

# Word stress

**Stress** is the relative emphasis that may be given to certain syllables in a word, or to certain words in a phrase or sentence. The term is also used for similar patterns of phonetic prominence inside syllables. The word **accent** is sometimes also used with this sense.

SO...

**Word stress** (WS) can be defined as the singling out of one or more syllables in a word, which is accompanied by the change of the force of utterance, pitch of the voice, qualitative and quantitative characteristics of the sound which is usually a vowel.

If we compare stressed and unstressed syllables in the two contract, we may note that in the stressed syllable:

- ◉ the force of utterance is greater, which is connected with more energetic articulation;
- ◉ the pitch of the voice is higher, which is connected with stronger tenseness of the vocal cords and the walls of the resonance chamber
- ◉ the quantity of the vowel is greater, a vowel becomes longer;
- ◉ the quality of the vowel in the stressed syllable is different from the quality of this vowel in the unstressed position, in why it is more narrow than.

The phonetic manifestation of stress varies from language to language. In different languages one of the factors constituting word stress is usually more significant than the others. According to the most salient feature the following types of word stress are distinguished in different languages:

- dynamic or force stress if special prominence in a stressed syllable(syllables) is achieved mainly through the intensity of articulation;
- musical or tonic stress if special prominence is achieved mainly through the change of pitch, or musical tone.
- quantitative stress if special prominence is achieved through the changes in the quantity of the vowels, which are longer in the stressed syllables than in the unstressed ones.
- qualitative stress if special prominence is achieved through the changes in the quality of the vowel under stress. Vowel reduction is often used as a manipulation of quality in unstressed syllables.

# Place and degrees of Word Stress

One of the ways of reinitiating the prominence of syllables is **manipulating the degree of stress**. There is controversy about degrees of WS in English and their terminology. Strictly speaking, polysyllabic word has as many degrees of stress as there are syllables in it.

Designating strongest syllable by 1, the second strongest by 2, etc., we may represent the distribution of stresses in the following example:

examination indivisibility  
igzemineSin indivizibiloti  
32415 2536174

The majority of British phoneticians (D. Jones, Kingdon, A. C. Gimson among them) and Russian phoneticians (V. A. Vassilyev, Shakhbagova) consider that there are three degrees of word-stress in English:

- ◉ primary -- the strongest
- ◉ secondary -- the second strongest, partial, and
- ◉ weak -- all the other degrees.

The syllables bearing either primary or secondary stress are termed stressed, while syllables with weak stress are called, somewhat inaccurately, unstressed.

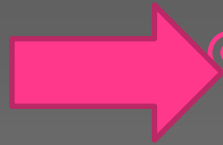
THE AMERICAN  
SCHOLARS BLOCH  
& TRAGER  
DISTINGUISH 4  
TYPES OF WS



- ◉ Loud
- ◉ Reduced loud
- ◉ Medial
- ◉ Weak

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OTHER AMERICAN  
LINGUISTS ALSO  
DISTINGUISH FOUR  
DEGREES OF  
WORD STRESS BUT  
TERM THEM:



- ◉ Primary
- ◉ Secondary
- ◉ Tertiary
- ◉ Weak

Stress can be characterized as fixed and free. In languages with fixed type of stress the place of stress is always the same.

- In English and Russian word-stress is free, that is it may fall any syllable in a word;
- Stress in English and in Russian is not only free but also **shifting**. In both languages the place of stress may shift, which helps to differentiate different parts of speech, e.g. `insult--to in`sult, `import--to im`port.

# Examples of shifting:

- ◉ preSENT (verb) – PRESent (noun)
- ◉ reFER (verb) – REFerence (noun)
- ◉ exTRACT (verb) – EXtract (noun)
- ◉ inCREASE (verb) – INcrease (noun)
- ◉ OBject (noun) – obJECT (verb)



# Functions and tendencies of the English stress

**1.** Word stress constitutes a word, it organizes the syllables of a word into a language unit having a definite accentual structure, that is a pattern of relationship among the syllables;

a word does not exist without the word stress. Thus the word stress performs the constitutive function. Sound continuum becomes a phrase when it is divided into units organized by word stress into words.

**2.** Word stress enables a person to identify a succession of syllables as a definite accentual pattern of a word. This function of word stress is known as identificatory (or recognitive).

Correct accentuation helps the listener to make the process of communication easier, whereas the distorted accentual pattern of words, misplaced word stresses prevent normal understanding.

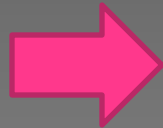
3. Word stress alone is capable of differentiating the meaning of words or their forms, thus performing its distinctive function. The accentual patterns of words or the degrees of word stress and their positions form oppositions, e.g. *'import — im'port, 'billow — below.*



**Recessive.** The accentual structure of English words is liable to instability due to the different origin of several layers in the Modern English word-stock. In Germanic languages the word stress originally fell on the initial syllable or the second syllable, the root syllable in the English words with prefixes. It is seen in the native English words having no prefix, e.g. *mother, daughter, brother, swallow*; in assimilated French borrowings, e.g. *reason, colour, restaurant etc.*



**Rhythmical.** The rhythm of alternating stressed and unstressed syllables gave birth to the rhythmical tendency in the present-day English which caused the appearance of the secondary stress in the multisyllabic French borrowings, e.g. *revolution, organi'sation, assimilation, etc.*



**Retentive.** Was traced in the instability of the accentual structure of English word stress: a derivative often retains the stress of the original or parent word, e.g. *'similar — as'similate, recom'mend — recommen'dation.*

# Typology of accentual structures

The numerous variations of English word stress are systematized in the typology of accentual structure of English words worked out by G.P. Torsuyev. He classifies them according to the number of stressed syllables, their degree or character (the main and the secondary stress). The distribution of stressed syllables within the word accentual types forms accentual structures of words. Accentual types and accentual structures are closely connected with the morphological type of words, with the number of syllables, the semantic value of the root and the prefix of the word.

- 1. ['\_\_\_\_]. This accentual type marks both simple and compound words. The accentual structures of this type may include two and more syllables, e.g. 'fɑ:ðə, 'pɒsəbəl, 'mʌðə-ɪn-lɔ:, 'gɑ:s-paɪp.

## The accentual types are:

- 2. ['\_ ']. The accentual type is commonly realized in compound words, most of them are with separable prefixes, e.g. 'reɪdɪo-'æktɪv, 'ri:'waɪt, 'dɪsə'beɪ.

- 3. ['\_ ' \_ ' ] and

- 4. ['\_ ' \_ ' \_ ' ]. The accentual types are met in initial compound abbreviations e.g. 'U'S'A, 'U'S'S'R.

- 5. ['\_ , \_\_\_\_]. The type is realized both in simple and compound words, very common among compound words, e.g. 'heɪr-,dresər, 'sʌbstrʌktʃə.

- 6. [, \_' \_\_\_\_]. The accentual type marks a great number of simple words and some compound words as well. In simple words the stresses fall onto:

- e.g.1. the prefix and the root: maga'zɪn;
- 2. the root and the suffix: ,hɒspɪ'tælɪtɪ;
- 3. the prefix and the suffix: dɪsɔ:rgənaɪzəʃən.

The other five types are rare and found in small number of words.

The most widely spread among the enumerated accentual types are supposed to be Type 1, Type 2, Type 5 and Type 6.

The variability of the word accentual structure is multiplied in connected speech. The accentual structure of words may be altered under the influence of rhythm, e.g. *An 'unpolished 'stone but: The 'stone was un'polished.*

The tempo of speech may influence the accentual pattern of words. With the quickening of the speed the carefulness of articulation is diminished, the vowels are reduced or elided, the secondary stress may be dropped, e.g. *The 'whole organi'zation of the 'meeting was 'faulty.*

*The End*