Chapter - V
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TECHNIQUES OF TEACHING STRESS, RHYTHM AND INTONATION PATTERNS

5.1 Introduction:

Pronunciation stress rhythm and intonation are the main elements in the proper learning of a second or foreign language. These elements are necessary for the learners to be intelligible to others. Teaching of pronunciation is a serious and challenging task. The teacher has to take these aspects of language teaching very seriously.

Teaching of individual sounds is somewhat easy. But teaching of stress rhythm and intonation is difficult. The teacher has to make efforts to teach these elements. He should be very careful while teaching these elements.

The present study emphasizes on the techniques of teaching stress, rhythm and intonation in detail. This study deals with the techniques in general as well as in the Indian situation particularly.
chapter also gives some suggestions for the teachers and guidelines for the students for the betterment of teaching and learning of stress, rhythm and intonation patterns.

Stress, rhythm and intonation can be taught through imitation drills. In these drills, the stress and intonation patterns can be 'visualized' with the help of symbols. The rhythmic pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables can be shown by dots or squares of different sizes. For example, the rhythmic pattern of the sentence *It's a red book* can be indicated by two small squares followed by two bigger ones, e.g. \[□□□□\].

Likewise, the intonation patterns can also be visually represented with arrow-heads indicating a rise or a fall.

5.2 *Techniques Of Teaching Stress*:

Teachers are advised to train students in using the words stress patterns in simple words of two or more syllables, compound words and words involving functional stress change. The patterns of sentence stress should also be taught by the use of stress.
marks and pauses in the sentences chosen for practice. The students should be asked to read the sentences aloud after they finish marking stressed syllables. Following techniques can be used for the teaching of stress patterns in English.

(1) **Use of Gestures:**

The teacher may use any of the following gestures to indicate the stress pattern:

(a) thump the air when saying the stressed syllable

(b) make a downward stroke of the hand-marking the "beat" like a conductor

(c) punch the palm of his other hand

(d) clapping more loudly for the stressed syllable

(e) bang his hand against something, e.g., the desk or the blackboard

(2) **Use Of The Blackboard:**

Indicating marks on the blackboard is quite an effective technique of showing stress patterns. Given below are few possible options.
(a) Teachers can make the stress patterns clear by writing stressed syllables in capital letters. Examples –

1. MEET me at SIX.
2. good MORNing.
3. BUY me a BOOK.
4. have you MET my FRIEND ?
5. good NIGHT.
6. I WANT to BUY a CAR.
7. good EVENing.
8. she CAME.
9. he WANted to SLEEP.
10. PINKY and RINKY are FRIENDS.

(b) The teacher can use the boxes to show the stressed syllable. Small boxes are used for unstressed syllables and the big boxes are used for the stressed syllables. Examples –

1. Meet me at six.
2. Good morning.
(4) Have you met my friend?

(5) Good night.

(6) Good evening.

(7) She came.

(8) I want to buy a car.

(9) He wanted to sleep.

(10) Pinky and Rinky are friends.

(c) The stressed syllable could be underlined. Examples:

(11) Meet me at six.

(12) Good morning.

(13) Buy me a book.

(14) Have you met my friend?

(15) Good night.

(16) Good evening.

(17) She came.

(18) I want to buy a car.

(19) He wanted to sleep.

(20) Pinky and Rinky are friends.
(d) Teachers can show stress by using the simple stress marks. (Mark at the top indicates the primary stress and those at the bottom indicate the secondary stress). For examples:

Oppor'tunity

Gene'rosity

Edu'cate, Cul'tivate etc.

(e) The stressed syllable could be written in a different coloured chalk.

5.3 **Techniques of Teaching Rhythm:**

The teacher can begin by getting the students to read aloud some of the sentence which he dictated and corrected in the ear training. He should first read them aloud several times himself, emphasizing the rhythm by getting the stressed syllables to fall at equal intervals of time. Then he should get the class to read the sentence aloud in chorus, and then (if he wishes) in groups and individually.

The teacher should point out to the students the importance of rhythm in English speech, without it, it
is very difficult for people to understand what one is saying.

The teacher can emphasize the rhythm by banging on his table, doing this at regular intervals, each bang coinciding with a stressed syllable. Teacher can also emphasize the rhythm by using non-sense syllables, using \textit{tum} for stressed syllable, and \textit{ti} for unstressed syllables. Examples

(1) \textit{tum} ti ti \textit{tum} ti ti \textit{tum} ti

\textit{Mary ne\'glected his \textasciitilde studies}

(2) \textit{tum} ti ti ti \textit{tum} ti ti \textit{tum} ti

\textit{Mary has ne\'glected his studies}

(3) \textit{tum} ti ti ti \textit{tum} ti ti \textit{tum} ti ti

\textit{Mary has been ne\'glecting his studies}

Individuals may be asked to read it aloud and simultaneously banging on their desks to mark the rhythm. After a student has read it aloud, the teacher should read it aloud himself.
After several students have read this aloud, the teacher should make the class read it in chorus or in groups. If they do not read it correctly, he should repeat the sentence after them himself and make them say it again.

5.4 Techniques of Teaching Intonation:

According to Adrian Doff, “Intonation is the ‘music’ of a language – the way the voice goes up and down as we speak. Intonation is very important in expressing meaning, and especially in showing our feelings (e.g., surprise, anger, disbelief, gratitude). However, intonation patterns are quite complex, and it is better for students to acquire them naturally rather than try to learn them consciously.”

Repetition is the easiest way of practicing intonation. Students should be provided sufficient practice in repetition of words, sentences or phrases. Intonation and pitch of the voice can be shown in the same way as the stress is shown earlier. Teachers should read simple, interesting and short passages from plays, novels, etc. and ask learners to locate the correct places of tonic syllables. Following techniques:

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can be used for an effective teaching of intonation patterns:

(1) **Exaggerations:**

When teachers exaggerate the main features (e.g. a falling tone in some questions) the pattern is more fascinating and memorable for learners when they try and imitate it.

(2) **Gestures:**

Intonation can be shown by making certain gestures e.g. clear sweep of the hand either up or down can indicate the general direction of the voice. Teachers can use their hand movement to show whether the voice starts on a high or low level pitch. Hence a falling tone or a rising tone can be clearly indicated through gestures. Gestures can be used effectively while conducting a choral structure drill for teaching rising, falling and falling-rising tones.
(3) **The Blackboard:**

(i) Intonation can be taught by drawing arrows on the blackboard, Examples:

A. He is my brother. \(\searrow\)  (Low fall)

B. Is he ? \(\nearrow\)  (High rise)

A. She is my teacher. \(\searrow\)  (Low fall)

B. Is she ? \(\nearrow\)  (High rise)

A. She is cute. \(\searrow\)  (Low fall)

B. Is she ? \(\nearrow\)  (High rise)

A. He is smart. \(\searrow\)  (Low fall)

B. Is he ? \(\nearrow\)  (High rise)

A. Can I borrow your notes ? \(\nearrow\)  (High rise)

B. No. \(\searrow\)  (Low fall)

A. Can I use your pen ? \(\nearrow\)  (High rise)

B. No. \(\searrow\)  (Low fall)

A. Who's that ? \(\searrow\)  (Low fall)
B. It's Peter. \ (Low fall)
A. Who is he? \ (Low fall)
B. He is Mack. \ (Low fall)
A. Is that Pinky? \ (High rise)
B. No, it isn't \ (Low fall)

(ii) drawing lines on the blackboard, e.g.;

E.g., a. \underline{I need a} book. (High fall)
   b. \underline{I need a} pen (High fall)

(iii) drawing dots on the scale, e.g.,

\underline{---------}
\underline{---------}
\underline{---------;}
\underline{---------}
\underline{---------}
\underline{---------}
\underline{---------}
\underline{---------}
I need a book (High fall)
(iv) Showing the height of the dot on the scale:

Extra high

High

Mid

Low

I need a pen. (Low fall)

(v) Using raised number (Low intonation is usually represented by 1, mid by 2, high by 3, and extra high by 4). Example:

²I need a ⁴road map², not a ³picture¹.

(vi) Using italic letters or, capital letters, for stressed syllables. Examples

Good EVENing

Good MORNing.

Good evening.

Good morning

(4) **Back-Chaining Technique:**

In most English sentences, the pitch movement at the end of the sentence is important for the
meaning. Students frequently find it difficult to repeat long sentences after the teacher. In this case the teacher should break the sentence down into bits and build up towards the complete sentence. Because of the importance of the intonation of the end of the sentence in English, it is usually better to begin to break the sentence down from the end, rather than the beginning.

This may be checked quickly by counting aloud from 1 to 6. It will be noted that the voice falls significantly on 6. If the following sequence, is repeated not as independent units, but as part of the full sequence: one, two, three, four, five, six,

One, two
One, two, three
One, two, three, four
One, two, three, four, five
One, two, three, four, five, six;
it will be noted that it is extremely difficult. Beginning at the end, however because the end remains
consistent, the intermediate stages are relatively easy, and contribute towards the ability to produce a complete sequence. One should try this sequence:

Five, six

Four, five, six,

etc.

As an example – Do you mind if I smoke? Could be back-chained as follows:

Teacher - smoke

Students - smoke

Teacher - If I smoke

Students - If I smoke

Teacher - mind if I smoke

Students - mind if I smoke

Teacher - Do you mind if I smoke?

Students - Do you mind if I smoke?

Beginning at the beginning means that the intermediate stages are not contributing naturally to
words the final version. Back chaining overcomes this difficulty.

5.5 **Suggestions For Teachers:**

For effective teaching of spoken English, particularly stress, rhythm and intonation patterns, the teachers are advised to follow the following measures:

1. Word stress should be taught by the use of stress marks and constant reference to a dictionary and word stress rules.

2. The patterns of stress, rhythm and intonation should be taught by the use of stress and tone marks in the sentences, chosen for practice.

3. The division of sentences into tone groups and the location of the tonic syllables should be taught by analyzing longer sentences.

4. The pitch movements at the end of most English sentence an important for meaning. The teacher should break the sentence down into bits and build up towards the complete sentence. It is
better to use the technique of back chaining (see 5.4 (4)) for effective teaching of intonation. Beginning at the end, because the end remains consistent, the intermediate stages are relatively easy, and contribute towards the ability to produce a complete sequence.

Example – **Listen to me carefully** could be back chained as following:

Teacher  – carefully

Students  – carefully.

Teacher  – to me carefully.

Students  – to me carefully.

Teacher  – **Listen** to me carefully.

Students  – **Listen** to me carefully.

(5) The teacher should say some words or sentences and ask the class to perceive intonation, stress and juncture for the sake of ear training. To be able to detect finer stress and intonation patterns in English is a must for Indian students.
(6) The teacher should describe the high and low pitch being shown on the blackboard through arrows, lines, dots, scales, etc.

(7) The teacher should ask the class to imitate her.

(8) The teacher should teach the class how to vary the sentence in order to suit various situations. This variation can be taught through substitution, transformation, expansion, reduction, combination, etc. Examples:

I need a book ↓

pen ↓

I need a pen ↓

book ↓

I need a book ↓

(9) The teacher should give a variety of assignments, e.g. a topic, a picture or set of pictures, a story, or some combinations of these as stimulus to his students for their oral exercises.
(10) The teacher should make use of the ear-training techniques.

5.6 Guidelines For The Learners:

The following suggestions are offered to the learners of English in India:

(1) The learners should learn and practice the correct word stress patterns in simple words, compound words and words involving functional stress change.

(2) The learners should acquire and practice the correct patterns of sentence stress and rhythm.

(3) Weak forms of vowels, in unstressed syllables and in form words in unstressed positions, should be correctly articulated and should not be given strong forms or stress in normal unemphatic speech in English.

(4) The learners should divide the sentences into proper tone groups with the normal use of pauses.
(5) The characteristic rhythmic patterns of English tone groups should be acquired with stressed syllables coming at more or less regular intervals of time by the rapid pronunciation of weak forms and unstressed syllables.

(6) The learners should acquire the correct location of tonic syllables corresponding to that of normal English.

(7) The learners should acquire the correct use of tones, satisfying the principles of the use of tones in normal English.

(8) The learners should carefully maintain the distinction between different kinds of tones conveying different attitudinal meanings.

(9) The correct use of English tones distinguishing different kind of utterances, e.g., statements, questions, commands, etc. and also conveying the speakers attitudes correctly is required to be learnt and practiced as they are used in normal English speech. Rigorous exercises are therefore needed for learning grammatical and
attitudinal meanings of English intonation if the learners wish to speak English effectively with an intelligible accent at the national and international levels.