

ANALYSIS OF WORD AND SENTENCE STRESS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Abstract:

Stress is one of the most important speech tools used by English speakers to communicate meaning. English speakers use stress to highlight information they think is important. In addition, every English word with more than one syllable or word part has a defined stress pattern. This article, which attempts to deal with both the word stress and the sentence stress in a normative way, is based on the qualitative explorative research design. It involves the fundamental rules of word and sentence stress as variables.

Keywords: intonation, accent, grammatical functions, notional parts of speech, syllables, phonetic, vowels.

Introduction

It should be emphasized that word stress and sentence stress are different, as the terms indicate. Word stress forms a word and singles out one or more of its syllables, while sentence stress deals with the formation of a sentence or phrase and singles out one or more words in the structure of a phrase. Thus, sentence stress is regarded as one of the components of intonation. These two types of stress, which are used in different levels of investigation, are sometimes mixed, though they differ with their components and degrees and also with their factors and functions.

Research materials and Methodology

Stress, or accent is defined differently by different authors. B. A. Bogoroditsky, for instance, defined stress as an increase and decrease of energy, accompanied by an increase and a decrease of expiratory and articulatory activity. D. Jones defined stress as the degree of force, which is accompanied by a strong force of



exhalation and gives an impression of loudness. H. Bweet also stated that stress is connected with the force of breath. Later, however, D. Jones wrote, that “stress or prominence is effected by inherent sonority, vowel and consonant length and by intonation“. A. C. Gimson also admits that a more prominent syllable is accompanied by the changes in the pitch of the voice, quality and quantity of the accented sounds.

English stress comprises varied functions. English speakers use stress to discriminate between the contextual feature and grammatical functions of words. Stress also influences the sound and form selection of word morphemes. It signposts the reaction of speakers at certain point of speech and the momentous relations established between parts of a word, a phrase, or a sentence.

If a syllable is made specially prominent, it is said to be stressed or accented.

Word Stress is a feature used to give prominence to one or more syllables within a word. Usually, this is the type of prominence we tend to apply to words produced in isolation, as we find them in a dictionary. Most approaches to word stress distinguish between three possible levels:

1. primary stress, marked by ' preceding the relevant syllable
2. secondary stress, marked by , preceding the syllable in question, as in impossibility /ɪm.pəsr'ɪbɪlɪti/
3. unstressed

Sentence-stress is the greater prominence with which one or more words in a sentence are pronounced as compared with the other words of the same sentence. Sentence-stress may vary in degree: it may be full or partial. Full sentence-stress in its turn may be unemphatic or emphatic. Full unemphatic stress is indicated by single stress-marks placed above the line of print, e.g. 'Open your 'books at 'page ,three.

Emphatic stress is effected by greater force of utterance, greater force of exhalation and lengthening the sounds. Emphatically stressed syllables become more prominent and sound louder than syllables with unemphatic stress.

Words which are usually stressed in English unemphatic speech belong to the notional parts of speech namely: nouns, adjectives, numerals, notional verbs, adverbs, demonstrative, interrogative, emphasizing pronouns and the absolute form of the possessive pronouns, for example, the words in bold type in the following sentences:

'Twenty 'minutes ,later | he 'came out of 'Number ,7, | `pale, | with his 'lips
↑tightly com`pressed | and an 'odd ex`pression on his ,face.



'Who was 'that on the 'phone?

He 'rang 'up himself, | 'wanted to 'speak to you.

This 'fountain – pen is 'hers.

However, personal, possessive, reflexive and relative pronouns, which also belong to the notional parts of speech, are usually not stressed.

The other class of words which are usually not stressed in English unemphatic speech are form-words, i.e. words which express the grammatical relationship of words in the sentence. These are: auxiliary and modal verbs, as well as the verb to be, prepositions, conjunctions, articles and particles, e.g.

She 'felt 'hot, | 'took 'off her 'coat, | and 'flung it over her 'arm.

“‘Why are you 'late?”

“‘You must be 'friends with him.”

However, it is necessary to point out that **any** word in a sentence may have logical stress, e.g. 'Where 'have you been?

'Where have 'you been?

He 'is a student.

A word which is made prominent by logical stress may stand at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of a sense-group, and it is usually the last stressed word in it.

As to A.C. Gimson:” The accentual pattern of English words is fixed, in the sense that the main accent always falls on a particular syllable of any given word, but free in the sense that the main accent is not tied to any particular situation in the chain of syllable, constituting a word, as it is in some languages”. Thus, word accent in English may be regarded free if we take all words in which any syllable can receive stress. E. g. 'water, 'common (the first syllable is stressed), be'come, mis'spell (the second syllable is stressed), 'after'noon (the third syllable is stressed while the first receives secondary and the second receives the tertiary stress), 'all-'round (both syllables are stressed), representation (the fourth syllable is stressed) etc.

If we take a separate word, it is noticeable that stress replacement in it is fixed and cannot be shifted to any other syllable of a monosyllabic, disyllabic and polysyllabic word. E. g. a'bout, a'bility, 'up-to-date, uni'-versal, con'tain etc.

Word-stress in Russian is both free and shifting as it falls on any syllable of words and word forms and may shift from one syllable to another in different grammatical forms of words. E. g. голова, голову, письмо, пи'сьма, высокий, высок, вы'ше, ноги, ноги'.



Word stress in Uzbek has become free as a result of language contacts which is observed in the cited examples. In the Turkic languages, particularly in Uzbek, word stress usually falls on the final syllable. The classification of words according to the place and degree of stress is known as the accentual structure (type, pattern) of words. Traditionally word accent has the following phonetic components:

- a) In articulatory aspect stress is realized by the great force of respiration (a stressed syllable has both an increase in respiratory and laryngeal activity², duration of articulation (a stressed syllable may belong and tense³) high frequency of the vibration of vocal chords;
- b) Acoustically, a stressed syllable has greater intensity, duration and pitch or tone of voice than an unstressed syllable;
- c) Perceptually, a stressed syllable is characterized by more loudness, duration and high tone of a sound in comparison with an unstressed syllable.

Word accent serves not only to single out one or more syllables in a word with the help of intensity, pitch and duration but it also prosodically combines and thus, phonetically shapes the word as a semantic unit in language structure.

In several languages, stress is consistently located on syllables in particular positions. It is therefore called fixed stress or predictable stress. In such languages, stress is easily predictable, and it performs a delimitative function. The Stress helps in segmenting the stretch of speech into regular units. Spanish, Polish, and Welsh always put stress on the penultimate syllables in words. In Hungarian, Czech and Finnish, stress is located on the initial syllable. Some languages put stress on the final syllable including Turkish and French. Unlike languages with predictable stress placement, many languages, including English, are not found to have stress with a delimitative function. They are called languages with free stress. Here, the location of the stress is not straightforward; instead it is decided through the application of a number of rules. Stress in these languages mark lexical meaning or grammatical class of the words. Ex: Insight /'insait/ vs. Incite /in'sait/ Absent (Adj.) /'æbsent/ vs. Absent (V) /æb'sent/ Extract (N) /'ækstrekt/ vs. Extract (V) /æks'trekt/ Object (N) /'ɒbzekt/ vs. Object (V) /ɒb'zekt/ Increase (N) /'ɪnkriz/ vs. Increase (V) /ɪn'kriz/ Attribute (N) /'ætribjut/ vs. attribute (V) /æ'tribjut/ Note: The diacritic ' indicates primary stress.

Stress beyond the single word includes phrasal stress and compound stress.

The phrase stress:



It is the stress in a syntactic phrase in which the second word is more prominent than the first one; therefore the head word of the phrase is stressed. Example:

Noun phrase: good 'work, heavy 'meal, dark 'night etc.

Verb phrase: can 'go, will 'read, may 'sleep etc.

Adjective Phrase: very 'good, too 'cold, quite 'lovely etc.

Adverb phrase: very 'clearly, quite 'well, too 'slowly etc.

The compound stress:

The compound stress refers to the stress in compound words which are made up of two or more single words. In compounding words, the first word is more prominent than the second or the third word. The stress falls on the first word. Example: 'blackbird, 'greenhouse, 'armchair, 'textbook etc.

Native speaker knows the appropriate use of stress (Harmer, 1990) [10]. It is general tendency to stress the word regardless of its word class to put special meaning into the sentences, for example:

I killed a tiger. (Not anyone else but “I”)

I 'killed a tiger. (I did nothing but “killed”.)

I killed 'a tiger. (Not two, three or other but only “one”.)

I killed a 'tiger. (Not a fox, lion or other but “tiger”.)

Conclusion

Stress, one of the suprasegmental features, is a puzzling aspect for the persons who use English as a foreign language in their speech or conversation. Stress is significant in conversation because it tends to determine the speaker's mood, emotion, emphasis and meaning. English speakers use word stress to communicate rapidly and accurately, even in difficult conditions. For example, even when one does not hear a word clearly, still one can understand the word because of the position of the stress. An appropriate use of stress is essential for better conversation or communication.

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