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The Implementation of Pronunciation Activities to Improve Learners' Communicative Skills

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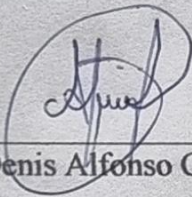
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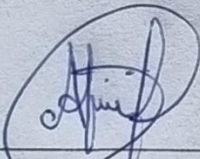
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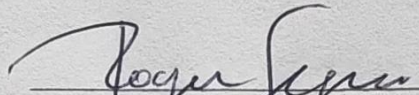
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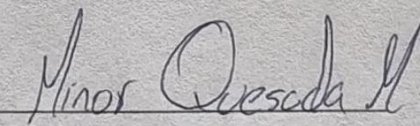
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### **Abstract**

This paper reports the results of the action research developed, in which explicit pronunciation instruction was given to enhance learners' communicative skills of students from the CI-UNA program in level 7. The study hypothesized that by implementing suprasegmental instruction students would improve their communicative skills. The group in this study constituted a total of 11 students of the program (3 male and 8 female learners). A pre-test was applied to diagnose students' communicative skills followed by the implementation of 8 sessions in which they received explicit instruction on suprasegmentals. In the end, a post-test with similar characteristics was applied to evaluate their communication skills. The findings showed that learners in general obtained low grades, reflecting a lack of knowledge on aspects like linking, stress, and intonation. Moreover, the results also showed that there was an improvement in the scores of the post-test compared to the scores of the pre-test, showing that explicit suprasegmental training may contribute to enhancing their communicative skills. Finally, it is suggested to include more implementations and a variety of activities for similar future research on this topic in order to obtain stronger results.

## Resumen Ejecutivo

Este trabajo reporta los resultados de la investigación acción desarrollada en la cual se brindó instrucción explícita de pronunciación para potenciar las habilidades comunicativas de los estudiantes del programa CI-UNA en el nivel 7. La hipótesis del estudio fue que al implementar la instrucción suprasegmental los estudiantes mejorarían su habilidades comunicativas. El grupo en este estudio constituyó un total de 11 estudiantes del programa (3 estudiantes masculinos y 8 femeninos). Se aplicó un pre-test para diagnosticar las habilidades comunicativas de los estudiantes seguido de la implementación de 8 sesiones donde recibieron instrucción explícita sobre suprasegmentales. Al finalizar, se aplicó un post-test de similares características para evaluar sus habilidades comunicativas. Los hallazgos mostraron que los estudiantes en general obtuvieron calificaciones bajas, lo que refleja la falta de conocimiento sobre aspectos como la vinculación, el estrés y la entonación. Además, los resultados también muestran que hubo una mejora en las puntuaciones del posttest en comparación con las puntuaciones del pretest, lo que demuestra que el entrenamiento suprasegmental explícito puede contribuir a mejorar sus habilidades comunicativas. Finalmente, se recomienda incluir más implementaciones y variedad de actividades para futuras investigaciones similares sobre este tema con el fin de obtener resultados más contundentes.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

This chapter aims at introducing the action research project by stating the relevance of the topic, the reason to develop it, the rationale and purpose of this study. It also states the general objective as well the specific objectives to be achieved for this action research paper. Finally, it presents the research questions and hypotheses.

#### **Introduction**

Acquiring a second language has become a common purpose for many people around the world. When talking about learning a second language, this usually refers to English. Costa Rica, for example, is a non-developed country where many opt for learning this language. As Stein-Smith (2017) stated, depending on the region, economy, and politics people decide to learn English (p. 6). In plain words, this society requires people to be bilingual in order to aspire for better future opportunities. The economy and political system in non-developed countries force people to find solutions for whatever their goals are to find better job opportunities. Therefore, many academic institutions arise trying to fulfill these needs. Nowadays, people are highly interested in learning conversational English. According to Burns (2019), speaking is a super important skill in any classroom. In addition to that, this author mentioned that speaking “is also an important component of syllabus content and learning outcomes” (p. 1). As an interpretation, speaking is the focus in most of the academic institutions that teach English because this might help learners achieve their goal of speaking the language as fast as possible.

When learning English, students need to study a set of skills and micro-skills. Speaking, for instance, has a vital micro-skill, which is pronunciation. For many EFL students, pronunciation has been one of the most difficult parts of learning English. This may happen because of two main aspects. To explain this Idris and Mohammed (2020) said that the first one

could be the sound system in English, which has sounds that can be totally new and hard to produce for students. The second aspect might be the area of pronunciation that is focused, which can be segmental or suprasegmental features (p. 195). In more detailed words, segmental features refer to vowels and consonants, and suprasegmental features refer to components such as intonation, rhythm, linking, and stress. Overall, this project covers pronunciation as a relevant aspect when teaching English for communicative purposes because it can allow learners to render utterances fluently and make themselves understood clearly.

### **Rationale**

Effective communication requires appropriate use of the language features. For example, students may know how to articulate a vowel or consonant sound; nevertheless, they might not use suprasegmental features appropriately. That means they may mean to ask a question, but if they use an incorrect intonation, it turns into a sentence. Whether this happens, it would be a problem because students will not get an answer when they expect a response. Inappropriate use of suprasegmental features can occur due to different reasons. Perhaps, the syllabus of the institution does not approach them directly, and students are not exposed to them as they should be. Another reason can be lack of confidence when speaking. The misuse of suprasegmental features can cause misunderstandings and affect students' fluency when communicating. Hence, the researcher of this study deems this topic relevant because the wrong use of suprasegmental features could not allow students to express themselves with fluency and accuracy. Fluency is an important aspect that each learner needs to acquire. As evidence, Briesmaster and Molina (2017) pointed out that fluency "is often the main goal of almost every second language learner due to the fact that the communicative approach is the primary focus of language learning" (p. 1). At Centro de Idiomas of Universidad Nacional (CI-UNA), most advanced students have fluency and phrasing issues based on the author's teaching experience. Therefore, it could be worthwhile to



find a way to help them improve their communicative skills. This topic could be important across countries because fluency plays an important role in communication. This study is significant because it might help learners break communication barriers. By implementing a correct use of suprasegmental features, students can improve their oral communication. As Hussain and Sajid (2015) wrote, suprasegmental features are important because they “improve English accent and pronunciation which play key factors in accent reduction and speaking ability in general” (p 2). In addition, students could avoid misunderstandings and express themselves with more confidence. As an example, students can make many pauses because they do not link sounds, and it prevents them from speaking naturally. Discovering how to improve fluency with the correct use of suprasegmental features is beneficial for all parties: students, instructors, and institutions. To sum up, with the elaboration of this project, students could reach a greater level of oral communication, teachers could approach their student’s needs more efficiently, and institutions could consider modifications in their programs to help learners if necessary.

### **Purpose**

This study aims to provide advanced students with suprasegmental features-based activities to help them become more fluent and enhance their phrasing when speaking. Sometimes, these features are not highly emphasized. For that reason, the researcher of this study considers it necessary to work deeper on these features so that students can practice and use them more appropriately. Besides, this work intends to help students feel more comfortable when speaking and avoid misunderstandings due to the lack of practice regarding suprasegmental features. The idea is to empower them with knowledge of these features and make students aware of the importance of implementing the correct use of stress, rhythm, linking, and intonation. In fact, some students may limit themselves, meaning that they could think that because they can communicate their ideas with an average fluency. It is important to change

students' thoughts and engage them so that they can improve. This project intends to see a positive change on how students use suprasegmental features after the pronunciation activities are implemented. The activities that will be used would help students acquire a better understanding of how to enhance their communication skills and obtain better results when communicating. Idris and Mohammed (2020) said that having accurate pronunciation is an advantage for language students because it would help them perform correctly when having a job interview or giving a speech (p. 202). In simple words, students would feel comfortable when using the language. Each student has their own needs, and that involves job opportunities, personal growth, or a competitive salary. Thus, if a student has great fluency, they can have better opportunities in the future. In a nutshell, by carrying out this study, students would become more language proficient. Moreover, their communication would be more effective and clearer without misunderstandings.

### ***General Objective***

To improve learner's communicative skills by implementing specific suprasegmental pronunciation training in advanced levels at Centro de Idiomas de la Universidad Nacional

### ***Specific Objectives***

To diagnose learner's communicative skills through the application of a speaking task

To implement pronunciation activities based on rhythm, stress, linking, and intonation aspects

To assess the effectiveness of the action plan in improving students' communicative skills

### ***Research questions***

To what extent can suprasegmental-focused activities improve students' communicative skills?

What suprasegmental activities seem to improve students' fluency?

### ***Hypothesis***

If students are exposed to suprasegmental-focused activities, they will improve fluency.

## **Summary**

This chapter introduces the importance of pronunciation for language learning and why suprasegmentals are essential when learning English. The chapter also discusses the initial reason why the proponent came up with the idea to develop this action research. It also states the importance of teaching aspects like linking, stress, intonation and rhythm to help students develop their communicative competence and communicate better in the target language. Finally, the chapter presents the objectives, research questions and hypotheses of this action research project.



## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

This chapter aims at presenting relevant theoretical information about the instruction on pronunciation and its role in the development of fluency. First, this chapter presents theory about the extent to which pronunciation has been incorporated in second language teaching. Secondly, the role of pronunciation teaching in the development of communicative skills with emphasis on suprasegmental-focused instruction. Third, it points out the impact of prosodic instruction on fluency given its importance for intelligibility enhancement. Fourth, it presents a discussion on how fluency can be measured for assessment followed by a discussion of similar research in the field and the effectiveness of explicit instruction of pronunciation in fluency.

### **Background to the Study**

Speaking a second language requires a different set of skills that the speaker needs to master in order to be able to communicate effectively. Concerning oral communication, not only do speakers need to apply grammar rules correctly, but also their pronunciation becomes an essential part of their performance. Nevertheless, pronunciation teaching has not always been considered that important. Starting with the grammar-translation method in the 1800s when it was given little or no attention to the teaching of pronunciation. Instead, this method's focus was on accuracy rather than fluency as Elmayantie (2015) stated. However, with the implementation of the audio-lingual method in the 1950s and 1960s, pronunciation took part in the language classroom. Mei (2018) described pronunciation teaching in the audiolingual method as the focus on aural skills first and then pronunciation instruction followed by speaking, reading, and writing. The author also pointed out the fact that the method focused on sound contrasts and the articulation of individual sounds like minimal pairs. In addition, pronunciation was taught in the form of drills where words and sentences were repeated over and over again, lacking context

with no attention to rhythm or intonation. So far, it is noticeable how instruction on pronunciation took more relevance in language teaching, but it was not taught to its fullest extent; it was rather poor, considering the usefulness it can bring about.

Pronunciation instruction after the audiolingual method did not improve whatsoever. As described by Katabi and Saeb (2015), the downfall of the Audiolingualism Approach occurred partly due to the implementation of the Cognitive Approach, which had its basis on the theory of transformational grammar that stated that language was rule-governed, leaving out habit formation. Learners were taught grammar and vocabulary, and they were expected to acquire grammar rules from the exposure to the language in those forms. Other methods and approaches during this gap of time (1960s and 1970s) included the Natural Approach, TPR, and Suggestopedia. However, given the characteristics of these approaches, they were used to teach the language as it occurs in first language acquisition, giving more weight to listening comprehension and other features of the language like pronunciation. Instructors expected pronunciation and other skills would flourish over time without explicit instruction but from the learners' knowledge itself. This period of time made pronunciation instruction go backward as explicit instruction was not given on this subskill, but it was expected to develop out of mere exposure to listening.

It is fair to think that with the implementation of the Communicative Method in language teaching, pronunciation instruction would improve enormously. Nonetheless, this was not the case. Abbas Gilakjani (2011) affirmed that even when this method grew popular little focus was given to pronunciation teaching. It is difficult to understand how new teaching methods emerged while this aspect of the language did not receive enough attention considering its meaningfulness for communicative skills. On the other hand, Gilakjani et al. (2011) claimed that there has been

little development of communicative methods in terms of pronunciation instruction. To make this situation even worse, not only is pronunciation a marginalized feature in language teaching, but according to Suwartono (2014), suprasegmentals are less taught and less researched than segmentals. The author asserted that the neglect may happen given the complexity of English pronunciation. In addition, the author reminds that the mastery of suprasegmentals contributes greatly to the intelligibility of utterances and helps learners to communicate clearly.

The neglect of pronunciation instruction is not the only issue that has not been addressed as time has passed by. Katabi and Saeb (2015) indicated that scarce research has been made throughout time on pronunciation in general, making it a big concern since little knowledge in the field is not passed on coupled with the fact that few teachers like teaching pronunciation. The authors also stated that even though publications of textbooks on pronunciation teaching have been made, it does not correspond to its importance. Little effort has been made to incorporate pronunciation training into the language classrooms and even to a lesser degree the teaching of suprasegmental features of the language, which can substantially contribute to boosting learners' communicative skills and become more fluent as a result of the articulation of sounds in larger units of the language.

### **The Role of Pronunciation in Students' Communicative Skills**

Pronunciation is a subskill that plays a crucial role in communication. This is clearly observed when second language learners produce utterances with adequate use of grammar and vocabulary but with poor pronunciation skills. The result, as pointed out by Gilakjani (2017), is communication failure since intelligible pronunciation is required to achieve effective communication. Therefore, pronunciation has a major role in students' communicative skills as it allows them to achieve better production (intelligibility) and perception (comprehensibility) of the target language. Zhigalev et al. (2019) defined communicative skills as people's ability to

convey information and ideas in an effective way in the different skills of the language (listening, reading, writing, and speaking) as well as nonverbal communication skills. In addition, pronunciation can be viewed from two different perspectives. The narrow perspective corresponds to the production of sounds of the language in an isolated form called segmentals. On the other hand, the broad view has to do with the articulation of different sounds in larger units of the language called suprasegmental features. Even though both views belong to the same subskill, Gilakjani (2011) explained that supra-segmental features are closely related to intelligibility in communication, being prosodic aspects indispensable for the teaching of phonological features of the language. Therefore, the interest of this paper is on how instruction on these features can favor learners' oral production.

Defining suprasegmentals is crucial to understand their function in oral communication. As expressed earlier, suprasegmentals are sounds that occur across larger units of the language in an utterance. Gilakjani (2012) defines them as sounds at a macro level which include linking, intonation, and stress. The first feature, stress, is concerned with the prominence or emphasis given to certain words uttered in order to convey more importance to the words that receive louder and longer pronunciation. For instance, in the utterance "can YOU take the scissors?" the word "you" receives the most stress to express that no one else is being asked to take the scissors. If, on the other hand, the stress was applied to the word "scissors" the meaning would change, suggesting that it is only that object (the scissors) and nothing else. This is a simple way to exemplify how knowledge of applying accurate stress in an utterance enables effective communication. Linking is the second feature, and it refers to the union of sounds from different words, usually consonants to vowels, consonant to consonants, and vowels to vowels. Finally, intonation, which according to the author, is the melody of the language and responsible for the

rising and falling pitches in the language. For example, rising the pitch in the utterance “Can you take the scissors” expresses a request while employing falling intonation to the same utterance expresses a command. This brief description of suprasegmental features provides us with better insights of the extent to which these subtle changes in sounds of the language affect speech production, and how second language learners can be affected if they do not receive instruction on prosodic aspects of the language.

### **Suprasegmental Instruction to Enhance Fluency**

Intelligibility is not the only fruitful achievement that comes along with the proper use of suprasegmentals. Hsieh, Zechner, and Xi (2019) affirmed that fluency is related to prosodic aspects of the language in the extent to which a listener’s effort is required to understand the speaker. This occurs if the overall intelligibility of the speech is to some degree deficient, not allowing the listener to achieve comprehension. That is, if a speaker struggles to communicate the message or fails to do so, fluency is compromised at some level. In like manner, Gordon and Darcy (2022) claimed that it is possible for learners to improve their intelligibility and fluency through the implementation of explicit pronunciation instruction in both segmental and suprasegmental features. In fact, results showed that the group trained in suprasegmentals demonstrated improvement in fluency while the other groups did not. These studies contribute to justify that training in suprasegmentals leads to the achievement of prosperous results and enhance learners’ fluency as a mean of boosting their communicative skills.

Understanding fluency is key to knowing its impact on oral production. Fluency refers to smoothness and ease of communication (De Jong et al, 2013). That is that the speech is continuous, with no unnatural pauses or hesitation. However, a more detailed stratification is given by Hsieh et al (2019). The authors suggested that fluency focuses on three main aspects which are then subdivided into smaller units. The first aspect is breakdown fluency, which refers



to pauses in continuous speech. Speed fluency is the second aspect, and it describes the rate of speech delivery. The last aspect is repair fluency corrections made by the speaker in his own speech while delivering the message. It also involves repetition of words or reformulation of statements. It is important to draw knowledge from the different aspects to be aware of how fluent a speaker is considering the different elements that fluency involves. Thus, by knowing which elements integrate fluency, instructors can examine and determine how fluent L2 learners are. In other words, a measurement scale needs to be established in order to determine students' fluency.

### **Measuring Oral Fluency**

Measuring students' oral fluency allows instructors to detect the aspects of fluency that they are not fully accomplishing. Thus, it is necessary to find which elements can be observed to determine whether learners are doing well. Lennon (2000) stated that fluency can be measured impressionistically or instrumentally by examining "speech rate, dysfluency markers (filled and unfilled pauses), false starts, hesitations, lengthened syllables, retraces and repetitions", suggesting that this subskill can be broken down to find out the areas where assessment needs to be reinforced. Likewise, Hsieh et al. (2019) identified some elements of each aspect that can be measured in students' performance. Units that are noticeable in breakdown fluency include the duration of the pauses, that is the length of the pause; the frequency of pauses, how often pauses are made throughout the speech; and location of pauses, if pauses are made in the middle of a thought group or when the idea is finished. On the other hand, speed fluency can be measured by two variables speech rate and mean length of run. Speech rate is related to the speed at which words are said while mean length of run is understood as the average in which syllables or words are uttered between pauses. Finally, elements perceived in repair fluency include restarts or reformulations; an utterance is not complete and a new one (lexically and syntactically different)

replaces it; and repetitions, correcting an erroneous utterance by repeating a word or phrase. So far, the different components of fluency have been described. However, measuring each component might not be that simple.

Establishing specific units to determine a speaker's fluency level is a subject for debate. Tavakoli et al. (2020) proved this by examining different techniques on the measurement of aspects of fluency and pointing out arguable methods employed. The authors also argued that raters' scores are partly subjective, which led them to implement software for analysis of data. Nevertheless, Tavakoli (2016) explained that speed rate can be measured by indicating the total amount of syllables per minute divided by the total time including the pauses. In the same way, mean of length of run can be established by the number of syllables between two pauses. These measures are taken on a basis of 60 seconds of the speaker's performance for further data collection. The author also employed transcripts and manual coding to measure other aspects like pausing and repairs, which are more easily perceived and counted for the purpose of measuring fluency. In addition, software available can be employed for the measurement of these features when available. With this being established, fluency can be broken down into smaller elements and analyzed to generate a general idea on students' domain of fluency.

### **Teaching Pronunciation Through Explicit Suprasegmental Instruction**

Defining a methodology to teach suprasegmentals is essential to implement suprasegmental-focused instruction fruitfully. Gordon et al. (2013) implemented explicit instruction of suprasegmental features using visual aids for teachers to introduce the contents followed by a communicative activity that enabled students to practice the content studied. Moreover, specific activities on suprasegmental explicit instruction were described by Gilakjani et al (2011) in which learners were instructed explicitly on intonation and stress. The author employed the use of practice so that students could implement the knowledge gathered and apply

the rules previously explained. Furthermore, a study carried out by Bouchhioua (2016) on the effects of explicit instruction of pronunciation demonstrated that learners showed significant improvement in their intelligibility. Therefore, these studies provide great insight into how to teach suprasegmentals for students to be able employ the knowledge obtained in oral production activities.

### **Summary**

Pronunciation is a subskill that has been neglected throughout the history of language teaching and research. Several methods and approaches employed have put this subskill aside despite its importance in oral production. Suprasegmentals are located even further from being part of the language classrooms. As this literature review suggests, the implementation of explicit instruction of suprasegmentals can contribute to better students' fluency. The reason for investigating this topic arises from experience in the classroom listening to students who struggle to convey their ideas in spite of their knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation of words, affecting their ability to express themselves. The development of this literature review has enriched the knowledge of prosodic aspects of the language and provided clue of why students in advanced levels of a language program do not manage to communicate clearly and effectively. The information in this literature review also sets this action research paper on the right track regarding how to develop the methodology based on the previous investigation of similar works. The following chapter will present the methodology to follow in this action research project including the research methodology and type of approach of the study, the setting in which it was carried out, the data collection procedures implemented along with the instruments employed, the action plan, and the intervention assessment implemented for its development.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Design and Method**

Chapter 3 describes the methodology employed for the development of this action research paper. It discusses the research method selected by the researcher to develop this work. Additionally, the researcher refers to the context under which this study was carried out, including the setting and the participants of the study. The chapter also includes a description of the data collection instruments and the process implemented in order to obtain the information required to answer the research questions. Finally, this section elaborates on the action plan implemented for later assessment on the data found.

#### **Research Method**

The purpose of this paper is the implementation of an action plan based on previous class context experience with students from a language program. Therefore, the chosen method to accomplish its goals is action research. Bradbury (2010) defined action research as the process of knowledge creation that emerges from teacher-student interactions. This type of research is also characterized by the implementation of formative orientation that provides stakeholders with orientation for the creation of knowledge. The main goal of this research is to provide learners with suprasegmental-focused instruction to enhance their fluency in oral production. It is essential to mention that as Bradbury (2010) stated, understanding and action is not separated by action researchers, but action is what leads us to legitimate understanding of the phenomenon encountered. With that being established, this research paper not only seeks to empower students with knowledge that helps them cope with their limitations, but also to enable teachers to better understand the process of this type of instruction.

## **Type of approach**

### ***Constructivist Paradigm***

This research work is carried out under the constructivist paradigm, recognizing the fact that there are various social realities, allowing us to identify and give them meaning in the context that they occur. As expressed by Bisman and Highfield (2022), this paradigm consists of the belief multiple realities that leads us to conclude that knowledge is relativistic, meaning that knowledge and realities depend on time, space, and context. This way, the researcher can describe factors that otherwise may not be described easily with the use of metrics or statistics.

### ***Experimental Design***

The present paper falls under the category of experimental design given that the implementation of a treatment will be used in hopes to perceive an effect. As Imai et al. (2012) explained experiments employ causal mechanisms through which researchers observe an outcome that comes about after employing a treatment. In the same manner, experimental design employs the use of a mediation effect component to be able to perceive the outcome under study. The present paper complies with these standards as a pre-test will be implemented to perceive students' initial fluency domain. Then, a similar test will be used after the treatment for analysis of the results obtained.

### ***Qualitative Approach***

For the present research paper, the researcher made use of instruments to obtain meaningful results on the observed phenomena. Saldaña (2011) explained that qualitative research employs the use of methods and approaches that allow researchers to study aspects or processes taking place in natural social life where findings can be obtained for later analysis of the phenomena under investigation. Moreover, the data collection process is usually achieved by



means of interviews, video recordings, fieldnotes, and other documents that provide researchers with valuable information about perspectives, actions, and reactions of the subjects of the study. Therefore, the paper developed falls under the category of qualitative research as the data collected will be gathered by means of the implementation of a pre-test, a post-test and the observations and insights by the author.

### **The Context**

The present study was carried out in Centro de Idiomas of Universidad Nacional (CI-UNA here on), Pérez Zeledón branch. Pérez Zeledón encompasses 1905 square kilometers of the province of San Jose, which represents 38.42 % of the province. The area is subdivided into 12 districts, being San Isidro de El General the main center of commerce and where language program is located. The main economic activities in Pérez Zeledón include agriculture, cattle, industry, and tourism. Moreover, services that demand knowledge of the English language include local tourism and the presence of a call center.

### ***The Setting***

CI-UNA consists of eleven different levels in total. Students enrolling in this program can choose to start from the starter level or take a placement test to be placed in a level that meets their same knowledge level. This program currently works both ways online and in person, and it is taught by bimesters. It is focused on enhancing learners' linguistic abilities, especially oral production. This English language program offers a few schedules that seek to fit the users. During the week, classes are on Monday and Tuesday from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m., on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m., and on Saturdays from 7:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

### ***The Participants***

The participants of this study were 11 students of mixed gender of which 3 were male participants and 8 were female participants. Students were taking level number 7 of the language

program during the I bimester in 2023. The group attended classes on weekdays from 6 pm to 8:30 pm. Students' ages varied from 15 to 38 years old. They had different social backgrounds in terms of education and occupational.

### **Data Collection Procedures and Tools of Initial Research**

For the development of this paper a pre-test was applied to students to assess students' communicative abilities by implementing a customized rubric including the aspects considered relevant to this study.

#### ***Procedures of Initial Research***

A diagnosis test was applied on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023 to measure students communicative skills before implementing the action plan where students were taught about suprasegmentals. The instrument utilized was an adaptation considering the oral evaluation rubric from CI-UNA and other rubrics obtained from online resources where aspects related to suprasegmentals were considered. The instruments implemented were chosen considering that the purpose of this study was to diagnose students' communicative skills. Therefore, a rubric was designed taking into account the aspects found in the literature review. On the other hand, the questions employed for both the pre, and post-test were taken from a test that the students took in the previous course. The reason to choose these questions was that the students knew about the topics they were going to talk about without having problems understanding the vocabulary or not knowing what to answer the questions asked. In order to validate the instruments, these were presented to the tutor in a previous advancement of this chapter for corrections and feedback.

#### ***Instruments***

The pre-test consisted of some questions related to the topics studied during their previous course. This way, students could be able to respond to the questions based on their

previous knowledge. The researcher chose a set of 5 questions for students to respond by sharing their opinions in regard to that topic.

The second instrument employed for this the data collection was a rubric for oral communication assessment. The instrument consists of different criteria divided into relevant aspects of oral communication including fluency, vocabulary, grammatical structures, pronunciation, and comprehensibility. In the case of pronunciation, this aspect was further subdivided into three subcategories in order to be able to observe in detail in which aspects of the language learners showed more or less domain. Each one of the aspects mentioned was further broken down into more specific descriptions with a numeric scale for the researcher to be able to assign a grade according to students' performance during the pre-test and post-test.

### ***Diagnostic Data Analysis***

Once the pre-test was applied to the subjects of this study, the researcher used the evaluation rubric to assign a grade to each student and obtain a record of the student's performance and compare it to the post-test result.

### ***Description of Deliberate Intervention Applied***

The intervention applied in this action research project was a set of activities where suprasegmental-focused instruction was given to students along with practical activities in which they could apply the knowledge obtained from the theory explained by the teacher. Students also received delayed feedback as they were doing the activities in class as a way to amend their mistakes.

**Table 1**

## Action Plan

<i>Lessons</i>	Name of the Activity	Purpose of the activity	Mediation Strategy	Time
<i>Lesson 1</i>	Introducing linking	Students recognize patterns where words can be linked across utterances.	T presents the topic by using a PPT with explanations and examples on how to link words across sentences. The teacher provides a script of a video they will watch. The teacher plays the video and has students mark where they believe linking is applied by the speakers. Then, T checks with students and provides feedback.	40 min
<i>Lesson 2</i>	Time to practice	Students apply the knowledge gathered from the theory explained in everyday utterances.	Students are provided with a script of a real-life audio or video. They work in small groups to figure out which words the speaker might link. T plays the audio for learners to check whether they did the correct linking of the words.	40 min

<i>Lesson 3</i>	Introducing Stress	Students understand what stress is and its application across utterances.	The teacher employs the use of a PPT to explain concepts related to stress and some examples on how to apply it. The teacher plays a video where he can point out the use of stress to illustrate. Then, the teacher has students identify these patterns on their own by calling on some of them to ensure understanding.	40 min
<i>Lesson 4</i>	Stress - Practice	Students identify stress patterns studied in the previous session.	Students are provided with a dialogue. They work in small groups to figure out which words are stressed. Once they identify it, they will rehearse the dialogue in their groups. Finally, they perform the dialogues in the main session where the teacher can provide delayed feedback on their performances.	40 min



<i>Lesson 5</i>	Introducing Intonation	Students learn about intonation patterns in utterances and how to apply them based on the speaker's purpose.	The teacher utilizes a PPT to explain the different types of intonation and their corresponding purposes when speaking. After that, the teacher employs a video where he can have students listen to the speakers exemplifying different intonation patterns in real-life language. The teacher also asks students different questions related to stress patterns they can observe throughout the video to ensure understanding.	40 min
<i>Lesson 6</i>	Intonation- Practice	Students identify intonation patterns and apply it when performing scripted dialogues	Teacher provides students with some dialogues in English and tells them to figure out where falling or rising intonation can be applied. After students discuss with their classmates	40 min

about what intonation pattern to employ for each utterance in the dialogue, they rehearse it in their groups. Finally, the teacher has them perform the dialogues in the main session and provides feedback based on their performance.

<i>Lesson 7</i>	Introducing Rhythm	Students recognize rhythm patterns of the English language and employ it when speaking	The teacher presents some theory about rhythm and provides some examples. Then, the teacher has them practice with short dialogues in breakout rooms.	40 min
<i>Lesson 8</i>	Suprasegmentals – practice	Students employ the knowledge gathered about suprasegmentals when speaking English	The teacher briefly recapitulates the aspects studied during the sessions. Then, he provides them with dialogues written for them to practice with their classmates in breakout rooms. At the end, the teacher brings them back to the main session for	40 min

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them to perform the dialogues. The teacher provides feedback as required and makes comments based on their performance.

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*Note.* Table 1 describes the procedure followed for the action plan and how the implementations were carried out.

### **Instruments Used to Assess the Intervention**

For the assessment of activities carried out during the eight sessions, a post-test similar to the pre-test was applied. Results of both tests were compared and analyzed to determine the level of improvement in students' communicative skills.

#### ***Instruments***

The pre-test consisted of some questions related to the topics studied during their previous course. This way, students could be able to respond to the questions based on their previous knowledge. The researcher chose a set of 5 questions for students to respond to by sharing their opinions in regard to that topic.

The same rubric for oral communication assessment was employed in order to measure students' oral proficiency. The instrument consists of different criteria divided into relevant aspects of oral communication including fluency, vocabulary, grammatical structures, pronunciation, and comprehensibility. In the case of pronunciation, this aspect was further subdivided into three subcategories in order to be able to observe in detail in which aspects of the language learners showed more or less domain. Each one of the aspects mentioned was further

broken down into more specific descriptions with a numeric scale for the researcher to be able to assign a grade according to students' performance.

### **Summary**

This research was developed under the action research method given its characteristics and the purpose of the study. Moreover, this chapter described the context under which it was developed as well as the data collection methods employed, including a pre-test, a rubric for oral communication assessment to analyze the data gathered, and a post-test for measuring improvement on learners' oral performance. Findings drawn from this section are thoroughly discussed in the next chapter, which describes the findings obtained from the data collected during this process.

## Chapter 4

### Findings

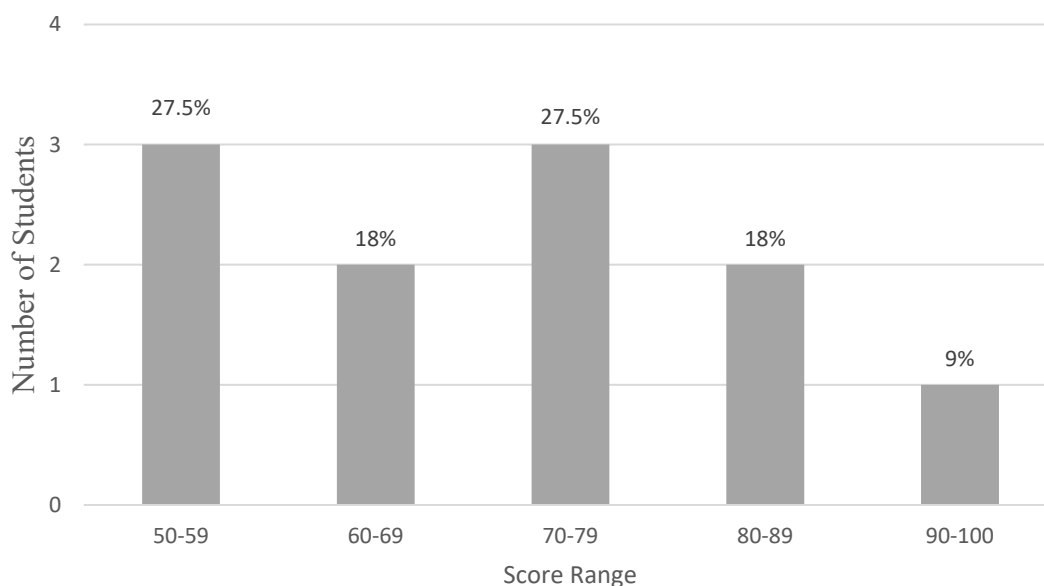
This action research project intends to diagnose the learners' communicative skills and implement an action plan with which they can learn about suprasegmental aspects of the English language for them to improve their communicative skills. This chapter recapitulates the results gathered from the application of the pre and post-tests and examines the effectiveness of the action plan through a comparative analysis of the data obtained.

#### Pre-test Results

Before implementing the action plan, a pre-test was administered. The pre-test consisted of questions related to the same topics students studied in the previous level. This test included 5 questions in which students were prompted to give their opinions. On average, students spent 5 minutes answering the questions asked. The graph below shows the results obtained from this test.

**Figure 1**

*Scores Obtained in the Pre-tests*



*Note.* Figure 1 shows the scores obtained in the pre-test considering the intervals presented in the graph.

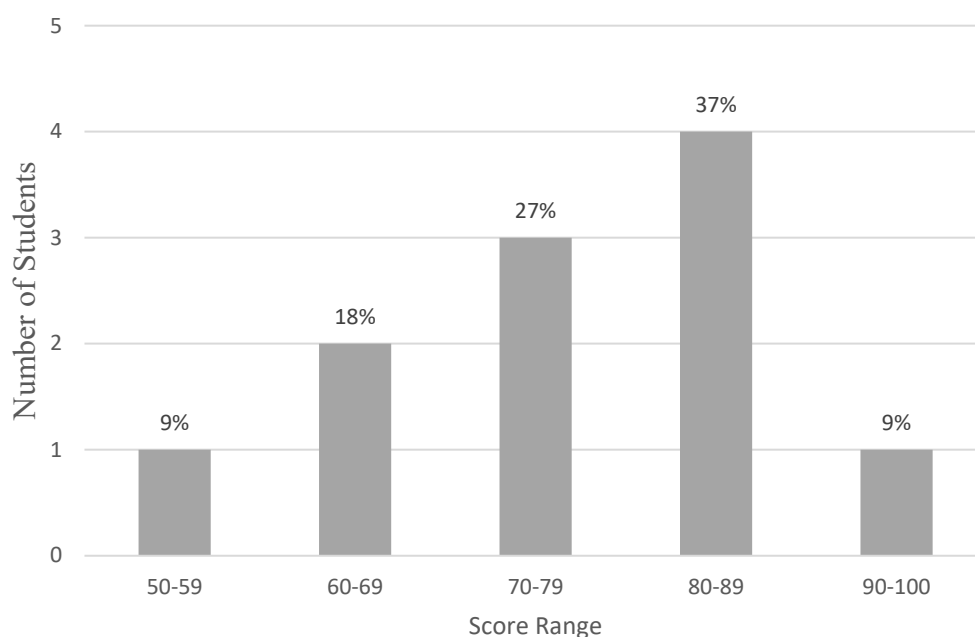
Figure 1 shows that 28% of the students obtained a score between 50 and 59. Also, 18% of the students scored from 60 to 69. Moreover, 27% of the students obtained scores between 70 and 79, while 18% scored between 80 and 89. Finally, only 9% of the students obtained a score higher than 90, being this range the lowest percentage of the graph.

From the data gathered, it is clear that a high percentage of the students did not obtain a passing grade for this pre-test. Considering the passing grade for the course is 80, the majority of the students failed this oral evaluation. In fact, only 27% of the students managed to pass the test, representing almost a quarter of the students in this study. It is also noticeable that a very low percentage of the students obtained a high score for this pre-test.

Considering the points students obtained in different aspects of the rubric, most of the students managed to get the most points in aspects like vocabulary, grammatical structures, and comprehensibility included in the rubric for this pre-test. However, aspects related to suprasegmentals like stress, intonation, and linking were the areas where they obtained fewer points during this pre-test.

### **Post-test Results**

After implementing the action plan, a post-test was administered. The post-test consisted of questions related to the same topics used in the pre-test for the same amount of time with the same number of questions. The graph below shows the results obtained from this test.

**Figure 2***Scores Obtained in the Post-tests*

**Note.** Figure 2 shows the scores obtained in the post-test considering the intervals presented in the graph.

Figure 2 shows that 9% of the students obtained a score between 50 and 59. In addition, 18% of the students scored from 60 to 69. Moreover, 27% of the students obtained scores between 70 and 79, while 37% scored between 80 and 89. This range represents the highest percentage of the students in the study. Finally, only 9% of the students obtained a score higher than 90.

From the data presented in Figure 2, it is noticeable that most of the students did not obtain a passing grade, which is 80 based on the standards established by the program. The percentage of students who did pass the test represents 46% of them. It can also be seen that a low percentage of students obtained a grade above 90, which corresponds to only 9% of them.

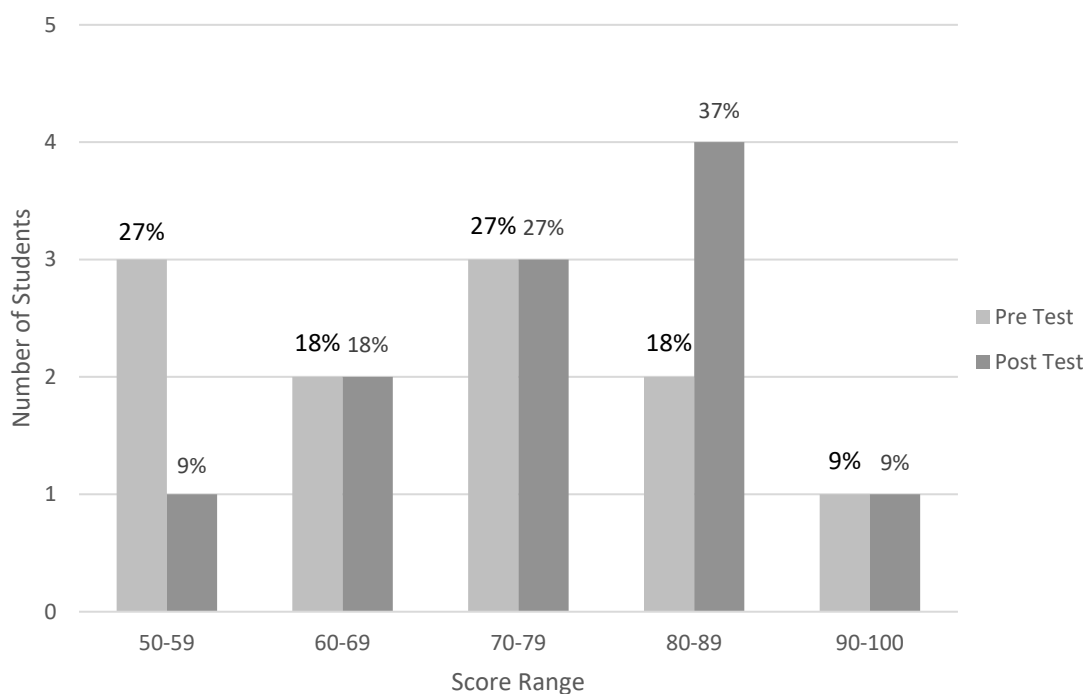
Considering the number of points obtained by students in the rubric employed and their performance during the test, most of them showed little improvement in their scores with a small tendency of improvement in pronunciation aspects and fluency. However, this is not the case for everyone as one of them obtained a lower score in the post-test compared to the pre-test.

### Comparative Analysis of Results

Once gathered the data from both tests, a comparative analysis was carried out. This comparative analysis is presented in Figure 3 below.

**Figure 3**

*Comparative Analysis of Pre and Post-Tests*



**Note.** Figure 3 compares the scores obtained from both the pre and post-test for data analysis.



The comparative graph above shows data about the results of both pre and post-tests applied for this action research project. The graph depicts how students improved their scores in the post-test since only 9% obtained scores from 50 – 59 compared to 27% in the post-test. Moreover, an increase in the number of students who obtained a grade between 80 and 89 is depicted in the graph where the percentage of students went from 18% in the pre-test to 37% in the post-test. Even though these are subtle changes, a change can be perceived, which was also perceived during the application of the post-test that students were a little more aware of the suprasegmentals when speaking. Finally, data obtained from both the pre and post-test suggests that students need to improve their communicative skills since most of them did not manage to pass the test with a score above 80. Also, in both cases, the aspects with the lowest points graded were the ones related to suprasegmentals and fluency, while aspects related to vocabulary, grammar, and comprehensibility were the ones where they obtained more points based on their performance.

### **Summary**

This chapter describes the data obtained from both: the pre and post-test. Data shows that students in both tests obtained grades lower than 80, which is the passing grade employed for levels from 6 to 10 in the language program. This suggests that students lack knowledge of how to employ suprasegmentals in oral communication. It also shows a subtle improvement in learners' communicative competence based on an increase in certain score ranges and how the weakest areas constitute the ones related to suprasegmentals and fluency.

## Chapter 5

### Reflections

After doing the investigation project, it is possible to reflect on the proponent's own personal teaching. The experience brought different insights about the study that provides opportunities for growth and for future studies on this matter. This chapter describes the reflections that were encountered throughout the development of the implementations.

The activities developed were planned in a way that allowed learners not only to be able to understand the different concepts related to suprasegmentals, but also to put them into practice afterwards. Therefore, the design implemented is considered to be helpful as they had the opportunity to understand the concepts with examples. Moreover, examples that illustrated the concepts with videos were used to have them spot these features of the language in real contexts. After that, they could practice identifying the features by themselves and take them to a speaking activity where they could experience it by themselves and also listen to their classmates do it. This is considered to be beneficial for the learning process.

The materials fulfilled the expected purpose. The PowerPoint presentations used allowed them to have the concepts for them to see in writing what the teacher was saying, and they also were given to the students so that they could review the concepts on their own later. The dialogues implemented involved different kinds of structures like sentences using wh-words and yes-no questions and others that allowed them to figure out the way to employ patterns like intonation, stress, and linking. The dialogues also allowed working faster as students went straight to identifying where to place more stress in words, where to link words or the intonation of sentences.

The application of the activities was successful considering different reasons during the implementations. For instance, students expressed that they were not taught about these aspects of the language before, but they were able to understand them and take them to practice in speaking activities. They made mistakes and received feedback to correct them, allowing them to be part of their own learning process. They also had enough time to practice the concepts studied as they received the lessons and learned at their own pace. Of course, the design of activities and materials implemented contributed to the success of the application of this project. Other reasons for this success include the use of a variety of activities for learners to identify the suprasegmental aspects of the language in real-life situations like videos, which empowered them with the tools for students to continue doing them on their own. Also, the willingness of students to understand the concepts and actively participate in the activities assigned.

After implementing the application, satisfactory feelings were found from part of the instructor as it is believed that he was able to teach them in a successful way about suprasegmentals even though these sessions were not part of the regular classes, but extra lessons they willingly took. The instructor also believes that this is going to be beneficial for them since they understood the importance of suprasegmentals when speaking and how they can help them to be understood better and improve their communicative skills in the future. Finally, the teacher believes that now they are aware of these aspects, and they will pay closer attention to these details when listening to other speakers and when they speak.

### **Plan for Further Action**

The development has brought several teachings for both parts: the instructor and students. From the part of the proponent, it was evident that students learn better through repetition and practice. At first, learners understood the concepts, but they struggled to put that knowledge into practice when they were performing. After repeating the activities, they demonstrated that they

could employ the patterns taught in their communication. However, not everything was perfect. For instance, one improvement of the activities could be to have them speak about everyday topics and have them record themselves. Then, they can transcribe what they said and figure out how the suprasegmentals should be employed to record again so that they can be able to understand what they might have done wrong. This could have been a great way to help students internalize the knowledge drawn during the lessons, but there was not enough time to accomplish it during the realization of this project.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusions**

The following conclusions were drawn from the pre, and post-tests applied during the data collection process based on students' performance when interviewed by the teacher, which was carried out at CI-UNA with a group of students from level 7. The conclusions of this work suggest that the implementation of specific suprasegmental instruction can help to improve learners' communicative skills as stated in the general objective of this project.

Results showed that most of the students failed the tests in both the pre and post-tests, which suggests that improvement in their communicative skills is needed as stated in the objective of this action research project. It was noticeable in the evaluation rubrics that the aspects they struggled most with were the ones related to suprasegmental features, indicating that they can communicate their ideas, but the message is not clearly transmitted. This issue may affect both their intelligibility and comprehensibility when speaking as the literature specifies. In addition, the results showed an increase in the scores of the post-test compared to the ones obtained in the pre-test. This finding could be interpreted as the need for instruction of suprasegmentals in language teaching for students to boost their communicative skills as stated in this project's objective and described in the literature review as well. It also suggests that the implementation of explicit teaching of suprasegmentals might have had a positive impact on the students' performance, leading to little improvement in their scores.

### **Strengths**

The elaboration of this research might be beneficial for teaching English by rising awareness of the fact that pronunciation is one aspect of the language that cannot be left behind, especially suprasegmentals as these enable learners to communicate with more intelligibility and

comprehensibility. Even though pronunciation is taught in the language program in which the study was carried out, the materials focus more on the teaching of segmentals, which may be the reason why students at high levels like the one under the study may still struggle to employ them accurately.

### **Limitations**

Some limitations were found to conduct this research project. Time was one because it is believed that more practice was needed to obtain better results. Due to the duration of each module, the number of implementations was 8 in total. It is believed that with more implementations more observations and more palpable results could have been obtained. Another limitation found was that the implementations occurred at a different time from class as the program did not allow them during regular classes, which lead to the next limitation, schedule. The schedule for the implementations was a limitation because most of the students work so the schedule agreed was one convenient for both parties. Due to this reason, 3 students of the course were not part of the research. Even with these limitations, the implementation of this project was carried out in a successful way.

## Chapter 7

### Recommendations

As mentioned in the limitations of this project, the proponent strongly recommends that more implementations are given to students since they responded well when they needed to repeat the activities, demonstrating that they had grasped the knowledge and they could perform the activities better and in a more natural way. It may also be helpful to develop more variety of activities like the one previously mentioned in this paper where they could record their own speech for later study to have them evaluate their own speech and learn from their own mistakes.

For future research on suprasegmentals, instructors need to be aware that there are not many free resources from where to obtain practice. So, instructors must create their own materials or develop them in class in order to provide students with feedback. As the literature reviewed stated, suprasegmental features are not given much importance in language teaching so practice is scarce compared to other subjects like grammar, listening, and so on. Materials related to this subject are not for free, unfortunately. Therefore, for the development of a similar study where more implementations can be made, teachers may need to carefully plan the activities and create the materials or adapt them for practice as it was made for the development of this study.

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## Appendixes

### Appendix A

#### Rubric for Oral Assessment

**Researcher:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**STUDENT:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Score:**

#### **Fluency (10)**

- 1-3 Speech frequently hesitant and jerky; long, unnatural pauses, or utterances left unfinished
- 4-5 Some definite stumbling, but manages to rephrase or continue
- 6-8 Speech generally natural and continuous; only slight stumbling or unnatural pauses
- 9-10 Speech natural and continuous; no unnatural pauses

#### **Vocabulary (breadth and precision of usage) (10)**

- 1-3 Often lacks needed words; somewhat inaccurate usage (wrong pronunciation/part of speech)
- 4-7 Occasionally lacks basic words; generally accurate usage (some mispronunciation)
- 8-10 Rich and extensive vocabulary (pronounced correctly which shows command)

#### **Grammatical Structures (20)**

- 1-5 Most utterances rendered incorrectly, major structural problems remain
- 6-10 Many correct utterances, but with definite structural problems
- 11-15 Many utterances rendered correctly, but significant structural problems interfere with communication
- 16-20 Utterances almost always correct, with some minor structural problems

#### **Pronunciation (30)**

##### ***Stress***

- 0-3 Frequent errors interfere with clear communication
- 4-5 Some consistent errors in stress given to utterances that interfere with the message.
- 6-7 Occasional misplacement of stress in sentences that interfere with communication.
- 8-10 Always places sentence stress correctly in order to convey accurate meaning to utterances.

##### ***Intonation***

- 0-3 Frequent errors interfere with clear communication
- 4-5 Many utterances are rendered using inaccurate intonation patterns that interfere with clear communication.
- 6-7 Occasional misplacement of proper intonation pattern that somehow affects communication.
- 8-10 Most utterances are rendered using proper intonation pattern that allows the speaker to express finer shades of meaning.

##### ***Linking***

- 0-4 Frequent errors interfere with clear communication
- 5-7 Few utterances are rendered employing correct linking across sentences.
- 8-10 Most utterances are rendered employing correct linking across sentences.

#### **Comprehensibility (10)**

- 1-2 Many errors; a lot of incomprehensible phrases
- 3-5 Many errors, but still generally comprehensible
- 6-8 Mostly comprehensible to native speakers of English; only an occasional word not comprehensible
- 9-10 Entirely comprehensible to native speakers of English; no words incomprehensible

## **Appendix B**

### **Pre-test**

### **Questions**

1. Tell your teacher about a complaint about something you bought online.
2. What would you do if somebody on the street asked you for money on your way home tonight?
3. Do you prefer to use a computer with or without a mouse?
4. Tell me about a famous person (who) you admire.
5. Which detective TV shows or movies are popular in your country right now?

## **Appendix B**

### **Post-test**

#### **Questions**

1. What's your favorite store or website to buy clothes?
2. Do you consider yourself in general to be a lucky person? Why (not)?
3. Have you ever had to live without the Internet for a few days or more, e.g. when you were on vacation somewhere?
4. What do you need to have before you can get on a plane?
5. Tell me about an iconic landmark (that) you really like.

## Appendix C


## Dialogues used for the interventions

Dialogue 1 266

 Listen — Ann is boarding a plane


ANN . . . . . Can you help me find my seat, please?  
 HOSTESS . . . . . Let's see. 27A. Follow me. That's your seat. It's next to the window. Please sit down.  
 ANN . . . . . Where can I put my bag?  
 HOSTESS . . . . . You can put it under the seat.  
 ANN . . . . . Thank you... Excuse me... Hello. My name's Ann. What's your name?  
 ALICE . . . . . Hello. My name's Alice and this is my husband Mike.  
 MIKE . . . . . Hi. Pleased to meet you.

Dialogue 2

 Listen — Where are you from?


ANN . . . . . Where are you from?  
 ALICE . . . . . We're from Boston. Where are you from Ann?  
 ANN . . . . . I'm from Montreal.  
 MIKE . . . . . Are you Canadian?  
 ANN . . . . . That's right, but my father's French.  
 ALICE . . . . . That's interesting.  
 MIKE . . . . . Where were you born?  
 ANN . . . . . I was born in Canada.  
 MIKE . . . . . Do you speak French?  
 ANN . . . . . Yes, I do.  
 HOSTESS . . . . . Fasten your seat belts. No smoking.  
 MIKE . . . . . Alice, hold my hand please.

Dialogue 4 272


 Listen — Are you tired?

ANN . . . . . Are you tired?  
 ALICE . . . . . Yes, I am. I'm sleepy.  
 HOSTESS . . . . . Would you like a pillow?  
 ALICE . . . . . Yes, thank you.  
 ANN . . . . . I can never sleep on airplanes.  
 MIKE . . . . . Neither can I. Are you going to San Francisco?  
 ANN . . . . . Yes, I am. I'm going to visit a friend. Her name is Sue. She studied in Montreal two years ago. She lived with my family. And now I'm going to stay with her family.  
 MIKE . . . . . That's nice.


Dialogue 3 271

 Listen — What do you do?

MIKE . . . . . Is this your first visit to the United States?  
 ANN . . . . . Yes, it is.  
 MIKE . . . . . Are you a student?  
 ANN . . . . . Yes, I am. I'm in high school.  
 ALICE . . . . . What grade are you in?  
 ANN . . . . . I'm in the tenth grade. What do you do?  
 MIKE . . . . . Pardon?  
 ANN . . . . . What are your jobs?  
 MIKE . . . . . Oh. I'm a teacher and Alice is a journalist.  
 ANN . . . . . Really? What do you write about?  
 ALICE . . . . . I'm a music critic. I write about music.

 Listen — Do you have any brothers or sisters?

MIKE . . . . . Do you have any brothers or sisters?  
 ANN . . . . . I have an older sister. She's married.  
 ANN . . . . . Do you have family in San Francisco?  
 MIKE . . . . . Alice's brother lives in San Francisco.  
 ALICE . . . . . He's a musician. He plays saxophone in a jazz band.  
 ANN . . . . . We're going to see him play.  
 ANN . . . . . That sounds like fun. I'd like to listen to some music right now.  
 ALICE . . . . . Use your head phones.  
 MIKE . . . . . You can choose from the music menu.  
 ANN . . . . . I think I'll try «Music From Around The World».

 Listen — Would you like something to drink?

HOSTESS . . . . . Would you like something to drink?  
 ANN . . . . . What do you have?  
 HOSTESS . . . . . There's coffee, tea, orange juice, and soft drinks.  
 ANN . . . . . I'll have an orange juice, please.  
 ALICE . . . . . I'd like a coffee, please.  
 HOSTESS . . . . . Milk?  
 ALICE . . . . . No thank you.  
 HOSTESS . . . . . Sugar?  
 ALICE . . . . . Yes, please.  
 MIKE . . . . . Do you have any beer?  
 HOSTESS . . . . . Yes, we do.  
 MIKE . . . . . I'll have a beer.  
 HOSTESS . . . . . Here you are. That's two dollars for the beer.  
 MIKE . . . . . Sorry. Here you are.

## Dialogue 7

286



## Listen — Do you want something to eat?

HOSTESS . . . . . Now, how about a snack?  
 ANN . . . . . What do you have?  
 HOSTESS . . . . . Cookies, potato chips, or sandwiches.  
 MIKE . . . . . Do you want something to eat, Alice?  
 ALICE . . . . . Nothing for me, thanks.  
 MIKE . . . . . I'll have some potato chips.  
 ANN . . . . . What kind of sandwiches are there?  
 HOSTESS . . . . . Chicken or tuna fish.  
 ANN . . . . . I'll have a tuna fish sandwich.  
 HOSTESS . . . . . Here you are.

## Dialogue 8

282



## Listen — Who's that?

ANN . . . . . Look! Who's that?  
 ALICE . . . . . Where?  
 ANN . . . . . Over there. Who's that man sitting in first class?  
 ALICE . . . . . He's wearing a purple shirt and a black tie.  
 ALICE . . . . . What's he doing?  
 ANN . . . . . He's reading a newspaper.  
 ALICE . . . . . Oh! That's Tony Bonito. He's a famous movie actor.  
 MIKE . . . . . Your right. It's him!  
 ALICE . . . . . He's short and fat.  
 MIKE . . . . . And he's rich.  
 ANN . . . . . I think he's funny.  
 MIKE . . . . . Who's the woman sitting next to him?  
 ALICE . . . . . That's Roberta Julia. She's an actress.  
 ANN . . . . . She's tall and thin.  
 MIKE . . . . . And she's beautiful!  
 ANN . . . . . I don't like her.  
 ALICE . . . . . Why not?  
 ANN . . . . . She can't act.



## Listen — What's that?

ANN . . . . . What's that?  
 ALICE . . . . . It's a map of San Francisco. Here's Alcatraz,  
 the famous prison.  
 ANN . . . . . I see. Where's Chinatown?  
 ALICE . . . . . It's right here.  
 PILOT . . . . . Ladies and gentleman, we are about to land at  
 San Francisco Airport. Please return to your seats  
 and fasten your seat belts.  
 ANN . . . . . Look. We're flying over San Francisco. I can see  
 the Pacific Ocean. Can you see it?  
 ALICE . . . . . Yes, I can. I can see the Golden Gate Bridge, too.  
 MIKE . . . . . They say it's the most famous bridge in the world.  
 ANN . . . . . It's beautiful!

## Dialogue 10

286



## Listen — What's the matter?

MIKE . . . . . I don't feel very good.  
 ALICE . . . . . What's the matter Mike?  
 MIKE . . . . . I'm nervous. I feel sick.  
 ALICE . . . . . Mike doesn't like flying.  
 ANN . . . . . I love flying.  
 MIKE . . . . . I don't like landing!  
 ANN . . . . . Breathe. Relax. Don't look out the window!  
 ALICE . . . . . Close your eyes. You can hold my hand.  
 MIKE . . . . . Thanks.

## Dialogue 12

290



## Listen — What's her phone number?

ALICE . . . . . What's her phone number?  
 ANN . . . . . It's 824 13 00... Can you lend me your pen?  
 ALICE . . . . . Sure.  
 ANN . . . . . Where are you staying?  
 ALICE . . . . . At the Hotel Saint Francis.  
 ANN . . . . . OK. I might call you.  
 MIKE . . . . . Maybe I can practice my French.  
 ANN . . . . . Are you studying French?  
 MIKE . . . . . Yes, I am. *Au revoir*.  
 ANN . . . . . Good-bye.  
 ALICE . . . . . Have a good time.  
 ANN . . . . . Thanks. You too.

## Dialogue 13

292



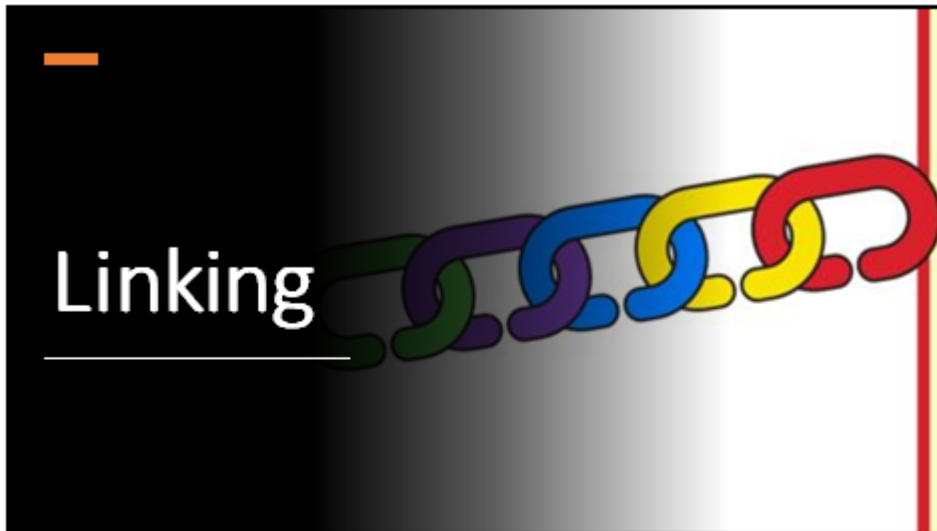
## Listen — How was your flight?

SUE . . . . . Ann, we're over here.  
 ANN . . . . . Hello, Sue. How are you?  
 SUE . . . . . Fine, thanks. Long time no see. How was your flight?  
 ANN . . . . . It was fun! I met some nice people on the plane.  
 SUE . . . . . Ann, this is my mother, Karen.  
 ANN . . . . . Hello.  
 KAREN . . . . . Nice to meet you.  
 SUE . . . . . And this is my father, Tom.  
 TOM . . . . . Hi, Ann.  
 ANN . . . . . Hello.



## Appendix D

### PowerPoint Presentation – Linking



1

What is linking?

- Linking enables fluid, consistent pronunciation of sequential words that share sounds—speakers who are unfamiliar with a language often struggle to link, subsequently causing disjointed pronunciation. An example of linking is the phonetic connecting of consonants when one word ends with the same consonant sound as the next begins with: English speakers will link words in a phrase like "car ride" by lengthening the /r/ consonant, not distinctly pronouncing each /r/ consonant. That is, speakers will say "carride", not "car ride."

2

There are basically two main types of linking:

---

- **consonant ↔ vowel**
- We link words *ending with a consonant sound* to words *beginning with a vowel sound*
- wake up
- stop eating
- move over
- come in

consonant vowel consonant  
 consonant vowel consonant vowel  
 consonant vowel consonant vowel  
 consonant vowel consonant vowel  
 consonant vowel consonant vowel  
 consonant vowel consonant vowel  
 consonant vowel consonant vowel

3

There are basically two main types of linking:

---

- **Consonant ↔ consonant**
- We link words *ending with a vowel sound* to words *beginning with a vowel sound*
- hot tea
- stop playing
- pet turtle
- move forward
- iced tea



4

## Vowel to Vowel

- **vowel ⇌ vowel**

- The VTV pattern is the final common way of linking words in spoken English. We use this pattern when first word ends with a vowel sound and the second word begins with one. When this happens, we add either a y or w sound between the two words. Here are some examples:

- I answered—I yanswered
- enjoy it—enjoy yit
- he asked—he yasked
- stay in—stay yin
- the boy is—the boy yis

5

## Vowel to Vowel

- **vowel ⇌ vowel**

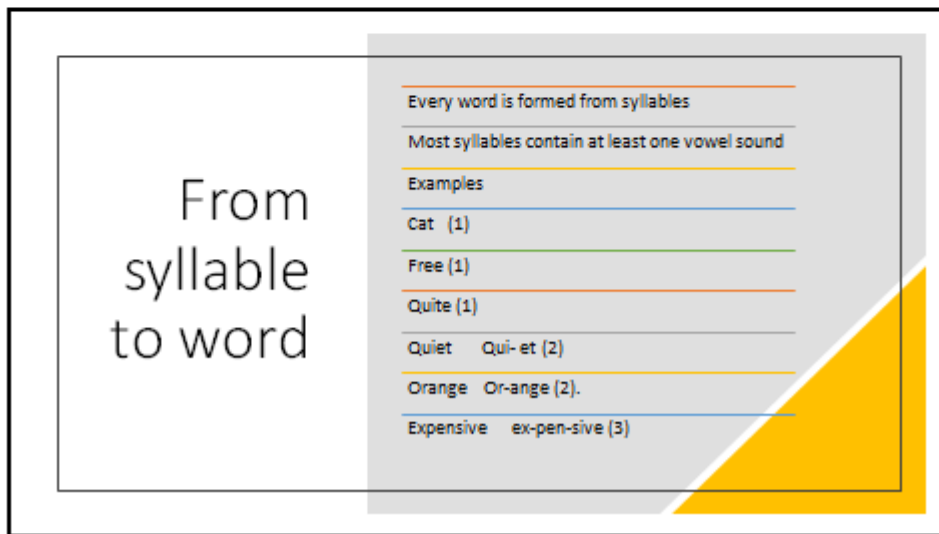
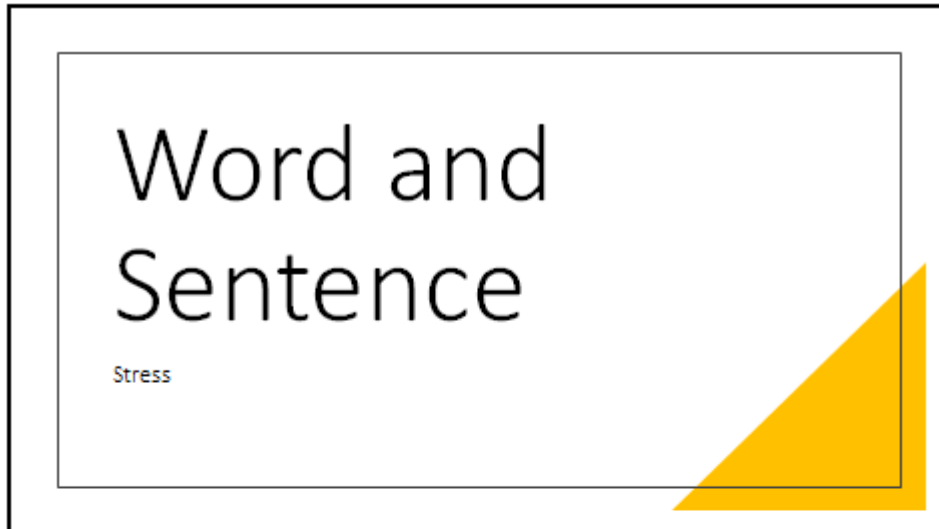
- When inking words using the VTV pattern, add a light w sound between the two words if the first word ends with any of the following sounds and the second word begins with any vowel.

- snow is cold—snow wis cold
- go in—go win
- do it—do wit
- how odd—how wodd

6

## Appendix E


### PowerPoint Presentation – Stress



## Word Stress

- The way in which stresses are distributed across the syllables of a word. It can also be called word accent.
- Photograph
- Photographer
- Photographic
- Stressed syllables are pronounced louder and longer
- Unstressed syllables are reduced to schwa sounds /ə/
- Banana /bəˈnænə/


3



## From words to sentences

- Content words
- Are the key words in a sentence. They are relevant words that carry meaning. Content words cannot be removed from a sentence as meaning would be lost.
- Structure words
- These are much simpler words that make the sentence grammatically correct.

4



## Content words

- Content words include nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Negative words such as *not* or *never* also get stressed because they affect the meaning of the sentence. Modals, too, can change the meaning of a sentence. Here is a list of words to stress in an English sentence:
- nouns (people, places, things)
- verbs (actions, states)
- adjectives (words that modify nouns)
- adverbs (words that modify verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, or entire sentences)
- negative words (*not*, *never*, *either*, etc.)
- modals (*should*, *could*, *might*, etc., but not *will* or *can*)
- *yes*, *no*, and auxiliary verbs in short answers (e.g., **Yes** *she* **does**)
- quantifiers (*some*, *many*, *no*, *all*, *one*, *two*, *three*, etc.)
- Wh-Question words (*what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, *how*, etc.—note that *what* is often unstressed when speaking quickly because it's so common)

5

## Not to Stress

- Some words don't carry a lot of importance in an English sentence. Short words such as articles, prepositions, and conjunctions don't take stress. Pronouns don't usually get stressed either because the context often makes it clear who we're talking about. The *be* verb and all auxiliary verbs don't carry much meaning—only the main verb does. Here is a list of words that shouldn't be stressed in an English sentence:
- articles (*a*, *an*, *the*)
- prepositions (*to*, *in*, *at*, *for*, *from*, etc.)
- conjunctions (*and*, *or*, *so*, *but*, etc.)
- personal pronouns (*i*, *you*, *he*, *she*, etc.)
- possessive adjectives (*my*, *your*, *his*, *her*, etc.)
- *be* verb (*is*, *are*, *was*, *were*, etc.)
- auxiliary verbs (*be*, *have*, *do* in two-part verbs or questions)
- the modals *will* and *be going to* (because they're common, and the future sense is often clear from context)
- the modal *can* (because it's so common)

6

## Examples

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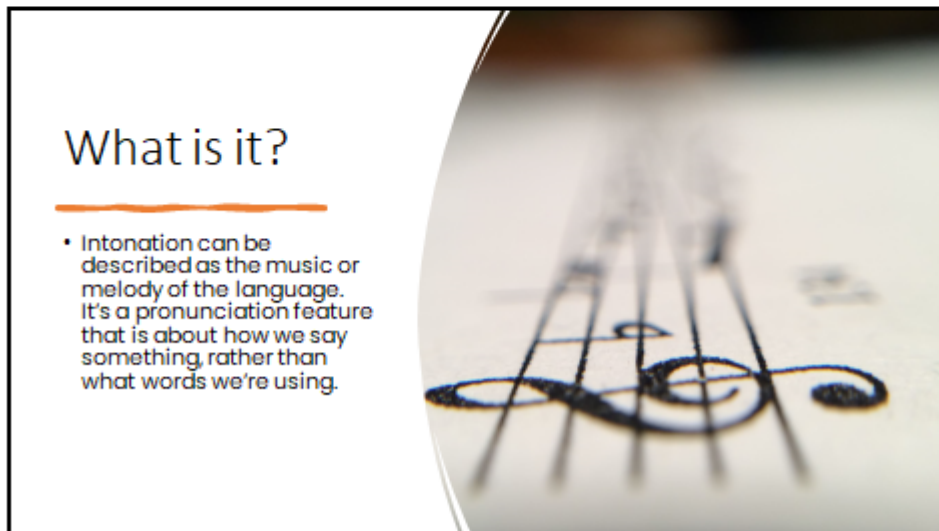
- The **kids** are at the **park**.
- Do you **have** any **brothers** or **sisters**?
- **Why aren't** you **doing** your **homework**?
- He **bought** a **red car** for his **daughter**.
- I am **Brazilian**.
- We are **not familiar** with this **new computer program**.
- The **athlete ran quickly** and **won** the competition.
- She does **not know** the **answer**.
- I **don't know** the **answer**, **either**.
- We **aren't sure**.

## Appendix F

### PowerPoint Presentation – Intonation



1



2



## Types of intonation

• Intonation describes how the voice rises and falls in speech. The three main patterns of intonation in English are:

• Falling intonation



• Rising intonation



• Fall-rise intonation



3

## Falling intonation

• Falling intonation describes how the voice falls on the final stressed syllable of a phrase or a group of words. A falling intonation is very common in *Wh*-questions.

• We also use falling intonation when we say something definite, or when we want to be very clear about something.


*Where's the nearest post-office?*

*What time does the film finish?*

*I think we are completely lost.*

*OK, here's the magazine you wanted.*

4



## Rising intonation


---

- Rising intonation describes how the voice rises at the end of a sentence. Rising intonation is common in *yes-no* questions:

*I hear the Health Centre is expanding. So, is that the new doctor?*

*Are you thirsty?*

5



## Fall-rise intonation

---

- Fall-rise intonation describes how the voice falls and then rises. We use fall-rise intonation at the end of statements when we want to say that we are not sure, or when we may have more to add:

*I don't support any football team at the moment. (but I may change my mind in future).*

*It rained every day in the first week. (but things improved after that).*

6

## Fall-rise intonation



- We use fall-rise intonation with questions, especially when we request information or invite somebody to do or to have something. The intonation pattern makes the questions sound more polite:

*Is this your camera?* ↘↗

*Would you like another coffee?* ↘↗

7

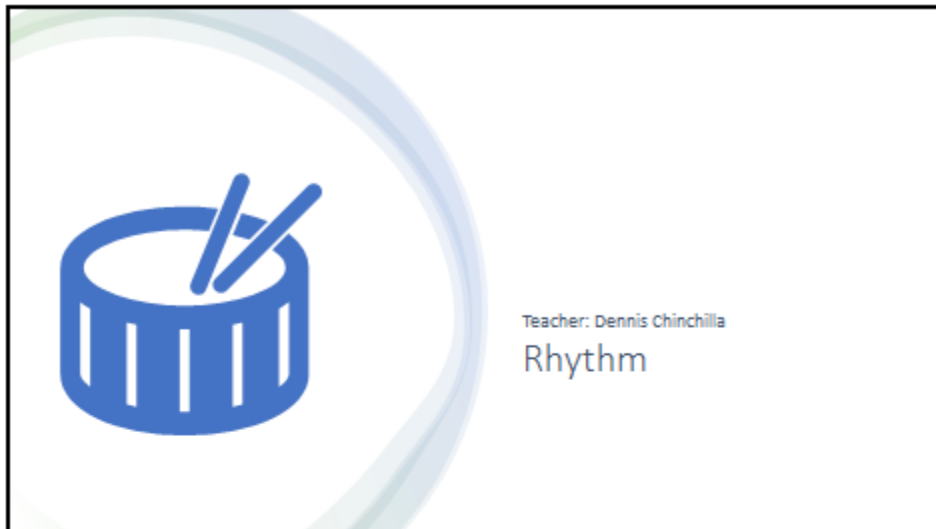
## Practice

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJztjGxl78w>
- He said he was going.
- He said he was going?
- He said he was going!
- He said he was going, because he liked her.

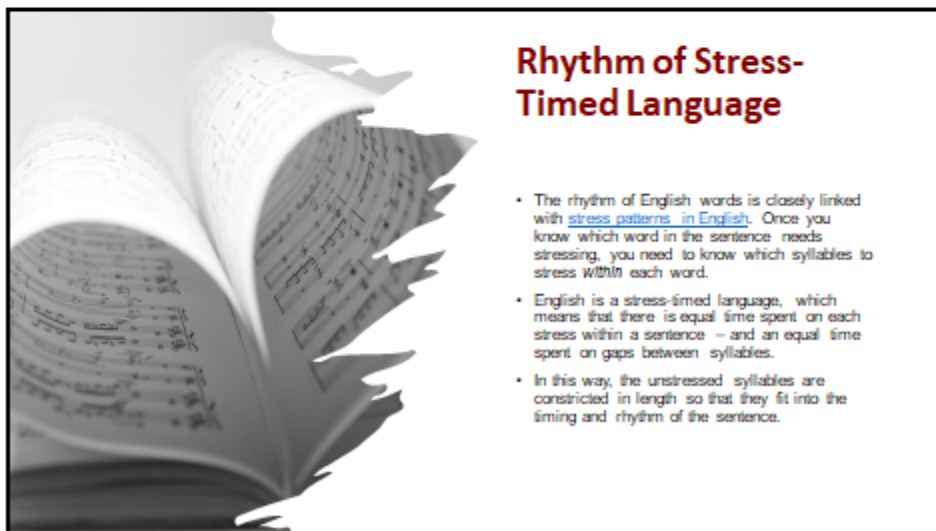
8

## Appendix G

### PowerPoint Presentation – Rhythm



1

A presentation slide with a grayscale image of an open book of musical notation on the left and text on the right. The text on the right is titled "Rhythm of Stress-Timed Language" and contains three bullet points.

### Rhythm of Stress-Timed Language

- The rhythm of English words is closely linked with [stress patterns in English](#). Once you know which word in the sentence needs stressing, you need to know which syllables to stress within each word.
- English is a stress-timed language, which means that there is equal time spent on each stress within a sentence – and an equal time spent on gaps between syllables.
- In this way, the unstressed syllables are constricted in length so that they fit into the timing and rhythm of the sentence.

2

## Weak Syllables and Rhythm

- All of this means that the unstressed syllables in English often sound very weak and can sometimes barely be heard at all.
- These words are said to have a 'weak form', as the speaker reduces the vowel and rushes over the sound in order to reach the next stressed word. Speakers do this to maintain the important rhythm of English.
- In fact, the English language is interesting in the way it treats syllables and rhythm. The unstressed syllables can expand to fill more time between the stressed syllables in English. This is how the speaker creates the correct or expected rhythm.
- Equally, the syllables can become shorter if there is less time between stresses. This syllable expansion and contraction happens so that the overall rhythm of the sentence remains constant. This constant rhythm in English is essential to the sound and feel of the language.



3



Unstressed syllables are always spoken more quickly than the stressed syllables, which also helps the listener to focus on the most important (stressed) words.



Rather than thinking about the syllables themselves, the detective [Laurie R. King](#) is all about the gaps between the syllables.



All the gaps between syllables last for roughly the same length of time because the sentence is stressed-timed. It's a how the natural rhythm of English is created and it's how native listeners can understand the sentence so quickly, even if they miss some of the words.



Be listening is not only listening for the individual words, they are also listening for the expected and detected rhythm, the music or melody, which makes fast comprehension.

4

## The Rhythm of English for Native Speakers

---

- In fact, native speakers of English are so accustomed to the rhythm of the English language that the weak sounds of the unstressed words are not a language problem.
- Even if English speakers do not hear all the unstressed words in a sentence, they can still guess the missing words from the overall rhythm of English.
- For example, in the sentence:
  - 'The **cat** sat on the **mat** while **eating** its favourite **food**'
- The stressed words are the words in bold. 'Eat', 'mat' and 'food' are all only one syllable, so these are easy to pronounce. The word 'eating' has two syllables so you need to know this is pronounced with the stress on the first half of the word ('eating').
- However, the unstressed 'ing' ending of the word 'eating' still needs to be stressed more than the less important words in the sentence. This creates the regular stress-timed rhythm of English.