

FURTHER OBSERVATIONS ON SECONDARY STRESS IN BRITISH ENGLISH

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At the last Congress I drew attention, under the heading "The evil 'i': or, shellfish is not 'somewhat shellf'. A pitfall for the unwary in English stress." to the frequent failure of phonetically transcribed texts to distinguish accurately and consistently between 'light' and 'heavy' /i/ (English Pronouncing Dictionary transcription) in places away from the tonic or nuclear stress: in other words, to recognise on this particular vowel quality the incidence of secondary stress. In this paper I examine two other areas in which problems may arise in connexion with secondary stress in British English.

'Light' and 'Heavy' Diphthongs and 'Long Pure' Vowels

In many words, notably in the immediately pre-tonic position, 'light' versions of the named categories may occur which are, on a lexically selective basis, distinct from the traditional weak vowels. Psychiatrist may show this phenomenon, psychology not.

Isochronicity

Where it is possible to establish a fully satisfactory 'foot' or 'stress bar' internal analysis may make it possible to distinguish minor prominences from surrounding weak syllables and to refer these prominences to secondary stress. The status, however, of isochronicity is suspect and in the absence of additional criteria grave difficulties of identification persist.

Both problem areas reflect the need for an exhaustive analysis of the temporal organization of The English utterance.