable. Thus, a tonic syllable is decided by the speaker on the basis of what he/she wants to highlight in an utterance.**
- ✚ The stressed syllables on which no pitch movement occurs are said to be on level tones (static).
- ✚ The level tones are indicated by usual stress marks used for primary (high voice) and secondary (low voice) stresses. In the case of continuous or long utterances, we take pauses in between to breath.
- ✚ Therefore, long utterances are divided into small groups on the basis of pauses.
- ✚ Such small groups of utterances are called tone/breath/sense groups. An utterance may be of one tone group as is the case with all the sentences above and in each tone group there may be level tones with a tonic syllable as an essential constituent.
- ✚ In complex sentences like 'When I was in office, he came to me as he needed my advice'.
- ✚ The three clauses of this sentence constitute the three tone groups as each of the tone group requires a pause for natural articulation.
- ✚ Intonation as a phonological feature is used to serve some important functions in utterances.

- ✚ It helps in making the meaning of utterances clear by showing the emphasis of the speakers on specific words having tonic syllables.
- ✚ It largely indicates the mood and attitude of the speakers, as a rising tone in wh-question usually shows the friendly gesture.
- ✚ It performs grammatical functions also. For instance, a statement with rising tone changes a declarative sentence into interrogative. Look at these sentences.

My friend is a teacher. (declarative)

My friend is a teacher. (interrogative)

- Here, the first sentence is declarative simply because there is falling tone on the word 'teacher'.
- The second sentence becomes interrogative due to the rising tone on the same word, where the speaker wants to be sure whether his friend is a teacher.
- Thus, intonation plays a very important role in English sentences.