

Lecture 5

Stress

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Definition

- Stress is an extra force exerted on a particular syllable or a particular word in spoken language. The stressed syllable or word is said with greater energy, and stands out in a word, phrase or sentence. Examples:

father /¹fɑːðə/

information /₁ɪnfə¹meɪʃn/

John bought a new car yesterday

Types of stress

1. **Word stress:** is an extra force put on a particular syllable of the word. It is usually fixed. For example:

invite

entertain

2. **Sentence stress:** is an extra force put on a particular word in a sentence. Sentence stress is not fixed. It depends on the speaker's feelings and attitudes and the message that he wants to get across to the listener. For example:

John bought a new car yesterday.

The nature of stress

- We can study stress from the point of view of production and perception.
 1. From the production point of view, the production of stress is generally believed to depend on the speaker's using more muscular energy than for unstressed syllables.
 2. From the perception point of view: all stressed syllables have one characteristic in common, and that is prominence. At least four factors make a stressed syllable prominent: loudness, length, pitch and vowel quality. Generally, these four factors work together in combination though syllables may sometimes be made prominent by means of only one or two of them.

Levels of stress

1. **Primary stress (tonic/nuclear):** is the strongest type of stress. It is marked by a small vertical line high up just before the syllable it relates to.
2. **Secondary stress (non-tonic):** it is weaker than primary stress, but stronger than unstressed syllables. It is usually found in words of four or five syllables. It is represented in transcription with a low mark. For examples:

photographic	economical
anthropology	nationality
3. **Unstressed:** can be regarded as being the absence of any recognizable amount of prominence.

Placement of stress within words

- In order to decide on the stress placement, it is necessary to make use of some or all of the following information.
 - a. Whether the word is morphologically simple or complex.
(whether the word is a simple, derived or compound word).
 - a. The grammatical category to which the word belongs.
 - b. The number of syllables in the word.
 - c. The phonological structure of the word.

Simple word stress

1. Two syllable words

- a. Verbs
- b. Adjectives
- c. Nouns
- d. Adverbs and prepositions

2. Three syllable words

- a. Verbs
- b. Nouns
- c. Adjectives

Two-syllable verbs

- a. If the second syllable of the verb contains a long vowel or a diphthong or it ends with more than one consonant, that second syllable is stressed.

E.g.

provide

protest

contain

agree

- More examples: *select, arrest, design, inform, invent, prefer, depend, occur, succeed, deny, apply, record, invite.*

- b. If the second syllable contains a short vowel and ends with one or no consonant, the first syllable is stressed. Examples:

enter

worry

travel

open

- More examples: *menace, settle, marry, differ, equal, answer.*

- c. The final syllable is also unstressed if it contains /əʊ/. Examples:

follow

borrow

Two-syllable Adjectives

- Two syllable adjectives are stressed according to the same rules as verbs. Examples:

correct

major

polite

complete

heavy

happy

sincere

precise