

Utah State University

DigitalCommons@USU

Faculty Honor Lectures

Lectures

5-1-1961

The Semantics of Stress and Pitch in English

George A. Meyer
Utah State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/honor_lectures



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Meyer, George A., "The Semantics of Stress and Pitch in English" (1961). *Faculty Honor Lectures*. Paper 35.

https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/honor_lectures/35

This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by the Lectures at DigitalCommons@USU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Honor Lectures by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@USU. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@usu.edu.



The
The
SEMANTICS of
STRESS and
PITCH in
ENGLISH

NOT
EVERY

BLÄCK
BÍRD *is*

A
BLÁCKBÍRD

not
every

BLÄCK
BÍRD
every

BLÄCK
BÍRD

IS A
BLÁCKBÍRD

NOT
EVERY

BLÄCK
BÍRD

92

TWENTY-FOURTH FACULTY HONOR LECTURE

The Semantics of Stress and Pitch in English

by

GEORGE A. MEYER

Professor of Languages

THE FACULTY ASSOCIATION
UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
LOGAN UTAH 1961

NOTE OF EXPLANATION

Since English has no generally accepted method of marking the printed or written word to show the difference in stress and pitch that occur in the spoken language, it has been necessary to choose an arbitrary set of signs to indicate those phenomena.

Various devices are employed at times by writers who feel the need of suggesting a higher pitch and greater stress to call attention to the "most important" word in a group. Underscoring, or italics, or quotes are used by some to achieve this end.

The printing of this lecture required the adoption of two stress marks for which special type had to be made in order to produce the contrasts necessary to the development of the argument:

- 1) Primary stress, with higher pitch, is represented by an acute accent over the vowel of the stressed syllable.
- 2) Secondary stress, with relatively lower pitch, is represented by a diaeresis over the vowel of the stressed syllable.

The Semantics of Stress and Pitch in English

by

GEORGE A. MEYER

Tó bē ór nōt tó bē, thāt ís thé quēstión.

Nōw ís the tíme fór äll goód mēn to cōme tó the äid of thēir cōuntry.

. . . Thāt gövērnmēt of thé pēople, by thé pēople ánd for thé pēople, sháll nōt pērish fróm the eārth.

Have your ears, not to mention your sensibilities, and your reverence for long established familiar rhythms and meanings been quite rudely jolted?

If each individual present here were to read these well-known lines from the printed page, or recite them from memory, I'm sure that you would, in each case, almost invariably reproduce them with the same stress, pitch, and rhythm patterns. There is comfort and relaxation of mind in rolling out the familiar phrases, with the stresses, relaxation from stress, and variations in pitch, that make them full of meaning.

Contrariwise, when you heard them spoken as I read them just now, the normal meaning of each group of words was violated by the change of stress and pitch on certain words. Your mind was induced to fly off in odd directions, trying to find some reason for the obvious distortion of the familiar and comfortable pattern of the normal.

The distortions of meaning and reference produced by the shift of stress and pitch are proof positive that our English language is not just the 600,000 plus vocabulary items listed in Webster's International. Those vocabulary items have to be arranged in certain sequences and patterns according to what is known as the rules of grammar. If both speaker and listener know and observe these rules, successful communication can be established. But there is much more to the problem of making our thoughts clear to a person on the receiving end.

English depends greatly on the use of stress and pitch for giving the full meaning of what we say. The spoken language, in contrast to the written language, is capable of very subtle and meaningful variations which are produced by the intensity and the pitch of an utterance. We have not yet devised a means for indicating such variations on the printed or written page. The written language is, therefore, an inferior means of communication, especially when used to record conversation, either fictional or real.

But the native speaker of English uses these devices without giving conscious thought to what he is doing. He has learned how to ring the changes on his words to convey differing shades of meaning with complete accuracy. He hears the patterns over and over, from the time when, as an infant, he begins to take notice of the sounds made by doting parents and fond relatives, as they try to establish communication with the new little bundle of flesh and bones. His first vocabulary consists of the words that are "important" to his environment. The inevitable "mama," and "papa," "up," "down," "bye-bye," "bad," "good," "nice," "pretty," "baby," "boy," "girl." There are no articles, prepositions, relatives, or demonstratives. Verbs become important a little later as he learns to move about, and be aware of himself as a doer. These first words he hears and comes to recognize are spoken with a firm stress, and most likely with a fairly high pitch, in order to attract the attention of the infant, and elicit an attempt at imitation. He thus begins his long learning of how to communicate with his fellow human beings, with his animal pets, and even with hosts of inanimate things by stressing his "important words," and using a high pitch to call his listener's attention to the person, thing, quality, or action he is most interested in at the moment.

Take the same child at the age of fifteen, and he will be doing the same thing with a vocabulary of 10,000 words or more, having added the articles, prepositions, relatives, demonstratives, possessives, pronouns, conjunctions, and auxiliary verbs, all of which later additions he will *not* stress unless some special situation arises that makes stress and high pitch on one of those words his most efficient way of calling attention to the special idea he wants to convey.

Let's take for example the sentence:

You paid your bills, didn't you?

This is the normal way to say these words if no special meaning is to be expressed. The stressed words are "paid," "bills," "didn't you." The unstressed words are "you," "your." They are said quickly, because they are really not "important" for the meaning of the sentence. The person being spoken to has supposedly paid his bills, and the speaker adds "didn't you?", because he is not sure that the payment has been made.

Now, take the same sentence with meaningful, attention-calling change of stress and pitch.

You paid your bills, didn't you?

The words "you," "your," and "didn't," have received the strongest stress and highest pitch, because the speaker has three special ideas to convey which are not found in the first sentence with its normal stress.

"You" now means "you," and nobody else.

"Your" now means "only yours."

"Didn't you" now means, "I'm sure you did."

Strangely enough, if you ask an American adult why he uses more force and a higher pitch on certain words in an utterance, and little force and low pitch on others he will probably be nonplused. He will be at a loss to explain the phenomena, and when the explanation is given to him, may feel as pleased as M. Jourdain in Moliere's *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* when he learned that he had been speaking *prose* all his life, without knowing it.

The non-native speaker of English has to be taught what words in our language should receive distinctive stress, and what ones are of so little importance that they receive no stress. Until he learns that, his speech is often a rush of syllables with a monotonous sameness of pitch and no strongly stressed words to call your attention to the progress of his thought. He also has to learn about the differences in meaning produced by the variations in the stress and pitch of words in a sentence. It may take him years of living in America before he makes such distinctions easily and unself-consciously.

It would take him some time to learn of the incongruity, or

should I say, the gruesomeness, of the second version of the following sentence, in which only one change of stress-pitch is made.

1. What are we having for dinner, möther?
2. What are we having for dinner, móther?

If we add to variations in stress and pitch some of the up or down glides which are so meaningful when used with monosyllabic utterances, the meanings and complications become most obscure for the non-native speaker.

Take, for instance, the implied meanings, the possible situations, the moods that can be suggested by the single word "yes." Try to think of some situation that might come to mind when you hear the word spoken in the following manners. I'll give a brief pause after each variation. Let your mind suggest some time or occasion for which each "yes" would be suitable.

Yes; yes; yes; yes; ye-e-es; yes; yes;

Or the word what?

What; what; what; what; wha-a-at; what; what;

This feature of English is so highly developed that we native-speakers depend on stress and pitch to convey much of our meaning. It is an economical method of communication in that it requires fewer words to express adequately the idea we wish to transfer from our minds to those of our hearers. Other languages in the Indo-European family, particularly in the Latin branch (French, Italian, Portuguese, Roumanian, Spanish, Provençal, Catalan) must resort to additional words, phrases, or even clauses in order to convey the meanings that English can achieve by stress and pitch. German, and the other languages of the Germanic branch of Indo-European, use stress and pitch to some extent to convey meaning, but they are much less flexible than English in their use of this device for achieving semantic distinctions.

Linguistic science is beginning to turn its attention to questions of stress and intonation in the languages of the world. This relatively new science has been preoccupied for the past forty years with the analysis of the sounds and the formal structure of languages. A formidable body of results has been obtained. Unfortunately, for the non-specialist in linguistics, this material is couched, for the

most part, in a technical jargon that outdoes even the present day jargon of the psychologist and the social scientist.

Linguistics in America has forged ahead of the more traditional approach to the same science in Europe, due largely to the impetus given to it by Leonard Bloomfield and Edward Sapir in the twenties. Specialists in the field have been creating their own vocabulary to describe their findings. This has gone on at such a rapid rate that it has been necessary to produce a dictionary of American linguistic terminology, so that scholars at home, and especially abroad, can understand the learned treatises of their colleagues in America.

Some of the most perceptive of our American linguistic scientists have been working on the problem of English intonation, and have achieved impressive results in classifying and reducing to recognizable patterns the various things that happen when one English-speaking person opens his mouth to communicate orally with one or more individuals who have been, do I dare say, fortunate enough to be familiar with the same simple, but in many ways, undisciplined and exasperating tongue. Unfortunately, from my point of view, they have approached the subject with the attitude that there are to be discovered and catalogued, certain fixed patterns of English intonation, which invariable govern the utterance of the thoughts of native speakers of English. Professor Charles F. Hockett of Cornell, one of the ablest of our modern linguistic scientists, has this to say in his chapter on English intonation (p. 34, *A Course in Modern Linguistics*):

Recent research suggests that every language has a system of basic speech melodies which is as unique to the language as is its set of vowel and consonant phonemes. It may be that the normal effect of an intonation is sometimes concealed or overridden by the superposition of non-linguistic features of speech melody under the stimulus of strong emotion, but this is on a par with the fact that normal articulation of vowels and consonants is sometimes distorted by excitement, depression, or drugs.

It is my considered opinion that this is an inadequate approach to the subject. English is not really saddled with "a system of basic speech melodies." While it is true that there are recognizable patterns of intonation that are used in certain situations, such as in

exclamations, interrogations, and emotion-tinged declarative statements, there is an all-important factor which has been unaccountably neglected by the analysts.

The rhythm, movement, and melody of our language are largely determined by the stress and pitch phenomena, and these stress and pitch phenomena depend upon the thought of the speaker. Stress and pitch have semantic value. They are not the result of the speaker following a system of basic speech melodies.

We speak, as we think, in groups of words, rarely in one-word utterances. I shall use the term "thought groups" to describe them. A thought group can be a short sentence, with a simple subject, a verb, and a short predicate. Or it can be part of a long sentence, such as a complex subject, a verb and its modifiers, a phrase, or a clause. Each thought group has one main idea it is trying to develop. There is one word in each thought group, which, in the mind of the speaker, is the most important word in the group. The speaker gives to that word the strongest stress and the highest pitch he will use in the group. Words of secondary importance receive a secondary stress and lower pitch, while unimportant "function" words will receive little or not stress, and their vowel sounds will be reduced or obscured.

All the phenomena of movement and rhythm will be determined by the approach to, and the departure from the high point, which is the word with the primary stress. The speaker, and what he is thinking and trying to convey to his listener, is the maker of his own pattern, for the particular situation and the immediate purpose he has in mind.

There can be a great number of variations in degree of stress or height of pitch on the words of secondary importance in each group. The greater the intelligence and sensitivity of the speaker, the more varied and subtle the shades of meaning he can convey. He is master of the situation.

Ex. If you want to gé^t thère, before the cúrtain goès üp, you'd better take a táxi.

It is this feature that sets English apart from most other languages I am familiar with. But when the eager linguistic scientists finish dissecting all of the nearly 3,000 known tongues of our globe,

who knows but they will have found something similar elsewhere?
And then, there is always Mars.

A little look into the function of pitch, or "tone," in Mandarin Chinese will give us an interesting glimpse into a usage that is quite different from our own. In Mandarin, the same syllable may be spoken with four different pitches, and the meaning of the word changes with the pitch.

- | | | | |
|-----------------|----|---|----------|
| 1) high-high | ma | = | mother |
| 2) mid-high | ma | = | numb |
| 3) mid-low-high | ma | = | horse |
| 4) high-low | ma | = | to scold |

One can imagine the many faux pas the inept foreigner might commit when struggling to match tone and meaning. For instance, he might say, "Horse, (mid-low-high) this is my mother (high-high)," when he meant to say, "Mother, this is my horse." A quite unlikely situation might put him to the test of saying without a slip up, "I was numb when my mother scolded me about my horse."

But to return to the question of the use of stress and pitch to convey meaning in English, let us take for illustrative purposes three short sentences.

1) The-earth-is-round. (Each word spoken at a dead level of pitch, and with equal stress on each word.)

The sentence is "dead" when spoken in this manner. It might be said this way by a dull-witted, seriously ill, or moribund individual.

But, The eärth is róund. The same sentence has come to life. A secondary stress on "earth" has called attention to that word as an important element in the statement; and a primary stress, with higher pitch on the word "round" has called attention to the idea of roundness, making round the most important word in the sentence.

Now, try the same experiment with another statement.

E. It's-cold-tonight. (With no distinctive stress.)

But, It's cóld toníght. Cold is the most important word, and it receives primary stress, with higher pitch. Tonight is of secondary importance.

Then still another.

Ex. Mary's-on-the-phone. (With no distinctive stress.)

Then, Máry's on the phöne. Mary is obviously the word the speaker wants his listener to catch. It receives more stress and higher pitch.

In each of the sentences there is a "most important" word, which receives primary stress and high pitch. In the first case it was the final word, in the second the middle word, and in the third the first word. Each sentence is a simple one, with a simple subject, the verb "is," and a short predicate. We can see in these examples, that there is no pattern of intonation except that imposed by the meaning of the speaker. He could have given different stresses, if the circumstances surrounding the utterances had been different.

For example:

The eärth ís röund. (To deny a statement that it is flat.)

It's cöld toníght. (Implying that it wasn't cold last night.)

Máry's on the phöne. (To answer the question, "Where's Mary?")

Now we will take a longer sentence, in which the number of variations possible is much greater. Every shift in stress and pitch will indicate a different attitude or point of view of the speaker, even though the words are identical in all six sentences. The shift may, 1) counter a statement or implication that a previous speaker has put forth; 2) deny some possibility or other which a previous speaker suggests; 3) reinforce the simple statement; 4) indicate surprise, anger, annoyance, or some other emotion.

The range of semantic values producible is almost endless. Remember that there is normally only one primary stress, with high pitch, in each thought group. The other less important words receive less stress and lower pitch.

1) He wént to the óffice that mörning. (normal)

That is where he went. Probably as he usually does.

2) He wént to the öffice that mörning.

No matter what anyone says, I'm sure that he went there.

3) Hé wént to the öffice that mörning.

I'm sure that he went there. Some others may have gone there too, but you can't prove it by me.

- 4) He wönt to the öffice thát mörning.
Perhaps he didn't go there some other mornings, but I'm sure he did that particular morning.
- 5) He wönt to the öffice that mörning.
He may have gone there in the afternoon, or some other time of day, but I'm sure about the morning.
- 6) He wönt tó the öffice that mörning.
I'm sure he arrived there, but can't vouch for what happened afterwards.

Most non-native speakers of English would be unable to indicate the six different meanings expressed in the six versions of the above seven word sentence. They would have to resort to the much longer paraphrases I made of each example, using a number of shorter sentences, or adding adverbs, phrases, or clauses to the original. This fact demonstrates the economy of vocabulary, and of time required, for the conveyance of meaning in English, which results from our highly developed technique of making stress and pitch serve a semantic purpose.

This sort of thing is not possible in French. For one reason, it would spoil the rhythm, the melody of that language. French does have patterns of intonation which restrict the rise and fall of stress and pitch to a limited number of places in a sentence. French people would be annoyed to hear stresses coming in unexpected places. In ordinary declarative sentences there is a rising intonation and slight increase of stress on the last syllable in each thought group, which indicates that the sentence is not yet completed. At the end of the sentence comes a slightly higher pitch on the next to last syllable, followed by a sudden drop to low pitch on the last syllable.

Ce matin, il est allé au bureau.

Frenchmen are irritated by Americans who transfer their own English stress habits to "la belle langue française," though they do find the same thing amusing and "charmant" in a pretty young American girl, especially if she happens to have a bit of Georgia in her. To achieve the shifts in meaning which we produce by stress-pitch, the Frenchman must either change the word order, add an adverb or interjection, expand with a phrase or clause, make two

sentences in place of one, or reword the whole proposition.

The importance of recognizing the semantic function of stress and pitch in our native tongue is very evident to every teacher of English to non-native speakers. Thousands of students, technicians, medical trainees, government officials, and business men from foreign countries come to this country annually to pursue studies in our colleges, universities, institutes, and training centers. Some fifty thousand were here in 1960. Most of them come inadequately prepared to use the English language as spoken in the United States, with ease and efficiency. Some of them can read the language readily, but the majority have difficulty in understanding lectures, participating in seminars, and carrying on social contacts.

While limited vocabulary accounts for much of their difficulty, a major handicap is their inability to distinguish the important words from the unimportant words, both in listening and in speaking, that is to say, they have no feeling for the significance of stress and pitch in our language.

Each non-native speaker of English will carry over into his pronunciation of English the stresses, pitches, and rhythms of his mother tongue, or he will give to each English word the strong stress and high pitch which he used in pronouncing the word aloud, in imitation of his teacher, while learning that word as a vocabulary item. He has been drilled to say "can," as of the same sound group as "man" or "ran." The article "a" he pronounces as the letter "a" of the alphabet. Consequently, he will say, "A män cän dånce," where we would say "A män can dånce." He may say "He cän dó it" in such a way that we think he has used the negative "can't."

Consequently, the teacher of English as a foreign language must concentrate for some time on helping the student to change long established habits, whether they come from his native speech patterns or from inadequate teaching of the language in his own country.

At this stage, it is a temptation to pry into the remote past of mankind, and try to imagine what his early efforts to communicate with his fellow men were like. We never can know with any scientific accuracy, for tape recorders, and even wax platters were

invented within the last few seconds of man's long existence as a communicating species. The earliest written records of human language are in the Sumerian tongue — a language spoken in the Mesopotamian Valley between 4,000 and 3,000 B. C. But it took eons of time for human speech to evolve to the point where highly developed societies felt the need of devising ways and means of recording in clay the important matters that were of concern to their world.

Man had found a means of communicating with his fellows about things that were of mutual interest, by using various organs that we today call the speech organs. In the course of the ages, his efforts increased the refinement of this method, and his cerebral cortex grew to accommodate and expedite the development, until by 10,000 B. C., the brain capacity of our forebears was the equivalent of that of modern man.

What was the start of this long process? Man-like creatures were living in groups as far back as 600,000 B. C. Group living inevitably involves communication. Joint action in the hunt, or in the gathering of vegetable food, called for concerted effort. The procuring, processing, and preparing of the game or the harvest for family or group consumption, required the use of names for things (nouns); their qualities, good or bad (adjectives); actions (verbs); directions, manners, and timings (adverbs); and amounts (numerals). It is precisely these vocabulary items which in modern American English are the "important words," which receive stress and pitch in normal communication.

One can imagine that our early ancestors began the process of speech development by cries, grunts, nudgings, and pointings, by which they endeavored to elicit the cooperation of members of the group in procuring the necessary means of survival in the way of food, shelter, clothing, tools, and weapons. Vocal sounds, made while gesturing, would be agreed upon by the group as a sure identification of an animal or plant that could be used for food — whether it was good or bad — what actions were necessary to capture or secure it — where, how, and when to take action — how much was needed, or had been secured.

The first speech utterances must have consisted of single words, or short, compact groups of words, that we have called "thought groups." They would be groups of content words, in which nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and quantity expressions were predominant. It must have been a primitive equivalent of Pidgin English (Man get fish), or infant talk (Baby want milk). The refinements of function words, such as articles, prepositions, connectives, possessives, case and tense endings must have come later, when settled community life developed, and man had time to work out the intricacies of relations between subject and doing, object and manner, and timing. That the verb "to be" is not essential in many languages even today, may indicate that it is the invention of a more sophisticated culture that had time to philosophize about the nature of things, because the urgent problems concerning survival were less pressing.

If this picture of man's early efforts to communicate has validity, we can say that modern English has, in a way, remained true to the origins of language, in that it still depends on stress and pitch to highlight or call attention to the important words in a sentence, and to make shifts in meaning by altering the pitch and stress on a given sequence of words.

We have, in fact, reverted to the more primitive method of thought conveyance, by dropping practically all the case endings on nouns and adjectives, and by retaining only a minimum of person and tense endings of the verbs. We rely on what we call logical word order, and stress and pitch, to make our meaning clear. The function words are reduced in sound, and the content words do the essential work of communication.

If we have established the fact that stress and pitch have definite semantic value in English, that they are not simply the product of fixed patterns of melody and rhythm, but rather shape and determine the melody and rhythm of our speech, that our meaning is clarified by the way we employ them; we have a tool for analyzing, classifying, and explaining many hitherto obscure phenomena of our language. Much as has been done in the past half century on the description of English, one of the most vital languages of our

era, there still remain subjects for many a doctoral thesis on problems of intonation.

We will apply the principles developed in the course of this paper to four problems that have as yet been inadequately dealt with by linguists.

1) Stress and pitch in phrasal compounds.

Linguists have been arguing for some time about what happens when two words are put together to form a new concept that has a different meaning from that of the two words taken by themselves.

Ex.	<i>Ordinary</i>	<i>Phrasal compound</i>
	A white hóuse	The White Hóuse
	A bläck bírd	A bläckbírd
	A rëd cáp	A rëdcáp

Hockett (op. cit., p. 316) gives up trying to explain the difference. He calls attention to the fact that in "White Hóuse" there is a primary stress on the first element, and secondary stress on the second, but sees no reason for the change in stress pattern from that of the ordinary type, "A white hóuse." He remarks, "About all we can say is that usually a phrasal compound is idiomatic." But he gives up too easily. He does not see that he has overlooked the element of pitch in both examples. When we say "A white hóuse," we use secondary stress on "white," but a primary stress on "house," with higher pitch — calling attention to the fact that it is a house, not a barn, or some other possible structure that is white. When we say "The White Hóuse," the primary stress and higher pitch is on "White" because that is the distinctive feature of the residence of the President. "Hóuse" has secondary stress and lower pitch because we do not need to insist that the President lives in a house, not a barn.

Thus we have the same principle at work, as in the thought groups and sentences we analyzed earlier. We give stronger stress and higher pitch to the elements in an utterance which we wish to call attention to.

When we say "A bläck bírd," we call attention to a bird which happens to be black. When we say "A bläckbírd," we call attention to a certain species of bird — which is always black.

When we say "A rēd cáp," we call attention to a cap, which happens to be red. When we say "A rédcáp" we call attention to a type of porter who always appears in a cap that is red.

This same phenomenon will appear in longer compounds, and will explain the stress and pitch phenomena in long names, especially place names. Listen for the most important word, as I read the following.

Ex. Gréat Sält Láke, Sält Láke, Sält Láke Cítý, Sält Láke Válley, Sält Láke Válley Conservátion Dístríct.

Yéllowstöne, Yéllowstöne Párk, Yéllowstöne Párk Muséum, Yéllowstöne Fálls, Yéllowstöne Fálls Informátion Cēter.

Röcky Mounťains, Röcky Mounťain Párk, Röcky Mounťain Párk Guíde Sērvice.

Where the linguistic analysts have failed most in their studies in this area is in examining such combinations only as isolated expressions. They have not noticed that the stress and pitch phenomena in such compounds vary with the thought groups of which they are only a part.

Notice that if some other word in the thought group is made the "most important," the primary stress on the place name is reduced to a secondary.

Ex. We've álready séen Sält Láke Cítý.

He's béen to Röcky Mounťain Párk.

Théy've séen the Dínosaur Mönument.

2) Stress and pitch in two-word verbs, and in the nouns made from two-word verbs.

Grammarians and linguists have not come to general agreement as to just what a two-word verb is. Everyone agrees that such combination as pĭck úp, gĕt ín, shŏw óff, püt ón, are genuine two-word verbs. But what about cáll för, tálk abŏut, thínk óf, pláy wĭth? Using the stress-pitch test, we can easily determine how to classify such combinations.

A genuine two-word verb consists of two elements. The first element is a verb, either transitive or intransitive, sometimes both, which, as a vocabulary item, is given secondary stress. The second

element is a word that adds a plus to the verb. It is so "important" that it is given primary stress.

Ex. Take dón, püt óver, máke óut, gët thróugh.

If these two-word verbs produce a corresponding two-word noun, the stress-pitch pattern is reversed. The verb or action part becomes the most important element, and *it* receives primary stress, while the second element receives a secondary stress.

Ex. A shów öff, a sétbäck, a cóok öüt, a pícküp.

Those verbs which have a second element which frequently is associated with them, but which cannot follow the stress-pitch patterns noted above, cannot be classed as two-word verbs. As vocabulary items, the verb element will receive primary stress, and the second element is simply a dangling preposition, that will normally receive only secondary stress.

Ex. Cáll för, dréam aböut, thínk öf, táke tö, cóme fröm.

They are at the present time incapable of producing two-word nouns. It would result in nonsense if one tried to convey meanings by using such forms.

Ex. He did a cáll för.

Her dréam aböut was frightening.

What was his cóme fröm?

3) Juncture.

To go into the problem of what the linguistic scientist calls juncture would take a full-hour's time, and would, no doubt, bore the listeners as much or more than it bores the average English professor. The analysis of how we progress from one word to the next in a thought group, how we join our words together, has led scholars to try to find meaning in the gaps between words. They would do better, to examine the possibility of explaining such gaps as the mere mechanics of adjusting the speech organs to the effort needed for getting on from one sound to the next, and to the attendant phenomena of stress and pitch.

4) English word stress.

One other area in which the semantics of stress and pitch can

be observed is in the word stress, or accentuation of English words of more than one syllable. Most treatments of this problem begin with the notion that it is characteristic of English stress patterns, that the stress normally falls on the first syllable, with the corollary that any stress that falls on a syllable other than the first is a departure from the norm.

Without going into detailed argument at this time, I would say that the English language does not have a fixed pattern of word stress, imposed by some law of form or of speech melody. Stress falls on the element in a polysyllabic word that is the most important semantically. This can be shown easily in the case of words of Germanic stock. The root word naturally receives primary stress when pronounced alone as a vocabulary item. It will have primary stress in derived polysyllabic words if the prefixes or suffixes are not "more important" than the root.

Ex. wórch, wórchy, wórchily, wórchlessness.

The root word retains its primary stress, even when it is the second or third syllable of the derived word, provided it is still the most important element.

Ex. unwórchy, unwórchily.

But if an element is added that is more important than the root word, the root word loses its primary stress, and the added element receives primary stress.

Ex. trústwórchy, pénnýwórch, wórchwíle.

The problem is quite complicated when we try to explain the stressing of words of Latin, French, and other linguistic origins, but probings to date would indicate that evidence for the semantic value of stress in polysyllabic words borrowed from other sources is not hard to find.

The use of stress and pitch for semantic values gives English an advantage over languages that do not have this feature. It is economical of time and effort. It is capable of great subtlety, combined with simplicity of structure. It makes the spoken language more interesting to listen to. Try observing the way our best commentators on radio and television use it to advantage. And if you listen to commercials, you will soon understand how the abuse of it can drive one to the dangerous extreme of settling down to a good book.

TWENTY-FOURTH FACULTY HONOR LECTURE
DELIVERED AT THE UNIVERSITY

October 19, 1961

A BASIC objective of the Faculty Association of the Utah State University, in the words of its constitution, is

To encourage intellectual growth and development of its members by sponsoring and arranging for the publication of two annual faculty lectures in the fields of a) the biological and exact sciences, including engineering, called the Annual Faculty Honor Lecture in the Natural Sciences, and b) the humanities and social sciences, including education and business administration, called the Annual Faculty Honor Lecture in the Humanities.

The administration of the University is sympathetic with these aims and shares the cost of publishing and distributing these lectures.

Lecturers are chosen by a standing committee of the Faculty Association. Among the factors considered by the committee in choosing lecturers are, in the words of the constitution:

- 1) creative activity in the field of the proposed lecture; 2) publication of research through recognized channels in the fields of the proposed lecture; 3) outstanding teaching over an extended period of years; 4) personal influence in developing the character of students.

Dr. Meyer was selected by the committee to the Faculty Honor Lecture in the Humanities. On behalf of the members of the Association we are happy to present this paper: **THE SEMANTICS OF STRESS AND PITCH IN ENGLISH.**

COMMITTEE ON FACULTY HONOR LECTURE

OTHER LECTURES IN THIS SERIES

THE SCIENTIST'S CONCEPT OF THE PHYSICAL WORLD

by Willard Gardner

IRRIGATION SCIENCE: THE FOUNDATION OF PERMANENT
AGRICULTURE IN ARID REGIONS

by Orson W. Israelsen

NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF SOME UTAH POPULATION GROUPS

by Almeda Perry Brown

RANGE LAND OF AMERICA AND SOME RESEARCH
ON ITS MANAGEMENT

by Laurence A. Stoddart

MIRID-BUG INJURY AS A FACTOR IN DECLINING
ALFALFA-SEED YIELDS

by Charles J. Sorenson

THE FUTURE OF UTAH'S AGRICULTURE

by W. Preston Thomas

GEOLOGICAL STUDIES IN UTAH

by J. Stewart Williams

INSTITUTION BUILDING IN UTAH

by Joseph A. Geddes

THE BUNT PROBLEM IN RELATION TO
WINTER WHEAT BREEDING

by Delmar C. Tingley

THE DESERT SHALL BLOSSOM AS THE ROSE

by D. Wynne Thorne

THE TEACHING OF SCIENCE

by Sherwin Maeser

THE BEGINNINGS OF SETTLEMENT IN CACHE VALLEY

by Joel Edward Ricks

GENETICS OF CANCER AND OTHER ABNORMAL GROWTHS

by Eldon J. Gardner

OBLIGATIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION TO THE SOCIAL ORDER

by Ernest A. Jacobsen

SOME EFFECTS OF FLUORIDES ON PLANTS, ANIMALS, AND MAN
by Delbert A. Greenwood

THE POLITICAL PROCESS
by Milton R. Merrill

RANGE LIVESTOCK NUTRITION AND ITS IMPORTANCE
IN THE INTERMOUNTAIN REGION
by C. Wayne Cook

SOME ECONOMIC FALLACIES AND THE CITIZEN
by Evan B. Murray

UTAH'S FUTURE WATER PROBLEMS
by Wayne D. Criddle

GOOD NUTRITION FOR THE FAMILY
by Ethelwyn B. Wilcox

ZION IN PARADISE: EARLY MORMONS IN THE SOUTH SEAS
by S. George Ellsworth

STUDIES IN EXPERIMENTAL EVOLUTION
by William Sidney Boyle

WATER FOR MAN
by Sterling A. Taylor

