

# Basic terms of Rhythm

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## Introduction:

“English is a language in which strong stresses occur at irregular intervals and are interspersed with varying numbers of unstressed syllables, a pattern reminiscent of the dots and dashes of the Morse code, though modulated by the superimposed intonation”( Kingdon 1958, 160-161).

“A certain degree of rhythm can however, be attained in speech even when the numbers of unstressed syllables separating the stresses are quite irregular. Simply, by using the variations in the speed of delivery is to regularize the time intervals between the stresses. In this system, which is probably used unconsciously by many speakers, the longer series of unstressed syllables are run over quickly, and so the beats of the stress occur at more or less regular intervals.”(P. 161).

An utterance is divided into groups of syllables where each group has a stressed syllable as its most prominent feature the stressed syllable need not take up the initial position in a group. It can occur even in medial or final position. The division of an utterance into groups is based on grammatical considerations as well as on the positions of the stressed syllables in the words .for e.g., the division of an utterance is like this:

The    `stressed    |`syllables    |do`    not|    `    all    |`occupy|    the`    same|`    relative|  
po` sition

|in the `groups: |they may be i`nitial,|`medial| or `final.| for the` points at

Which the` groups| be` gin| and` end| are de`termined| by gram`matical|

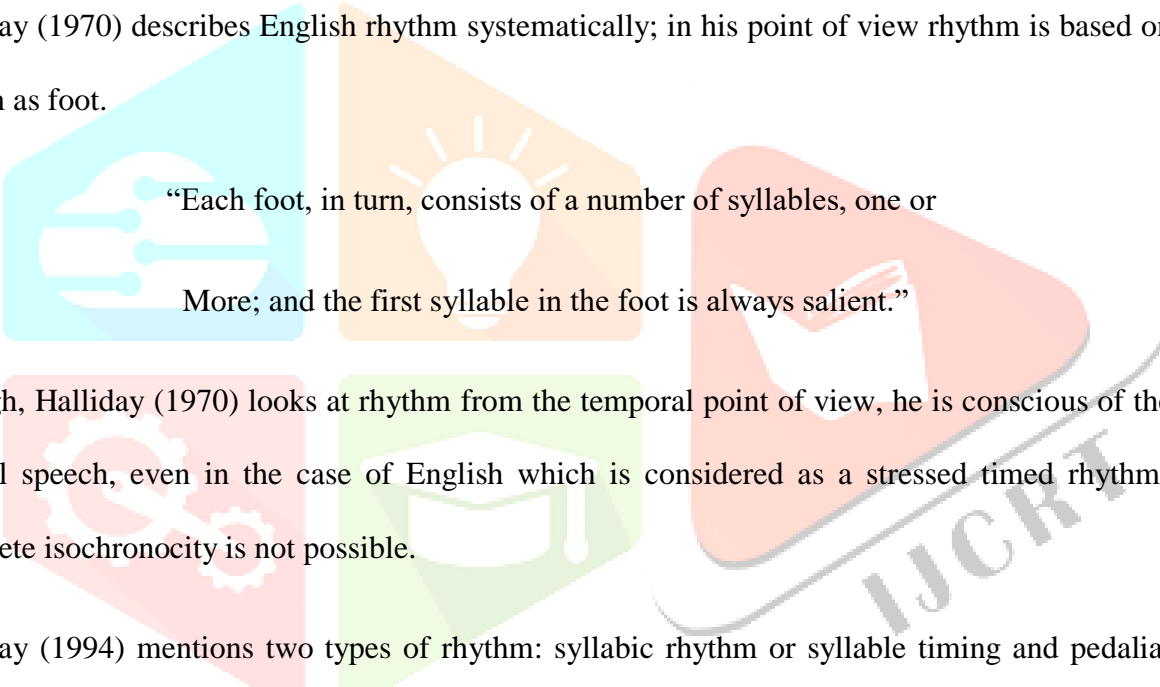
Considerations as well as by the positions of the stressed syllables in

The words.

Here ‘’ shows stress mark and ‘|’ shows group boundary. All these stress groups are said with more or less similar duration.

Halliday (1970) has mainly described the rhythmic pattern of standard British English like other phoneticians he also considers this variety of English as stress-timed. Actually he owes most of his description of rhythm to David Abercrombie but unlike Abercrombie and other phoneticians he integrates the concept of rhythm with intonation.

Halliday (1970) describes English rhythm systematically; in his point of view rhythm is based on a unit. It is known as foot.



“Each foot, in turn, consists of a number of syllables, one or more; and the first syllable in the foot is always salient.”

Though, Halliday (1970) looks at rhythm from the temporal point of view, he is conscious of the fact that in natural speech, even in the case of English which is considered as a stressed timed rhythmic language, complete isochronicity is not possible.

Halliday (1994) mentions two types of rhythm: syllabic rhythm or syllable timing and pedalian rhythm or foot timing. This is commonly known as stress timing. But he divides human languages into three categories when he says that some languages fit either in the first category or in the second and some languages have a mixture of both.

The term rhythm has been used by different scholars in a different way. Philip Carr states that his work is based on stress timing and rhythm also. Philip Carr said that “It deals with stress timing and eurhythmy. English feet may consist of a stressed syllable followed by a sequence of unstressed, as in the phrase ‘heard in the park’, in this stressed syllable is followed by two unstressed syllables, where ‘ heard’ is followed by three, if the phrase heard it in the announcement ,where it is followed by four. English allows for really quite extensive sequences of unstressed syllables, it has to be said that the ideal or optimal rhythmic structure is

one in which strong and weak syllables alternate in a s-w-s-w pattern. This process is quite regular in English. The reversal process reverses a sequence of a secondary stressed syllable and a primary stressed syllable when it is followed by a primary stressed syllable within a phrase”.

We encounter Rhythm in our daily lives by the movements of our own body like breathing, walking, talking etc. These are all rhythmic activities.

“Rhythm is patterning of energy simultaneously produced and perceived; a series of alternations of build-up and release, movement and encounter- Movement tending toward regularity but complicated by constant variations and local inflections”.

Rhythm makes a physical medium seem to move with deliberateness through time, recalling what has happened and projecting itself into the future rather than leaving time pass .Rhythm is felt as much it is heard or seen. A poetic rhythm is a heightening and an utilization of the rhythm of a particular language. The rhythm of the English language is about syllables and stresses.

The definition of rhythm is learning to read poetry in such a way as to experience its rhythm.

### Some basic terms of rhythm:

**Verse:** verse is a line or a stanza. Poetry is written in verse, verse introduces some principles. This concerns poetry in verse.

Two major types of verse:

- Metrical verse
- Non metrical/free verse.

**Free verse:** It has straight forward device to bring about focus on the movement of the language, the nonstop flow of prose language which has breaks resolute by syntax and sense and it is regularly indicated by a slight pause. Free verse has integrity and function of its own .Free verse depend on the intrinsic rhythmic characteristics of spoken English.

**Meter and metrical verse:** Meter is an organizing principle which turns to the general inclination toward regularity in rhythm into a firmly decorative regularity that can be counted and named. To make the lines metrical –the poet has to work with the arrangement of words, placing of syntactic boundaries, and his organizations of lines. If the sense seems to need a pause or quickening, we can provide metrical verse because it is built into words and it will continue to make itself felt. Versification is the art of writing in verse; metrics or more conventionally, prosody is the study of that art.

**Beat:** The basic characteristic of the rhythm is organized as a meter that is the beat, an explode of energy that is part of repeating and ordered pattern. An offbeat refers to the weaker pulses and it is a kind of beat, but it is clearly noticeable from a full beat by being less powerful because full beat is powerful.

### Types of Meter:

In this there is a basic distinction between stress-meter and syllable stress meter. And every metrical poem as falling into the group of either four- beat verse or non four beat verse .Four beat verse occurs in all types of meter, but non four beat verse occurs solely in syllable stress meter.

### The familiarities of meter:

In every popular music variety, shows a superiority of meter and rhythm that its listeners react to without any speaker training. Rhythmic understanding is very easy to learn before a child can articulate the words a language, it is mimicking the way patterns of syllables and stresses are produced in that language, and absorbing the metrical structure of the nursery rhymes and songs that it hears. In fact, one of the problems we face in discussing this subject is the deep acquaintance we have with the rhythms of poetry.

A two-year old chanting the following rhyme with perfect metrical placing of syllables even if its actual pronunciation is far from perfect.

In a poem that the words in the first line have to be pronounced with remarkable slowness, an adult says that each of them carries a beat. The third line moves much faster and every second carries a beat , the other two lines fall between these limits .We can show this variety by underlining the emphasized syllables.

For e.g.: star light, star bright,

--- --- --- ----

First star I see to night

--- --- --- ---

I wish I may I wish I might,

--- --- --- ----

Have the wish I wish tonight

--- --- --- ----

Rhyme comes with regularity, a tune attached and it helps to bring out the rhythmic regularity of the verse. The speakers of English can turn irregular-looking sets of lines like these into regular metrical verse. (Derek Attridge, 1995).

Rhythm is basically felt by the speaker, it is subjective. A stress syllable is produced by reinforce chest pulse. Rhythm is the organize of chest pulse and it is a movement that is regular and periodic. Any periodic recurring movement constitutes rhythm.

The chronological patterning can be binary modification or a more complex rhythm as found in metrical poetry and music. The terms 'focal' and 'nonfocal' rhythm constituent are assigned to value sequences such as high\_ low pitch, pitch peak\_ pitch trough, long\_ short syllable, Vowel\_ consonant segment, we therefore recognize two factors in the temporal organization of rhythm: the internal focal-nonfocal rhythmic pattern, and the external rhythmic environment. The rhythmic environment (whether the syllable, the foot, or some other unit) is sometimes called rhythm unit, etc.

**Conclusion:** Rhythm takes an alternation of strong and weak syllables in a sentence. Between two stresses we cannot have four unstressed syllables. Content words are stressed and structural words are less unstressed. Not stressed it is weak; when it is stressed it is strong. Auxiliaries, conjunctions have weak forms in generally, prepositions takes stress when it is on the end. Weak forms and the terms of rhythm are very important for keeping rhythm. If the rhythm is not kept, the speech became futile and unpleasant.

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