Identifying Normativity in Word Stress and Intonation of English

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at exploring the normative rules used to accentuate prominent syllables in English words as well as prominent words in English sentences. As part of findings, the study has identified seven prominent normative rules of word stress and seven prominent rules.

Keywords: Word Stress, Intonation, Normativity

INTRODUCTION

While learning a language we learn mainly three things of that language. Number one is vocabulary; number two is structure or grammar in which we learn how words are combined together to write or to speak a meaningful sentence; and number three is pronunciation which perhaps is the most important component of mastering a language. But English being English is somewhat weird in terms of pronunciations. One of the main reasons of using wrong pronunciations in English is English words are not pronounced the way they are written. In this regard, speakers of languages like Sanskrit, Hindi, Spanish, and many other Indian languages are really fortunate because they don't have to learn pronunciation additionally. In what follows, we can see first how English pronunciation is asymmetrical in nature. However, this study has identified 14 normative principles of word stress and intonation.

RESEULTS AND DISCUSSION

In attaining the set objective, the study enlists seven normative principles of word stress and seven normative principles of sentence stress (intonation) to master English pronunciation.

Word Stress Principles

1. If a word starts with weak prefix, put stress on the root word. The bold part shows stress or emphasis in the following examples:

a**cross**   de**velop**

a**part**   re**duce**

a**lone**   be**tween**

a**mount**   pre**sent**

ex**port**

2. If a disyllabic word is noun, adjective, or compound noun, put stress on the first syllable.

table   **cle**ver

football   **key**board

toothpaste   **ha**ppy

rainy   **sam**ple

However, there are some loan nouns and verbs in which second syllable is stressed as in ho**tel**, con**cise**, under**stand**, re**lax**, etc.

3. If a word ends with suffixes like "-tion, -cian, -sion, -ic, -ical, -ial, -tial, -ment", put stress on the syllable before the suffix as in:

Appli**ca**tion, Exami**na**tion, Qualifi**ca**tion	-tion
Elec**tri**cian, Mu**si**cian, Poli**ti**cian, Phy**si**cian	-cian
Gram**ma**tical, Theo**ret**ical, Philo**soph**ical	-ical
Ar**range**ment, En**croach**ment, Ex**cite**ment	-ment
Patri**ot**ic, Scien**tif**ic, Spe**cif**ic, characte**ris**tic	-ic
Cere**mon**ial, In**dus**trial, Con**gen**ial	-ial
Of**fi**cial, Es**sen**tial, Confi**den**tial, diffe**ren**tial	-cial / -tial
Co**mmis**sion, Ad**mis**sion	-sion
Re**sist**ible, Im**poss**ible, **Terr**ible	-ible

4. If a word has three syllables ending with suffixes like (-ly, -er, -ful, -ness), put stress on the first syllable.

Or-der-ly   **Ea**-si-er

Qui-et-ly   **Beau**-ti-ful

Ha-ppi-ly   **Faith**-ful-ness

Ma-na-ger   **Po**-wer-ful

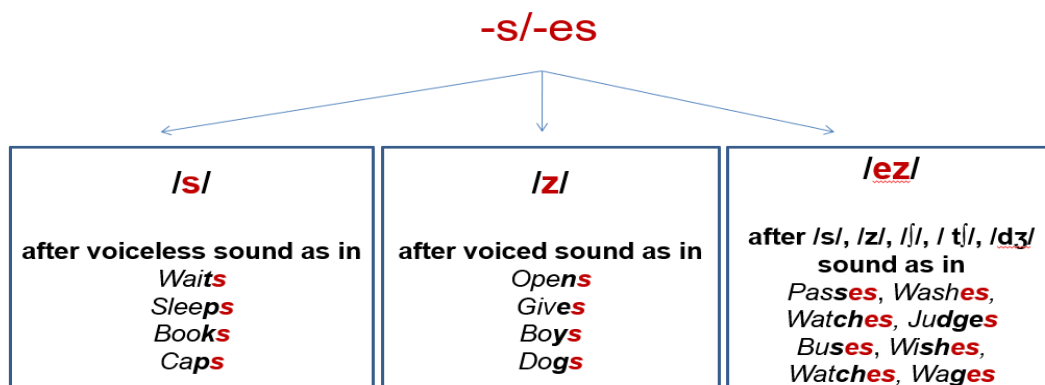*5. Put stress on the third syllable from the end if a word ends with suffixes like "-ty, -ous, -tive, -gy".*

Ac-**ti**-vi-ty   Po-ssi-**bi**-li-ty

ne-**ce**-ssi-ty   Co-**mmo**-di-ty

In-**dus**-tri-ous   La-**bo**-ri-ous

In-**ju**-ri-ous   In-**for**-ma-tive

Su-**per**-la-tive   Psy-**cho**-lo-gy

Pho-**no**-lo-gy

*6. Put stress on the first syllable of a word if it ends with suffixes '**ate** or **able**'.*

Com-pli-cate   **Know**-le-dge-able

Cul-ti-vate   **Ma**-na-ge-able

Edu-cate   **Do**-able

For-tu-nate   **Lov**-able

In-di-cate   **Break**-able

Se-pa-rate   **Watch**-able

7. V5 and Plurals are usually formed by adding /-es/ or /-s/ at the end of the root verb or noun. In such cases, /s/ or /es/ will conditionally have three different pronunciations as shown in the following figure:

-s/-es

/s/	/z/	/ez/
after voiceless sound as in	**after voiced sound as in**	**after /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, / tʃ/, /dʒ/ sound as in**
Waits	Opens	Passes, Washes,
Sleeps	Gives	Watches, Judges
Books	Boys	Buses, Wishes,
Caps	Dogs	Watches, Wages

8. V2 (past simple) or V3 (past participle) form of regular verb is usually formed by adding /-d/ or /-ed/ after a root verb. In such cases, there are three pronunciations of {-d/-ed}.

-d/-ed

/t/	/d/	/ed/
after voiceless sound as in	after voiced sound as in	after /t/ or /d/ sound as in
Walk**ed** Ask**ed** Hop**ed** Laugh**ed** Fax**ed** Wash**ed** Watch**ed** Lik**ed**	Open**ed** Dubb**ed** Play**ed** Allow**ed** Begg**ed**	Wait**ed** Want**ed** Wedd**ed** End**ed**
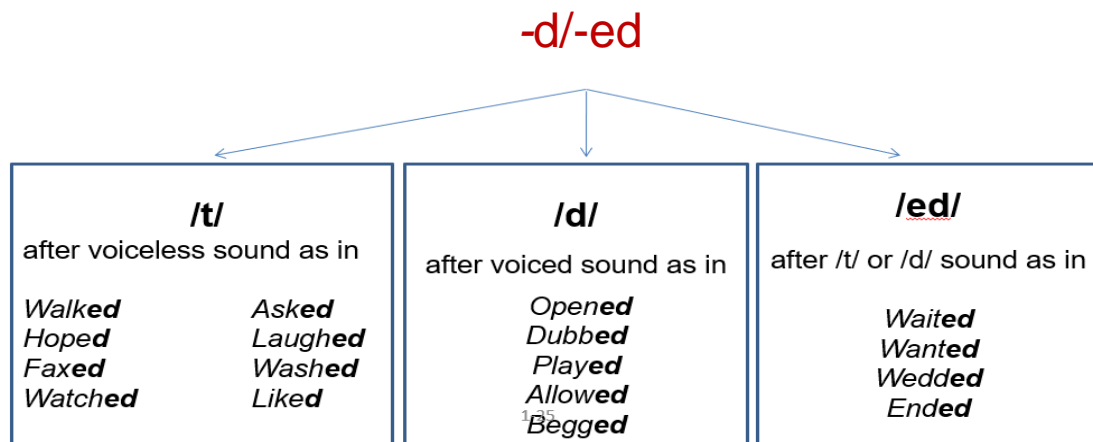
9. If a word is used as a noun, put stress on the first syllable, whereas the stress will be on the second syllable if the same word is used as a verb.

Object   (Noun)   Ob**ject**   (Verb)

Progress   (Noun)   Pro**gress**   (Verb)

Record   (Noun)   Re**cord**   (Verb)

Present   (Noun)   Pre**sent**   (Verb)

Sentence Stress (Intonation) Principles

Intonation is variation in the pitch of our voice in terms of rising and falling tone to distinguish more prominent and less prominent part of your speech.

Rule-1: Use rising tone for open words and falling tone for closed words

Will you sell my car because I am going to France?

Open words:			sell	car			going	France
Closed words	Will	you	my		because	I'm	to	

Rule-2: Primary and secondary auxiliary verbs can be stressed if they get emphasis in an assertive sentence as in:
It `can be done.
It `has been done.

Rule-3: For emphasis, put stress on a word which the speaker wants to make most important as in:

I like *kids*. (I may, however, dislike men or women.)
I *like* kids. (I'm insisting on my emotion.)
I like kids. (Although my brother is not very fond of them.)

Rising tone (Rules 4 to 7)	Falling tone (Rules 8 to 11)
A rising tone is used:	**A falling tone is used :**
• **In incomplete utterances**	• **In ordinary statements made without emotional implications**
➤ It's seven ↗ o'clock (but she hasn't got up yet.) ➤ The house is ↗ empty. (and has been for years.) ➤ The water's ↗ warm (so why don't you come in?)	➤ It's seven ↘ O'clock. ➤ The house is ↘ empty. ➤ The water is ↘ warm.
• **In questions which demand *yes* or *no* answer:**	• **In unfriendly questions which begin with <u>wh</u>-question words**
➤ Are they ↗ coming? ➤ Will you do ↗ it? ➤ Have you seen my younger ↗ brother?	➤ Why did you do ↘ it? ➤ Whose bag is ↘ this? ➤ What are they talking ↘ about?
• **In questions asked in a warm friendly manner:**	• **In commands**
➤ How is your ↗ mother? ➤ Why didn't you come and see ↗ me? ➤ What time is it?	➤ Do as I ↘ say? ➤ Come ↘ here. ➤ Go over ↘ there.
• **In polite requests**	• **For exclamations**
➤ Would you open the ↗ window? ➤ Please sit ↗ down.	➤ What a ↘ surprise ! ➤ So nice of ↘ you !.

CONCLUSION

The present study is exploratory in nature as it delved into identifying some of the prominent normative rules or principles to mend word and sentence level pronunciation in spoken context. As an extension to this study, the researcher aims at listing 50 similar rules that govern English pronunciation of syllables in words and words in sentences. The study is significant for the reason that it imparts a ready reference to the non-native speakers of English who are interested in improving their understand of pronunciation at lexical and syntactic levels.