

## CHAPTER 7

### LINKING, THOUGHT GROUPS, AND RHYTHM

As you learned in Chapter 6, native English speakers always put the emphasis on one stressed syllable in each word and on the content words in making the sentence rhythm to help listeners understand them. Putting the emphasis on the content words can help your listeners understand which words are most important and what you are saying. In fluent or rapid speech, words are often linked together smoothly and naturally without a break between them, which is the way that native English speakers normally do. Another way to help their listeners to understand them is making a pause and separating words into thought groups. These also help them make the rhythm smoothly and naturally while they are speaking English. Let's discuss these points below.

#### Linking

“Linking (Settle Learning Academy, 2008-2011) is the merging of multiple words together until they sound as if they are only one word.” When we say a sentence in English, we blend or link words together. Linking is very important in spoken English. If learners or students recognize and use linking, two things that they will find are 1) they will understand native English speakers more easily, and 2) native English speakers will understand them more easily.

Listen to the following sentence, and notice how words are linked together.

1. What can I help you?      /kə-naɪ/ + /hel-pju/
2. I like an apple.      /laɪ-kə-'næpl/
3. Come and sit down.      /kʌ-mənd/
4. May I come in?      /meɪ-jɑɪ/ + /kʌ-mɪn/
5. May I go out?      /meɪ-jɑɪ/ + /gəʊ-waʊt/

From the sentences above, “words within a speech unit (Hewings, 2007: 58) are usually said without a break in fluent speech. The sound at the end of one word is



|                                      |                                 |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2.1.2 Linking with /t/ and /d/       | Linking transcription           |
| 1) What <u>about</u> you?            | /wə-tə/                         |
| 2) He's a <u>friend of</u> mine.     | /fren-dəv/                      |
| 2.1.3 Linking with /k/ and /g/       | Linking transcription           |
| 1) <u>Take a</u> seat, please.       | /teɪ-kə/                        |
| 2) Let's take the <u>dog out</u> .   | /dɒ-gaʊt/                       |
| 2.1.4 Linking with /tʃ/ and /dʒ/     | Linking transcription           |
| 1) <u>Watch out</u> .                | /wɒ-tʃaʊt/                      |
| 2) You don't <u>change a</u> thing.  | /tʃeɪn-dʒə/                     |
| 2.1.5 Linking with /f/ and /v/       | Linking transcription           |
| 1) <u>Half an hour</u> .             | /hɑː-fə-'naʊə(r)/               |
| 2) <u>Have a</u> nice day!           | /hæ-və/                         |
| 2.1.6 Linking with /θ/ and /ð/       | Linking transcription           |
| 1) I like <u>both of</u> you.        | /bəʊ-θəv/                       |
| 2) I'm going <u>with Eric</u> .      | /wɪ-'ðe-rɪk/                    |
| 2.1.7 Linking with /s/ and /z/       | Linking transcription           |
| 1) It's <u>almost</u> four.          | /ɪt-'sɔːlməʊst/                 |
| 2) <u>Is it</u> cold?                | /ɪ-zɪt /                        |
| 2.1.8 Linking with /ʃ/               | Linking transcription           |
| 1) I <u>wish I</u> could.            | /wɪ-ʃaɪ/                        |
| 2) The <u>fish is</u> good.          | /fɪ-ʃɪz/                        |
| 2.1.9 Linking with /m/, /n/, and /ŋ/ | Linking transcription           |
| 1) <u>Come in</u> !                  | /kʌ-mɪn/                        |
| 2) It's <u>an answer</u> .           | /ɪt-sə-'nɑːnsə(r) or 'nænsə(r)/ |
| 3) <u>Bring it</u> to me.            | /brɪ-ŋɪt/                       |

## 2.1.10 Linking with /l/ and /r/      Linking transcription

1) Please fill in the form.      /fɪ-lɪn/2) Where are you going?      /weə-rə/

It should be noted that in section 1.1.10 “linking /r/ (Roach, 2010: 115) does not occur in syllable –final position in the BBC accent, but when the spelling of a word suggest a final /r/, and a word beginning with a vowel follows, the usual pronunciation is to pronounce with /r/, e.g., ‘here’/hɪə/ but ‘here are’/hɪə-rə/”.

## 2.2 Final vowel sound (V) + (V) Initial vowel sound

We link words ending with a *final vowel sound* to words beginning with *an initial vowel sound*. To help learners to link vowel sounds to vowel sounds, a small *w* or *y* (*j*) is included with the linker, e.g.: *do-wɪt* or *I-yam sorry*.

Here again, to help to promote natural linking, Care should be taken, however, not to exaggerate the link to a full, strong *w* or *y* (*j*), resulting in *do-wit* or *I-yam sorry*.

Take a look at the examples of linking: V + V, as shown below:

## 2.2.1 Linking /w/      Linking transcription

1) How do I live?      /du\_waɪ/2) Go away!      /gəʊ\_wə'weɪ/

## 2.2.2 Linking y/ or /j/      Linking transcription

1) We all miss you.      /wi-ɹɔ:l/2) I am sorry.      /aɪ-ɹəm/

From the sentence above, it should be noted that 1) if our lips are **round** at the end of the first word with the final vowel sounds: /ʊ, u:, əʊ, aʊ, we insert a **w** sound as in *do-wɪ*, *too-weasy*, *so-wɪn* love, *ho-w*about, and 2) if our lips are **wide** at the end of the first word with the final vowel sounds: /i:, ɪ, eɪ, aɪ, ɔɪ/, we insert a **y(j)** sound as in *coffee-yor* tea, *we-y*all, *ma-y*ɪ, *m-y*arm, *bo-y*and girl.

## Thought groups

“Thought groups are meaningful phrases within a sentence. The words in a thought group are pronounced together, as a unit (Lane, 2005: 159).” In English, another way to speaking clearly and being understood is making a pause between groups of words in sentences (Elemental English, 2009-2015). Thought groups also help the listener identify the parts of a sentence. Consider the following sentence:

English learners need help to develop this skill / when they study pronunciation.//

or

English learners need help / to develop this skill / when they study pronunciation.//

The sentence above is quite long and thus a speaker cannot utter a long sentence in one breath. He/She utters groups of words in one breath; he/she pauses and then utters another group. The place where he/she stops or pauses is marked by a slant mark [/].

### 1. Reasons for making thought group division

When we speak, we often break up long sentences into smaller groups of words or thought groups, with a short pause between them. This makes it easier for listeners to follow what we’re saying. Summarily, when we pause in a sentence, it is usually for one of three reasons:

- 1.1 To give the listener time to understand your word.
- 1.2 To make the meaning clear.
- 1.3 To allow the speaker to take a breath when producing longer sentence.

### 2. Grouping words in a thought group

Actually, “there are no fixed rules for deciding which words to include in a thought group (Lane, 2005: 159).” If we do not pause much, it will be difficult for the listener to understand what we are saying. If we pause too often, the sentence can seem choppy, hard to understand and unpleasant to listen to. Look at two ways to group the words in the sentence below.

We’re going to work at a hotel in Pattaya.

We’re going to work at a hotel in Pattaya.

Generally, thought group (WebLearn, 2014) is divided into the following:

2.1 at the end of a *short sentence*

e.g: I am happy/

2.2 at the end of a *phrase*

e.g: because of his being late/.....

2.3 at the end of a *clause*

e.g: When you do exercises/.....

2.4 After a word when we leave a gap before uttering another word or at the end of a short sentence:

e.g: Henry/what are you doing?//

2.5 After a subordinate clause and after a main clause:

e.g: If you get the first rank,/I'll give you a prize//

2.6 Before a conjunction:

e.g: You are intelligent/but you are not honest//

2.7 Before a question tag:

e.g: She writes beautifully/doesn't she?//

2.8 At the end of quotation marks

e.g: "Joe!"//She shouted at her husband/"the truck is on fire!"//

2.9 At the end of a comma

e.g: "Hardly that,/Senior General,"//said our friend//

It should be note that a short pause is marked by a single slash [/], and at the end of sentence we use double slash [//] to show a longer pause, as shown below.

### 3. Examples of grouping thought groups

These are some examples of dividing a speech unit into thought groups.

#### 3.1 Example 1

"We have a great opportunity /at the moment/to encourage awareness of science/ among the public.// a recent opinion poll/ which was conducted earlier this year/ revealed that/80% of the population/ is interested in science.//In addition/, it shows/ a growing trust in scientists/ who make an important contribution/ to society.// however,/ the poll also showed/that few people/felt they know enough/about

science.//To develop understanding of science/ we need more public debate/ and we should be making science/ more interesting/ in school.”// (Martin Hewings 2007: 114)

### 3.2 Example 2

“Once upon a time,/ there was a beautiful princess /who lived in a big castle /with her father,/ the king, /and her mother,/ the queen.// Even though she had everything she asked for,/ she was not very happy.”// (Yoshida, 2012).

### 3.3 Example 3

My favourite thing to do/ on a sunny day/ is to go to the beach.// It takes about an hour/ from my house.// I have to get the train /and a bus,/ but it’s worth it.// Lots of my friends/ live near the beach,/ so it’s always the perfect way /to catch up /and enjoy the sunshine.// (Hewings, 2007: 144)

## Rhythm

Rhythm is timing patterns among syllables. However, the timing patterns are not the same in all languages. Regularly, English speech (Roach, 2010) is rhythmical, and the rhythm is detectable in the occurrence of stressed syllables.

### 1. Rhythmic patterns

To better understand the rhythmic pattern of English, let’s take a look at the similarity in stress patterns that occur in both words and simple sentences.

|                       |                      |                          |
|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1.1 Rhythmic pattern: | ● ○                  | ○ ●                      |
| Word                  | <u>teacher</u>       | <u>believe</u>           |
| Sentence              | <u>Do it.</u>        | <u>It hurts.</u>         |
| 1.2 Rhythmic pattern: | ○ ● ○                | ● ○ ●                    |
| Word                  | <u>prediction</u>    | <u>introduce</u>         |
| Sentence              | <u>I like it.</u>    | <u>What’s your name?</u> |
| 1.3 Rhythmic pattern: | ● ○ ● ○              | ● ○ ● ○ ○                |
| Word                  | <u>understanding</u> | <u>international</u>     |
| Sentence              | <u>Harry saw it.</u> | <u>Come to Canada</u>    |

## 2. Rhythmic pattern problems of sentence stress

Dale and Poms(2005:91) stated in their book on *English Pronunciation: Made Simple* that “English sentence-level stress patterns may not be used the same way as in your language in English, specific words within sentence are emphasized or spoken louder to make them stand out.” Thus, learners or students whose first language (L1) as Thai can be described as syllable-timed rhythm often have problems in recognizing and then producing features of the second language(L2) as English such as *contractions*, *primary* and *secondary stresses*, and *weak stress*. Obviously, the rhythm in English is created by using *stressed* and *unstressed* syllables, known as *stress-timed rhythm*, while the rhythm in Thai is created by using nearly equal weight and time in all syllables, known as *syllable-timed rhythm*. These two languages, therefore, are very different in rhythm.

Take a look at the pictures, the left one represents the stress-timed rhythm created by using stressed and unstressed syllables (roosters represent stressed syllables and chicks represent unstressed ones), and the right one represents the *syllable-timed rhythm*, created by using nearly equal weight and time in all syllables (ducks represent the same length and weight that each syllable has).

1) Stress-timed rhythm (English)    2) Syllable-timed rhythm (Thai)

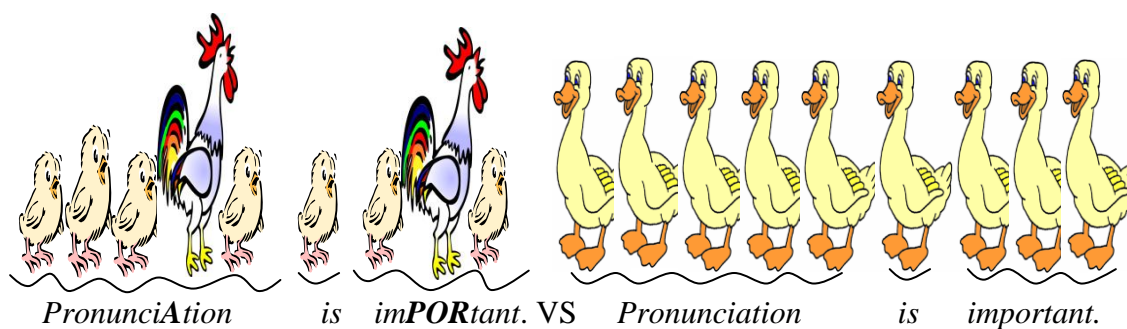


Figure 7.3 Comparison of stress-timed and syllable-timed rhythms

Source: Sherman ( 2015 ) ; DLTK's Sites (1998-2015)



## Summary

In connected speech, words are often linked together smoothly and naturally without a break between them, which is the way that native speakers normally do. Therefore, linking is very important in spoken English. There are two types of linking: *Final consonant sound > Initial vowel sound* (C+V) and *Final vowel sound > Initial vowel sound* (V+V). Another way to help the listeners to understand what we are saying is by making a pause and separating words into *thought groups*. By making a pause **into our speech**, we can divide longer sentences into two or more parts, or **thought groups**. In addition, rhythm is the patterning of stressed and unstressed syllables in words, phrases and sentences and gives the timing smoothly and naturally while we are speaking English.

## Question reviews

1. What is linking?
2. How many types of linking are there in spoken English?
3. Mark [ ͡ ] between the linking sounds in the following phrases and sentences.
  - 3.1 Come over here.
  - 3.2 A cup of tea
  - 3.3 In the afternoon
  - 3.4 Who are you?
4. What is thought group?
5. How many reasons do we pause in a sentence when we speak?
6. Divide each of the following sentences into **thought groups** by placing slashes [/] (short pause), and [//] (long pause) at pauses.

My favourite thing to do on a sunny day is to go the beach. It takes about an hour from my house. I have to get the train and a bus, but it's worth it. Lots of my friends live near the beach, so it's always the perfect way to catch up and enjoy the sunshine. (Hewings, 2007: 144)

7. What is rhythm?
8. What is the difference between a syllable-timed rhythm and a stress-timed rhythm?
9. Is English syllable-timed or stress-timed? Explain it briefly.
10. Give two examples of words and sentences by using the stress and rhythmic patterns.