

## **Prosodic Features**

- vowels and consonants = segments
- together form the syllables
- features imposed on the syllables = suprasegmentals, or, prosodic features
- suprasegmentals infl. patterns extending over larger chunks of utterance than the single segment
- (a) variations in **stress**
  - grammatical function (distinguish btw a noun x a verb)
  - contrastive emphasis ('I want a *red* pen, not a black one.')
- (b) variations in **pitch**
  - pitch pattern in a sentence = intonation
  - pitch pattern of a syllable or word causing the change of meaning in tone languages (Chinese) = tone
  - grammatical function ('This is my father.' [the highest pitch on the 1<sup>st</sup> syllable of 'father']; 'Is this your father?' [the highest pitch on the 2<sup>nd</sup> syllable])
- (c) variations in **length**
- (d) v. in **loudness**
  - combinations of pitch, length and loudness produce accent
  - oth. suprasegmentals: rhythm, tempo, voice quality

## **Word Accent**

- the word = a commutable entity with a separate linguistic identity, composed of one or more phonemes
- the word as a pattern formed by the qualitative and quantitative elements of its phonemes
- polysyllabic words: the word pattern determined also by the relationship of its parts
- varying prominence of the individual word parts gives rise to different word patterns
- the syllable of a word standing out from the remainder = the accented syllable
- accentual pattern of English words
  - (a) fixed = the main accent always falls on a particular syllable of any given word
  - (b) free = the main accent not tied to any particular situation in the word (x Czech: the main accent falls on first syllables)

## **Prominence**

- degrees of prominence of a syllable
  - (a) primary accent = the last major pitch change in a word/utterance
  - (b) secondary accent = a non-final pitch change in a word/utterance
  - (c) minor prominence = full vowel with no pitch change
  - (d) non-prominence = reduced vowel with no pitch change /ɪ, ʊ, ə/
- achieving the prominence
  - (a) pitch change
    - the most prominent factor
    - **primary accent** = the final pitch accent, the most prominent one
    - **secondary accent** = a pitch accent on an earlier syllable, less prominent
    - shift of accent in 'insult (n.) x in'sult (v.); 'import (n.) x im'port (v.); 'bellow x be'low" x no shift of accent in 'report, delay, select"
  - (b) loudness
    - accented syllables louder than unaccented ones
  - (c) quantity and quality
    - unaccented syllables: some more prominent than others due to the quality and quantity of the vowels at their centre
    - long vowels and diphthongs more prominent than short vowels
    - **full vowels** = vowels with minor prominence
    - **reduced vowels** = non-prominent short vowels in unaccented syllables /ɪ, ʊ, ə/

## **The Process of Elision**

- = a process of gradation, a loss of phonemes or obscuration of vowels in weakly accented syllables

- (a) established in the language for some time
- (b) current only recently in colloquial speech
- vowels: initially ('state, scholar, sample'), medially ('forecastle' /'fəʊksl/, 'Salisbury' /'sɔ:lzbɪ/, 'marriage'), finally ('name, loved, cousin')
- consonants: initial clusters /wr, kn, gn/ ('write, know, gnaw'), medial /t/ + /n/ or /l/ ('fasten, often, castle'), final /mb, mn/ ('lamb, hymn')

## Intonation

- **intonational phrases** = divisions of an utterance, signalled by pitch changes; their boundaries generally correspond syntactically with syntactic phrase/clause boundaries
- **nucleus** = the syllable with the final pitch accent, the starting point of one of the pitch patterns
- **nuclear tone** = a pitch pattern beginning at the primary accent and ending at the end of the intonational phrase
- types of nuclear tone:
  - (a) falling nuclear tones = start from the highest pitch of the speaking voice and fall to the lowest pitch (= high fall), or from the mid pitch to the lowest pitch (= low fall)
  - (b) rising nuclear tones = end at a high point (= high rise), or at a mid point (= low rise)
  - (c) falling-rising nuclear tones = fall-rise
  - (d) rising-falling nuclear tones = rise-fall
  - (e) level nuclear tones = mostly commonly a mid level
- the nucleus falls on the most prominent syllable, hence the most prominent word in an intonational phrase => the nucleus marks the end of the new information
- falling intonation: declaratives, yes/no-interrogatives, tag-interrogatives when expecting agreement, imperatives when abrupt, exclamatives
- rising intonation: wh-interrogatives, tag-interrogatives when leaving open the possibility of disagreement, imperatives when polite