

**LIVING
ENGLISH
SPEECH**

W. STANNARD ALLEN

LIVING ENGLISH SPEECH

STRESS AND INTONATION PRACTICE FOR
THE FOREIGN STUDENT

By

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WHAT THIS BOOK IS ABOUT

This book is designed for use in English classes for foreign students, its purpose being to present the basic principles of stress and intonation and to provide copious practical exercises. The vocabulary of the exercises is deliberately simple, many of them being quite suitable for students who have been learning for less than six months.

This book is not a course in itself, but rather a graded set of supplementary exercises for providing practice in stress, rhythm and intonation at all stages of learning English. The notes and remarks are intended for the teacher, to acquaint him with the point of each exercise and suggest how it might be practised. Exercises appropriate to the standard of the class can be worked through as part of the conversation or spoken English hour, preceded where necessary by a blackboard exposition of the points to be practised. The teacher's notes and remarks are deliberately telegraphic and concentrated, and for that reason, if the teacher feels that they would prove helpful to the class, they should always be re-stated and elaborated before an exercise is done.

Apart from the stress exercises with polysyllabic words, the vocabulary of even the advanced exercises is fairly simple (falling for the most part well within the range of the well-known Essential English series), so that little difficulty is experienced in switching from one group to another if the ability of any particular set of students seems to warrant it. As this book is intended for the use of all types of foreign students of English, and not only students

specializing in the language, it has not been written in a phonetic script. Examples and exercises are in the normal orthography apart from a few isolated instances, where a broad type of transcription (as found in Daniel Jones's Pronouncing Dictionary) is used. It would be an unnecessary obstacle to the average student if he had to learn to read a phonetic script fluently first. The diacritics necessary as a guide to the required stress or intonation have been added to a normal script, and by combining these with certain typographical devices it has been possible to present even complex patterns in the form of exercises that are readily understood.

I must conclude these introductory remarks with sincere thanks to the many anonymous students who have unwittingly contributed to the book whenever they opened their mouths; to my wife for providing a lot of extra practice material; and to Milica Rekalić of Belgrade for devoting so many of her spare hours to making a typed draft from my original hieroglyphics, a feat only possible to one brought up on cursive cyrillics.

W. S. ALLEN

Belgrade

April 1953

BOOK LIST

Although a number of familiar intonation patterns in English appears for the first time in this book as deliberate practice material, the general background of this subject has already been covered in many books and articles. On these the writer of this book has based many of the exercises, and students or teachers who are curious to make a more detailed examination of this aspect of English should consult the standard textbooks on the subject. The following books would probably be the most useful for an average general student:

D. JONES: *Outline of English Phonetics*, Ch. 28-31 (Heffer).

ARMSTRONG AND WARD: *Handbook of English Intonation* (Heffer).

IDA WARD: *Phonetics of English*, Ch. 15-16 (Heffer).

PALMER AND BLANDFORD: *Everyday Sentences in Spoken English* (Heffer).

R. LAS VERGNAS: *Les pièges de l'anglais parlé* (Hachette).

KENNETH L. PIKE: *The Intonation of American English* (Univ. of Michigan)

ROGER KINGDON: Articles in *English Language Teaching* (British Council). Volume II, Nos. 4, 5, 6. Volume III, Nos. 1, 7. Published as separate brochure entitled *Teaching of English Intonation*.

SUMMARY OF NOTATION AND TYPOGRAPHY

The following list of signs and types is for reference only. More detailed explanation is given in the notes to the appropriate exercises.

Stress and rhythm

ˈ is placed before a syllable or word having stress. E.g. beˈfore.

□□□ pictorial representation of rhythmic groups of **stressed** syllables (big squares) and **unstressed** syllables (little squares).

E.g. ˈtake it aˈway □□□

△ Music notation is used in addition where it is necessary to show the exact stress-pattern or uneven rhythms.

E.g. $\frac{2}{4}$  in a ˈbook

$\frac{2}{4}$  ˈattitude

$\frac{2}{4}$  ˈaptitude

Intonation

~~Introductory unstressed syllables are printed in *italics*.~~

~~The stressed syllable that begins a fall or a rise in the tune is printed in **bold type**.~~

~~The accent to indicate this fall is `~~

~~The accent to indicate this rise is ,~~

~~A new high pitch in longer sentences is preceded by ↑~~

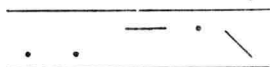
Examples: *He will* 'come to 'day.

'Can you 'come to, day?

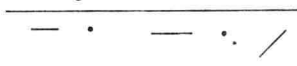
He 'asked us to 'tell him the ↑ 'right way to 'do it.

The intonation of the model sentence at the beginning of each exercise is also shown graphically between two parallel lines. These lines represent the approximate upper and lower limits of the voice, with dashes to show stressed syllables, and dots to show unstressed ones. The three examples just used would be shown graphically as follows:

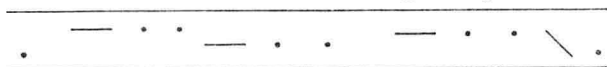
(a) *He will* 'come to 'day.



(b) 'Can you 'come to, day?



(c) *He* 'asked us to 'tell him the ↑ 'right way to 'do it.



Syllables taking a stress in order to convey a special meaning, that is, in order to give them particular prominence in the speaker's thoughts, are printed in CAPITALS.

Example: *But he wrote* 'YOUR name in 'MY book.

The above sentence shown graphically:

But he wrote 'YOUR name in 'MY book.



This kind of stress, when occurring together with a

rising intonation, produces the characteristic wave (fall-rise) that is found at the end of so many English sentences. It is printed here as follows:—

Example: *But I 'CAN'T come to[^]DAY.*

The above sentence shown graphically:

But I 'CAN'T come to[^]DAY.

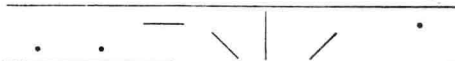


The division between two intonation patterns in a sentence is shown by a vertical stroke.

Example: *They were 'too 'late | ,weren't they?*

The above sentence shown graphically:

They were 'too 'late, ,weren't they?



INTRODUCTORY NOTES

An English course for foreigners must necessarily concentrate on the structure of the English language. It cannot teach much about the spoken language apart from offering a guide to pronunciation. Most of the practical work in spoken English must be devised by the teacher; normally he uses either more or less spoken English in his classes in proportion to his own ability in the language. This book is designed to give systematic practice in the spoken language. It assumes a basic knowledge of the sounds of English and provides graded exercises in the less easily defined world of stress, rhythm and intonation.

Stress, rhythm and intonation should really be considered as a whole, for they are very closely connected elements of a single aspect of the language that we might call Speech Flow. Speech is essentially movement. However accurately we learn to pronounce the isolated sounds of a language we must still train ourselves to set them in motion in the right manner if we wish to make ourselves easily understood. A student of music learns the theory of combining sounds into harmonic sequences, yet he does not create music until he can make this material move in a melodic shape. Music has its Stress in the regular recurrence of beats; it has its own Rhythm; and melody is its Intonation. Spoken language behaves in a broadly similar way. The sounds of English and isolated syllables, like notes or chords in music, only become intelligible when set in motion. This movement—its beats, its rhythms and its melody—

is the theme that this book develops throughout its series of controlled exercises.

Broadly speaking, a reasonably correct speech-flow is more important for intelligibility than correct sounds. It is possible to carry on an intelligible English conversation in a series of mumbles and grunts, provided the voice-movement is correct. English people often do this when exchanging a few words on a trivial topic, though we do not suggest that foreign students should take examples of this kind of intercourse as their models. On the other hand, some foreign speakers of English, even though they learn to make English sounds quite well, fail to acquire a sufficiently accurate speech-flow. The result is that English-speaking people find it quite difficult to understand them; and they, for their part, complain that English people mispronounce or swallow half their words.

This book consists of exercises on all the aspects of spoken English that contain problems for a foreign student. There are, however, no drills on individual sounds. Most class text-books on modern lines contain sufficient practice material on the sounds themselves.¹ Here you will find material to practise typical English speech patterns. Although it is wiser not to make a rigid division between the elements of Stress, Rhythm and Intonation, this book does in fact present its exercises to the student in that order. The earlier exercises are purely on the stressing of words in phrases and sentences; this leads to speech rhythms, with exercises on typical English rhythmic patterns; and the final (and longest) section of the book deals with intonation, presupposing some knowledge of stress and rhythm.

Nevertheless, teachers will find that exercises can be

¹ The graded pronunciation drills that run through the first three books of the well-known *Essential English* method, by C. E. Eckersley (Longmans, Green), provide an excellent example of this.

practised from all three sections simultaneously. The vocabulary is simple and up-to-date; and, except for the exercises on the secondary stress of long words, it is well within the range of fairly elementary students.

The book is not intended to be "worked through" in the manner of an ordinary text-book. An exercise or two should be used at every opportunity for oral practice as part of the classwork in spoken English. An important feature of a large number of the exercises, especially those on stress and rhythm, is repetition. Phrases or patterns are to be repeated two or three times, and the teacher must insist on unhurried regularity, taking care to start off the next phrase himself at the same regular pace. This kind of exercise can be kept steady more easily by practising a group of people rather than individual students. The tapping of a ruler or pencil, or hand movement as for the restrained conducting of a choir, will certainly be needed from time to time.

If any real progress is to be made towards a type of spoken English that sounds natural, faulty speech-flow should be corrected at every opportunity; an exercise in grammar done orally should at the same time be treated as an exercise in the spoken language. It is important to start good habits right from the very first lessons, for five minutes' drill in the early stages is worth fifty minutes at a later stage when bad habits have already been allowed to form.¹ It is not necessary to spend too much time on trying to perfect the pronunciation of elementary students, but they *should* be made to imitate the broader features of the spoken language whenever they use it. By spending too much time on the sounds of English in the early stages of

¹ *Oxford Progressive English for Adult Learners*, by A. S. Hornby, published by Oxford University Press, 1953, has work on stress and intonation as an integral part of the early stages of learning.

learning the language a student will fail to see the wood for the trees; for the key to intelligibility lies more in knowing how to move the voice according to accepted patterns of stress and melody than in making or recognizing correctly the component sounds.

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STRESS AND RHYTHM

When English is spoken, we can hear that some syllables stand out above the others. This can be quite an objective feature of speech, since it is just as marked when reading a list of words from a dictionary as when we are engaged in conversation. We can also give special point to our ideas by stressing certain vital words as we speak. In print we put words specially stressed in this way in italics, or in writing a personal letter we can underline such words when we wish to be sure that the reader has exactly the shade of meaning we wish to express. This special stress for emphasis, unlike the natural stress of words in an objective setting, usually affects the intonation. For this reason exercises on it are delayed until the appropriate place among exercises on intonation.

We shall begin with exercises on the stress and rhythm of words in phrases and sentences. (The complicated subject of the correct stressing of individual words of several syllables will be found as an appendix with further exercises at the back of the book.) Spoken English shows a marked contrast between its stressed (strong) and unstressed (weak) syllables, a fact which largely accounts for its characteristic rhythmic patterns. Some languages¹ make very little difference between syllables in the matter of stress. Native speakers of such languages find it especially difficult to achieve a natural speech-flow in English; they would be advised, therefore, to do the stress and rhythm exercises carefully and to return to them from time to time.

¹ e.g. French.

For the sake of the exercises that comprise the greater part of this book, work on stress and rhythm has been somewhat artificially separated from that on intonation. It is stress, however, that largely dictates the significant moves of the voice up or down, and an ability to stress a phrase correctly will help to guide the speaker to use the correct intonation, for the voice changes its direction only on stressed syllables. Stress and rhythm are even more closely connected; we might draw a useful musical parallel by likening stress to the main beats or pulse, and rhythm to the various patterns of movement that fill the spaces from one pulse to another. One cannot rely too much on this musical analogy, however, since the pulse and rhythm of conversational speech or of prose-reading will be of a much freer pattern than the more regularly recurring musical bars. Nevertheless, for the sake of practice, many of the exercises that follow should be done under a kind of musical discipline with an insistence on rhythmic regularity.

Sentence stress

It can be generally assumed that in any normal sentence we shall stress (or give full sound value to) the significant words only. These are briefly:

1. Nouns (and some pronouns, notably interrogatives).
2. Demonstratives (this, that, etc.).
3. Adjectives.
4. Most adverbs.
5. Verbs (and auxiliaries in certain circumstances).

The other words in a sentence, mostly form-words to join together the words that carry meaning, are normally unstressed, many of them having special weak forms. Prepositions, auxiliaries, conjunctions and pronouns make up the greater part. The syllables bearing stress proceed at a

fairly regular pace, the unstressed syllables being accommodated between them in varying rhythmic sequences. The latter provide one of the greatest difficulties for the foreign student, who generally tries to give them a fuller pronunciation than is due to them.

We can see this most clearly by comparing sentences with many significant words (and therefore many stresses) with sentences consisting mainly of form-words (and therefore of few stresses). Consider the following four sentences: the first and second have 11 and 12 words respectively, 10 of them being stressed; the third and fourth have 14 and 16 words respectively with only 4 stresses each. Yet the *longer* sentences take only half the time to say that the shorter ones take. The unstressed words, crowded together between the steadily moving pulses, are spoken quite quickly compared with the shorter sentences full of the stressed syllables.

1. 'Bert's 'friend 'John has 'just 'sold 'two 'very 'fine 'old 'paintings.
2. The 'Daniel 'Jones Pro'nouncing 'Dictionary 'lists 'most 'versions of 'modern 'English pronounci'ation.
3. 'What would you have 'done if he had 'talked to you in the 'street?
4. *It would have been* 'better not to have 'paid for it be'fore you had re'ceived it.

The last two in a phonetic transcription:

3. 'wɒt wʊd ju əv 'dʌn ɪf hi əd 'tɔ:kt tə ju ɪn ðə 'stri:t.
4. ɪt wʊd əv bɪn 'betə nɒt tu əv 'peɪd fr ɪt bɪ'fɔ:ʃud rɪ'si:vɪt.

The ability to move smoothly and steadily from one stress to the next, and to fit in the unstressed syllables between them, forms the basis of a good natural English accent. For that reason our first forty exercises or so are devoted to