SENTENCE STRESS

WHAT IS SENTENCE STRESS?

- Remember that **word stress (syllable stress)** is the '*beat*' on one or more syllables within a word; **sentence stress** is the '*beat*' on certain words within a sentence.

- In other words, **sentence stress** can be described as the '*rhythm*' of spoken language.

- Like word or syllable stress, **sentence stress** can help you to understand a language, especially when spoken fast.
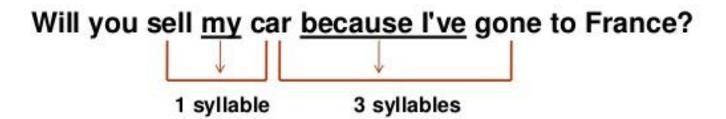
WHY IS 'STRESS' IMPORTANT IN PRONUNCIATION?

- **Stress** is important because it adds **rhythm** when you speak.

- If you **stress** all the words in an utterance, you may sound unpleasant or even cause misunderstanding, because:

  1. You are giving too much information; and

  2. English native speakers usually stress all words only when they are impatient or angry.

According to the way they function, words in a language are normally classified into two types:

a). *Content words*, are the key words of a sentence. They are the important words that carry the meaning or sense.

b). *Structure words*, are not very important words. They are small, simple words that make the sentence correct grammatically. They give the sentence its correct form or structure.

- In the previous example, there is 1 syllable between "*sell*" and "*car*" and 3 syllables between "*car*" and "**gone**", but the _time_ (*t*) between "*sell*" and "*car*" and between "*car*" and "*gone*" is the same.

Will you sell <u>my</u> car <u>because I've</u> gone to France?

1 syllable   **3 syllables**

We maintain a <u>constant beat</u> on the stressed words (*sell*, *car*, *gone*, *France*). To do this, we say "*my*" more slowly, and "*because I've*" more quickly.

RULES OF SENTENCE STRESS

- The basic rules of sentence stress in English are:

1. **Content words** are stressed;
2. **Structure words** are unstressed; and
3. **The time between stressed words** is always the same.

The following table can help you decide which words are the content words and which are the structure words: