

Speech and Pronunciation Instruction
To Improve English Language Learners' Understandability

A First Literacy Professional Development Workshop

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Word Stress

Content Words and Structure Words

Content Words: “... the words that carry the most meaning.”

Mastering the American Accent

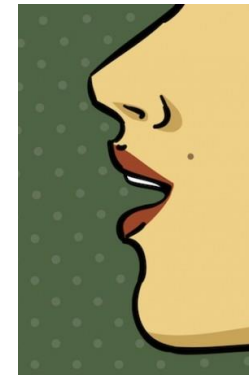
-Lisa Mojsin (p.85)

Content Words are said louder and longer.

I've been **waiting** for **ages**.

I'm **afraid** you've **made** a **mistake**.

They **changed** the **schedule** at the **end** of **April**.





They are usually:

- ❖ nouns I want a bacon sandwich.
 Grace asked for a new bike.

- ❖ verbs I hve to go.
 Please, don't go now.

- ❖ adjectives The soup was tasty.
 The concert was nice.

- ❖ adverbs The class went well.
 Give it to me now.

Structure Words

Structure words: "... generally don't carry as much importance or meaning..."

Mastering the American Accent
by Lisa Mojsin (p.88)

❖ articles

The kids got a dog from the pound.

❖ pronouns

Where was it?

❖ indefinite pronouns

Did you see anyone at the show?

❖ prepositions

The price of gas has gone up twice since last year.

❖ conjunctions

I asked her why she was sad, but she didn't tell me.

❖ auxiliary verbs

I haven't seen him since last Christmas

Content Words

❖ nouns

❖ verbs

❖ adjectives

❖ Adverbs

Structure Words

❖ articles

❖ pronouns

❖ indefinite pronouns

❖ prepositions

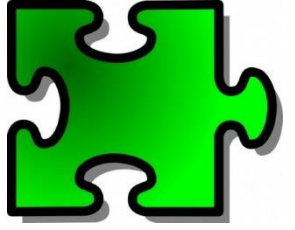
❖ conjunctions

❖ auxiliary verbs

Structure words are reduced in speech.

These words are reduced to *schwa* most of the time.

Their full sound, i.e. as they are pronounced in isolation, changes to a schwa /ə/ as in **up**, **cup**, **because** and **does**.



For becomes /**fər**/.

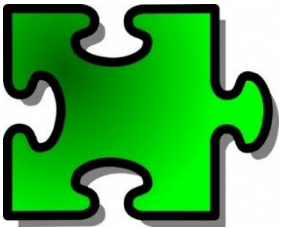
- Hey! Wait for me!
- This is for Bill, not for you.
- I'm looking for my keys. Have you seen them?

As becomes /**əz**/.

- That's not as much as you said.
- As soon as I got home, I called him.
- They went out to eat as always.

To becomes /**tə**/.

- I'd like to see you tonight.
- We need to do this now.
- He did it to please you.

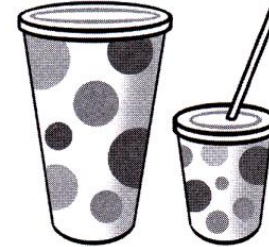


And becomes /n/.

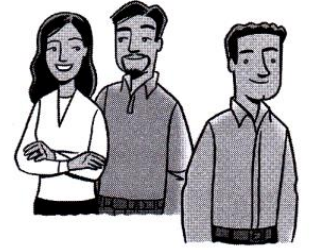
- He painted the chairs black and white.
- I like bacon and eggs for breakfast.
- My father and I are going fishing.



soup ər salad



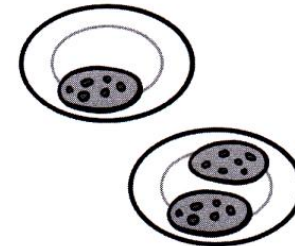
large ər small



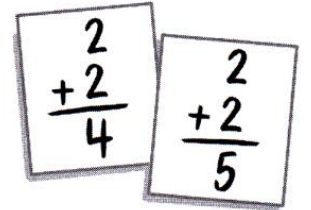
married ər single



coffee ər _____



one ər _____



right ər _____

Can becomes /kən/.

- I can go with you now.
- You can call me any time.
- They can get their passports tomorrow.

Reduced Forms

For becomes /fər/.

- Hey! Wait for me!

As becomes /əz/.

- That's not as much as you said.

To becomes /tə/.

- I'd like to see you tonight.

Can becomes /kən/.

- I can go with you now.

And becomes /ən/.

- He painted the chairs black and white.



soup əɹ salad



coffee əɹ _____

Noun+ Noun and Adjective +Noun

The main stress is usually on the first word.

- She likes playing **computer** games.
- Did you buy that with a **credit** card?
- She went to the **book**store.
- Juan and his brother are **taxi** drivers.



The main stress is usually on the second word.

- It's also near public **transportation**.
- She went to the new **store**.
- Juan and his brother are new **drivers**.
- We watched the terrible **game**.

Verb Phrases

Usually stress the last word.

- ✓ I can go there now.
- ✓ He doesn't study every day.
- ✓ David wants to go with you.
- ✓ I have lived here for five years.

When a verb is in the negative form, the stress changes.

- *I can do it.* *I can't do it.*
- *He should try it.* *He shouldn't try*
it.
- *I'd like it.* *I wouldn't like it.*

Word Stress

Noun - Noun

Stress the first noun.

- I lost my credit card.

Adjective - Noun

Stress the second word.

- That's a good card.

Verb Phrases

Stress the last verb form.

- ✓ I can go there now.
- ✓ He doesn't study every day.

My wife Julie and I had a great time dancing together and seeing all of our old friends.

You just got back from a long hard day at the office. You're exhausted. All you want to do is take off your jacket, put down your briefcase, and relax over a great dinner. Then just as you're about to sit down at the table, the phone rings.

Thought Groups

Thought Groups: “... words that belong together as a grammatical unit.”

Mastering the American Accent

-Lisa Mojsin (p.91)

- Grouping words naturally helps listener understand.
- There is a very short pause between one thought group and another.
- One word in each thought group usually gets the most stress.
- It conveys key information.

T
h
o
u
g
h
t

G
r
o
u
p
s

In reading, punctuation facilitates thought group formation.
Grammar is the oral guide.

Identifying grammatical units helps place
the pauses in a sentence. (e.g. *a beautiful woman*)

- Noun phrases
- Verbs and adverbs (spoke rapidly)
- Verbs and objects (climbed tall trees)
- Verb phrases (was going to call you)
- Prepositional Phrases (after class, at the library)
- Clauses (When I was a boy...) (The student who came in late...)

Some sentence units are small and should be separated, i.e. they are not
combined

- She saw him.
- It's her book.
- Did you lose it?

My wife Julie and I / had a great time / dancing together / and seeing / all
of our / old friends.//

You just got back / from a long hard day / at the office// You're exhausted. //
All you want to do / is take off your jacket / put down / your briefcase / and
relax / over a great dinner.// Then / just as you're about / to sit down / at the
table / the phone rings. //

Different T Sounds

Held T

cat
late
eight weeks
it was

T Before N

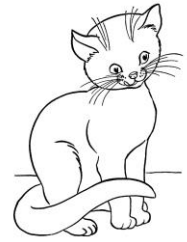
shorten
kitten
button
curtain

T After N

interview
twenty
internet
center

T Between 2 Vowels

city
little
party
total

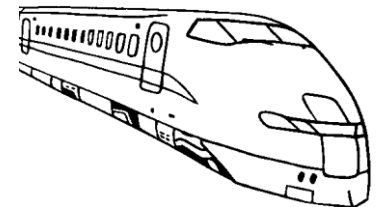


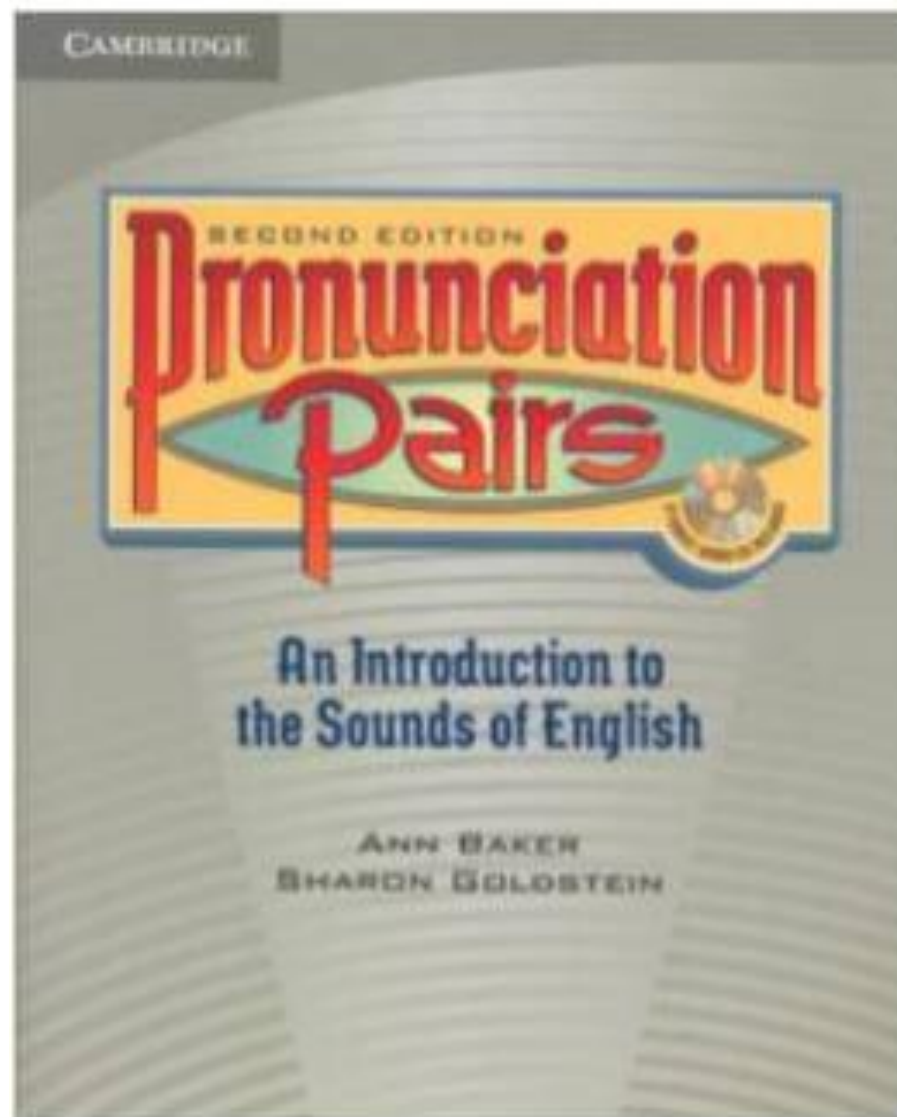
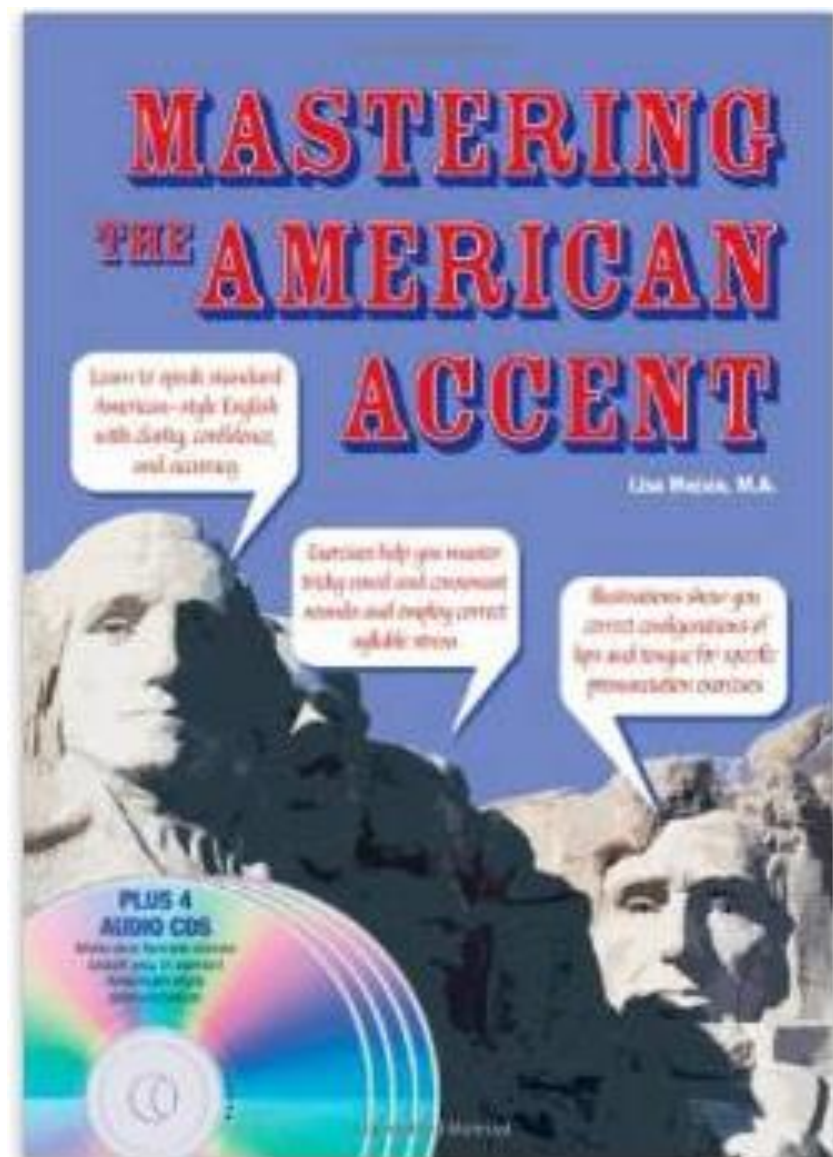
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Tr-

try
traffic
train
trade

- The cat ate the food outside, on the mat.
- The international conference took place in Atlanta and on the internet.
- I haven't forgotten to buy the curtain.
- I'll eat it a little later.
- What is the trouble with Tracy?





Sources:

Mastering the American Accent

Lisa Mojsin, M.A.

ISBN-13: 860-1401483595

Pronunciation Pairs

Ann Baker & Sharon Goldstein

ISBN-13: 978-0521678087