

Lesson Plan: Prosodic Scansion

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A. Course Details

Item	Details
Paper	ENGMJ-101
Module	Module IV — Prosody: Rules of Scansion
Programme and Level	B.A. English (Major), Undergraduate
Semester	I
Number of classes	10 scheduled (8 instructional + 2 doubt-clearing) and 2 remedial
Duration of each class	55–60 minutes
Prescribed handbook	Bose and Sterling, <i>Elements of English Rhetoric and Prosody</i> (Prosody section)
Supporting handout	<i>Rules of Scansion</i> , a class note of sixteen numbered rules with worked examples and practice lines
Teacher	Dr. Tanimma Dutta, Assistant Professor and Head, Department of English

B. Rationale

Students commonly meet scansion as a list of feet to be memorised and then cannot apply it to an unseen line. The module therefore builds the skill in stages — stress in the word, stress in the line, feet, metre, variation — and reserves the last two classes for doubt clearing.

C. Objectives of the Module

- To introduce the vocabulary and notation of English prosody and to distinguish rhythm, metre and scansion.
- To establish the rules of stress in English: fixed word accent, root, prefix and suffix, and the distinction between major and minor words.
- To enable students to identify metrical feet and to name the metre of a given line.
- To explain metrical variation as a resource of meaning rather than a defect.
- To prepare students to answer scansion questions accurately in the university examination.

D. Expected Learning Outcomes

On completion of the module, students will be able to:

- Define prosody, rhythm, metre, foot, accent and scansion, and use the standard notation.
- Divide any English word into syllables and mark its stress, justifying the marking by rule.
- Scan an unseen line of accentual-syllabic verse, divide it into feet, and name the metre.
- Recognise metrical variations and distinguish a genuine variation from an error of scansion.

- Relate metrical features to meaning in a short analytical comment.

E. Class-wise Plan

Class	Topic	Objective	Discussed	Outcome	Readings
1	Introduction to English Prosody	To introduce prosody, distinguish rhythm from metre, and fix the terms and notation.	Scope of prosody; quantity in classical verse against accent in English verse; syllable, stress, foot, metre, scansion; the marks for stressed and unstressed syllables, foot-division and caesura; counting syllables by vowel sounds.	Defines the key terms, counts syllables correctly, and reads the notation used in scanned lines.	B & S, Prosody, Chs. I–II; Abrams, <i>Glossary</i> , “Metre”, “Scansion”
2	Stress within the Word	To establish that polysyllabic words carry a fixed stress and to teach the rules that locate it.	Root syllable as bearer of stress; unstressed prefixes; neutral, stress-attracting and stress-shifting suffixes; noun–verb pairs (RE-cord / re-CORD); compounds; secondary stress.	Marks the stress of any polysyllabic word and justifies it by rule.	B & S, Prosody, Ch. I; handout, Rules 1–6
3	Major Words and Minor Words	To move from the word to the line and to establish which words take stress in a sentence.	Nouns, main verbs, adjectives, adverbs, demonstratives, negatives and question words as stressed; articles, monosyllabic prepositions and conjunctions, pronouns and auxiliaries as unstressed; disyllabic prepositions and conjunctions; the exclamatory interjection against the vocative <i>O</i> ; emphasis and contrast.	Marks the stresses of a complete line of verse.	B & S, Prosody, Ch. II; handout, Rules 7–13
4	Metrical Feet	To group marked syllables into feet and to identify each foot by name.	Iamb, trochee, anapaest, dactyl, spondee and pyrrhic, with a note on the amphibrach; rising and falling rhythm; illustration from Gray, Blake, Byron and Tennyson.	Divides a scanned line into feet and names each foot correctly.	B & S, Prosody, Ch. III; Fussell, Ch. 1
5	Counting Feet and Naming the Metre	To complete the basic procedure by counting feet and naming the metre.	Monometer to octameter; the alexandrine; naming by foot and length; blank verse and the heroic couplet; end-stopped and run-on lines; the caesura; feminine endings and catalexis.	Names the metre of a regular line and recognises blank verse and the heroic couplet.	B & S, Prosody, Chs. IV, VII; Attridge, Chs. 1–2
6	Variation in the Line	To account for irregularity and to treat deviation as a deliberate effect.	Substitution, especially trochaic inversion; spondaic and pyrrhic feet; relativity of stress, with promotion and demotion, illustrated from Tennyson’s “The long day wanes”; elision and contraction; the sounded <i>-èd</i> ; flexible words.	Scans an irregular line, identifies the substituted foot, and explains its effect.	B & S, Prosody, Ch. V; Attridge, Ch. 8
7	Scansion Workshop	To apply the full method of scansion to continuous passages of verse.	The step-by-step procedure from reading aloud to naming the metre; collective scansion of a Shakespearean sonnet, a passage of Miltonic blank verse and a stanza of Gray’s <i>Elegy</i> ; metrical pattern against speech rhythm; timed individual practice.	Scans an unseen passage independently and defends disputed markings.	B & S, Prosody, Ch. VI and “Questions on Prosody”; Wright, selected pages

Class	Topic	Objective	Discussed	Outcome	Readings
8	Other Metrical Systems and the Function of Metre	To place foot-scansion in its wider context and to connect metre with interpretation.	Accentual or strong-stress verse; Hopkins and sprung rhythm; syllabic verse; free verse and the limits of foot-scansion; rhyme, alliteration and assonance; common stanza forms; metre as an instrument of meaning.	Recognises when foot-scansion does not apply and writes a short comment on metrical effect.	B & S, Prosody, Chs. VIII–X; Fussell, Chs. 4–5; Hobsbaum, Chs. 1–2
9	Doubt-clearing Session I	To resolve difficulties from Classes 1–4 and to correct recurrent errors in marking stress.	Queries submitted in advance; errors diagnosed during the module — distorting fixed word stress to fit the metre, counting vowel letters instead of sounds, confusing noun–verb pairs, stressing every monosyllable, mishandling the vocative <i>O</i> and contracted forms; board work with volunteers.	Identifies and corrects errors in stress-marking, and explains the correction.	Revision of B & S, Prosody, Chs. I–III; handout, Rules 1–13
10	Doubt-clearing Session II	To resolve remaining difficulties and to prepare students for the examination question.	Doubts on feet, line length and variation; how a scansion answer should be presented in the answer script; a model answer worked on the board; disputed scansions and how to justify a defensible choice; the pattern of the university question.	Attempts a complete scansion question and supports it with a brief comment.	Revision of B & S, Prosody, Chs. IV–VII; previous years' question papers
R1	Remedial I: Syllable and Word Stress	To re-teach the foundation for students who need further support.	Slow re-teaching of syllable division and word accent on simple words; guided marking of short regular lines; individual correction at the desk.	Divides words into syllables and marks word stress with confidence.	Handout, Rules 1–6 and Quick Revision Chart
R2	Remedial II: Guided Scansion Practice	To bring the same students to the level required for an unseen line.	Supervised practice in marking, dividing and naming; graded worksheet with immediate feedback; pairing with peer mentors from the class.	Scans a short regular line and names the metre unaided.	Handout, Rules 7–16 and practice lines

Remedial classes R1 and R2 are additional to the ten scheduled classes and are held outside the routine for students identified as needing support.

F. Teaching Methods and Aids

- PPT
- Lecture-cum-demonstration, with every rule illustrated on the board before it is applied.
- Recitation aloud, since stress is heard before it is marked.
- E-copy of the *Rules of Scansion* circulated at the beginning of the module.
- Practice Session

G. Prescribed and Reference Reading

Prescribed handbook. Bose, Rai Radhika Nath, and T. S. Sterling. *Elements of English Rhetoric and Prosody*. Calcutta: Chuckervertty, Chatterjee and Co. (Prosody section, Chs. I–X, with “Questions on Prosody”.)

Reference books.

1. Attridge, Derek. *Poetic Rhythm: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
2. Fussell, Paul. *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form*. Rev. ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979.
3. Saintsbury, George. *A Historical Manual of English Prosody*. London: Macmillan, 1910.
4. Hobsbaum, Philip. *Metre, Rhythm and Verse Form*. London: Routledge, 1996.
5. Leech, Geoffrey N. *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*. London: Longman, 1969.
6. Wright, George T. *Shakespeare’s Metrical Art*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.
7. Abrams, M. H., and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Boston: Cengage (current edition).
8. Preminger, Alex, and T. V. F. Brogan, eds. *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

Poems used for illustration. Shakespeare, Sonnet 18 and passages from the plays; Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book I; Gray, “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard”; Blake, “The Tyger” and “The Sick Rose”; Wordsworth, “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”; Byron, “She Walks in Beauty”; Tennyson, “Ulysses” and “Break, break, break”; Poe, “The Raven”; Hopkins, “Pied Beauty”.