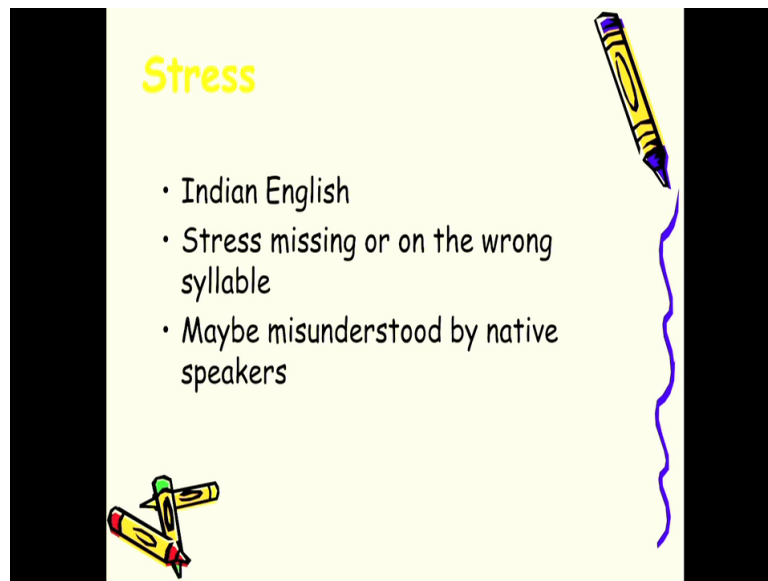


Speaking Effectively
Professor Anjali Gera Roy
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur
Lecture 15
Stress and Rhythm

Hello, the next problem area for the Indian learners of English is stress. It is not that what is stress?

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We are not talking about stress in the sense of mental stress, we are talking about stress used in language. When a syllable in a particular word a particular syllable in a particular word is said more loudly or more force than other syllables then that syllable receives the stress in that particular word. Now English is a stress time language which means that we do not stress each syllable equally. We stress certain syllables in a particular word and we do not stress the other syllables which is different from Indian languages.

In some Indian languages we put equal stress on each syllable, in some Indian languages we put the stress on the second syllable. But in English the rules are very complicated, we have rules of stress related to syllables of words of two syllables bisyllabic words, stress in polysyllabic words and also the notion of stress. Shit, how does one use stress and why is stress important?

Indian learners of English, Indian speakers of English tend to put the stress on the wrong syllable in a particular word and because the stress is on the wrong syllable, people are not able to understand what they are trying to say, native learners are not able to understand what they are trying to say. They tend to stress either the first syllable or they tend to stress the second syllable or they put equal stress on each and every syllable. Whereas in English, in some words only the first syllable is stressed, in some bisyllabic words only the second syllable is stressed.

And in polysyllabic words we have more complex rules for stressing syllables. Let us begin with some commonly mispronounced miss-stressed words. So either we do not stress the syllable at all or we put the stress on the wrong syllable and this may be misunderstood by native speakers. So let us take some very commonly mispronounced miss-stressed words by Indian learners. I was thinking of, let us take some public some examples from the public domain which might be familiar to some of you or most of you. I was thinking of the advertisement for the phone for the provider Idea, the campaign for Idea.

Now what happens, if you remember, the older campaigns for the service provider you had advertisements in which you had Abhishek Bachchan, the actor who was the celebrity endorsing the cellphone, is dressed in rustic attire most probably dressed as a village elder village chief and when and you have cronies and sycophants addressing him as Sirji. Now in these campaigns, the first campaign that came about, it used a combination of humor and stress in the wrong syllable to do a takeoff of a rustic Indian accent probably because the company was targeting rural users.

So dressing the suave Abhishek Bachchan who is educated abroad and who speaks perfect English as a rustic chief who is addressing a gathering of village villagers and one of his villager says, what an Idea sirji what an Idea sirji and he says get an Idea yes get an Idea. Now in this, since the advertisement is using humor, it is okay to use to mispronounce the word because the advertisement is trying to show this is how rural speakers rustic speakers of English speak English in the villages. But what does it do? It uses stress to create this humor.

So now when you compare the new campaign for the same provider, in which you have a very sophisticated looking, very suave looking Abhishek Bachchan walking through boardrooms, walking through elevators and advising people to get an Idea get an Idea. You see the difference? Get an Idea sirji, what an Idea sirji and get an Idea.

So you see how the whole campaign depends on how the whole campaign has changed from addressing the rustic rural user to an urban sophisticated user, a more youthful urban sophisticated user just by changing the stress in the word which is commonly miss-stressed by rustic or non-English speaking speakers in India and the stress is put on the first syllable you say Idea so what an Idea sirji. Now the correct usage is, the stress is put on the second syllable Idea not Idea.

And the film star, the celebrity Abhishek Bachchan uses two different accents to create this rural or urban sophisticated ambience for the company get an Idea when he says get an Idea. This is a perfect example of how Indian non-sophisticated users or rustic users of English in India tend to miss-stress commonly used English words. Let us take another example, the word which most of us use, you say hotel, in Indian English we tend to say hotel and hotel.

So you say like in the song you say kisi hotel mein jaye kisi disco mein jaye, normally the commonly we the common way in which this word it is pronounced in India is hotel. Hotel mein rahenge, in Hindi you say, we will stay in a hotel. So in the South people say hatel and hotel kopore, I am going to the hatel. So what is the correct stress? In North India, people say hotel, they are stressing the first syllable hotel. In the South, they are stressing ha hatel mispronounced, sound is wrong and also the stress is wrong. Whereas the stress is supposed to be on, the second syllable, hotel.

Not hotel, hotel it is the second syllable which is stressed and you do not say tal you say tel so hotel Idea. For my students here in IIT Kharagpur, the most commonly mispronounced word is what they all are, they tend to when you say what are you, who are you, what are you, what is your profession? They would say engineer and you would have parents saying I am going to make my son into an engineer, engineer doctor mera beta to engineer banega. Now that is one of the most commonly mispronounced miss-stressed words because the stresses on the second syllable engineer.

Engineer, you do not say engineer you say engineer, right. So this is about stress in words of two syllables. So either we put the stress on the first syllable or we put the stress on the second syllable and in India we tend to stress the wrong syllable invariably. How do I know when to stress, how to stress the right syllable? Are there any rules? Yes there are a number of rules but the rules are so mind-boggling and so confusing and there is only accept exceptions to the rule that I strongly advise you not to go by the rules but just do the simple thing.

When you consult a word in a dictionary, normally you have the pronunciation of the word. You would also notice a vertical mark in front of certain syllables, now that vertical mark indicates the stress of that particular word. So one way is to use the dictionary and I know, we are all very lazy, when we have common words like Idea or activity or follow or husband or industry, we do not want to consult a dictionary for looking up such simple words, we tend to look up only more complicated words. So that is one option that you check the stress by saying by looking at where the vertical mark is placed.

Usually the stress is, the vertical mark is placed before the stress syllable. The other easier way and quicker way is to listen to people, listen to people who you think you consider at good speakers of English. Just listen to their speech and compare your own stress patterns with theirs. Take well common words, I myself find myself doing it because I found what was the word the other day I found I was tripping over that word because I was putting the stress on the wrong syllable, I will come to that but even a word like activity we tend to say activity.

There is no activity in the class, there is no activity in the campus but we are putting the stress in the wrong syllable because the stress is on tiv, so you say activity activity. Or you ask people the steel industry in India is going through a loss steel industry but where are you putting the stress on dus industry Industrial Revolution, okay. But the stress in in the word is on ind, it is not on dus so you say industry you do not say industry you say industry you do not say industry.

Similarly, you do not say holiday because if you sing holiday, you are putting the stress on the first you are putting equal stress on both syllables, you are saying tomorrow is a holiday but you are supposed to stress the first syllable so you say it is a holiday hawl, when you say that you do not stress the second syllable, it becomes holiday not holiday. from words of two syllables I take you to the next example where in words of two syllables bisyllabic words, the stress shifts depending upon whether a word is a noun, an adjective or whether it is a verb, the stress changes.

So there are certain words which can be used, both as nouns and adjectives and as verbs. Now when these words are being used as nouns and adjectives, we put the stress on the first syllable. When we use the same words as verbs, we use the stress in the second syllable. So you would say produce, if you are using the word as a noun but if you are using the word as a verb, you would see produce. The agricultural produce of Punjab exceeds that of Haryana.

The Punjabi farmers produce a lot of food. So you see from produce we changed to produce, okay.

Similarly, what subjects are you studying for your B.Tech when you are using it as a noun? Or when you use it as a verb you say, I was subjected to a lot of mental abuse. So the stress shifts from first syllable to the second syllable which is ject, you do not say subject, you say subject. Similarly object, he is the object of my affection or you say I object to your marks, so object becomes object. Do you see what happens to the syllable awe ob when you do not put stress? When you do not put stress on the syllable ob, the first syllable, the awe turns into aa, sure.

So you do not when you put the stress on the second syllable, you do not say object, you say object. But when you put the stress on the first syllable, then you stress awe and you say ob but when you stress the second syllable and the first syllable is an stressed, then you say object. So you say insult or you say insult, I take that as an insult, I take that as an insult, you do not say insult, use it insult, I take that as an insult. You are insulting me, then you can say insult but otherwise you say insult.

There is a stress shift in polysyllabic words also, so when we turn bysyllable word of two syllables into a word of more than two syllables we have a different set of rules. What are these rules? In polysyllabic words we have a set of rules which we can safely follow to put the stress on the right syllable. In polysyllabic words, what are polysyllabic words? Where we combine syllables to form complex words by using a suffix. So the rule is that it is always the syllable before the suffix that will take the stress, just follow this rule.

And most of us in India do not follow this rule because we tend to put the stress in the same syllable which we would when the word is not polysyllabic. Let me illustrate this through some examples, so say a word like politics. Whereas the stress? The stress is pol politics politics but when the word becomes polysyllabic, when we are a suffix cal to it, then the stress shifts to the syllable just before the suffix. So we normally we hear people saying political political, it is incorrect because the syllable just before the suffix ical should get the stress.

So you should sa, political pol becomes pa and the stress is on it political political. You do not say political, you say political, the stress has shifted from pol to it. Similarly you say politician because the suffix is ian or cian cian so you say politician, the stress is on ti

politician physician, right. take another example, photograph, where do we put the stress? Photo. But when we say the art of taking photographs, we say photography, we do not say photography.

Indian users tend to say they carry over the same stress of photograph and they say photography usko badi achi photography karni aati hai, he knows how to photograph very well usko photo photography. Instead of photography, the stress shifts the suffix is hy, so the syllable before the suffix will take the stress which is photography tography photography photographer photography.

So I have found myself miss-stressing a word which I do not use commonly when I heard a professional like cinematograph cinema cinematograph cinema, where the stress is on cin cinema but when you say cinematograph, the suffix graph, you say take the put the stress on the syllable just before the suffix cinematograph, the stress is on matograph cinematograph cinematograph.

And the person who takes, who does this camera work in films is called a cinematographer so very often we say cinemato cinematographer, we trip over that because we are not putting the stress on the syllable before the suffix. So you break up the syllable syllables into cine mato grapher cinematographer cinematographer cinematographer, okay. So it is a question of how you break up a word into different syllables so that that word sounds right. Only if you break up the word into the right number of syllables, you will get the stress right.

So the first thing you must know, in order to stress words is, to learn to break up a words into its constituent syllables and then to discover and find out syllable is to be stressed and put the stress on the right syllable. Now in polysyllabic words there is another complication, in polysyllabic words, in addition to in addition to primary stress we have a second stress which we call secondary stress. And why do we need to know the difference between primary stress and secondary stress?

We need to know this difference because when we come to the next unit which is on rhythm and intonation particularly on intonation, we will find that when we change our tone, our quick changes and the syllable on which the pitch change takes place, that has to be the primary stress, the pitch cannot change on the secondary stress. Let me now give you some examples of secondary stress. So it is no now and suppose I enter my classroom, I find my students wishing me, and how would they wish me?

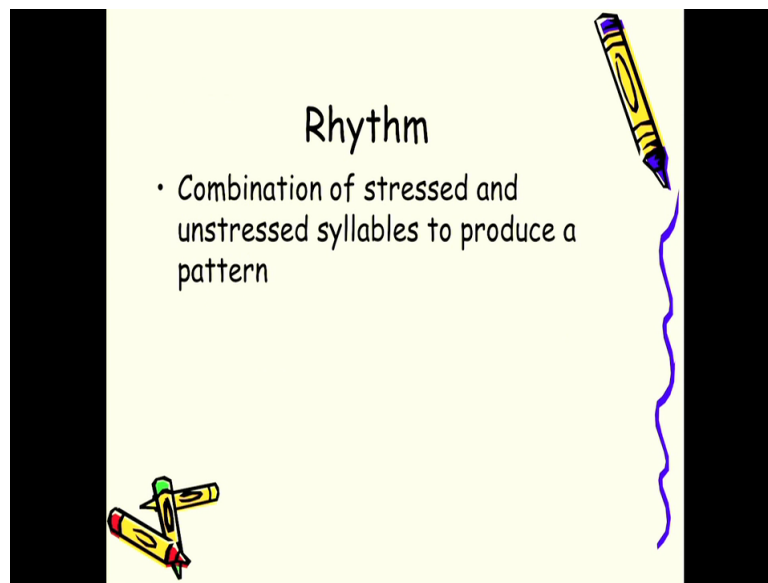
They would say good afternoon mam good afternoon mam and that is what I have been used to hearing and even repeating when I was a school child myself and even in my college days until I got to tell the difference. So in this in the word afternoon, we tend to stress the first syllable, we say good afternoon good afternoon, we tend to stress af. Now in this polysyllabic word, we have two stresses, one is a stress before af which is correct but the prime stress is before noon, so you say good afternoon good afternoon good afternoon.

So the first stress primary stress is before noon and the secondary stress is before af. So when when if I want to change my tone, good afternoon, I said it with a falling tone and a very glum tone but if I want to say it in a cheerful tone and I want to change the pitch, I say good afternoon. So the pitch change takes place on the primary stress which is on noon.

So we have a number of words like this where there are two stresses like in opportunity, I heard a lot of people saying, particularly in interviews for jobs, I would have people make speaking very grandly about or they want opportunities they want to get a lot of opportunities or they want to get opportunities. Invariably they mispronounce the word and the reason why they mispronounce the word is because they put the stress on the wrong syllable and they do not realize that there are two stresses in the word opportunity.

So one is before op, the secondary stress but the main stress is before tun, so you say opportunity responsibility. Normally in an Indian English you say, this is my responsibility and you put the stress only on res, this is my responsibility but the stress is on bility bil so you say bil is the main stress and res has the secondary stress, so you say responsibility responsibility opportunity, right. So in polysyllabic words, in addition to primary stress, we have a secondary stress.

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Now I will quickly sum up with rhythm, what is rhythm? When we combine a certain number of stressed and unstressed syllables, we string them together in a sentence, that produces a certain rhythm. But first of all let us get them meaning of the word rhythm. What do we mean by the word rhythm? We tend to use the word rhythm in our everyday speech, in a number of contexts. You say you like the rhythm of the song, you say that the rhythm of this dance is different from the rhythm of that dance.

Or you, when you are talking about music, when you are talking about dance and sometimes even in other contexts you tend to use the term rhythm. So did you know that the grand old philosopher Aristotle in his poetry said, what is common to poetry, music, dance and tragedy was according to him rhythm. So extrapolate from Aristotle, let us say that rhythm is not only the common thread running between music, dance, poetry and tragedy but it is also something which is prevalent, which is a part of language.

Every language has its own distinctive rhythm. Every language has its own distinctive rhythm. Now when we speak a new language, why that new language sounds different from the way the native speakers speak it, it is because we carry over the own rhythm of our own languages into our learning of the new language. And how do we carry over the rhythm of our mother tongue into the learning of new language? We tend to carry over the stress patterns of our mother tongue into the stress patterns of the new language.

So in English, if we put the stress on the wrong syllable, like we do, we will not get the rhythm of English right. Why, what is with them? Rhythm is a certain pattern, it may be in

music, it may be in dance, it may be poetry or it may be in language. The pattern which is produced by a succession of buy something which is repeated after periodic intervals. So it may be a step or it may be a sound, it may be a note which is or it may be a rhyme scheme which is repeated after regular intervals, that produces the characteristic rhythm of a particular musical composition or dance or a poem or a language.

Now if you were to listen to say tune into your radio or tune into your television and you do not know what language is being spoken, you can guess. How do you guess? Very often when you travel to another country and you switch onto the local television, you cannot follow the language but of course because you are in that country, you know that this is the language of that country and you can guess, oh this must be German this must be Russian.

But when you have multiple channels in a country and you are listening to those multiple channels switching surfing channels and you are moving from say a French channel to a German channel to a Russian channel to a Turkish channel, how do you know what is the language. You do not know either of the languages, you know just by because you are for some reason or the other you are familiar with the rhythms of that language.

You have been introduced to the rhythms of the different languages and you cannot tell different the meaning of particular words in Russian or in Turkish but you know what is Turkish and what is Russian, alright? So that is because the rhythm of Russian would be different from the rhythm of Turkish.

Now let me narrate one amusing example to you, now when I moved into Singapore for a year long appointment, I switched onto the channels in my hotel room and of course, like they were not too many choice of channels, we just got the local television and there was an English language channel, there was Chinese channel and there was a Tamil channel, I was surprised to find that there was a local Tamil channel.

And then I find a channel which is called Suria which is spelt as Suria and it is spelt Suria and I see a kind of I watched I mean I could watch something like a chat show in on Indian television a more like female feminine kind of exchange of tips on make-up and dress, that kind of lifestyle chat show and you I found these two women who were dressed identical to Bollywood film stars and they had images of Shah Rukh Khan, Priyanka Chopra in the background. Now what was my assumption?

My assumption was that this is an Indian language channel because of the way these young women were dressed and also because of the posters adorning the walls behind them and also the confusing name of the channel because in India also be have a channel called Surya in the South which is of course spelt as Surya. So I was completely confused but yet I was not sure, I kept thinking, now this is not that Tamil language channel because I do understand a bit of Tamil, it did not sound like Tamil to me. Later when I got to stay there for a longer, I found it was a Malay channel.

So just by the rhythm of the language I could guess that this is not an Indian channel, even though there was confusing signals like the dress of the young women or the Bollywood and start posters in the background. So every language has its own distinctive rhythm and if we change the stress pattern. Now I will quickly sarise how is the rhythm of English different from Indian. In English, in RP, stressed syllables occur at regular intervals. What does that mean?

It means that the time gap between two stressed syllables, irrespective of the number of unstressed syllables that intervene, that come in between, so whether we have one syllable between two stressed syllables of whether we have two syllables between two stressed syllables of whether we have three unstressed syllables between two stressed syllables or whether we have four syllables between two stressed syllables, the time you should take to say these unstressed syllables should be the same.

What does it mean? That you have to say the four unstressed syllables in the same time that you say the first unstressed syllable to get the rhythm right and if you do that, you will get the distinctive dumb beat rhythm of English. So if you say I am going to the market, that is not the right way to say it, you say I am going to the market I am going to the market. So the time I take to say I am which is unstressed and to the mar in to the mar in to the witches three unstressed syllables, it should be the same. I am going to the market I am going to the market.

So the three unstressed syllables are said in the same as two unstressed syllables to get the right rhythm. Now how do we get the right rhythm? Let me close with that. How do we stress, how do we know the rules of stress to get the rhythm? All the content words, remember when I was talking about words, I introduced you to the difference between content words and functional words. Content words are words carry meaning and functional words are words which we need to connect different words to get a sentence.

So all the content words should be stressed in a sentence and the grammar words, the functional words should not be stressed, which means, nouns, adjectives, principal verbs are stressed and pronouns, auxiliary verbs, conjunctions and prepositions are not stressed. Now when I say nouns, adjectives and verbs are stressed and pronouns, auxiliary verbs, conjunctions and prepositions are not stressed, what do I mean? I do not mean that the entire word is stressed because you saw in the rules of word stress, you do not stress the whole word, you only stress a particular syllable in a word.

So only the stress levels in content words should be stressed and the syllables in unstressed words should not be in the functional words should not be stressed at all. So only the stress syllables, I do not stress, I am going to the market. I do not stress the whole word going, I do not stress market fully, I just rest go and mar. So in this whole sentence, I stress only go and mar, I am going to the market I am going to the market. Let us take some more simple examples, what is your name? What is your name? What are the stress syllables?

What and name and is becomes iz your becomes ya unstressed. So what is your name? What is your name? You have to say that without putting any stress, what is your name? My name is Ram my name is Ram my name is Ram. So what do you say? Name and Ram is the stress syllable, you do not stress my name is Ram because then you would be stressing the pronoun. You say my name is Ram. When you are speaking very fast, the my is almost not heard, you say my name is Ram, name is Ram my name is Ram.

But in Indian English, think of the song, my favorite song in fact, you hear it on Star Gold all the time, my name is Anthony Gonsalves, now what are we doing? The song is very nice, very pleasant but we are using Indian English, so we are stressing my name is Anthony Gonsalves. We are stressing each and every syllable, whereas we should stress only name Anthony Gonsalves, right. So it is forgivable because we are not trying to speak Indian English, we are just singing a pleasant song but normally we do not stress a pronoun. But when do you stress a pronoun? There is an exception.

So suppose you want to say, your name is Sita and my name is Ram, then we say my name is Ram, then you vary the stress, your name is Sita. Normally we do not stress yours and mine. So with this we come to the end of rhythm and I will give you some activities in which you will be able to work out the stress pattern of particular sentences using non-syllables. Thank you.

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One time to be or not to be that is the question. And I want to tell you one last thing that Shakespeare wrote, that I think tells us about I am iambic pentameter diddum diddum diddum diddum diddum because you can also have the opposite rhythm. You can do stress unstress stress unstress stress unstress.