

GST 101 A: Use of English Module 2 (Speaking Skills)  
(First Semester 2024/2025 Academic Year)  
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### **Introduction**

In this module we will discuss speaking skills in English. The English language, like most languages, is a spoken language. Most of the communication done in English (as in other spoken languages) is in the spoken form. This explains why we need to pay attention to lessons in this module if we desire to communicate well in English. We will stress three major components of speaking skills in English: phonetic symbols and sounds in English, stress patterns in English and intonation. It is very important for learners of English as a second language to learn these components well since the sounds do not come naturally to them as is the case with native speakers who get the sounds from birth and grow up with them.

### **Learning Objective**

The objective of this module is to enable students to pronounce English sounds well with the correct stress and intonation.

### **Learning outcomes**

By the end the lessons, students will be able to:

1. Identify, write and pronounce English phonetic symbols
2. Pronounce simple English words properly
3. Place the stress of words properly and pronounce them correctly
4. Identify where rising and falling tones should be and read sentences correctly
5. Use intonation to identify emotion and attitude

### **Lesson One: Phonetic Symbols**

English sounds are divided into two major categories: vowel sounds and consonant sounds. A vowel sound is a sound produced without any obstruction to the airstream (flow of air) from the lungs to the mouth. The air we use to produce sounds comes from the air stored in the lungs, when we breathe in. When there is no obstruction as the air flows out of the mouth, with the sound affected only by the shape of the lips and the position of the tongue, we have a vowel sound. A single vowel sound (also called pure vowel) is called a monophthong.

### **Illustration**

VOWELS	monophthongs				diphthongs		<b>Phonemic Chart</b> voiced unvoiced		
	i:	ɪ	ʊ	u:	ɪə	eɪ			
	sheep	ship	good	shoot	here	wait			
	e	ə	ɜ:	ɔ:	ʊə	ɔɪ			əʊ
bed	teacher	bird	door	tourist	boy	show			
æ	ʌ	ɑ:	ɒ	eə	aɪ	aʊ			
cat	up	far	on	hair	my	cow			
CONSONANTS	p	b	t	d	tʃ	dʒ	k	g	
	pea	boat	tea	dog	cheese	June	car	go	
	f	v	θ	ð	s	z	ʃ	ʒ	
fly	video	think	this	see	zoo	shall	television		
m	n	ŋ	h	l	r	w	j		
man	now	sing	hat	love	red	wet	yes		

The 44 phonemes of Received Pronunciation based on the popular Adrian Underhill layout

adapted by [EnglishClub.com](http://EnglishClub.com)

Learning Activities: Teacher illustrates, plays the sounds on Youtube and invites the students to pronounce the sounds independently. He puts them in groups to pronounce the sounds while he goes round to listen to their pronunciation.

Diphthongs. Vowel sounds can be made up of two sounds called diphthongs. A diphthong is a sequence of two vowel sounds, the articulation of which involves a glide from one vowel quality to another. The result is that you have one sound out of two. See the phonetic chart above.

Learning Activities: Teacher illustrates and invites students to pronounce the diphthongs independently.

A consonant sound is a sound produced with an obstruction to the flow of air from the lungs. For example, in each of the consonant sounds above there is an obstruction. The nature of the obstruction determines the type of consonant sound.

Learning Activities: Teacher pronounces the sounds. He invites the students to repeat the sounds after him and then pronounce them independently.

Evaluation:

-Write the phonetic chart in your personal note.

-Write five words that contain each of the 44 sounds (20 vowels and 24 consonants) and pronounce them correctly.

## Lesson Two: Stress Patterns in English

English words have units of sounds called syllables. A syllable contains one vowel sound and one or more consonant sounds. Knowing syllables is not only important in speech but also in writing. In writing the division of words for continuation on the next line must be done in syllables.

A word can have one or more syllables. In English when we have more than one syllable, one unit of sound (syllable) is pronounced louder than the other. This is what stress is all about. We have primary stress and secondary stress but one is always louder than the other (s). In English the unstressed vowels are reduced to schwa (ə). The ability to stress sentences well makes your speech resemble that of naive speakers.

Learning activities: Play stress pattern Youtube for an illustration.

## English Word Stress Rules

Here are some general rules about word stress in English:

- Only vowel sounds are stressed (a,e,i,o,u).
- A general rule is that for two syllable words, nouns and adjectives have the stress on the first syllable, but verbs have the stress on the second syllable.

For example: **table** (noun), **special** (adjective), **demand** (verb).

- Words ending in 'ic', 'tion' or 'sion' always place their stress on the penultimate (second to last) syllable. (e.g. **supersonic**, **Atlantic**, **dedication**, **attention**, **transformation**, **comprehension**).
- Words ending in 'cy', 'ty', 'gy' and 'al' always place their stress on the third from last syllable. (e.g. **accountancy**, **sincerity**, **chronology**, **inspirational**, **hypothetical**).
- Words ending in 'sm' with 3 or fewer syllables have their stress on the first syllable (e.g. **prism**, **schism**, **autism**, **botulism**, **sarcasm**) unless they are extensions of a stem word. This is often the case with words ending 'ism'.
- Words ending in 'ism' tend to follow the stress rule for the stem word with the 'ism' tagged onto the end (e.g. **cannibal** = **cannibalism**, **expression** = **expressionism**, **feminist** = **feminism**, **opportunist** = **opportunism**).
- Words ending in 'sm' with 4 or more syllables tend to have their stress on the second syllable (e.g. **enthusiasm**, **metabolism**).

## Words ending in 'ous'

- Words ending in 'ous' with 2 syllables have their stress on the first syllable (e.g. **monstrous**, **pious**, **anxious**, **pompous**, **zealous**, **conscious**, **famous**, **gracious**, **gorgeous**, **jealous**, **joyous**).
- English words ending in 'ous' with 4 syllables usually have their stress on the second syllable (e.g. **gregarious**, **anonymous**, **superfluous**, **androgynous**, **carnivorous**, **tempestuous**, **luxurious**, **hilarious**, **continuous**, **conspicuous**). There are some exceptions using different stressed syllables, such as **sacrilegious**, which stresses the 3rd syllable.

Words ending in 'ous' with 3 or more syllables do not always follow a set stress pattern. Here are some common English words with 3 syllables ending in 'ous' and their stress placement:

### Words ending in 'ous' with stress on first syllable

**fabulous, frivolous, glamorous, calculus, dubious, envious, scandalous, serious, tenuous, chivalrous, dangerous, furious**

**Words ending in 'ous' with stress on second syllable**

**enormous, audacious, facetious, disastrous, fictitious, horrendous, contagious, ambitious, courageous**

Learning Activities: Teacher pronounces the words with students and allows them to repeat them.

Stress and change of meaning

The word stress can change the meaning of the word:

object (noun) and object (verb), import (noun) and import (verb), export (noun) and export (verb)

Stress in a sentence

Native speakers tend to stress (emphasize, make louder) the most important words in a sentence.

The most important words are called content words: nouns and verbs. Let us look at this sentence:

The cat sat on the mat while eating its favourite food.

The most important words in this sentence: cat, sat, mat, eating, food. The words are spoken loud (stressed) while the others are not. You can understand the sentence without the others. Try to read the sentence with stress on these words.

Finally, English speakers emphasize some words to show what they mean (even non-content words: I want the green shirt. Emphasis is on GREEN. Emphasis can also be on WANT or SHIRT.

Learning Activities. Read sentences with the students to show stress patterns.

Evaluation: Give texts from the reading list to different groups to read and present in class, showing understanding of stress patterns in English.

### **Lesson Three**

Play a conversation of two native speakers

Ask what they observed.

Then define intonation: It is the rise and fall of voice in speaking. Explain it.

There are guides in the rise and fall of voice:

- Wh-word questions: falling intonation
- Yes/No questions: rising
- Statements: falling
- Question-Tags: 'chat' - falling; 'check' - rising
- Lists: rising, rising, rising, falling

Please note: "In each tone unit, the pitch movement (a rise or fall in tone, or a combination of the two) takes place on the most important syllable known as the '**tonic-syllable**'. The tonic-syllable is usually a high-content word, near the end of the unit."

Let us look at the following conversation:

SK: Can I help you? (rise)

C: I'd like a chocolate (fall) ice-cream.

SK: One chocolate (fall-rise) ice-cream. Anything else?

C: One strawberry (fall) ice-cream.

SK: One chocolate (fall-rise), one strawberry (fall-rise). Anything else?

C: Yes. One chocolate (fall-rise), one strawberry (fall-rise), and one vanilla (fall).

Learning Activities Let them write a short conversation in groups and present it to show their understanding of intonation.

Evaluation:

Read these sentences properly showing the rise and fall of tone:

1. Are you coming to my house today?
2. Who are you?
3. This is really not what I want.
4. The students are Mary, Jane and James.

5 Read this sentence to show how you communicate your meaning, placing the emphasis on the word (s) that expresses your meaning or emotion:

I have to tell you that I need the green cup today to celebrate my birthday.