

Changing meaning through word stress



When you are speaking English the words you stress can change the underlying meaning a sentence. Take a look at the following sentence:

I don't think he should get the job.

This simple sentence can have many levels of meaning based on the word you stress. Consider the meaning of the following sentences with the stressed word in **bold**. Read each sentence aloud and give a strong stress to the word in **bold**:

I don't think he should get the job.

Meaning: *Somebody else thinks he should get the job.*

I **don't** think he should get the job.

Meaning: *It's not true that I think he should get the job.*

I don't **think** he should get that job.

Meaning: *That's not really what I mean.*

OR I'm not sure he gets that job.

I don't think he should get **he** that job.

Meaning: *Somebody else should get that job.*

I don't think he **should** get that job.

Meaning: *In my opinion it's wrong that he's going to get that job.*

I don't think he should **get** that job.

Meaning: *He should have to earn (be worthy of, work hard for) that job.*

I don't think he should get **that** job.

Meaning: *He should get another job.*

I don't think he should get that **job**.

Meaning: *Maybe he should get something else instead.*

As you can see, there are many different ways this sentence can be understood. The important point to remember is that *the true meaning of the sentence is also expressed through the stressed word or words.*

(Source: <http://esl.about.com/od/speakingadvanced>)