

The Stress

Lecture 15

The Stress

The stress is a phonological feature by which a syllable is heard as more **prominent** than others.

Prominence is produced by four main factors:

1. loudness

2. length

3. pitch

4. quality

Cont.

Generally these four factors **work together in combination**, although syllables may **sometimes** be made prominent by means of only **one or two** of them.

Levels of Stress

There are three levels of syllable stress:

1. **primary** stress
2. **secondary** stress
3. **unstressed** syllable

1. Primary Stress

The **prominence** that results from pitch movement, or tone, gives the **strongest** type of stress called the *primary stress*.

Cont.

This *primary stress* is marked in transcription by placing a small vertical line (/) high up, just **before** the syllable it relates to.

Examples

əˈbaʊt

pəˈhæps

əʊˈpən

2. Secondary Stress

In some words, we can observe a type of stress that is **weaker** than **primary stress** but **stronger** than **unstressed** syllable. This stress is called ***secondary stress***.

Cont.

This *secondary stress* is presented in transcription with a low mark (_˘), just **before** the syllable it relates to.

Examples

fəʊtə'græfɪk

æ'nθrə'pɒlədʒi

æ'nθrə'pɒlədʒ

3. Unstressed Syllables

Unstressed syllable is regarded as as being the absence of any recognizable amount of prominence.

Examples

ə.[/]baʊt

pə.[/]hæps

[/]əʊ.pən

Placement of Stress Within the Word

In order to decide on stress placement, it is necessary to make use of some of the following information:

Cont.

1. Whether the word is **morphologically simple**, or whether it is **complex** as a result either of containing one or more **affixes** (prefixes or suffixes) or of being a **compound** word.

Cont.

2. What the **grammatical category** of the word is (noun, verb, adjective, etc.)
3. How many **syllables** the word has.
4. What the **phonological structure** of those syllables is.

Single-syllable words

Single-syllable words present no problem- If they are pronounced in isolation they are said with primary stress.

Two-syllable Words

Rules for marking stress in two-syllable

words:

Verbs:

1. If the **second syllable** of the **verb** is **strong** syllable, then the **second syllable** is stressed.

Example:

/ə.[!]plaɪ /

/ə.[!]raɪv /

/ə.[!]sɪst /

Verbs

2. If the **final syllable** is **weak**, then the **first syllable** is stressed.

Example:

/é.n.tə /

/əʊ.pən /

/i:.kwəl /

Cont.

3. A final syllable is also **unstressed**, if it contains **/əʊ /**.

Example:

/bɪ.rəʊ /

/fɪ.ləʊ /

Adjectives

Two-syllable simple **adjectives** are stressed according to the **same rule**.

Example:

/lʌv.li / /di.vain /

/ə.laɪv / /kə.rekt /

Nouns

Nouns require different rules: if the **second syllable** contains a **short vowel**, then the **stress** usually come on the **first syllable**.
Otherwise it will be on the second.

Example:

/mʌ.ni /

/ɪ.steɪt /

/prɒ.dʌkt /

/bə.lu:n /

Three-syllable Words

Rules for marking stress in three-syllable words:

Verbs:

1. If the **final syllable** of the **verb** is **strong** syllable, then it will be stressed.

Example: entertain /en.tə.'teɪn /

resurrect /re.zə.'rekt /

Verbs:

2. If the **final syllable** is **weak**, then it will be unstressed, and **stress** will be placed on the **preceding** (*penultimate*) syllable if that syllable is **strong**.

Example: *encounter* /ɪŋ.ˈkaʊntə /

determine /dɪ.ˈtɜːmɪn /

Verbs:

3. If both **second** and **third syllables** are **weak**, then the **stress** will fall on the **initial** syllable.

Example: *parody* /'pæ.rə.di/

Nouns:

1. **Nouns** require a slightly different rule: if the **final syllable** is **weak**, or **ends** with **/əʊ /**, then it is **unstressed**; if the syllable **preceding** this is strong, then the **middle syllable** is stressed.

Example:

Nouns:

Example:

mimosa /mi.ˈmæʊ.zə /

disaster /di.ˈzɑː.stə /

potato /pə.ˈteɪ.təʊ /

Nouns:

2. If the **second** and **third** syllables are both **weak**, then the **first** syllable is stressed.

Example:

quantity /'kwɒn.tə.ti/

cinema /'sɪ.nə.mə/

emperor /'em.pə.rə/

Cont.

Most of the above rules show stress tending to go on a syllable containing a long vowel or diphthong and/ or ending with more one consonant.

Nouns

3. However, Three-syllable nouns are different. Even if the final syllable is strong, the stress will usually be placed on the first syllable. The last syllable is usually quite prominent, so we could have secondary stress.

Nouns:

Example:

intellect /'ɪntələkt /

marigold /'mæriɡəʊld /

alkali /'ælkəlaɪ/

Adjectives:

Adjectives seem to need the same rule, to produce stress patterns such as:

opportune /'ɒpətju:n /

insolent /'ɪnsələnt /

derelict /'derəlɪkt /