Lecture 5 — Syllables, Stress, and Connected Speech

¶ 5.1

[Onset] + [Nucleus] + [Coda] = Syllable

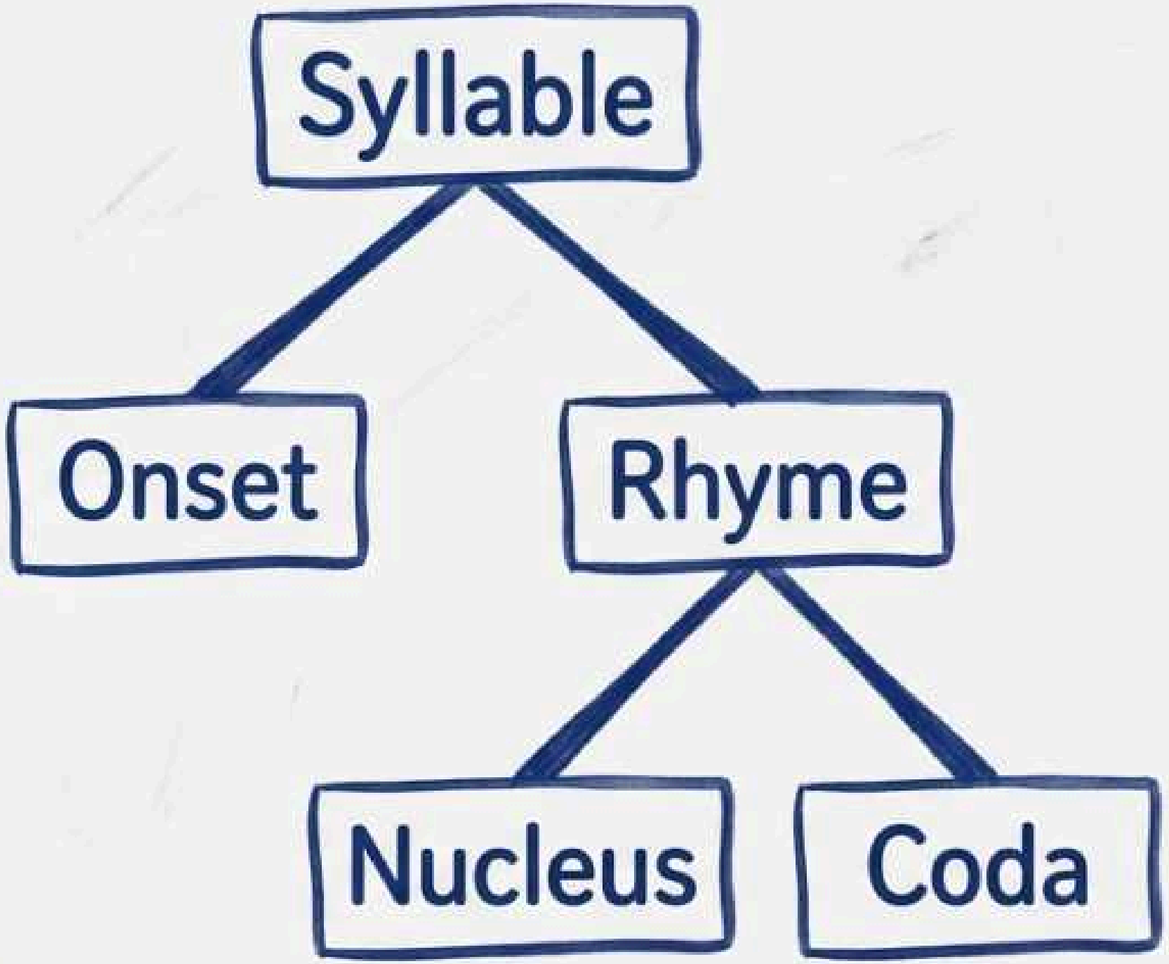
str — Onset: Consonants before

ɛ — Nucleus: Vowel / Peak of Loudness

ŋkθs — Coda: Consonants after

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¶ 5.2



Sound vs. Spelling

Sound Match	Spelling Illusion
/kæt/ (cat)	love (/lʌv/)
/hæt/ (hat)	move (/muv/)

Despite visual similarity, these do not rhyme acoustically.

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¶ 5.3

The Syllabic Consonant



English Examples:

bottle → final l carries the syllable.

button → final n carries the syllable.

English speakers produce them constantly without noticing.

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¶ 5.4

Counting Vowel Peaks



= 3 peaks

Banana



strengths = 1 peak



syllabic = 4 peaks

make

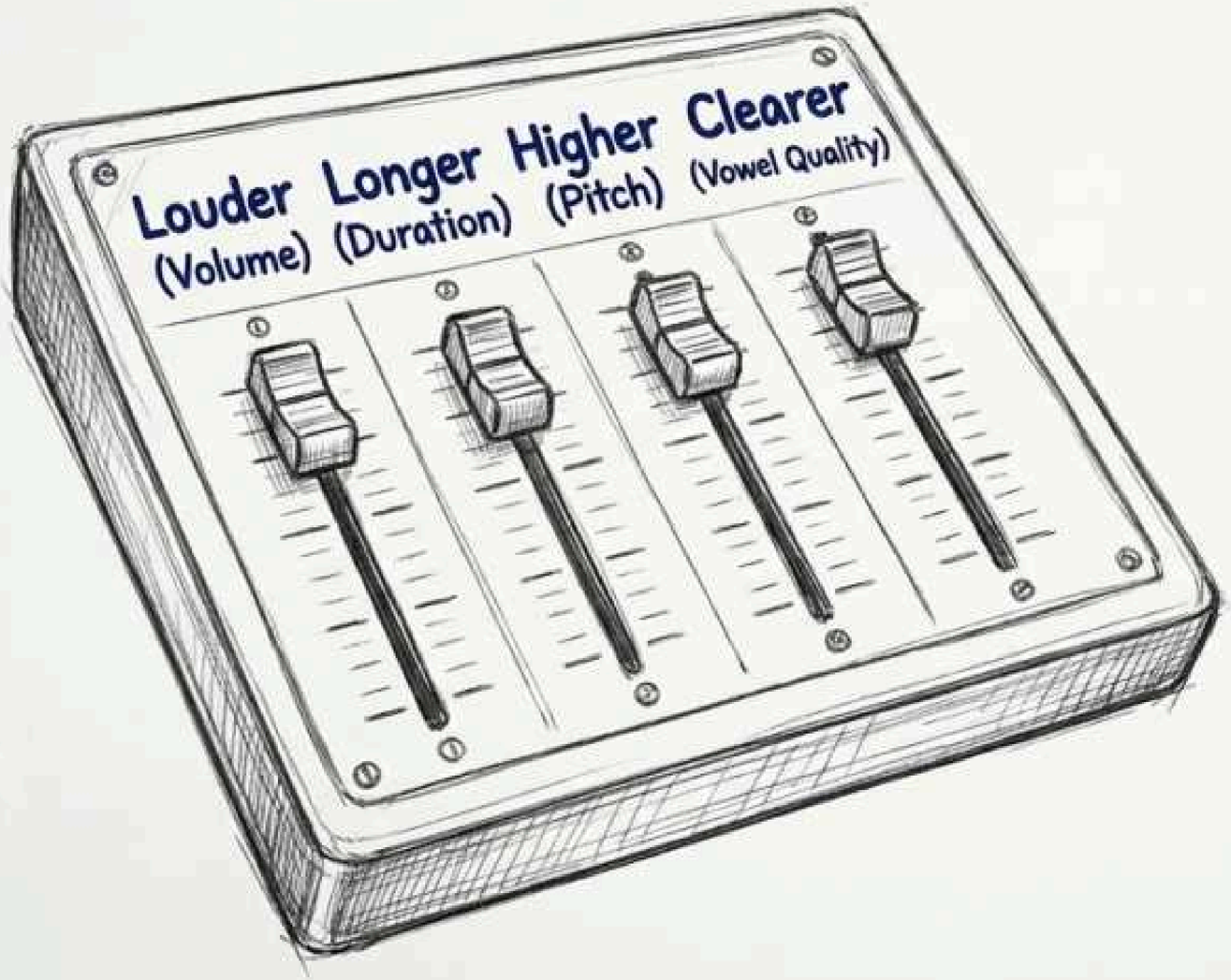
1 peak

Syllables belong to sound, not letters.

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¶5.5

The Anatomy of Stress



ˈ = Primary Stress

ˌ = Secondary Stress

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Stress Changes Meaning

¶ 5.6

Noun (Stress on 1st Syllable)	Verb (Stress on 2nd Syllable)
/ˈrɛkə·d/	/rəˈkɔɹd/
	

Other shape-shifters: present, contract, produce

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¶ 5.7

The Schwa Effect: Vowel Reduction

photograph

ˈpho-to-graph

phə-ˈtog-rə-pher

pho-to-ˈgraph-ic

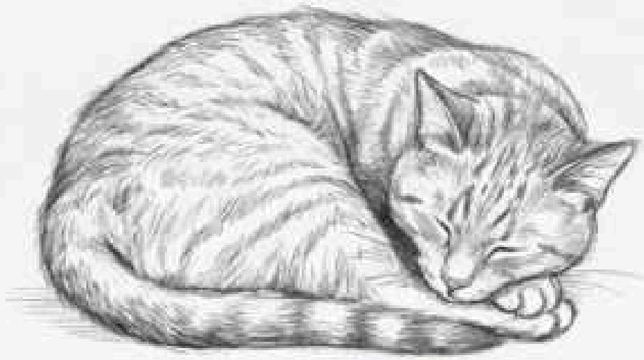
The exact same letters, spoken with entirely different vowels each time.

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¶ 5.8

Weak Forms in Running Speech

and → /ən/
to → /tə/
can → /kən/
of → /əv/
for → /fə/



a cat

Running Speech: → /ə/ (Standard)

a cat

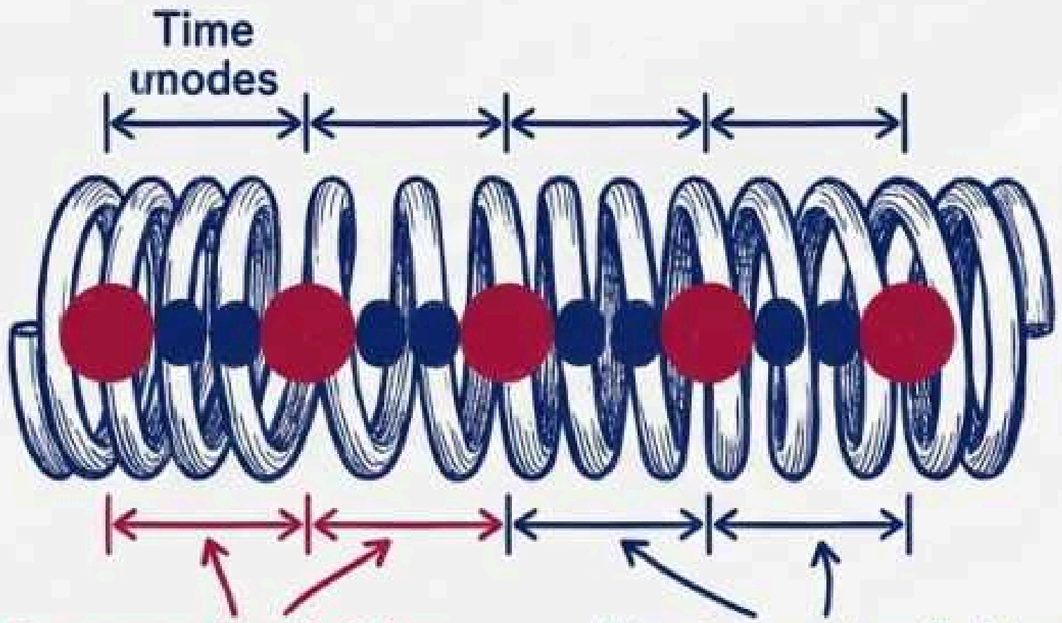
Emphatic: → /eɪ/ (Only when emphasizing)

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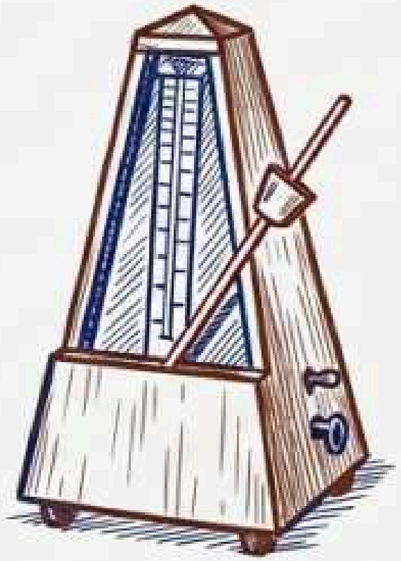
The Rhythm of Speech

¶ 5.9

English (Stress-Timed)



Spanish (Syllable-Timed)



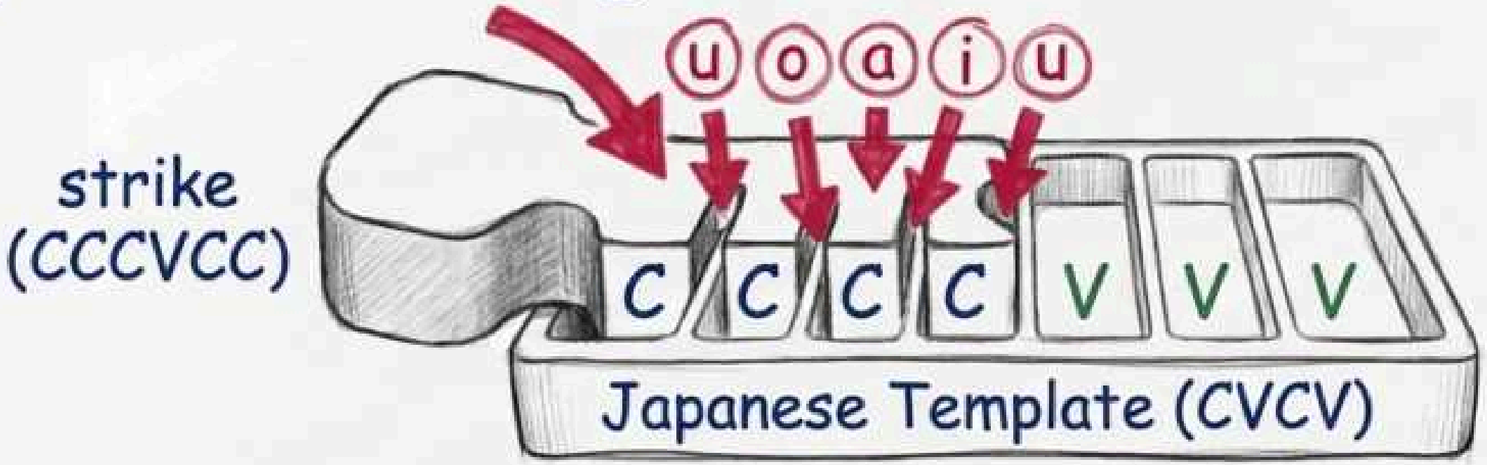
Every single syllable gets an exactly equal, regular share of time

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The Syllable Template

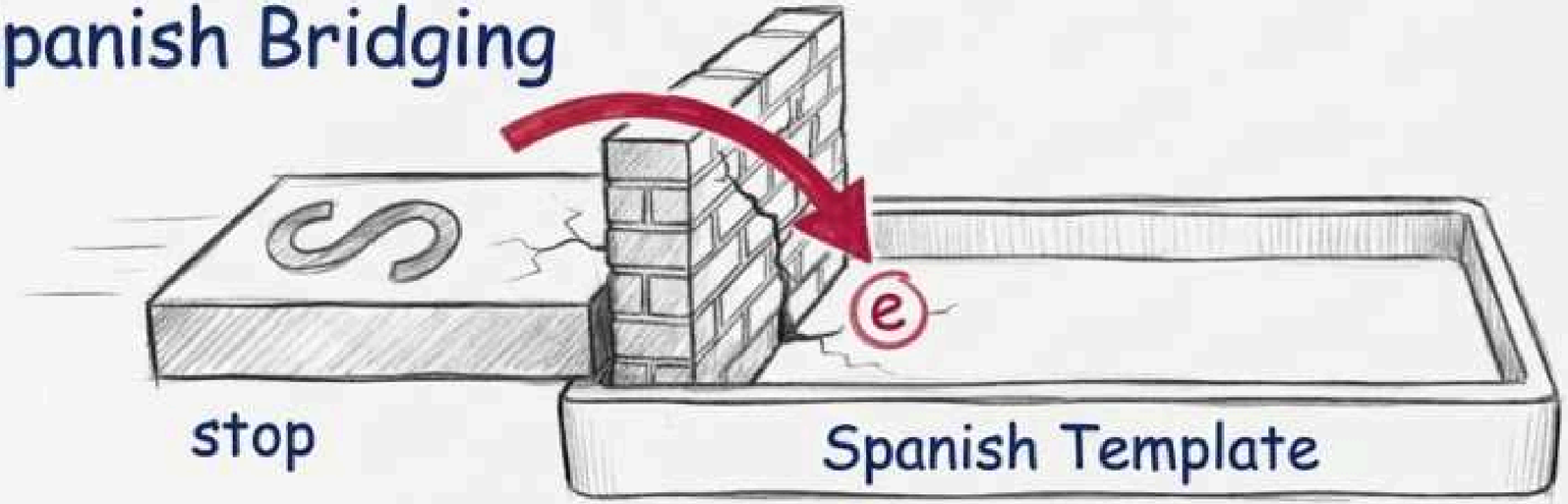
¶ 5.10

Japanese Borrowing



= su-to-rai-ku

Spanish Bridging



= estop

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Connected Speech: Linking

The Continuous Stream

Step 1: pick it up



Step 2: pick it up

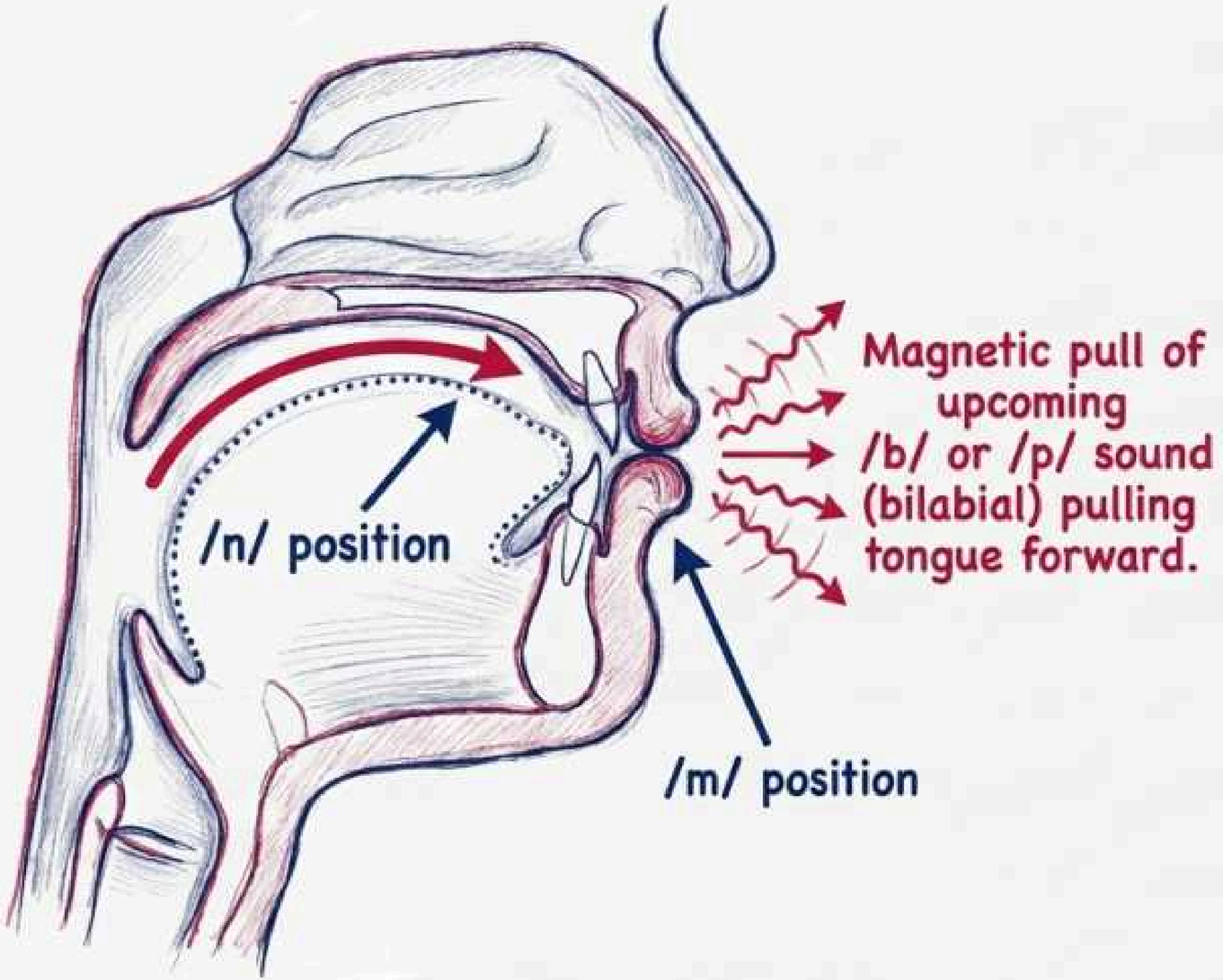


Step 3: pickitup (/ˈpɪkɪˌtʌp/)

Listening to speech as a stream of syllables, not separate words, is the first step to understanding fast talkers.

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Assimilation (Sound Magnetism)



Examples Output

ten boys → tem boys

input → imput

did you → /'dɪdʒu/
(d + y merge to dʒ)

Assimilation: sounds become more similar to neighboring sounds to ease pronunciation.

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Elision (Dropping Out)

¶ 5.13

prob-~~ab~~-ly → ['prɹabli]

nex~~t~~ day → [nɛks'deɪ]

cam-~~e~~-ra → ['kæmɹə]

fam-~~i~~-ly → ['fæmli]

choc-~~o~~-late → ['tʃɔklət]

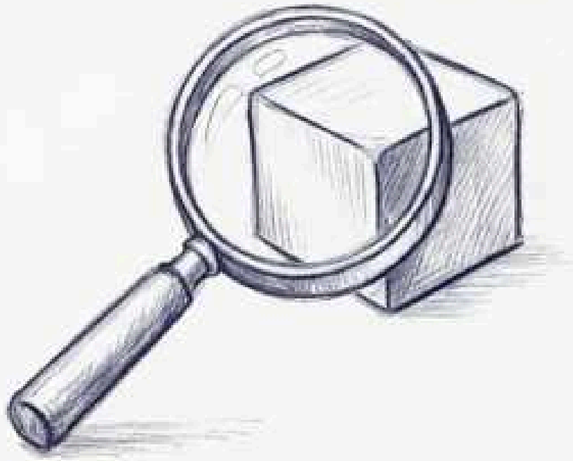
Said with fewer syllables than the spelling suggests.

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Two Levels of Transcription

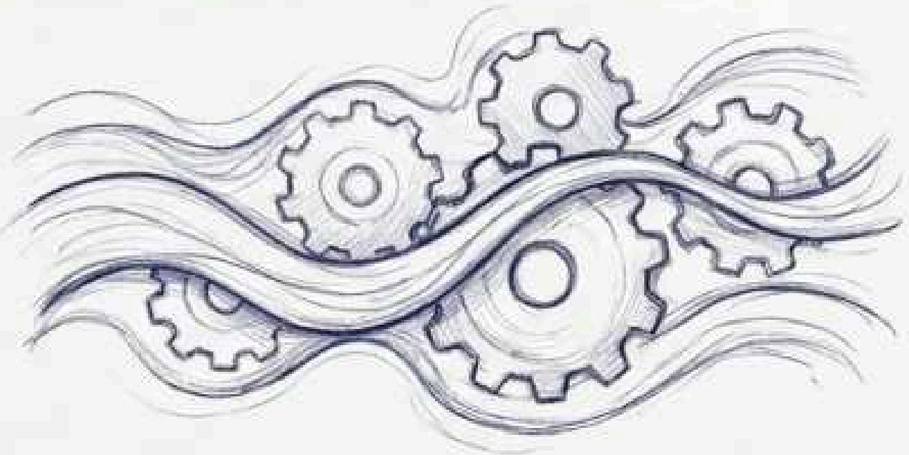
¶ 5.14

Citation Form



Careful pronunciation; records each word as if said entirely alone.

Connected Speech



Running talk; records the mutations, merges, and drops of real-world physics.

Both are correct. Choice depends on what you want to show.

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The Physics of Fast Talk

¶ 5.15

[Careful Words] + [Reduction] + [Linking] + [Assimilation] = [Fluent Output]

Example Sandbox

going to ⇒ gonna
want to ⇒ wanna
what do you ⇒ whaddaya

These are not sloppy. They are regular patterns of reduction, linking, and assimilation that every fluent speaker uses.

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¶ 5.16

Intonation: Pitch Across a Phrase

Statement



Question



The words are identical. The meaning is entirely different.

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¶ 5.17

Intonation Marks Focus

I didn't say HE stole it. → (Implies someone else did.)

I didn't SAY he stole it. → (Implies you only hinted at it.)

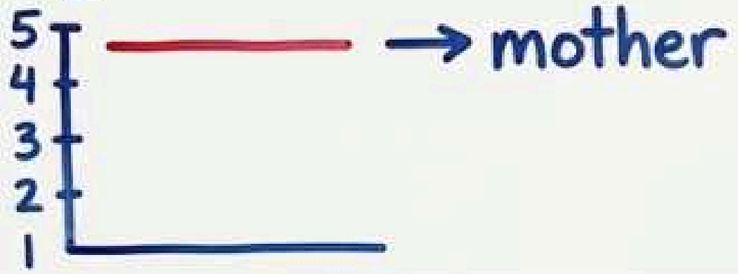
A single sentence carries half a dozen meanings depending on the accent.

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Tone Languages

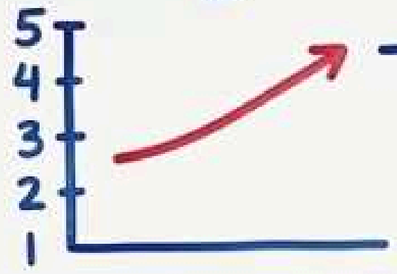
¶ 5.18

High Level (Tone 1)



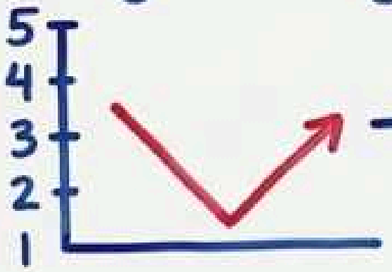
→ mother

Rising (Tone 2)



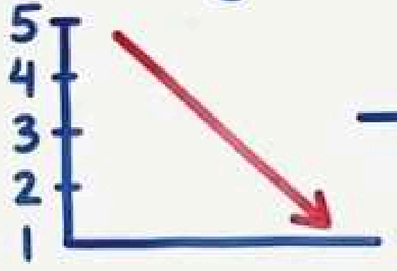
→ hemp

Falling-Rising (Tone 3)



→ horse

Falling (Tone 4)



→ scold

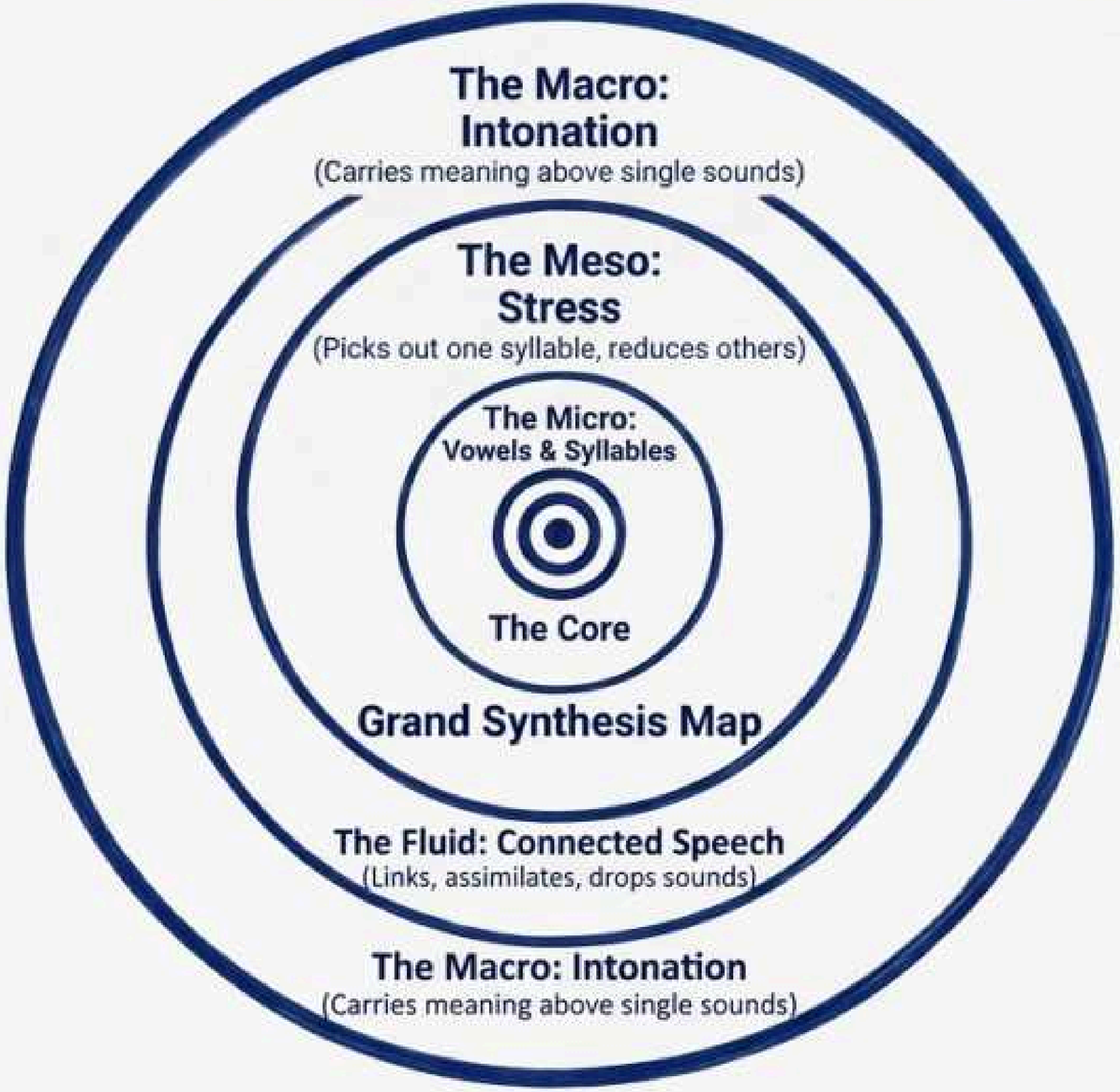
English Intonation = Works across phrases.

Mandarin Tone = Works on individual words.

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The Hierarchy of Spoken English

¶ 5.19



Now we will put all of this to work in transcription.

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