Talk a Lot

Focus on Connected Speech

Weak Forms – Information Sheet

Notes:
- The weak forms of many function words are commonly used in **spoken English** instead of strong forms (in Standard Pronunciation, dialects, and accents).
- All words that have weak forms usually act as function words.
- All words that have weak forms have only one syllable – they are monosyllabic (apart from "any").
- Most of the weak forms use the vowel sound **schwa** /ə/.
- If we use strong forms when we should use weak, we sound overly **formal** and it's harder for people to understand us, because the sentence stress is incorrect (see p.12.1). Communication is reduced.
- If a function word comes at the end of a sentence we usually use its strong form, e.g. "What are you looking <u>for</u>?" /fɔː/ or, "Who are you writing <u>to</u>?" /tuː/
- If we want to show emphasis or contrast, we can vary intonation by using strong forms where we would normally use weak forms, e.g. "Where've you <u>been</u> all day?" /biːn/

articles & determiners

	<u>weak</u>	<u>strong</u>
a	/ə/	/eɪ/
an	/ən/	/æn/
any	/ˈə.ni/	/ˈen.i/
some	/səm/	/sʌm/
such	/sətʃ/	/sʌtʃ/
the	/ðə/ *or* /ði/	/ðiː/

be & auxiliary verbs

	<u>weak</u>	<u>strong</u>
am	/əm/	/æm/
are	/ə/	/ɑː/
be	/bi/	/biː/
been	/bn/ *or* /bɪn/	/biːn/
is	/z/ *or* /s/	/ɪz/
was	/wəz/	/wɒz/
were	/wə/	/wɜː/
do	/də/ *or* /dʊ/	/duː/
does	/dəz/	/dʌz/
had	/əd/ *or* /həd/	/hæd/
has	/əz/ *or* /həz/	/hæz/
have	/əv/ *or* /həv/	/hæv/
can	/kən/	/kæn/
could	/kəd/	/kʊd/
must	/mst/	/mʌst/
shall	/ʃəl/	/ʃæl/
should	/ʃd/	/ʃʊd/
would	/wd/	/wʊd/

conjunctions

	<u>weak</u>	<u>strong</u>
and	/ən/ *or* /ənd/	/ænd/
but	/bət/	/bʌt/
than	/ðən/	/ðæn/
that	/ðət/	/ðæt/

prepositions

	<u>weak</u>	<u>strong</u>
as	/əz/	/æz/
at	/ət/	/æt/
for	/f/ *or* /fə/	/fɔː/
from	/frəm/	/frɒm/
of	/əv/	/ɒv/
to	/tə/ *or* /tʊ/	/tuː/

pronouns

	<u>weak</u>	<u>strong</u>
he	/i/ *or* /hi/	/hiː/
her	/ə/ *or* /hə/	/hɜː/
him	/ɪm/	/hɪm/
his	/ɪz/	/hɪz/
me	/mi/	/miː/
she	/ʃɪ/	/ʃiː/
them	/ðəm/	/ðem/
their	/ðə/	/ðeə/
us	/əs/	/ʌs/
we	/wɪ/	/wiː/
you	/jə/ *or* /jʊ/	/juː/
your	/jə/ *or* /jər/	/jɔː/

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