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Nabil Morchid earned his Ph.D. from Ibn Tofail University in 2020. Dr Morchid has also authored seven referred journal articles, many of which are on quality education and technology acceptance.

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# Spoken English: Rules and Functions

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## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this book to my father, Morchid Abdelkhalek, for all the positive things he contributed to my life. I also dedicate this work to all my family members. I feel grateful for their presence in my life.

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# Introduction

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## Rationale

English studies programmes attract a large number of university students who aspire to reach further with their knowledge base on the English language and literature. English studies programmes offer a wide range of course contents that are also trajectories for self-fulfilment. The variety and practicality of the course contents made accessible to students belonging to English departments cause students to choose among many promising career paths. These are distinct itineraries for personal and professional development that load on distinct fields of study. Linguistic proficiency is a common thread found in all programmes leading to professional development. It is common for graduates of English studies departments to pursue careers in journalism, translation, teaching or business. The odds for excellence in all these occupations stand dependently of linguistic proficiency, which is both a function and condition for professionalism and dedication. A good metaphor for linguistic proficiency is a compass that is meticulously calibrated to designate four distinct directions: north, south, east and west. By way of analogy, linguistic proficiency specifies four trajectories that are also perspectives for accuracy in the use and production of language. Listening, speaking, reading and writing are distinct goal areas for language learners. The magnet that is binding on the four points of the compass impacts the four skills in the same way. For students to attain linguistic proficiency, they must cater for such kind of synergy that would enable total reciprocity between listening, speaking, reading and writing. This book centres on the contents that load on academic spoken English, but it does not overlook the influences from the remaining language skills. The fact is that there is more to linguistic proficiency than the sum of its parts.

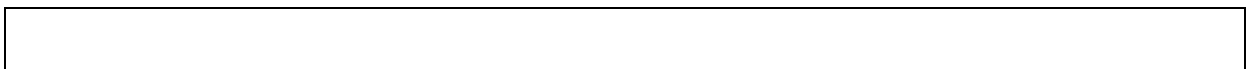
## Purpose

This book is intended to help students attain proficiency in academic spoken English. At the university level, students of English need speaking proficiency and its provisions to demystify the theoretical landscape surrounding the speaking skill. This book offers theoretical and functional concentrations of knowledge that are also complementary perspectives of instruction for fostering the quality of linguistic performance. For students to unlock the practical relevance of academic spoken English, they must acquaint themselves with the knowledge base on speech production. Knowledge on the different features and patterns of spoken English helps students make informed choices in their use and manipulation of the English language. For this same reason, this book begins with theoretical accounts on the nature of oral language and the particularities of the English language. Then, from theory to practice, and for students to be able to assess the quality of their academic spoken English, many practice activities are designed to complement the theoretical loads in this book. The contents in this book are optimised to enable full reciprocity between the theoretical and functional attributes of spoken English.

## **Format**

In addition to an introduction, this book combines a theoretical part and a functional part. The theoretical part provides context for the rules and practices of academic spoken English. This includes an explicit account of the different features that characterise the speaking skill and a comprehensive overview of the English sound system. The functional part in this book, on the other hand, is oriented towards the interpersonal and presentational patterns of communication that build on the speaking skill. In particular, the contents in this book stretch over five chapters, in which the first two chapters illustrate the different rules that apply to the speaking skill in general and the English sound system in particular while the remaining three chapters give practice and experience in three traditions in the spoken discourse: public speaking, debating and interviewing. All chapters begin with an introduction that provides context for the contents developed in every chapter. Also, all chapters sum up with an assessment section for the purpose of giving students immediate practice in the knowledge base they have been exposed to. The second chapter in this book is the only exception where the evaluation structure disperses at different points throughout the chapter. The unique character of the English sound system requires students to trust their knowledge of distinct speech patterns before they can go further with the consolidation of their English

language speaking skills. For more convenience, the works cited in every chapter appear at the end of the same chapter to facilitate students' access to the loads of literature that characterise the contents being exposed.



## **Part 1: Speaking proficiency**

This book is intended to provide EFL students with the practice and experience needed for attaining speaking proficiency. The knowledge concentrations in part 1 are customised to enable the reciprocity between theory and practice. In particular, chapter 1 begins with a general perspective of the spoken discourse and all the features that characterise the speaking skill. Theoretical accounts from different branches of linguistics are exposed to help students gain a deeper understanding of the particularities of the speaking skill. The study of spoken language is not exclusive to the affordances of the speaking skill. Targeting speaking proficiency without acknowledging the impact discourse has on the production and manipulation of speech would only perjure the intent from this book. For this reason, chapter 1 offers perspectives on several features of the spoken discourse. The second chapter addresses the basics of the English sound system. The concept of academic spoken English is central to this book because it substantiates the essence of speaking proficiency. For EFL students to reach further with their linguistic abilities, they must speak correct English. There are many rules that regulate the oral production of the English language. Chapter 2 gradually strengthens students' capabilities to take responsibility for their own learning. For every section in chapter 2, the contents are organised to build on what was understood from prior processes and structures. For example, practice in phonetic transcription is a necessary condition for understanding word stress. Also, for every section in chapter 2, there exist practice exercises that help students assess their performances before venturing on new knowledge concentrations.

### **Chapter 1: The speaking skill**

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## **1.1 Introduction**

Language can be referred to as speech or writing. The speech-writing dichotomy characterises the linguistic situation of all languages. All branches of linguistics pinpoint the distinctive features that separate speech from writing and the elements of discourse that are typical of language production in its oral and written forms. The distinction between speech and writing is consequential at all levels, and it needs to be exposed and examined from different perspectives for a better grasp of the fundamentals of spoken English.

## **1.2 Speech Vs. Writing**

### **1.2.1 Speech**

The faculty of speech is inherent to the human condition, and so is the intent from oral language. The theories on the origin of language forward different arguments on the nature of language and its origin, but they all acknowledge the evolutionary character of language, which has led to the invention of writing. The source codes of language were initially oral. Prior to the systemisation of writing, language was exclusive to orally coded utterances. The historical advantage of speech over writing has triggered varied speculations about the nature of oral language and its manifestations. The attributes of oral language are well observed from the lens of Horowitz and Samuels (1987):

Oral language is typically associated by linguists with conversation that is produced, processed, and then evaluated in the context of face-to-face exchange and grounded in interpersonal relationships that are often clearly established. Oral language is adapted to a specific audience and to socio-cultural settings and communities that are presumably present, functioning in a context of here and now. (p. 56)

Indeed, oral language is basically a spontaneous exchange of information. The inclusive character of oral language requires situational awareness on the part of the speakers, who constantly assess and assimilate elements of their environment. Also, the spontaneity of spoken language pairs with several inconsistencies such as false starts, fillers and hesitations. These are speech disfluencies. The effect they exert on the exchange of information is marginal as long as they do not interfere with the reciprocity of meanings in any given act of communication.

### **1.2.2 Writing**

A written language is the representation of a system of communication, be it linguistic or non-linguistic, by means of written forms. A written language is not exclusive to words that are organised into sentences. It is common for a writing system to combine tactile graphics, curved symbols or computerised codes. Today, writing has gained a lot in terms of maturity and aesthetics. The first writing forms are traced back to 5000 BP in Mesopotamia with the cuneiform writing system (Schmandt-Besserat, 1992). Back then, writing was in its most basic forms and it looked more like drawings and carvings. Although there is no evidence there had been no writing systems prior to cuneiform, there is a consensus among scholars on the subordination of writing to oral language. More than that, today, the number of oral languages exceeds by far the number of written languages. Only in Africa, around 2000 languages are exclusively oral.

The fact is that human speech has evolved independently of writing. Oral languages have always been necessary conditions for the evolution of written languages. Oral languages are acquired naturally and effortlessly. Children become native speakers of their first language without any knowledge of the grammar rules that apply to their speech. However, writing is the function of instruction. Learning a written language requires conscious knowledge of the rules applicable to that language. Most importantly, there is lack of reciprocity between a written language and its oral form. Mastery of grammar does not necessarily convert into oral proficiency. In this regard, T.S Eliot (as cited in Hughes, 2005, p.5) specifies that “an identical spoken and written language would be practically intolerable; if we spoke as we write, we would find no one to listen, and if we wrote as we speak, we would find no one to read. Spoken language and written language must not be too near together as they must not be too far apart”. Indeed, speech and writing do not belong dependently of one another; also, they are not in competition as they fulfil different functions.

### **1.3 Features of Oral Language**

As noted earlier in this chapter, Spoken language is different from written language for many reasons. Spoken language is inclusive of features other than its own contributions to the transfer of meaning. The oral messages we produce are an important part of oral communication, but they do not afford full reciprocity with the meanings shared in any given act of oral communication. This section is set to address the fundamentals of the spoken discourse. In

particular you will be introduced to the features that characterise the production and assimilation of speech for you to understand the intercourse between spoken language and another kind of languages that are not necessarily linguistic.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>1.3.1 Accent:</b>	It designates the prosodic features that characterise distinct pronunciations of the same language. It should be noted that accent is always sensitive to the social context where it happens to be produced and reproduced (Derwing & Munro, 2005).
<b>1.3.2 Dialect:</b>	The common definition of a dialect as an immature or divergent version of a superior language is untrue to the complexity surrounding the dialect-language dichotomy. The fact is that the identification of a linguistic system as dialect or language is the function of factors that emphasise the dynamics of power and status (Haugen, 1966). For a linguistic phenomenon to be recognised as language, it must have joint power. Concentrations of social, cultural and political power are the necessary conditions for a dialect to upgrade into a language. The fact is that there would always be dialects that have long served the intent of their respective community members, and still would not receive equitable status and be on equal footings with languages that fulfil the same purposes.
<b>1.3.3 Speech tempo:</b>	Speech tempo designates the rate of speech and the quantity of speech units produced in a given amount of time (Jones, 1956). The rate of speaking is sensitive to a wide range of factors that relate to the speaker and the context of communication. Tempo is a feature that characterises the speech discourse and causes the speakers more freedom in the manipulation of language. It is normal for a speaker to use

contracted language forms, elliptical constructions and shortened sentences.

**1.3.4 Prosody:** The prosodic features of speech encapsulate a wide range of acoustic features that affect the speaking skill without being perceptible in writing (Hirst & Di Cristo, 1998; Roach, Stibbard, Osborne, Arnfield, & Setter, 1998) . From a linguistic perspective, prosody is the scientific study of suprasegmentals, which are speech units larger than individual phonemes or speech sounds. The prosodic phenomenon in speech is impossible to disassociate from the speaking skill. Speakers change intonation, pitch, stress , rhythm and tempo to convey meanings and feelings other than those understood from writing. For this same reason, language learners need to gain experience and knowledge on how to decode and label distinct displays of prosody. It should be noted that the prosodic features of speech are not the same for all languages. The next chapter in this book is intended to instruct you on the fundamentals of the English sound system. A good part of the instruction is devoted to the prosodic features of the English language.

**1.3.5 Contraction:** It is very common for a speaker to use shortened forms of language. Unlike writing where a lot of emphasis is placed on accuracy and formality, speech is characterised by concise and fast-paced utterances (Widdowson, 1998). Examples of the most common contractions in the English language are as follows:

- was not = wasn't
- what is = What's
- I am =I'm
- you will = you'll
- let us= let's
- I have = I've

**1.3.6 Adjacency pairs:** Adjacency pairs are automated units of speech that require minimum attention from the interlocutors while conversing (Schegloff, 2007; Wells, MacLure & Montgomery, 1981). The hearer's responses become conditioned reactions to the speaker's contributions to the act of communication. Adjacency pairs give evidence of the spontaneity of oral language where the exchange of meaning may belong independently of the will of the communicators. For example, greetings in many Moroccan contexts defy the logic of a meaningful exchange of information. Sometimes, the interlocutors repeat the same utterances to mean different things. Also, the tempo is so fast to the point of making it impossible for both speakers to assimilate what has been said.

**1.3.7 Ellipsis:** It is a common thing in the spoken discourse to use incomplete sentences where one or more words are purposefully omitted (Martin & McElree, 2009). The reasons for ellipsis are the same as those for contraction. The prolific nature of the speaking skill causes the speakers to be efficient with minimum costs. The fact is that speakers would intentionally discard parts of a sentence as long as they do not affect comprehension of the intended messages. More than that, Well composed sentences may defeat the intent in speaking as they compromise the normal flow of communication. Ungrammatical sentences are in many cases the function of ellipsis but they do not affect as much the outputs from speech.

**1.3.8 Back-channel:** Back-channel designates both verbal and nonverbal responses made by one or more individuals in an act of communication for the purpose of showing interest in what is being said by the speaker (Krauss, Garlock, Bricker & McMahon, 1977). Examples of back-channel responses include:

- Interjections that show feelings of satisfaction, dissatisfaction, interest, boredom, hesitation, approval, etc.
- Physical movements intended to convey feelings and attitudes

**1.3.9 Fillers:** Spoken language contains elements of speech that add nothing to the meanings being expressed (Jones, et al., 2003). The largest part of speech is unprepared. People normally do not plan and outline what to say and how to say it whenever they speak. Doing so would be mentally demanding if not impossible. Fillers are dis-fluencies that characterise the spontaneity of the spoken discourse. These disfluencies are the function of speech tempo among other features that characterise the speaking skill. Speech production constantly shows the effect extra –linguistic features ranging from the speaker’s state of mind to the context of communication.

**1.3.10 Elision:** Elision is an important feature of the speaking skill. Elision happens when one or more phonemes are not pronounced (Roach, 2001). The manifestations of elision are numerous. Consider the following examples:

- The word “found” is phonetically transcribed as /faʊnd/ and the word “to” as /tə/. Yet, when the two words combine in a single utterance, the pronunciation changes to /faʊn/ /tə/. Of course, there is a phonological reason for the omission of the /d/ sound. When two labio-dental sounds come together, the voiced one is dropped, and this was the case of the /d/ sound in “round to”. You will obtain more practice and experience in classifying the consonants and vowels of the English language in the next chapter.

- Syllabic consonants are another form of elision. In English, it is very common for /n/, /l/, and /r/ to have the peak position in a syllable and be considered as a syllabic consonant. The word “cotton” could be pronounced as /kɒtən/ or /Kɒtn/. In the latter case, you may have noticed the omission of the schwa sound, which has not been fully omitted. Instead, it has merged into the /n/ sound allowing it to be a syllabic consonant.
- Another example of elision is when distinct speech units are connected by means of an extra speech sound. When /ɪ/ /i:/, /aɪ/, /ɔɪ/ or /eɪ / comes together with a word that begins with a vowel, the /j/ sound merges the two words into one speech unit. The /w/ sound functions in the same way when /ʊ/ /u:/ /ʊə/ or / uə/ connects to a word starting with a vowel. Consider the pronunciation of the following words:

“See it” “Know it”

**1.3.11 Sociolect:** A sociolect is a variety of language spoken by a social group that has distinct particularities (Trudgill, 2003). A sociolect emphasises the social conditions amongst the community members of the same social group. It is normal for the members of the same profession to have their own variety of language, and the same logic applies to all social groups sharing distinct beliefs and attitudes.

**1.3.12 Hedging:** Hedging is an important feature of the speaking skill. For many reasons, the speaker chooses to soften the assertiveness of the message being conveyed (Weinreich, 1966; Fraser, 2010). The process by which the contents of an utterance are purposefully attenuated is referred to as hedging. Hedges emphasise the social nature of language and the spontaneity

of the speaking skill. The use of hedging allows the speaker to convey a diverse range of feelings. Consider the following examples:

- I am sort of busy these days.
- I may not be able to help you.
- I must ask you to leave now.
- I suppose that illiteracy is the function of poverty.
- All I know is online gaming causes addiction.
- They say money cannot buy happiness.

The above examples give evidence of the ability of hedging to impact the speaking discourse in many ways. Hedges have the ability to convey messages beyond the propositional meanings in spoken language as they activate channels for conveying feelings and attitudes that affect the assertiveness of speech. Also, it should be noted that hedging is sensitive to many variables, among which are the determinants of status, gender and power.

**1.3.13 Conversational implicature:** Conversational implicature is an important linguistic phenomenon that characterises the speaking skill. Spoken language activates modes of discourse where the reciprocity between the propositional content and the intended message is not without exceptions. Conversational implicature has its roots in pragmatics, or the scientific study of the influences context exerts on meaning and comprehension. More precisely, conversational implicature is traced to Grice (1975)'s cooperative principle which encapsulates four maxims labelled as: quantity, quality, manner and relation.

An utterance can convey a wide range of meanings other than those encapsulated in the referential meanings of the speech units being conveyed. That is to say, a speaker may say something to mean another thing without causing the addressee doubt and suspicion. For the interlocutors to reach

mutual understanding of what is said and shared, they must obey the cooperative principle, and emphasise the maxims of quality, quantity, manner and relation. The following examples specify the different manifestations of conversational implicature in terms of quality, quantity, manner and relation:

#### The maxim of quality

“Ahmed has honoured his promise.”

In the above example the addressee infers from the speaker’s statement that Ahmed has fulfilled his promise. More than that, the addressee implies from the proposition that the speaker believes and probably admires what has been accomplished by Ahmed.

#### The maxim of quantity

“AC Milan outperformed Real Madrid. “

Grice’s principle of Quantity is well observed in in the speaker’s message. The speaker assumes that AC Milan did not lose to Real Madrid, and they had their objectives from the match cleared. For this, the speaker had to be sure the addressee is able to make the right inferences.

#### The Maxim of relation

“Roger Federer did not lose against Rafael Nadal.”

The addressee implies form the message that the speaker is referring to a distinct tennis match which took place at distinct point of time known to both the speaker and the addressee although no explicit information is made available about that in the contents shared by the speaker.

#### The maxim of manner

A: How do you get into a prestigious university?

B: Score high in all tests.

In the exchange above, “B”’s response to the question raised by “A” is concise. “B” assumes that “A” knows that high scores on tests are only the function of a lot of effort and commitment among other things. “B” is confident “A” is able to infer from the message contents other than those made explicit.

**1.3.14 Phatic talk:** Phatic talk is an important feature that characterises interpersonal modes of communication (Malinowski, 1923; Leech, 1983). Phatic talk fulfils functions other than those assigned to the referential roles of language. That is to say, the interlocutors in any act of communication may use speech units to convey attitudes more than referential input. These are phatic expressions. For example, when people meet and greet one another, they automate their responses as a means of contextualising the act of communication. The reason for phatic talk is well observed from the lens of (Bühler, 1934). Language is known to have two functions one is representative while the other expressive. Referential talk fulfils the representative function of language while expressive talk synchronises with the intent of phatic talk.

In this chapter, you were introduced to the fundamentals of the spoken discourse for you to understand the distinctive properties of oral language. At this point, you should be able to determine the discourse features that separate speech from writing. Proficiency in speaking is the function of many factors that affect the oral production of speech in different ways and under different circumstances. The intercourse between the linguistic and non-linguistic elements in speaking adds to the complexity of the spoken discourse. What you should retain from this chapter is that there is more to the speaking skill than the sum of its parts.

#### **1.4 Chapter one assessment**

Here is an extract from President Barack Obama's farewell speech. Some parts of the speech are intentionally omitted to suit the context of this course. President Obama's speech contains different features that highlight the basics of the speaking discourse.

---

**[1]** *Hello Skybrook*

*It's good to be home!*  
*(APPLAUSE)*

**2** *Thank you so much, thank you. Thank you. Thank you.  
We're on live TV here, I've got to move.  
You can tell that I'm a lame duck, because nobody is following instructions.*  
*(LAUGHTER)*  
*Everybody have a seat.  
My fellow Americans, Michelle and I have been so touched by all the well-wishes  
that we've received over the past few weeks. But tonight it's my turn to say thanks.*

**3** *Whether we have seen eye-to-eye or rarely agreed at all, my conversations with you,  
the American people — in living rooms and in schools; at farms and on factory  
floors; at diners and on distant military outposts — those conversations are what  
have kept me honest, and kept me inspired, and kept me going. And every day, I have  
learned from you. You made me a better president, and you made me a better man.  
So I first came to Chicago when I was in my early twenties, and I was still trying to  
figure out who I was; still searching for a purpose to my life. And it was a  
neighborhood not far from here where I began working with church groups in the  
shadows of closed steel mills.*

*It was on these streets where I witnessed the power of faith, and the quiet dignity of  
working people in the face of struggle and loss.*

*(CROWD CHANTING "FOUR MORE YEARS")*

*I can't do that.*

*Now this is where I learned that change only happens when ordinary people get  
involved, and they get engaged, and they come together to demand it.*

**4** *After eight years as your president, I still believe that. And it's not just my belief.  
It's the beating heart of our American idea — our bold experiment in self-  
government.*

*It's the conviction that we are all created equal, endowed by our creator with certain  
unalienable rights, among them life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.*

*It's the insistence that these rights, while self-evident, have never been self-  
executing; that We, the People, through the instrument of our democracy, can form  
a more perfect union.*

*[.....]*

**5** *If I had told you eight years ago that America would reverse a great recession,  
reboot our auto industry, and unleash the longest stretch of job creation in our  
history — if I had told you that we would open up a new chapter with the Cuban  
people, shut down Iran's nuclear weapons program without firing a shot, take out  
the mastermind of 9-11 — if I had told you that we would win marriage equality and  
secure the right to health insurance for another 20 million of our fellow citizens —  
if I had told you all that, you might have said our sights were set a little too high.  
But that's what we did. That's what you did. You were the change. The answer to  
people's hopes and, because of you, by almost every measure, America is a better,  
stronger place than it was when we started.*

*[.....]*

**6** *And the good news is that today the economy is growing again. Wages, incomes,  
home values and retirement accounts are all rising again. Poverty is falling again.*

[.....]

7] *Because that, after all, is why we serve. Not to score points or take credit. But to make people's lives better.*

*If you're disappointed by your elected officials, grab a clip board, get some signatures, and run for office yourself.*

*(CROWD CHEERS)*

*Show up, dive in, stay at it. Sometimes you'll win, sometimes you'll lose. Presuming a reservoir in goodness, that can be a risk. And there will be times when the process will disappoint you. But for those of us fortunate enough to have been part of this one and to see it up close, let me tell you, it can energize and inspire. And more often than not, your faith in America and in Americans will be confirmed. Mine sure has been.*

[.....]

8] *I am asking you to hold fast to that faith written into our founding documents; that idea whispered by slaves and abolitionists; that spirit sung by immigrants and homesteaders and those who marched for justice; that creed reaffirmed by those who planted flags from foreign battlefields to the surface of the moon; a creed at the core of every American whose story is not yet written: Yes, we can.*

*(APPLAUSE)*

*Yes, we did.*

*(APPLAUSE)*

*Yes, we can.*

*(APPLAUSE)*

*Thank you. God bless you. And may God continue to bless the United States of America. Thank you.*

The full transcript of President Barack Obama's farewell speech is available on:  
<http://time.com/4631007/president-obama-farewell-speech-transcript/>

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**Read the speech and answer the following:**

1. Extract from the speech examples that highlight the different manifestations of conversational implicature in terms of quality, quantity, manner and relation.
2. The prosodic features of speech convey a diverse range of feelings. Extract from the speech utterances you think are loaded with emotion. Then, specify the emotion being conveyed.
3. Are there any speech non-fluencies in the speech? If so, do these non-fluencies impact the quality of the messages expressed?
4. Do the degrees of formality in the speech come closer to the spoken discourse or the written discourse? Justify your answer.
5. Does the speaker use hedges? If so, in what way do they impact the speaking discourse?

6. Extract from the speech examples of phatic talk. Then, specify the expressive function they fulfil.
7. In part 1, “thank you” is repeated many times. What function do these repetitions fulfil?
8. Are there any sentence structures in part 4 that are untrue to academic spoken English?
9. If you were to measure the speech tempo in part 5, in what speech parts would you expect the speaker to go slowly?
10. In part 6, is it normal to start a sentence with “and”? What is the function of “and”?
11. How many sentences are there in part 6? Are the sentences grammatical?

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## **Chapter 2: The English sound system**

### **2.1 Introduction:**

Pronunciation is an inextricable part of the speaking skill. Good pronunciation facilitates communication between people while improper pronunciation may impede understanding and cause a communication breakdown. Indeed, pronunciation is an important facet of speaking proficiency. Pronunciation instruction is not specific to a distinctive learning area. It impacts the context of language learning at different levels. This chapter is set to offer EFL students the practice and experience they need to reach further with their speaking skills.

English is a global language and it has probably met the status of a lingua franca with hundreds of millions native speakers of the English language all over the world (Trudgill, 2001). The magnitude of the English language is getting out of proportion. An increasing number of people all over the globe seek to learn the English language for all the positive influence it exerts on their abilities to be functional in a wide range of contexts. Still, the universal character of the

English language causes a state of uncertainty among English speakers because of the uncertainties surrounding authentic pronunciation. There is a wide variety of English dialects and accents. Only in United Kingdom, There are more than 40 dialects. In the context of academic spoken language for university students, maximum care is needed in the choice of what should be the most suitable English for language learners. Eventually, “Received Pronunciation” (RP) happens to meet the criteria of convenience for Standard English. Below is a definition of the socio-economic attributes of RP.

It was the speech pattern of prominent people in the dominant part of the country; it is no surprise that it soon became recognised as the most socially acceptable and indeed superior accent of the British Isles. A number of dictionaries and other guides produced during the 18th {...}, promoted the idea that this form of pronunciation was correct and that to be different was to be vulgar. (Hinton, 2015, p. 25)

The key features of RP are homogeneity and stability together with high status. Most importantly, RP conveys the social characteristics that are inherent to the British upper class aspirations for refinement and greatness. All these attributes emphasise the legitimacy of RP as a model of reference for all EFL students.

## **2.2 Phonetic transcription**

As noted earlier in this book, speech and writing are two distinct paradigms. Phonetic transcription offers the means to reconcile the discrepancies between the oral and graphical representations of language. It should be noted that the English sounds, also referred to as phonemes, exceed by far the number of letters. There exist 26 letters of the English alphabet against more than 44 phonemic sounds. Eventually, the letters of the alphabet cannot afford infallible reciprocity with pronunciation. Only phonetic symbols can do respect to the oral representation of language. In this regard, the International Phonetic Association (IPA) system is well positioned to assist students in their understanding and analysis of the English sound system.

### **2.2.1 The rationale for using phonetic transcription**

Phonetic transcription is an instrument of control for language learners who seek to enhance the quality of their pronunciation. Phonetic transcription is eventually important for many reasons:

- It quantifies the sound system of language.
- It causes reciprocal relationship between spelling and pronunciation.
- Language learners can make informed choices about their pronunciation by looking up words in a dictionary for the correct pronunciation or pronunciations.
- The same letters are pronounced differently ( there : /ðer/ ; thin /θɪn/).
- Many letters in the English sound system are silent (debt : /det/).
- Listening cannot be trusted for a reliable model of pronunciation because there exist many incorrect pronunciations that are widespread. Also, the increasing number of accents and dialects makes it hard for language learners to pick up correct pronunciations.

### **2.2.2 International Phonetic Alphabet**

IPA is an international alphabet system for a phonetic representation of the sounds of any language (International Phonetic Association, & International Phonetic Association Staff, 1999). It was developed and customised by the International Phonetic Association in the 19<sup>th</sup> century for the purpose of a standardised characterisation of the pronunciation of languages. IPA uses graphical characters and Roman alphabets to provide a distinct representation for the wide variety of sounds in languages.

- IPA is found in dictionaries to help language learners pronounce words correctly.
- Because of IPA, linguists can devise writing systems for oral languages.
- IPA is a prerequisite for studying phonetics and phonology.

### 2.2.3 English Phonetic Alphabet

Consonants		Short Vowels	
<u>IPA symbol</u>	<u>Examples</u>	<u>IPA symbol</u>	<u>Examples</u>
p	person- pear- pool	ɪ	Bill- hill- sink
b	best- basket- bell	e	Let- bet- set
t	tall- tell- teacher	ə	Aside- above- teacher
d	dear- door- deal	æ	Sat-black- fat-
k	Kind- cake- castle	ɑ	Lot- dog- sought
g	goal- gift- dog	ʌ	But- blood-love
f	fight- enough- soft	ʊ	Pull- put- good
v	lord- above- cave	<b><u>Long Vowels</u></b>	
θ	heath- faith- thick		
ð	The- then- their	<u>IPA symbol</u>	<u>Examples</u>
s	super- sweet- loss	i:	deem- feel- real
z	zoo- zip- zone	ɜ:	sir- earn- burn
ʃ	shop- short- nation	ɑ:	far- calm- bath



**transcriptions below. What words do they designate? Supply the missing symbol for each transcription.**

/ver-/ ..... /v--u: / ..... /bɪ--ɒz/ .....  
 /f--st/ ..... /ʃ--mpu:/ ..... /mʌ--ə/ .....  
 /r--f/ ..... /leɪ--ə/ ..... /fɔ---ənətlɪ/ .....  
 /gɪvɪ--/ ..... / mæ--nɪfɪsənt/ ..... /--æŋks/ .....

**2.2.4 Homographs**

Homographs are words that are spelled in the same way, but they differ in meaning and sometimes pronunciation Britton (1978).

**2.2.4.1 Practice exercises**

**a) Write the English spellings for the words below. Each word can be spelled in more than one way.**

conduct: .....; ..... produce: .....; .....  
 lead: .....; ..... tear: .....; .....  
 wind: .....; ..... read: .....; .....  
 live: .....; ..... subject: .....; .....  
 content: .....; ..... minute: .....; .....  
 bow: .....; ..... present: .....; .....

**2.2.5 Homophones**

Homophones are words that are pronounced in the same way, but they differ in orthography (Kawamoto & Zemblidge, 1992).

**2.2.5.1 Practice exercises**

**a) Transcribe the words below. Each word can be transcribed in more than one way.**

/ki:/	..... ; .....	/raɪt/	..... ; .....
/flɔ:/	..... ; .....	/θrɔ:/	..... ; .....
/wɪt/	..... ; .....	/hju:/	..... ; .....
/baʊ /	..... ; .....	/aɪl/	..... ; .....
/weə/	..... ; .....	/səʊ/	..... ; .....
/flaʊə/	..... ; .....	/wʌn/	..... ; .....

**2.2.6 Long vowels and short vowels**

In English, all vowels are produced with an open configuration of the oral tract; still, some vowel sounds are short while others are long (Myers, 1987). Short vowels make shorter speech

sounds than is the case with long vowels. Most importantly, vowel sounds should not be confused with vowel letters. The same vowel letter can make both short and long speech sounds when found in different words. In the word “black”, ‘a’ makes a short vowel sound while “a” in the word “dark” makes a long vowel sound. There are a few rules, usually with exceptions, that specify the morphological and phonetic circumstances for short vowels and long vowels.

- Three-letter words with a single vowel in the middle are pronounced with short vowel sounds (but, hat, lit, hot, and pet).
- When preceded by the consonant “c”, the vowel letters “ei” make a long vowel sound, /i:/ (receive, deceit, conceit).
- Words with double “e” are pronounced with a long vowel sound, /i:/ (flee, see, meet, keep and fleet)
- The vowel letters “a” and “o” makes a long vowel sounds when they are by the consonant letter “r” (dark, far, mark, horse, fork, and sore).

Rules for proper pronunciation are not without exceptions. The best way to practice the correct pronunciation of words with short vowel sounds and long vowel sounds is through phonetic transcription.

### 2.2.6.1 Practice exercises

a) Write the words below in the correct column.

/i:/

feet, leap, fit, lip, hit, sit, beat, delight, mix, breathe, key, see, flee, kneel, teach, each, happy, business, leave, cream, silly, equal, dignity, free, reason, in, spirit, sing, window, very, divide, near, bill, real, seal; indoor, money, honey, sunny, cease

I	i:
.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....

æ/a:

glamour, have, art, start, sat, aunt, dance, ask, card, farm, trap, stand, scar, father, arm, car, cat, bat, ask, calm, far, lack

/æ/	/a:/
-----	------

.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....

**ʊ/ʊ:**

through, mood, few, boot lose, choose, put, look, should, yours, flu, good, put, should, look, you, juice, blue, hood, soot

ʊ	ʊ:
.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....

**ʌ/ɔ:**

pot, hot, spot, dot, lot, core, door, sore, cough, sword, possible, rob, watch, top, talk, walk, port, more, small, court

/ʌ/	/ɔ:/
.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....

**e/ɜ:**

went, bread, necessary, edge, friend, furniture, very, set, blur, stir, birth, interview, head, world, new, merry, heard, sir, her

/e/	/ɜ:/
.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....

## 2.2.7 Diphthongs and triphthongs

### Diphthongs

Unlike monophthongs which are made of a single speech sound, diphthongs are sound sequences that are made of two sounds. A diphthong combines two vowel sounds in one syllable (Giannakis et al., 2013).

### Triphthongs

A triphthong combines three vowel sounds in one syllable. Triphthongs are formed by the addition of the schwa sound to diphthongs (Giannakis et al., 2013).

Diphthongs		Triphthongs	
IPA symbol	Examples	IPA symbol	Examples
/aɪ/	King- height- light	/aɪə/	Fire- lair- higher
/eɪ/	Age-aid- taste	/aʊə/	Power- hour- flower
/ɔɪ/	Oil- voice- join	/eɪə/	Player- greyer- layer
/əʊ/	Home- hope- joke	/əʊə/	Lower-slower- widower
/aʊ/	Brown- house- mouse	/ɔɪə/	Employer- royal- loyal
/ɪə/	Near- fear- appear		
/eə/	Air- reappear-share		
/ʊə/	Sure- poor- pure		

### 2.2.7.1 Practice exercises

a) Underline the words which contain the diphthong /aɪ/.

a) Fight	Oil	town	Blow	near	where	Poor
b) Soil	height	round	Show	fear	Care	Sure
c) mouse	poison	despite	Snow	clear	chair	Cure

b) Underline the words which contain the diphthong /əʊ/.

a) ghost	moisture	Isle	dear	doubt	Hair	Fuel
b) superior	annoy	Spouse	soak	deny	impair	curious
c) there	boil	fountain	So	interfere	Lie	endure

**c) Underline the words that contain the diphthong /ɪə/.**

a) tear	Air	Casual	Fate	skies	Coin	brown
b) fair	Near	Allure	Haste	wild	Toy	drown
c) appear	complare	residual	Late	tie	join	trousers

**d) Underline the words which contain the diphthong /ʊə/.**

a) harware	Dear	reviewer	strange	knight	oily	endowed
b) mysterious	Square	manual	eight	despise	void	confound
c) repair	Nuclear	obscure	gate	shiny	joint	fountain

**e) Underline the words which contain the diphthong /eə/.**

a) where	manual	Shave	Sigh	crown	soap	interfere
b) care	obscure	Afraid	Despise	town	hope	cereal
c) hair	individual	Basis	Decline	fountain	owner	nuclear

**f) Underline the words which contain the diphthong /ɔɪ/.**

a) compare	tour	Mitigate	Tricycle	abound	mysterious	posion
b) toy	stair	Casual	clowning	goat	inferior	mind
c) square	void	Mural	contemplate	silence	shout	tomato

**g) Underline the words which contain the diphthong /eɪ/.**

a) declaim	siphon	Soil	resound	Probe	interior	Laid
b) favour	slight	Coin	thousand	only	revese	damage
c) mature	sable	master	advertise	land	mere	Foil

**h) Underline the words which contain the diphthong /aʊ/.**

a) radiant	surprise	avoid	Round	coke	weir	Fool
b) vain	lie	Boil	Allow	rope	year	Below
c) hay	blind	Recoil	bounce	ode	cheer	Cheer

**i) Transcribe the words below and put them in the right column.**

Lair, fire, loyal, royal, lower, mover, power, hour, buyer, higher, flyer, tire, wire, lawyer, coward, sour, tower, slower, mower

/aiə/	/aʊə/	/eiə/	/əʊə/	/ɔɪə/

--	--	--	--	--

### 2.2.8 The schwa sound

Schwa is the most common vowel sound in English in view of the large number of words where it appears (Silverman, 2011). The schwa sound originates from Hebrew, and it was explicitly represented in IPA manuals for the first time in 1888. Since then, the sound vowel has occupied a central position in modern phonetics and phonology. The schwa sound is the function of different spellings. You find below the most common spellings with /ə/.

a) <u>“a”</u> spelling Amazing /əmeɪzɪŋ/	b) <u>“i”</u> spelling experiment /ɪkperəment/	C <u>“e”</u> spelling sentence /sentəns/
d) <u>“o”</u> spelling offensive /əfensɪv/	e) <u>“u”</u> spelling furniture /fɜːnɪ tʃə/	

#### 2.2.8.1 Practice exercises

a) Read the words and sentences below and specify where the schwa sound occurs

• Actor	• banana	• purpose	• according
• hammer	• leisure	• the	• and
• pronunciation	• phonetics	• above	• accordingly

- What are you planning for tomorrow?
- It takes a lot of money to travel to America.
- I was trying to leave.
- My leisure activities are so amazing.
- The stadium is not far from the city centre.
- Spoken English is about appropriate pronunciation.

### 2.2.9 Consonants

Unlike vowels, which are produced with an open configuration of the oral tract, consonants are speech sounds that are produced by a partial or complete obstruction of the airflow streaming

from the lungs into the organs of speech (Roach, 2009). The parameters used for classifying consonants relate to place of articulation, manner of articulation and state of glottis.

### **2.3.9.1 Place of articulation**

Place of articulation determines the articulatory gestures associated with the pronunciation of distinct consonants. The places of articulation associated with the production of English consonants are presented as follow:

Bilabial: Both lips touch one another.

Labiodental: There is partial or full contact between the lower lip and the upper teeth

Dental: The tip of the tongue presses against the upper and lower teeth.

Alveolar: The tip or blade of the tongue presses against the alveolar ridge which is located behind the gums.

Palato-alveolar: The blade of the tongue touches the area behind the alveolar ridge

Palatal: The back part of the tongue presses against the hard palate.

Velar: The back of the tongue and the soft palate are in direct contact.

Glottal: It designates the movement and alteration made at the level of the vocal folds.

### **2.2.9.2 Manner of articulation**

Manner of articulation is another parameter used in the classification of English consonants (Roach, 2009). It specifies the modifications made to the airflow leaving the lungs throughout the oral tract. In particular, manner of articulation describes how different speech organs synchronise to produce distinct consonant sounds. The different manners of articulation are presented below:

Stops, also referred to as plosives, are produced by a complete obstruction of the air. The sound consonants /t/ and /d/ are produced by total blockage of the air, be it at the level of the mouth

or the nose. Whereas, in /n/ and /m/ the air is blocked at the level of the mouth but there is no such blockage at the level of the nose

Nasals are articulated by allowing the air stream out of the nose instead of the mouth. The blockage at the level of the mouth is carried out in three ways:

- Bilabial: The two lips are brought together.
- Alveolar: The tongue is pressed against the alveolar ridge.
- Velar: The back of the tongue is held against the palate.

Fricatives are articulated by allowing a narrow passage for the air that flows between the tongue tip and the alveolar ridge. This is the reason why fricatives are produced with a hissing sound.

Affricates are hybrid sounds. They have a stop part and a fricative part. In the /t / sound, the airflow is first blocked by a stop; then, it quickly transforms into another sound.

Laterals are produced by allowing the air to flow around one side or the two sides of the tongue. English has only one lateral and it is the /l/ sound.

Approximates are produced by bringing the articulators close to one another without causing total obstruction of the airflow leaving the oral tract.

### **2.2.9.3 Voicing**

The pronunciation of some consonants require more energy than is the case with other consonants (Roach, 2009). The pronunciation of voiced consonants is associated with the vibration of the vocal cords while the pronunciation of voiceless consonants requires no vibration at the level of the vocal cords. When the vocal cords are held close to one another, they impede the air stream from the lungs and they cause a tension that is associated with voicing.

### **2.2.10 Silent letters**

As noted earlier in this book, speaking and writing are two separate systems. There is evidence of lack of correspondence between English orthography and English pronunciation. Some letters produce more than one sound and could be represented differently in different orthography. In addition, some letters are not pronounced at all. These are silent letters. In an alphabetic writing system, a letter may not be pronounced but it makes huge difference to the

meaning and pronunciation of words. In English, there are two types of silent letters: auxiliary letters and dummy letters (Carney, 2012).

### 2.2.10.1 Auxiliary silent letters

Auxiliary letters further subdivide into exocentric diagraphs or endocentric diagraphs.

- **Exocentric diagraphs** are two letters that combine into a single speech sound. The sound they produce is different from either of the letters in the diagraph. For example, the letters “ph” make the /f/ sound in “phone”, which is neither /p/ nor /h/.
- **Endocentric diagraphs** occur when a pair of letters produces the same speech sound. An example of this is the double consonants “tt” in the word “letter”

### 2.2.10.2 Dummy silent letters

Dummy silent letters are silent letters that have no phonemic representation (Stewart, 2020). The inert type of dummy silent letters is specific to cognate words. Consider the orthography of the word “resign”. The letter “g” is silent, but in the word “resignation” the “g” is pronounced. On the other hand, empty silent letters are never pronounced. This could be due to the evolution of the English language. Many letters were one pronounced and had phonemic representation before they turned out to be silent. The “k” letter in “know” and “knit” has not always been silent.

### 2.2.10.3 Rules and examples

Silent letter rules and examples are provided to help you cope with the uncertainties associated with pronunciation and transcription.

<b>Silent B</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The letter “b” is usually not pronounced when it occurs at the final word position after “m”. (Comb, thumb, climb, tomb, crumb, lamb)</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The letter “b” is usually not pronounced before “t”. (Doubt, doubtful, subtle, debt)</li></ul>

--

### **Silent C**

- The letter “c” is usually not pronounced when it is combined with “sc”.  
(fascinate , ascent , muscle)
- The letter “c” is usually mute before the “k” and “q”.  
(acquire, mock, lock, block, puck, acknowledge)
- The letter “c” is silent when it comes after “s” and precedes “i”, “e” or “y”.  
(science, sceptre, scent, scenery)

### **Silent D**

- The letter “d” is not pronounced when it is before “n” or “g”.  
(Wednesday, cadge, Pledge, grudge)
- The letter “d” is not pronounced in: sandwich, Wednesday, handsome, handkerchief, sandwich

### **Silent E**

- The letter “e” is not pronounced at the end of words.  
(live, fore, table, stable, before, write, give)
- The letter “e” is not pronounced in the past form of verbs that end with a voiced sound.  
(played, amazed, smuggled, begged, revised)

### **Silent G**

- The letter “g” is not pronounced when it precedes “n”.

(design, foreign, sign, gnash, align)

*Exceptions: dignity, magnet, ignorance, igneous, cognitive, signature*

### **Silent GH**

- “Gh” is not pronounced when it comes after a vowel.

(Sigh, high, fought, thought, through)

*In compound words, “gh” is pronounced separately: big-hearted, doghouse, etc.*

### **Silent H**

- “H” is usually not pronounced when it comes after “w”.

(why, what, where, when, whale)

*Exception: Whose, whosoever, who, whoever, whole*

### **Silent K**

- “k” is never pronounced when it precedes “n”.

(knit, know, knock, knife, knight)

### **Silent N**

- “N” is not pronounced when it comes after “m” at the end of a word.

(column, damn, solemn, autumn)

### **Silent P**

- “P” is not pronounced at the beginning of many words when it is combined with “s”, “t” or “n”.

(pterygium ,psalm, psephology, pterodactyl, pneumonia, pneumatic)

### Silent S

- “S” is not pronounced before “l” in these words: Aisle, island, islet.

### Silent T

- “T” is not pronounced in these words: bristle, Christmas, fasten, listen, often, beret, werstle, whistle, thistle, bustle, hasten, soften, rapport, moisten, ballet

### Silent U

- “U” is not pronounced when it is preceded by “g” and followed by a vowel: (guide, guest, guard, guess, guano)

### Silent W

- “W” is not pronounced at the beginning of words when it is followed by “r”. (wrack, wrangle, write, wrest, wrong, wrack, wrap)
- “W” is not pronounced in these words: who, whose, whole, whom, whole, (whoever, awry, answer, sword, two)

#### 2.2.11 Practice exercises

##### a) Transcribe the words below. Each word contains a silent letter.

Psychology – isle – debris-knowledge – gnash- charisma-technology- though- who – hide – resign – where – fasten – debt- doubt- snack- whistle - light- bomb - scissors – revised- autumn- catalogue- thistle- wreath- bike- biscuit- codemn-calm-psychotic- calf- could-knee- loch- mnemonic-spaghetti- edge- answer- stayed- orchid- knee- guilt- tongue- Christmas- coup- technique- fight- archive- rhinoceros

#### 2.3 The Syllable

The English sound system is made of phoneme sounds and larger speech units referred to as syllables. A syllable is a phonemic unit of speech consisting of a vowel sound with or without consonants (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011). The architecture of a syllable is presented as follows:

### **2.3.1 The nucleus**

The nucleus is the part of a syllable that is compulsory (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011). The nucleus is a vowel sound, except in the case of syllabic consonants which are vocalic consonants acting as vowels. In English, there are four letters with the capacity to form a syllabic consonant: “m” “r” “l” and “n”. In particular, these consonants have the ability to absorb the schwa sound. Consider the pronunciation of the following words: “cotton”, “bubble”, “button”, and “percent”. It should be noted that the syllabification of a vowel is also the function of accent. Reconsider the pronunciation of “percent”. The vocalic “r” is a feature of American spoken English while it is omitted in British spoken English (Roach, 2009).

### **2.3.2 The onset**

The onset is an optional part of a syllable. It designates the consonant sounds that precede the nucleus. Roach (2009) classifies onsets as follows:

- Zero onset means there is no consonant sound that precedes the nucleus.
- One-consonant onset means there is one consonant that precedes the nucleus.
- Multiple-consonant onset means there are two or more consonants that precede the nucleus.

### **2.3.3 The coda**

The coda is another optional part of a syllable. It designates the consonant sounds that follow the nucleus. Also, there are different types of codas (Roach, 2009).

- Zero coda means there is no consonant that follows the nucleus.
- One consonant coda means there is one consonant that follows the nucleus.
- Multiple-consonant coda means there are two or more consonants that follow the nucleus.

The English syllable is an important constituent of the English sound system. Knowledge on the different structures of a syllable in English is a necessary condition for understanding more complex features of the English sound system. For students to understand and experiment on

the prosodic features of speech such as stress, intonation and pitch, they must have extensive knowledge about speech units that are larger than phoneme sounds.

### 2.3.4 Syllable types

- A **monosyllabic** word is made of one syllable.
- A **disyllabic** word is made of two syllables.
- A **trisyllabic** word is made of three syllables.
- A **polysyllabic** word consists of four syllables and more.

### 2.3.5 Syllable Rules

<b>Syllable rules</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ The number of syllables in a word corresponds to the number of sound vowels.</li><li>➤ Two or more vowel letters can be next to one another; still, they make a single vowel sound and combine into one syllable (flee-eat-leave).</li><li>➤ A silent vowel does not count as a syllable (hate).</li><li>➤ “Le” and “les” are considered syllables only when they are preceded by a consonant (apple).</li></ul>

### 2.3.6 Practice exercises

#### a) Divide the words according to the number of syllables:

Actor – hero – strain- see- light- sculpture- ice- love- hate- dreaming- paly- glove- graffiti- immature industry- knife- mistake- miserable- poetry- hole- pretend- punishment- rage- imitate- signature- snake- spider- spoke- evoke- simulation- syllable- thoughtful- smart- zero- pages- words- science- transformer- graffiti- necessary

One-syllable word	Two-syllable word	Three-syllable word	Four-syllable word

b) Describe the syllable structure in the words from the previous exercise. Identify the nucleus, the onset and the coda.

Example: actor /'æk.tə/ – two syllable word

1st syllable /'æk/ – zero onset, nucleus = /æ/, coda = /k/ – one consonant coda

2nd syllable /tə/ – one consonant onset /t/ – nucleus= /ə/, no coda

## 2.4 Word stress

You remember from the previous section in this chapter that a syllable is an important component of all speech systems and the English sound system is no exception. Knowledge of the different structures of a syllable eases students' understanding of the suprasegmental features of speech. Word stress is one of these features and it occurs at the level of the syllable.

### 2.4.1 Features of word stress

A number of features combine to characterise word stress (Pathare, 2020). Practise pronouncing the word “laughter”. You realise that the pronunciation of the first syllable combines these features:

- The pronunciation of laughter requires more time for the pronunciation of the first syllable than is the case with the second syllable (l→a→u→g→h→ter).
- It is pronounced with higher volume. **LAUGH**ter
- It has a higher pitch. In the second syllable, the pitch drops drastically.
- The rate of speech is slower in the in the stressed syllable for the speaker to be able to clearly articulate all the speech sounds.
- It requires larger facial expressions.

Meanwhile, it should be noted that the unstressed syllable has the opposite features. It is quite, soft, and low-pitched.

### 2.4.2 The rationale for word stress

The suprasegmental phenomenon in speech is a necessary condition for speakers to convey clear messages (Roach, 2010). Word stress is an obligatory determinant of speaking proficiency. Think of a speaker who stresses the second syllable in all nouns and adjectives. This would definitely cause the addressees a situation of doubt and confusion. Another reason for learning word stress is that word stress affects the meaning and category of the words we pronounce. Verbs and nouns that are spelled in the same way differ in their pronunciation as they cause word stress to fall on different syllables. Basically, disyllabic verbs have stress on the second syllable while disyllabic nouns receive stress on the first syllable.

<b>Verbs</b>	<b>Nouns</b>
<b>SubJECT</b>	<b>SUBject</b>
<b>ObjECT</b>	<b>OBject</b>
<b>ConFLICT</b>	<b>CONlict</b>

### 2.4.3 Word stress levels

Words made of three and more syllables receive different levels of stress (Roach, 2010). That is to say, polysyllabic words may require the speaker to perform varied levels of stress, which are labelled as primary stress, secondary stress and tertiary stress. Primary stress has the highest pitch and volume; secondary stress requires less pitch and volume; tertiary stress is the least prominent level of stress. The different stress levels in a word cause the speaker to perform rhythmic beats. These are ups and downs highlighting variance in pitch and loudness. Consider the pronunciation of the word “defamation”. This four-syllable word combines three levels of word stress. The third syllable receives the primary stress for an obvious reason that you will study in the upcoming section dealing affixation and word stress. The first syllable carries the secondary stress; the rhythmic beat in the second syllable does not have equal weight in terms of loudness and pitch. The fourth syllable carries tertiary stress, which is also the least consequential form of word stress. You may have noticed that the word “defamation” contains one syllable that is unstressed for another obvious reason. The schwa sound is a weak vowel that is never stressed.

#### **2.4.4 Word stress representation**

As noted earlier in this chapter, IPA is not the only system used for phonetic transcription. The merits of IPA are obvious as it standardises the graphical representation of a wide range of speech sounds. Still, in dealing with word stress, it is advisable for students to acquaint themselves with other forms of representing word stress.

##### **Word stress In IPA**

IPA is by far the most prominent and popular choice among practitioners of phonology and the word stress field of study is no exception. In IPA, a primary stressed syllable is displayed with an accent on top of the first letter making the syllable, / 'hæpi/. Secondary stressed is referred to by an accent place at the bottom line right before the syllable in question.

##### **A numerical system**

The numerical representation of word stress in writing assigns distinct numbers to four levels of stress (Pierrel J., 2010). “0” designates absence of stress; “1” designates primary stress; “2” designates secondary stress; “3” designates tertiary stress. Consider the pronunciation of the word “denotation”. This word combines four levels of stress that are numerically displayed as follows:

- denotation: /2013/

In the word above primary stress falls on the third syllable and it is referred to by the number “1”. The secondary stress is carried out by the first syllable and is manifested by the number “2”. The fourth syllable attracts tertiary stress and for that, it is assigned the number “3”. The second syllable is unstressed and the number “0” numerically displays the absence of stress in a word.

##### **A visual system**

The visual system used for representing word stress in writing is simple as it concerns itself with three levels of stress: primary stress, tertiary stress and absence of stress (Pierrel J., 2010). Distinct norms in orthography are used to represent these levels of stress. In particular, primary stressed syllables are spelled in bold case and capital letters. Secondary stressed syllables are spelled in bold case and are underlined. Unstressed syllables are spelled in small case letters and are neither bold nor underlined.

- different: **Different**

### 2.4.5 Word stress rules

For more efficiency in speaking, stress rules with examples are provided to help students cope with the uncertainties surrounding word stress in English. Still, stress rules are not without exceptions (Roach, 2010). Practice remains students' best option for the correct use of word stress.

Rule	Example	Exception
One-syllable words receive stress on that one syllable.	<b>COURT- FUN - DOOR</b>	function words (prepositions, modals, question-words, quantifiers, auxiliaries, articles and dterminants)
Most two-syllable nouns and adjectives have stress on the first syllable.	<b>MAStEr RIver APple</b> <b>HAPpy-NErvous-</b> <b>TIdy</b>	Lagoon -hotel
Most two-syllable verbs have stress on the second syllable.	de <b>CIDE-</b> be <b>GIN</b>	
In words that can be used as nouns and verbs, nouns have stress on the first syllable while verbs have stress on the second syllable.	Noun: <b>SUSpect -IMport</b>  Verb: sus <b>PECT-</b> im <b>PORT</b>	Respect -witness
Word stress falls on the first part of a compound noun.	<b>FOOTbaLL-</b> <b>HAIRbrush</b>	
Word stress falls on the second part of a compound adjective.	Ill- <b>TREAted</b>  old- <b>FASHioned</b>	

Word stress falls on the second part of a compound verb.	under <b>STAND</b> over <b>FLOW</b>	
As noted earlier in this book, the schwa sound is a weak vowel and it is never stressed	a <b>BOVE</b> a <b>GAIN</b>	

- The rules specific to penultimate and anti-penultimate syllables are presented in the next section on affixation.

## 2.5. Affixation

For students to understand stress patterns that apply to the English language, they need instruction in word structure. Word stress can be the function of word morphology. That is to say, the morphological changes made to the base form of a word cause word stress to fall on distinct syllables. This is the reason why you need to know the basics of affixation in English.

### 2.5.1 Word morphology

Affixation is the process of making new words by the addition of morphemes to a morphological base (Roach, 2009). Sometimes, students are able to guess the meaning of words they have never encountered before. For instance, most semester one students of English know the meaning of words such as “true”, “make” and “bend”. They can probably induce the meaning of “unload”, “undo” and “unwrite” though they may have never seen them before. Indeed, students of English must be able to scrutinise the morphology of a new word to infer its meaning. The fact is that the large majority of words making the English language are morphological extensions of already existing words.

- An affix is either a prefix or a suffix.
- A prefix is a word part attached to the beginning of an already meaningful word.
- A suffix is word part attached to the end of an already meaningful word.
- A root is a word part that cannot be reduced to smaller units of language. Also, the root is the basis and necessary condition for making new words. Roots can be free or bound. Free roots are meaningful units of language that make meaning on their

own. Bound roots, on the other hand, are morphologically incapable of making new words on their own. Consider the examples below:

Free roots	Bound roots
Joyful	Lazy
Undo	Rely
helpless	Vivacious

- A base is the morphological structure to which prefixes and suffixes are attached. To avoid any possible confusion, it should be noted that a root is irreducible while a base is not. As simple as it sounds, every root is a base while a base cannot always function as root. Consider the morphological structure of “unfaithfully”. “Faith” is the root in this word, and it is also the base because it cannot be further divided; in addition, it serves as a base for “faithful”. “Faithful” on its turn serves as a base for “faithfully”, but it cannot function as root because it has already been attached to the suffix “ful”

### 2.5.2 Affixation and word morphology

Affixation is another reason for you to contemplate the interplay between phonology and morphology. As noted earlier in this book, there is more to the speaking skill than the sum of its parts, or at least its manifest features. Affixation is a determinant of word stress (Roach, 2009; Törkenczy, 2013). In particular, some suffixes cause primary stress to fall on distinct syllables. For this same reason, the word stress rules that relate to suffixes are exposed as follows:

**The following suffixes cause primary stress to fall on the second syllable from the end:**

-ia	-ial	-ian	-ible	-ic	-ient
Eutha <b>N</b> asia	Fact <b>O</b> rial	Pedia <b>T</b> rician	Con <b>V</b> ertible	Lin <b>G</b> uistic	Insuf <b>F</b> icient
/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../
Cafe <b>T</b> eria	Spe <b>C</b> ial	Authori <b>T</b> arian	Su <b>S</b> ceptible	Photo <b>G</b> raphic	Ex <b>P</b> edient
/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../

Aca <b>DE</b> mia /...../	Com <b>MER</b> cial /...../	Phy <b>SI</b> cian /...../	Res <b>PON</b> sible /...../	Epi <b>DE</b> mic /...../	Ing <b>RE</b> dient /...../
Gal <b>LE</b> ria /...../	Refe <b>REN</b> tial /...../	Statis <b>TI</b> cian /...../	Repre <b>HENS</b> ible /...../	Spe <b>CI</b> fic /...../	De <b>FI</b> cient /...../

<b>-ious</b>	<b>-ish</b>	<b>-osis</b>	<b>-sion</b>	<b>-tion</b>
Re <b>LI</b> gious /...../	Out <b>LAN</b> dish /...../	Dia <b>GN</b> osis /...../	Trans <b>MIS</b> sion /...../	Pro <b>TE</b> ction /...../
Contra <b>DI</b> ctious /...../	Car <b>TOO</b> nish /...../	Tubercu <b>LO</b> sis /...../	Com <b>PRE</b> sion /...../	Col <b>LE</b> ction /...../
Sus <b>PI</b> cious /...../	Es <b>TAB</b> lish /...../	Mor <b>PHO</b> sis /...../	Appre <b>HENS</b> ion /...../	Con <b>SUM</b> ption /...../
Con <b>TEN</b> tious /...../	Re <b>PUB</b> lish /...../	Hyp <b>NO</b> sis /...../	Exp <b>PAN</b> sion /...../	Popu <b>LA</b> tion /...../

**The following suffixes cause primary stress to fall on the last syllable:**

<b>-ade</b>	<b>-aire</b>	<b>-ee</b>	<b>-eer</b>	<b>-ese</b>
Esca <b>LADE</b> /...../	Lumi <b>NAIRE</b> /...../	Chimpan <b>ZEE</b> /...../	Engi <b>NEER</b> /...../	Bureaucra <b>TESE</b> /...../
Chiffon <b>NADE</b>	Million <b>AIRE</b>	Corrobo <b>REE</b>	Mountai <b>NEER</b>	Voca <b>LESE</b>

/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../
Carro <b>NADE</b>	Doctri <b>AIRE</b>	Guaran <b>TEE</b>	volun <b>TEER</b>	Journa <b>LESE</b>
/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../
Fusill <b>ADE</b>	Solit <b>AIRE</b>	Atten <b>DEE</b>	Pio <b>NEER</b>	Japa <b>NESE</b>
/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../
<b>-ette</b>	<b>-oo</b>	<b>-oon</b>	<b>-que</b>	<b>-sce</b>
Leathe <b>RETTE</b>	Kanga <b>ROO</b>	Soup <b>SPOON</b>	Pictur <b>ESQUE</b>	Lumi <b>NESCE</b>
/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../
Ciga <b>RETTE</b>	Peka <b>POO</b>	Maca <b>ROON</b>	Gigan <b>TESQUE</b>	Eva <b>NESCE</b>
/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../
Kitchen <b>ETTE</b>	Tat <b>TOO</b>	After <b>NOON</b>	Disco <b>THEQUE</b>	Deli <b>QUESCE</b>
/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../
Silhou <b>ETTE</b>	Vinda <b>IOO</b>	Bal <b>LOON</b>	Communi <b>QUE</b>	Obso <b>LESCE</b>
/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../

**The following suffixes cause primary stress to fall on the third syllable from the end:**

<b>-ate</b>	<b>-cy</b>	<b>-eous</b>	<b>-ical</b>	<b>-ify</b>	<b>-inal</b>
Indi <b>SCRI</b> minate	Incon <b>SIS</b> tency	mis <b>CELLA</b> neous	<b>IDEN</b> tical	<b>ELEC</b> trify	In <b>TES</b> tinal
/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../
Inap <b>PRO</b> priate	Ex <b>PECT</b> ancy	simul <b>TAN</b> eous	Eco <b>LOG</b> ical	<b>MOD</b> ify	Sub <b>LIM</b> inal
/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../
Inter <b>COR</b> porate	De <b>MO</b> cracy	Spon <b>TAN</b> eous	<b>GRA</b> phical	<b>RECT</b> ify	<b>ORI</b> ginal
/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../

Bacca <b>LAU</b> reate	Dis <b>CRE</b> pancy	<b>H</b> ideous	<b>L</b> ogical	<b>S</b> PEcify	<b>TER</b> минаl
/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../

<b>-itive</b>	<b>-ity</b>	<b>-ise</b>	<b>-phy</b>	<b>-ogy</b>
<b>SEN</b> sitive	Employa <b>BI</b> lity	In <b>DUS</b> trialise	<b>BIO</b> graphy	Physi <b>O</b> logy
/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../
In <b>TR</b> ansitive	Accessi <b>BI</b> lity	Bu <b>REAUC</b> ratise	Or <b>THO</b> graphy	Psy <b>CHO</b> logy
/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../
Com <b>PET</b> itive	Availa <b>BI</b> lity	Revo <b>LUTION</b> ise	Pho <b>TO</b> graphy	Pa <b>THO</b> logy
/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../
In <b>HIB</b> itive	Responsi <b>BI</b> lity	<b>HYP</b> notise	Phi <b>LO</b> sophy	Tech <b>NO</b> logy
/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../	/...../

It should be noted that word stress is not always a function of affixation. There are certain suffixes which do not interfere with the placement of word stress; among these are grammatical suffixes, also referred to as inflectional suffixes: “s”, “ed”, “t”, “er”, “est”, “ing”, and “en”.

- **STU**dents
- de**RIV**ed
- re**FORM**ing
- For**GOTT**en
- **HAP**pi(er)
- **LAZI**est

As noted in the examples above, grammatical suffixes do not affect word stress placement. Two-syllable nouns still receive stress on the first syllable and two-syllable verbs are still stressed on the second syllable. In parallel, more suffixes are known to have no effect on words stress placement these are: “less”, “full”, “al”, “ally”, “ish”, “ly”, “ship”, and “hood”.

Indeed, word stress rules that relate to affixation are important because they help you stress the appropriate syllable in a wide range of morphological structures. More than that, they condition the aptitude needed for speaking proficiency. For instance, by rehearsing all the suffixes that

attract stress to second last syllables, you internalise distinct morphological and phonological structures that are also applicable to a large number of words of the same morphology. As the saying goes, to every rule there is an exception. The same logic applies to word stress rules. For this reason, new words must be looked up for their respective RP transcription, and for this same reason you are left with the task of reproducing the IPA transcriptions of all the words used in explaining the interplay between word stress and affixation in this section.

### 2.5 3 Practice exercises

Transcribe all the words in the tables and mark the syllable that receives primary stress.

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For the purpose of this course, the contents from

PRONUNCIATION OF -ED					
<b>/t/</b>	Final -ed is pronounced /t/ after verbs ending in voiceless sounds except /t/	/k/	Cooked	Walked	Talked
		/s/	Danced	Missed	Practiced
		/p/	Typed	Hoped	Helped
		/f/	Laughed	Stuffed	Scuffed
		/θ/	Scathed	Wreathed	Teethed
		/ʃ/	Punished	Washed	Flushed
		/tʃ/	Snatched	Watched	Switched
<b>/d/</b>	Final -ed is pronounced /d/ after verbs ending in voiced sounds including vowel sounds	/v/	Lived	Waved	Arrived
		/m/	Harmed	Confirmed	Performed
		/n/	Phoned	Signed	Cleaned
		/l/	Called	Killed	Strolled
		/r/	Preferred	Discovered	Entered
		/dʒ/	Changed	Judged	Encouraged
		/g/	Begged	Pinged	Plugged
		/ð/	Bathed	Clothed	Teethed
		/z/	Advised	Realized	Hypnotized
		/ʒ/	Rouged	Garaged	Massaged
		/b/	Climbed	Bombed	Grabbed
/ŋ/	Banged	Belonged	Stringed		
<b>/ɪd/</b>	Final -ed is pronounced /ɪd/ after verbs ending in /t/ or /d/ sounds	/t/	Voted	Waited	Wanted
		/d/	Minded	Sounded	Demanded