



A Morphological Insight into English Word Stress System

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Abstract

Pronunciation plays a very vital role but in order to be a master of pronunciation one needs to know the cardinal principles of word-stress patterns. This study aims at studying stress patterns of English because word stress of English is different from word stress of Indian languages. This study will help a non-native speaker of English to learn and master correct pronunciation of English words. To be more precise, this study has elaborated three distinct phenomenon of word stress: I Sound system of English, II Process of syllabication, III Condition based word stress rules.

Introduction

All the languages have their certain characteristics of stress. But in all the languages the phenomena of stress is different or distinct because different stress may mean different meaning in different language. Stress phonemic in English is very different from any other language. According to Jones (1962), syllables can be stress or unstressed depending on the degree of stress in a particular utterance. The nomenclature of primary and secondary is important to be recognized to understand the pronunciation of any language.

Syllable: A syllable is a part of a word that contains a single vowel sound and that is pronounced as a unit. So, for example, 'book' has one syllable and 'reading' has two syllable. It is a combination or set of one or more units of sound in a language that must consist of sonorous element (a sonant or vowel) and may or may not contain less sonorous elements (consonants or semivowels) flanking it on either or both sides.

Stress: Stress is the degree of loudness with which a syllable is pronounced. English words are either monosyllabic (of one syllable) or polysyllabic (of more than one syllable).

Research Objective

To explore the cardinal principles of stress patterns of English language and to teach English pronunciation in a prescriptive manner.

Research Question

What are the cardinal principles of stress patterns of English to learn correct pronunciation of English words?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in the fact that this study will prove worthwhile for all the non-native speakers of English as it not only talks about all the cardinal principles of word stress system but also prescribes them in a conditioned manner. Thus, this study has a great utility in learning English pronunciation in a short span of time.

Review of Related Literature

Stress has been defined as the degree of force with which a word is pronounced. Daniel Jones argues that “cases do occur where a strong stress fails to give much carrying power to a sound, therefore fails to make it objectively prominent.”

Daniel Jones has asserted that “it is important to learn the stress of each word individually.” For example:

On the first syllable	student	/'stju:d(ə)nt/
On the second syllable	understand	/,ʌndə(r)'stænd/
On the third syllable	economics	/,i:kə'nɒmɪk//,ekə'nɒmɪk/

Gimsons (1994) says that stressed syllables are normally louder than the unstressed syllables because of the extra breath force. Greater loudness is carried by voice sounds, in which great amplitude of variation of the vocal cord, together with the reinforcing resonance of the supra-glottal cavities, results in the acoustic terms, in a relatively great intensity.

Syllabification refers to the breaking words up into their component syllables. Students who can count the syllables in a word are aware of how many vowels a word should have, and they are better prepared to chunks , or break them into manageable parts, polysyllabic written words so that they are easier to decode. Though syllabification necessarily is not the most exciting part of learning to read and write, but it is essential to know about the written complexities of a language.

Syllabification is a process of dividing a word into syllables. Syllable is unit of pronunciation that may occur usually in three probable forms as follow:

(vowel+consonant)=vc

(consonant+vowel)=cv

(consonant+vowel+consonant)=cvc

For example, **book** has one syllable as cvc; **before** has two syllable cv and vc; whereas **information** has four syllables as vc, cv, vc, cvc.

After dividing a word into syllable(s), we have to learn which syllable is stressed more. As for monosyllabic word, the stress is on the word itself. In case of the polysyllabic words like **before** and **information**, the stress is on the syllable /fɔ:/, and /meɪ/ respectively.

Classification of sound system

Total sounds are (20 + 24) that are divided into vowels and consonants:

VOWELS -20 (12 Pure _ 8 Glide)	CONSONANTS-24
TONGUE HEIGHT	PLACE
TONGUE ADVANCEMENT	MANNER
ROUNDING	VOICING

Vowels can be defined on three parameters namely **tongue-height**, **tongue advancement**, and **lip-rounding**.

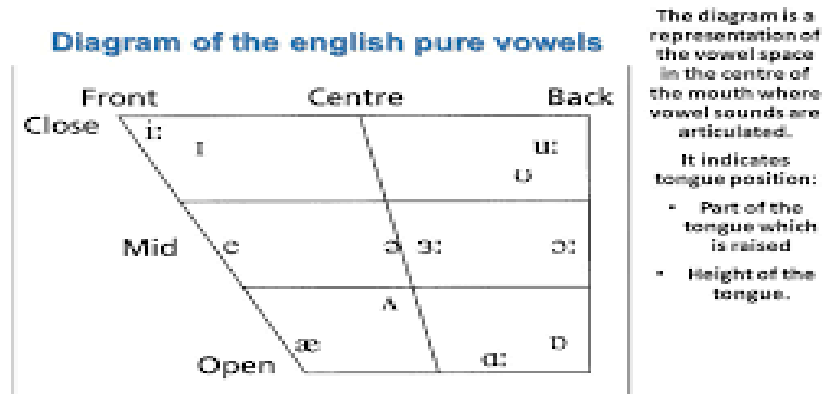


Figure-1: Classification of English Vowel Sounds

Classification of monophthongs (PURE VOWELS)

Table-1 Tongue Advancement

TONGUE HEIGHT	FRONT	FRONT	CENTRAL	CENTRAL	BACK	BACK
	LONG	SHORT	LONG	SHORT	LONG	SHORT
HIGH	Dean	Din			Soon	Look
A high vowel is one which	Seen	Sin			Root	Book
	Seat	Hit			Rude	Could
	Heat	Sit			Food	Would

tongue is as high to the roof of mouth as possible.						
MID A mid vowel is one foe which tongue remains between intermediate positions.		Bed Head Leg Beg	Turn Bird Sir Girl	About Sofa Mother Away	Walk Talk Call Wall	
LOW A low vowel is one for which the tongue is as low as possible with jaws wide open.		Bat Hat Back Pack		But Hut Cup Suck	Dark Park Palm Calm	Pot Hot Coffee rock

Lip rounding: as for lip-rounding, lips can take three different shapes:

Rounded: all the back accept /a:/ are rounded as the corners of the lips are moved away from each other and the lips pushed forwards.

Unrounded: all the front and central vowels are unrounded as the corners of the lips are moved away from each other, as for a smile.

Neutral: this is the position where the lips are not noticeably rounded or spread. The noise most English people make when they are hesitating (written “er”) has neutral lip position

(GLIDE VOWELS)

As the name suggests, a glide vowel which is made up of two pure vowels changes its quality; e.g. in /ei/, the quality of /e/ changes to /i/.

Glide or Diphthong

Combinations of two vowels which form a single syllable. They have the same length as long than pure vowels. The stress in the glides appears on the first element. In English we can find eight glides:

Iə	eɪ	
fear	say	
ʊə	ɔɪ	əʊ
pore	toy	no
eə	aɪ	aʊ
lair	pie	cow

Consonants: all the 24 consonants have been explained below on the bases of voiceless-voiced, place of articulation and manner of articulation respectively.

Table-2: Classification of Consonants

	stop	fricative	affricate	nasal	liquid	glide
bilabial	p, b			m		w
labio-dental		f, v				
dental		θ, ð				
alveolar	t, d	s, z		n	l, r	
palatal		ʃ, ʒ	tʃ, dʒ			j
velar	k, g			ŋ		
glottal		h				

Sounds that are **bold** are voiced.

Methodology

This empirical study is qualitative in its nature for which the researcher used document analysis as a primary data gathering to select a representative sample of 100 words. Using analytic induction, these words were further studied in terms of their shift in stress.

Analysis and Findings

Word Stress In English

According to Jha (2013), accent or pronunciation is one of the foul vital components after vocabulary, grammar, and structures. Since, many non-native speakers often fumble while pronouncing English words properly, this study delves into understanding how shift in stress results into different meanings of a word.

Word stress means producing on syllable of a multisyllabic word with a greater emphasis (stress) than the other syllable in the word. The following factors are to be taken in account in determining the relative prominence of a syllable. It should also be marked that pitch change is one which is marks a stressed syllable.

Pitch change: pitch height as well as pitch change determines the stress pattern of a word. Pitch changes may create stress prominence at the word level or within a phrase. For example: **object** (N) and **object** (V)

Functional shift of stress: There are many words that consist of syllable in which the accentual pattern depend son whether the word is used as noun or adverb. When the word is noun, the stress is on first syllable. When the word is used as adverb, the stress is on the second syllable. Here are few examples:

Table-3: Data for Analysis

WORD	NOUN	VERBS
Address	ˈaddress	Adˈdress
Attribute	ˈattribute	Atˈtribute
Addict	ˈaddict	Adˈdict
Absent	ˈabsent	Abˈsent
Conflict	ˈconflict	Conˈflict
Convert	ˈconvert	Conˈvert
Combat	ˈcombat	Comˈbat
Convict	ˈconvict	Conˈvict
Compact	ˈcompact	Comˈpact
Contest	ˈcontest	Conˈtest
Console	ˈconsole	Conˈsole
Content	ˈcontent	Conˈtent
Converse	ˈconverse	Conˈverse
Dismount	ˈdismount	Disˈmount
Discharge	ˈdischarge	Disˈcharge
Decrease	ˈdecrease	Deˈcrease
Digest	ˈdigest	Diˈgest
Default	ˈdefault	Deˈfault
Desert	ˈdesert	Deˈsert
Detail	ˈdetail	Deˈtail
Discount	ˈdiscount	Disˈcount
Export	ˈexport	Exˈport
Entrance	ˈentrance	Enˈtrance
Exploit	ˈexploit	Exˈploit
Extract	ˈextract	Exˈtract
Escort	ˈescort	Esˈcort
Frequent	ˈfrequent	Freˈquent
Insert	ˈinsert	Inˈsert
Invite	ˈinvite	Inˈvite
Invalid	ˈinvalid	Inˈvalid
Import	ˈimport	Imˈport
Increase	ˈincrease	Inˈcrease
Insult	ˈinsult	Inˈsult
Misprint	ˈmisprint	Miˈsprint
Object	ˈobject	Obˈject
Perfect	ˈperfect	Perˈfect
Permit	ˈpermit	Perˈmit
Present	ˈpresent	Preˈsent
Progress	ˈprogress	Proˈgress
Protest	ˈprotest	Proˈtest

Perfume	‘perfume	Per’fume
Project	‘project	Pro’ject
Pervert	‘pervert	Per’vert
Produce	‘produce	Pro’duce
Pocket	‘pocket	Poc’ket
Refund	‘refund	Re’fund
Record	‘record	Re’cord
Rebel	‘rebel	Re’bel
Rewrite	‘rewrite	Re’write
Reject	‘reject	Re’ject
Refuse	‘refuse	Re’fuse
Recall	‘recall	Re’call
Refill	‘refill	Re’fill
Suspect	‘suspect	Sus’pect
Survey	‘survey	Sur’vey
Subject	‘subject	Sub’ject
Transport	‘transport	Trans’port
Transfer	‘transfer	Trans’fer
Update	‘update	Up’date
Upgrade	‘upgrade	Up’grade
Upset	‘upset	Up’set

Stress in disyllabic word: in words of two syllables, one always has a strong stress and other has a weak stress. For example:

‘increase

‘insult

In’crease

In’sult

Certainly, disyllabic words have strong stresses on both of its syllables. For example:

Fifteen

Prepaid

Conclusion

In response to the set objective, this study has explored few cardinal principles of English word stress patterns. Of the major findings, three findings are worth mentioning here. The stressed syllables are heavy when compared to non-stressed syllables so they are pronounced with a

greater emphasis when compared to unstressed syllable. Also, it has been found that noun tend to follow general pattern whereas verbs tend to place their stress on one syllable later than the noun in accord with the general pattern of English word stress placement. If the word is used as a noun, the stress is on the first syllable but it is likely to shift on the second syllable if the same word is used as a verb. Although, the findings of this study are based on limited data of 80 words, the outcome of this study should not be generalized in a wider domain. Furthermore, the scope of the future research on the stated topic is wide open.

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