



FUNCTIONS, PLACEMENT AND DEGREES OF WORD STRESS

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ABSTRACT

Word stress is one of the most essential elements in phonology, accompanied by segmental phonemes to express the specific meanings of vocabulary, grammar, etc. It has an identificatory factory function because stress patterns of words enable people to identify definite combinations of sounds as meaningful linguistic units. Distressing the stress pattern may hamper understanding or produce a strange accent.

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Word stress in a language performs three functions like following:

1. Word stress constitutes a word, it organizes the syllables of a word into a language unit having a definite accentual structure, that is a pattern of relationship among the syllables; a word does not exist without the word stress. Thus the word stress performs the constitutive function. Sound continuum becomes a phrase when it is divided into units organized by word stress into words.

2. Word stress enables a person to identify a succession of syllables as a definite accentual pattern of a word. This function of word stress is known as identificatory (or recognitive). Correct accentuation helps the listener to make the process of communication easier, whereas the distorted accentual pattern of words, misplaced word stresses prevent normal understanding.

3. Word stress alone is capable of differentiating the meaning of words or their forms, thus performing its distinctive function. The accentual patterns of words or the degrees of word stress and their positions form oppositions, e.g. 'import — im'port, 'billow — below.²

Languages can differ with word stress placement and degrees of it. According to the position of stress in words and word forms, word accent may be free (or shifting) and fixed (or constant). 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»³. 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), represen'tation (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. about, a'bility, 'up-to-date, uni'-versal, con'tain etc.

In Uzbek word stress is free as it may fall on any syllable. E.g. deraza «a window», rels «rails», qonun «a law», sekretar «secretary» etc. 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. Turkic languages are regarded as agglutinative, i.e. word forms may take from one to six suffixes. For example, the word bola «a child» may have four suffixes as bolalar-i-miz-ga «for our children», in the word form ishqi-boz-li-gi-miz-dan «as we like» there are six different suffixes. In these examples word stress tends to be at the end of the word form and very often the last syllable receives stress.

Many languages have dominant initial or final syllable stress. Turkic languages have

² <https://studfile.net/preview/3558876/page:17/>

³ A.C. Gimson. An Introduction to the Pronunciation of English. London, 1962, p. 216.

heavy syllables in word final position and in order to combine such «heavy» syllables (or suffixes) into a single word form the final stress is very important. Besides, there is historical evidence that long vowels, which had been stressed, was being lost in Uzbek and short vowels began to be used in all words. As a result of this historical change, final stress was generalized in all words of Turkic origin. As to borrowings from other languages, they brought foreign accentual patterns and prosodic rules which influenced to make the placement of word stress in Uzbek free.

Different authors distinguish from three to five degrees) of word stress in English. The British linguists distinguish three degrees of word stress: primary, secondary and weak (unstressed)⁴. Most American linguists distinguish four degrees of word stress in English: primary, secondary, tertiary and weak⁵ but the terms and marks used to indicate the degrees of word stress are also different. For example, they use the terms main, lowered main, medium and weak degrees of stress and also full stress⁶, half stress, weak stress distinguishing three degrees⁷. Probably, it is possible to differentiate more than three degrees of word stress in English polysyllabic words. Though listeners cannot perceive five or more degrees of word stress (as D.Jones and A.C. Gimson have admitted them), theoretically such degrees of stress may be important only for some polysyllabic words. Practically the human ear can distinguish three degrees of stress.

We distinguish four degrees of word stress in Uzbek: primary, secondary, tertiary and weak, e. g. uylarimizda «at our house», kutubxona «library», studentlar «students» etc. Recent experimental investigation proves the correctness of this idea as to **Uzbek**⁸. The placement and degrees of word stress in Uzbek depend

on the syllabic structure of words. Different degrees of word stress may fall on any syllable of a polysyllabic word. Primary stress cannot be shifted from one syllable to another in most English words of Germanic origin though some suffixes may be

added (e.g. 'beauty, 'beautiful, 'beauti-fulness, 'beautifully). On the contrary, in Uzbek word stress can be shifted from syllable to syllable, e. g. ko'z «eye», ko'zi «his (or her) eye», ko'zlar «eyes», ko'zlarga «to eyes», ko'zlarimizga «to our eyes».

RESOURCES:

1. A.C. Gimson. An Introduction to the Pronunciation of English. London, 1962, p. 216.
2. V. A. Vassilyev. Op. cit., p. 261.
3. P. Ladejoged. A Course in Phonetics. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1975, p. 101. Г. Глисон. Введение в дескриптивную лингвистику. М., 1959, с. 79-80.
4. F. S. Southworth. Ch. J. Daswani. Id., p. 67.

⁴ V. A. Vassilyev. Op. cit., p. 261.

⁵ P. Ladejoged. A Course in Phonetics. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1975, p. 101. Г. Глисон. Введение в дескриптивную лингвистику. М., 1959, с. 79-80.

⁶ F. S. Southworth. Ch. J. Daswani. Id., p. 67.

⁷ H. Kurath. A Phonology and Prosody of Modern English. Ann Arbor, 1964, p. 141.

⁸ С. Салиджанов. Силлабическая, и акцентная структуры слова и их соотношение в разносистемных языках. (Сопоставительно-типологическое и экспериментально-фонетическое исследование на материале английского и узбекского языков.) Автореферат канд. диссертации. М., 1982.

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