

## Vidéo 2 - « Contrasting French and English prosody : an overview »

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Vidéo 2 is available at [http://frenchforthought.com/Phonologie/phonologie\\_010.html](http://frenchforthought.com/Phonologie/phonologie_010.html)

### Transcript

#### Jean-François Duclos

In this first part of our course, you have discovered that there are few rules of prosody to follow in the French language. We're here to compare and contrast some of these rules with their English counterparts, when they exist.

In French, vowels are pronounced the same way regardless of their position in the word. They're short and do not vary. Let me take a couple of examples. The first name "Barbara", pronounced [ba ʁba ʁa] has three [a], and are pronounced the same way : [ba ʁba ʁa]. "Emilie" [e mi li] has two [i] and again, their position in the word does not affect the way they are pronounced [e mi li]. What happens in English with these two examples?

#### Andrew Pantos

The first name you mentioned is generally pronounced as ['baɪ, bɪə]. The other name is pronounced as ['ɛ, mɪ, li]. The vowels in unstressed syllables tend to be reduced. Sometimes they are not produced at all.

#### Jean-François Duclos

In French, vowels are short in duration, and I believe it is also the case of most vowels in Spanish. And in English?

#### Andrew Pantos

Vowels in English are produced with varying duration. Vowels that occur in open syllables, and particularly those at the end of an utterance-final word, tend to be produced the longest. If those are tense (or so-called 'long') vowels, they are produced as diphthongs. For example, 'go' in "I want to go." is produced as [gou] and 'say' in "I can't say." is produced as [seɪ]. It would sound non-native to say [go] or [se]. We'll talk more about vowel duration and its meaning later in this video series.

#### Jean-François Duclos

In French, words are glued together to create rhythmic groups of up to 7 syllables. There are called "groupes rythmiques", or intonation units. So "Les anciens amis" will become "Lesanciensamis". There is no pause between words within the same rhythmic group. Do English speakers proceed the same way, by making no pause between words?

#### Andrew Pantos

English doesn't behave the same way that French does in terms of rhythmic groups, but English speech sounds influence their neighbors. I think this is an important point to make about speech sounds, in general. They do not behave like beads on a string. That is, they are not immune to the sounds around them, but instead are influenced by neighboring sounds.

In terms of rhythm, English is fairly complicated. English is a word-stress language, meaning that the stress of individual words is of great importance to our understanding. Think of ['ɪ, kɔɪd] vs. [ɪ, kɔɪd] (a record / to record). In addition to word stress, though, English speakers tend to spread out stress patterns across an entire utterance. This isn't a hard and fast rule, but in general, we don't

allow our stresses to fall too close together. So, even though we might say [ˈtʃak, lɪt] if asked what flavor ice cream we want, we will change the stress if we're saying it in a larger collocation without any particular emphasis in meaning, like "She baked a delicious chocolate cake."

**Jean-François Duclos**

Within a sentence, each intonation unit goes down. So in the following example made up of three units: "En général, le samedi, je me repose", the intonation goes up at the end of "général" and "samedi", because they are positioned at the end of a rhythmic group, within the sentence (not at the end) and then it goes down at the end of the sentence after "repose". Can you briefly explain to us the intonation system in English?

**Andrew Pantos**

Intonation is not quite so predictable in English. In general, we have falling intonation at the end of declaratory utterances, and rising intonation at the end of yes/no questions. That said, intonation patterns can vary greatly, depending on things like emphasis, individual style, and dialect. In addition, an utterance can consist of more than one intonation unit in English. Non-utterance final intonation units can end in a slightly rising intonation pattern, indicating the speaker's intention to continue to speak. Compare "I went to the post office yesterday" to "I went to the post office yesterday and mailed that important letter."