

If patterns can occur within a speech, they must result from features that exist inside the language as it's understood by normal people in their daily lives. In English, for example, speakers know which syllable is stressed within a word. And children know, before they read or write that "desert" and "dessert" are different words. They understand the difference in the sounds. The loudness of the second syllable or relaxation of the "ee" to "uh" We put these things together and we "hear" which syllable is stressed and which one's not. It's also true that meaning dictates stress. We emphasize the most important words and words like "I" or "that" would be pronounced with schwa or something else, depending on the meaning that's conveyed. And that's how rhythmic stress occurs in speech.

If patterns can occur within a speech,  
They must result from features that exist  
Inside the language as it's understood  
By normal people in their daily lives.  
In English, for example, speakers know  
Which syllable is stressed within a word.  
And children know, before they read or write  
That “desert” and “dessert” are different words.  
They understand the difference in the sounds.  
The loudness of the second syllable  
Or relaxation of the “ee” to “uh”  
We put these things together and we “hear”  
Which syllable is stressed and which one's not.  
It's also true that meaning dictates stress.  
We emphasize the most important words  
And words like “I” or “that” would be pronounced  
With schwa or something else, depending on  
The meaning we intend to be conveyed.  
And that's how rhythmic stress occurs in speech.

Phil Thompson