

# 國立清華大學 107 學年度碩士班考試入學試題

系所班組別：外國語文學系碩士班 乙組 (語言認知與教學組)

考試科目 (代碼)：英文閱讀與寫作 (3803)

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**Directions:** Please read the following passages excerpted from a journal article written by John Murphy and (1) write a summary of 300 words for the passages (40%) (2) write an essay to criticize or further develop the main ideas in the passages as a language learner, educator, and researcher (60%).

Several months ago, I was standing in line at the university's cafeteria waiting to place a lunch order. While facing the deli counter, I heard an animated voice say, "Oh, teacher, how do you say "ee**POE**potoma." I turned and realized I was being addressed by a former student from the Ivory Coast named Jean-Paul (a pseudonym).

Author (AU): Oh, Jean-Paul, good to see you.

Jean-Paul (J-P): I was thinking of you because I do not know to say that word.

AU: Well, you remember what we used to do in class?

J-P: [smiles, and replies] Okay, I think so.

AU: How many syllables does it have?

[J-P counts them out on his fingers]

J-P: Five.

AU: So, what kind of a word is it?

J-P: A 5 syllable word, but I don't know where is the stress syllable. When I used it in class the other day, a couple of people thought it was funny.

AU: Okay, so you say it's five syllables. That's right. Which one do you **THINK** is the stress syllable?

J-P: The second one.

AU: Actually, it's not the second.

At this point I raise and spread out the five fingers of my left hand. Using the index finger of my other hand, I tap out five quick beats on the left hand fingers. The hand gestures involved light taps on the outstretched thumb and index finger, followed immediately by a much stronger and more pronounced tap on the middle finger. Once I had struck the middle finger, there were two more light taps on the remaining two fingers.

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J-P: Then it's, "eepo**POE**toma"

AU: So what kind of a word is it?

J-P: 5. . it's a 5-3 word.

[In the course, '5-3' is a code we use to signal a word of five syllables that has primary stress on the third syllable]

AU: That's right, it's a 5-3 word.

J-P: "eepo**POE**toma." "eepo**POE**toma." "eepo**POE**toma." Can you say it?

AU: Okay. How large is a 'hippopotamus'? I guess a 'hippopotamus' is one of the largest animals I can think of. Why are we talking about a 'hippopotamus' anyway?

J-P: In class, I was explaining about Africa but you do not see all animals in the Ivory Coast.

AU: So, how are you supposed to say it?

J-P: "eepo**POE**tomas"

AU: Yes, that's it. Let's do the hand shake thing. . .

At this point, Jean-Paul faces me directly. He stretches out his hand to grasp mine, starts to say the word, but does not actually clasp my hand until he reaches that third syllable. Once he pronounces the third syllable, he immediately releases my hand before he completes the word. We go through the process of shaking hands like this several times while Jean-Paul coordinates the handshake with his forceful production of the third syllable in the word 'hippopotamus'. A few moments later, I motion for him to give me a 'high-five.' Again he responds. The moment when our palms make contact is only for an instant and coincides with both our enunciations of the target word's third syllable. After doing so several times, we stop and begin to catch up on what has been happening in Jean-Paul's life over the past few months. I am sharing this story for a couple of reasons. First, it illustrates that former students remember and learn to work with at least some of the things we teach in class. More importantly, I would like to use the story to illustrate possibilities for calling English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and other English for Specific Purposes (ESP) students' attention to word-level stress while they are learning new or specialized

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vocabulary.

As depicted in the cafeteria scenario, Jean-Paul and I shared a common code to discuss phonological patterns. The code targets stress patterns of the citation form of individual words. At the present time I teach in a department that includes an intensive English program (IEP) focused on EAP instruction. However, teachers in a range of different settings may find some strategies introduced here useful for teaching one dimension of the pronunciation component of oral communication (word-level stress). Some additional settings where the teaching strategies may be applied include the training of international teaching assistants, English for science and technology, English for medical purposes, and other ESP settings (e.g. accounting, engineering, business). The strategies involve calling learners' attention to word-level stress as a tool for assisting them in remembering and learning to use new words.

Why focus attention on word-level stress for purposes of English language vocabulary development? Though the underlying processes are inadequately understood (J. Archibald, personal communication, 4 June 2002) and vigorous research continues (Archibald, 1998; Cutler, Dahan, & van Donselaar, 1997; Major, 2001), a compelling reason is that learning word-stress information is an integral part of the experience of learning a new word (Aitchison, 1994). In a recent discussion of L2 vocabulary learning, Nation's (2001) definition of what it means for English as a second language (ESL) speakers to "know a word" includes three facets: The word's form (spoken, written, and word parts), meaning, and use. All three facets are essential to developing vocabulary knowledge and expanding one's "mental lexicon" (Aitchison, 1994: 10). This paper highlights one dimension of the first facet: the spoken form. Nation suggests that ESL teachers and learners keep two basic questions in mind: what does the word sound like, and, how is the word pronounced? Fundamental to learning what a new word sounds like is awareness that English words of more than one syllable have an underlying rhythm of alternating strong and weak syllables and that "in a polysyllabic word, there is always one syllable which is more prominent than the others; this syllable is said to be [primary] stressed" (Archibald, 1993: 32). Though it may be tempting to assume that English language speakers (either L1 or L2) apply rules for word-level stress after having retrieved a

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vocabulary-item from the memory system (McCartan, 2001), several specialists point out that fluent speech offers insufficient time for a linear sequence of speech production preceded by (a) word retrieval and (b) word-stress analysis (Aitchison, 1994; Levelt, 1989). Contemporary research suggests that a speaker's awareness of word-level stress is one of the central dimensions of what it means to know the spoken form of a word (Aitchison, 1994; Cutler et al., 1997). As new words are encountered, learners find ways to include their perceptions of the word's rhythmic pattern within the mental lexicon. This perspective implies that at the moment of retrieval, an ESL speaker may have already accessed her or his best intuitions of relevant word-stress information.

While the preceding may be an appealing description of what takes place, it is important to acknowledge that there are alternative viewpoints on how L2 learners of English access word-stress information. Archibald (1998), for example, leaves unresolved the question of whether L2 learners store word-stress information in the mental lexicon, or if they rapidly figure out stress locations, as the need arises, by analogizing from patterns previously internalized. Though unresolved at present, both storage and figuring out models may have roles to play within an adequate understanding of how ESL learners access and begin to use word-stress information for new vocabulary. While precise specification of the underlying processes learners use to internalize word-stress information—and to incorporate it within their speech production—remains unclear, the instructional practices advocated in later sections of this paper do not require commitment to a single theory. Whether L2 learners rely more on storage or figuring out processes, for example, raising learner awareness of common patterns of word stress is likely to have a facilitating impact under either—or both—condition(s). For native speakers of English, rhythmic patterns seem to be accessed along with other dimensions of the words they use. Aitchison (1994) argues convincingly that information on word-stress is accessed from the mental lexicon along with other pieces of information such as word meaning, syntactic features, and additional phonological signals. Though the process is complicated and likely differs for L2 speakers (Archibald, 1995), ESL learners also appear to access rhythmic information as part of the process of vocabulary acquisition (Cutler et al., 1997).

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There are rapid mental processes at play that depend upon—at least in part—the learner's system of internalized rules for how word-stress patterns operate. Several of the processes are well documented in the literature on the acquisition of L2 phonology. For example, Archibald (1998) and Major (2001) discuss the role and importance of L1 transfer (in the form of interference), lenition (e.g. weakening of syllables that need to be stressed), fortition (e.g. strengthening of syllables that should be left unstressed), simplification, and overgeneralization. A major difference between L1 and L2 speakers of English is that the rhythmic information accessed by L2 learners is less reliable due to such factors as incomplete mastery of the rhythmic/word-stress system, inevitable phases of mental fatigue, the phonological distance a learner must travel from the rhythmic patterns of the learner's L1 to those of the L2 (Pennington, 1994), and so forth. However partial or complete their control over the lexical rhythmic system might be, both L1 and L2 speakers of English seem capable of accessing rhythmic information for the words they know—and the new words they are in the process of learning—as part of the complex interconnections constituting the mental lexicon (Aitchison, 1994; McCartan, 2001).

While the process of how ESL learners store and learn to use word-stress information is poorly understood, contemporary specialists such as Aitchison (1994), Archibald (1998), and Major (2001) share at least two points concerning ways in which words exist in the mind: (a) the relationship of strong to weak syllables produces rhythmic patterns which form the basis of the English word-stress system, and, however it is accessed, (b) some sort of a rhythmic structure for individual words (either accurate, incomplete/partial, or erroneous) is represented in the mental lexicon of both L1 and L2 speakers. Most specialists agree that word-level stress patterns function as navigational guides to English language listeners (Benrabah, 1997; Brown, 1990; Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 1996; Cooper, Cutler, & Wales, 2002) who sometimes become lost when trying to communicate with L2 English speakers who are weak in this area. Also, there is a continuum of responses by native English speakers to the varying degrees of control evidenced by ESL speakers over rhythmic patterns of the words they use. When ESL speakers fail to get word-stress information right, native English speakers may perceive the quality of their speech as (a)

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nonnative but fully functional and easy to understand, (b) somewhat difficult to understand because significant listener effort is required for effective communication to occur, or (c) largely unintelligible even to a native English listener who is trying her or his best to understand, a condition that likely precludes effective communication.

In an informative synthesis of the L2 word-stress acquisition literature, McCartan (2001) posits that the rhythmic pattern of a new word is not memorized by an ESL learner any more than the exact sequence of segmental phonemes is memorized. Two functions of language classrooms are to clarify how language systems operate and to assist learners in being able to activate internalized patterns when needed. A value implicit in specialist work in this area is that ESL learners who are aware of common patterns of word-stress for new vocabulary, and have internalized basic principles of how the English stress system operates, are better able to perceive patterns of the new (or only partially known) words they meet. As patterns are perceived, learners are more likely to integrate such information within the constellation of descriptive features that constitute words in the mental lexicon. As well as attempting to describe the processes involved, McCartan (2001) recommends three goals for ESL instruction in this area: to develop awareness of how rhythmic patterns operate at word-level, to teach a manageable inventory of common patterns, and to foster learner autonomy. These goals are intended to enable students to perceive stress patterns of new words through combinations of exposure to both spoken and written forms and to prepare learners to be able to store such stress-pattern information in their memory systems. As McCartan (2001: 4) points out:

*The cognitive process involved is one of perception of the stress pattern, storage of the pattern in the mental lexicon, and retrieval at the time of production. The learning process is one of pattern recognition, retention, and storage, rather than rule learning and application to assign stress to a word retrieved from the mental lexicon devoid of stress.*

Since intelligible speech in English depends upon word-stress knowledge in



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coordination with other pieces of lexical information, the potential exists for language teachers to play an important role in building learner awareness of word-stress patterns.

Several years ago, my colleagues and I were examining options for teaching pronunciation in order to identify areas that would be most useful to EAP learners. We were trying to determine what would be appropriate degrees of attention to give to pronunciation in EAP courses. Along with the oral communication course I was teaching at the time, students in the IEP take three other courses titled (1) reading and listening for academic purposes, (2) writing for university exams, and (3) structure-composition for university writing. Each course applies principles of sustained content language teaching since it is tied to a specific area of content that is sustained for 15 weeks of instruction. For example, the content focus of the oral communication course I offer is 'human communication.' The listening, speaking, discussion, and pronunciation tasks featured in the course are tied to assigned readings students complete outside of class. The core reading assignments are five out of the eighteen chapters Verderber and Verderber (2002) include in their university-level introduction to human communication textbook (the 10th edition of a popular non-ESL textbook used across Canada and the United States in university courses). The five chapters are titled: communication perspective (20 pages), verbal communication (22 pages), listening in interpersonal communication (28 pages), conversation in interpersonal communication (22 pages), and participating in small groups (20 pages). Though a majority of students in the course are beyond stages of needing intensive work on most dimensions of pronunciation, they have persistent problems in learning to use many of the words presented as central vocabulary in the Verderber and Verderber text. As faculty we were already interested in finding ways of working effectively with the large number of specialized vocabulary words featured in sustained content course materials. Within the IEP's curriculum committee we discussed ways of developing links between the teaching of speech intelligibility and vocabulary. While reading or listening to a mini-lecture, for example, many students seemed able to use context clues to figure out the meaning of words such as 'generalization,' 'individualism', and 'collectivism' (from the chapter on verbal

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communication) but were reluctant to use such words when speaking in class. For students who did attempt to use them, their speech was sometimes unintelligible. A persistent problem seemed to be the location of primary stress syllables. Frequently, a student would place word-stress on the wrong syllable or would pronounce each of a polysyllabic word's syllables with equal stress. Such difficulties were mentioned consistently by the program's teachers. Since new and specialized vocabulary permeated course reading materials, we decided to explore ways of increasing the inclusion of such words within the normal routine of spoken discourse in the classroom. Teachers in our program found that the process of drawing explicit connections between word-level stress and polysyllabic vocabulary was an effective way to involve students in using (probably the most important function), analyzing, and discussing new words. By including polysyllabic words as integral parts of listening and speaking tasks while planning other lesson phases to feature analysis, discussion, and guided practice with word-stress patterns of the same words, learners seemed to feel more confident in learning to use, discuss, and ask questions about new vocabulary as normal parts of the classroom routine.

Potential benefits of incorporating attention to word-stress in conjunction with new vocabulary are not restricted to EAP classrooms. Most ESP learners are surrounded by new and specialized vocabulary that they would like to be able to include as part of their conversational fluency. Making explicit connections between word-stress and the learning of new words is one way to assist students in learning to think about, talk about, and use some of the new vocabulary they encounter in specific fields. As my colleagues and I developed such connections, we accepted as a starting point that word-stress issues are more likely to be treated well in classrooms if teachers and students have shared conventions for discussing them. As illustrated at the start of this discussion, Jean-Paul and I shared such conventions.

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Passages from:

Murphy, John (2004) Attending to word-stress while learning new vocabulary.

*English for Specific Purpose* 23, 67–83.

Note: The above passages were slightly edited specifically for this exam.