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#### PART I:

# The definition of weak forms and some reasons for learning weak forms

#### a. Definition

- → Weak forms are syllable sounds that become unstressed in connected speech and are often then pronounced as a schwa.
  - → An very important component of natural and fluent English

Ex: What do you want to do this evening?

→In the sentence above, the first 'do' is a weak form and the second is stressed.

#### PART I:

# The definition of weak forms and some reasons for learning weak forms

#### b. Reasons for learning weak-form words:

- ✓ Improve your listening skills, especially to understand native speakers.
- ✓ Improve your *speaking skills*. If you want to speak naturally you should pronounce weak forms correctly.
- ✓ Failure on weak forms will affect your *English rhythm*.
- ✓ You will avoid misunderstandings.

#### PART II:

#### Inventory of weak-form words

- ARTICLES: a, an, the
- CONJUNCTIONS: and, as, but, than, that
- PREPOSITIONS: at, for, from, of, to
- AUXILIARY AND MODAL VERBS: am, is, are, was, were, have, has, had, do, does, must, would, can, will, shall
- PRONOUNS: he, him, her, us, them, there

#### PART III:

#### Most common weak forms in English

#### 1.'the'

Weak forms: ðð (before consonants)

'shut the door' /∫^t ðð 'dɔ:/.

ði (before vowels)

'Wait for the end' /'weit fò ði 'end/.

# 2.'a', 'an'

Weak forms: **d** (before consonants).

- ' Read a book' /'ri:d ð 'buk/ ðn (before vowels).
- 'Eat an apple' /'i:t on 'æpl/.

#### 3. 'and'

Weak form: ∂n (sometimes n after t, d, s, z, ʃ/

- ' come and see' /'k^m ∂n 'si:/
- 'Fish and chips' /'fis n 'tsips/.

## 4. 'but'

Weak form: b∂t

'It's good but expensive'

/Its 'gud bot Iks'pensiv/.

# 5. 'that'

(This word only has a weak form when used in a relative clause; when used with a demonstrative sense it is usually pronounced in its strong form.)

Weak form: ððt

'The price is the thing that annoys me'
/ ðð 'prais iz ðð 'Θiη ððt ð'nɔiz mi/.

# 6. ' than'

Weak form: /ð∂n/

ex: 'Better than ever' /betd ðdn 'evd/.

#### 7. 'his'

```
Weak form: iz, (hiz at the beginning of a sentence)
```

'Take his name' /'teik iz 'neim /

(Another sense of 'his', as in 'it was his' has always the strong form).

#### 8. 'her'

```
(When used with possessive sense, proceeding a noun; as an object pronoun, this can also occur at the end of a sentence).
```

Weak forms: **d** (before consonants).

'Take her home' /'teik ∂ 'h∂um/.

∂r (before vowels)

' Take her out' / 'teik ∂r 'aut/.

# 9. 'your'

```
Weak forms: jð (before consonants)

' Take your time' /teik jð 'taim/
jðr (before vowels)

' On your own' /ɔn jðr 'ð℧n/
```

# 10. 'She', 'He', 'We', 'You':

- 'she' \[ \int /i/
- ' why did she read it?' /wai did si 'ri:d it ?/.
- 'Who is she?' /'hu: 'iz ʃi?/
- 'he' /i/ (the weak form is usually pronounced without h except at the beginning of a sentence).
- 'Which did he choose?' / 'witf did i tfu:z/
- ' He was late, wasn't he?' /hi w∂z ' leit ' woznt i?/
- 'we' /wi/
- ' How can we get there?' / ha℧ k∂n we 'get ðe∂?/
- ' we need that, don't we?' / wi 'ni:d ðæt 'd∂ont wi/
- 'you' /ju/
- 'What do you think?' /'wot d∂ ju 'Θiηk?/
- 'You like it, do you?' /ju 'laik It 'du: ju?/

### 10. 'She', 'He', 'We', 'You':

→ This group of pronouns has weak forms pronounced with weaker vowels than the /i:/ and /u:/ of their strong forms.

#### 11. 'him'

```
Weak form: /im/
```

- 'Leave him alone'
- 'I've seen him'

```
/li:v im d'ldun/
```

/aiv 'si:n im/

### 12. 'her'

Weak form: d (hd when sentence -initial)

- 'Ask her to come' /a:sk d td 'k^m/
- 'I have met her' /aiv 'met d/

## 13. 'them'

```
Weak form: ððm
```

'leave them here'

'eat them'

```
/li:v ððm 'hið/
```

/i:t ððm/

### 14. 'us'

```
Weak form: ds
'Write us a letter' /'rait ds d'letd/
'They invited all of us' / ðei in'vaitid' 'ɔ:l dv
ds/.
```

The next group of words (some prepositions and other function words) occurs in their strong form when they are final in a sentence. This also depends on the intention of the speaker, the situation, the pitch level of the word; examples of this are given.

# 15. 'at'

Weak form: dt

'I'll see you at lunch' /ail 'si: ju dt 'l^ntʃ/

In the final position: æt

' What's he shooting at?' / 'wots I 'su:tin æt?/

## 16. ' for'

- Weak form : f∂ (before consonants)
- 'Tea for two' / 'ti: f∂ 'tu:/
  - f∂r (before vowels).
- 'Thanks for asking' /'Θæηks fðr 'a:sklη/
- In the final position: fo:
- ' what's that for? '/wots 'ðæt fo:/

## 17. 'from'

Weak form: fr∂m

- 'I'm home from work' /aim 'hdum frdm 'w3:k/ In the final position: from
- 'Here's where it came from' /'hidz wedr it 'keim from

# 18. ' of '

Weak form: dv

' Most of all' /'mdust dv ' D:I/

In the final position: Dv

'Someone I've heard of' /'s^mw^n aiv 'h 3:d Ov/

## 19. 'to'

- Weak form: td (before consonants)
- 'Try to stop' /' trai td 'stOp/
  - -Tu (before vowels)
- ' Time to eat' /'talm tu 'i:t/
  - In the final position: tu (It is not usual to use the strong form /tu:/, and the pre-consonantal weak form tô is never used).
- ' I don't want to' /al 'd∂unt 'w⊃nt tu/.

#### 20. 'as'

Weak form: dz

- 'As much as possible' /ðz 'm^tʃ /ðz pOsibl/ In final position : æz
- 'That's what it was sold as' /'ðæts 'w⊃t it w∂z 's∂ʊld æz/

#### 21. 'some'

This word is used in two different ways:

 In one sense (typically, when it occurs before a countable noun, meaning "an unknown individual") it has strong form:/s^m/

```
' I think some animal broke it'
/ai ' Θiηk s^m 'ænim! ' brð℧k it/
```

 If it comes before uncountable nouns (meaning "an unspecified amount of"), in such uses it has the weak form:
 sòm.

```
' Have some more tea' / 'hæv s∂m 'mϽ: 'ti:/
-In final position: s^m
' I've got some' /alv 'g⊃t s^m/
```

# 22. 'there'

```
This word has a demonstrative function; it always occurs in
  its strong form: ∂e∂ (ðe∂r before example), e.g.
'There it is' / de∂r it iz /
'Put it here '/p℧t it ðe∂/
Weak forms: ð∂ (before consonants)
There should be a rule' /ð∂ 'ʃod bi ∂ 'ru:l/
    ð∂r (before vowels)
'There is' / ð∂r 'iz/
In the final position the pronunciation may be \eth \partial or \eth e \partial.
'There isn't any, is there? '
                                           / ð∂r' iznt eni 'iz
/ ð∂r 'iznt eni 'iz ð∂/
                               or
```

ðe∂/.

# 23. 'can', 'could'

```
Weak forms: /k∂n/, /k∂d/

'They can wait' / ðei K∂n 'weit/

'He could do it' /hi: k∂d 'du: it/

In final position: /kæn/, /k℧d/

' I think we can' /ai 'Θiηk wi kæn/

' Most of them could' /'mð℧st ðv ðem k℧d/
```

# 24. 'have', 'has', 'had'

```
Weak forms: \partial \mathbf{v}, \partial \mathbf{z}, \partial \mathbf{d}
                            (with initial h in initial
  position)
'Which have you seen?' /'witf ∂v ju 'si:n/
' which has been best?' /' wItf ∂z 'bi:n 'best/
' Most had gone home' /m∂ost ∂d 'gon 'h∂om/
   In final position: hæv, hæz, hæd
'Yes, we have'
                        /'jes we 'hæv/
'I think she has' /ai 'Oink si 'hæz/
'I thought we had' / ai 'Oo:t wi ' hæd/
```

## 25. 'shall' 'should'

```
Weak forms: [ðl or ʃl; ʃðd

'we shall need to hurry' /wi ʃl 'ni:d tð 'h^ri/

' I should forget it' / ai ʃðd fð'get it/

In final position: ʃæl, ʃʊd

' I think we shall' /ai ' Θiŋk wi 'ʃæl /

' So you should' /sð℧ ju ' ʃʊd/
```

#### 26. 'must'

- e.x: 'she left at 8 o'clock, so she must have arrived by now'
- → when 'must' is used in this way, it is rather less likely to occur in its weak form than when it is being used in its more familiar sense of obligation'

```
1/ Weak form: m∂s (before consonants)
'You must try harder'
/ju m∂s'trai 'ha:d∂/
```

- 2/ m∂st (before vowels)
- ' He must eat more' /hi 'm∂st 'i:t 'mɔ:
- 3/In final position: m∧st
- 'she certainly must '/si 's3:tnli 'm^st/

# 27. 'do', 'does'

```
1/Weak forms:
'Do' d∂ (before consonants)
'Why do they like it?' /'wai dò ðei 'laik it/
  Du (before vowels)
'why do all the cars stop?' /'wal du o:l ðð 'ka:z 'st op/
'Does' d∂z
'When does it arrive?' /wen doz It d'ralv/
2/In final position: du:, d^z
'we don't smoke, but some people do'
/wi: ddUnt 'smdUk bdt 's^m 'pi:pl 'du:/
'I think John does' /ai ' Oink 'dz on d^z/
```

# 28. 'am', 'are', 'was', 'were'

**→** /∂m/ 1/am'Why am I here?' /wai ∂m ai 'hi∂?/ 2/ are → /∂ /( before consonants) 'Here are the plates' /hi∂r ∂ ð∂ 'pleIts/  $\rightarrow$  / $\partial$ r/ (before vowels) 'The coats are in there' / ð∂ 'k∂℧ts ∂r In ðe∂/ 3/ was  $\rightarrow /$   $\text{w}\partial z/$ 'He was here a minute ago' /hI w∂z 'hI∂r ∂ 'mInit ∂'g∂u/

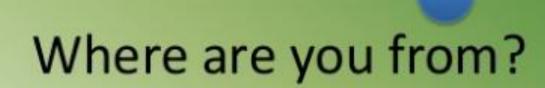
- 4/ were →w∂ (before consonants)
- 'The papers were late' / ð∂ 'peIp∂z w∂ 'leIt/
  - →w∂r (before vowels)
- 'The questions were easy' / ð∂ 'kwestf∂nz w∂r 'i:zi/
- 5/ In final positions: æm, a:, woz, w3:
- 'She's not as old as I am' / siz 'not ∂z 'aI æm/
- 'I know the smiths are' /aI n∂℧ ð∂ 'smIOss a:
- 'The last record was' / ð∂ la:st 'rekod woz/
- 'They weren't as cold as we are'
- / ðeI ' w3:nt ∂z 'k∂℧ld ∂ 'wi: w3:/.

Questions?

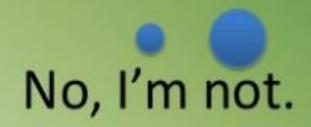
## Questions?

when do weak forms become strong?

1. the end of the sentence







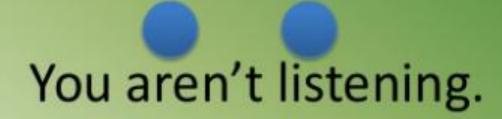
2. Negatives



I can speak German.



I can't speak German.





the stress is always on 'not' even when it's abbreviated

3.

## auxiliary or modal substitutes or includes the main verbs

I can't speak German

but my friend can.

Do you like English?

No, I don't.

## 4. double stress for emphasis



## EXERCISE: How many weak forms can you find?

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way-in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.

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