

CHAPTER 6

STRESS IN ENGLISH

Do you know what stress in English is? To understand what native speakers speak, it is necessary to learn about stress in words, phrases, and sentences in English. The native speakers speak English by stressing in words, phrases, and sentences so naturally that they don't even know they are using it. One problem found in teaching English phonetics in Buriram Rajabhat University is that some students speak English without using stress in English. When native speakers or foreign lecturers speak English fast, students cannot understand what they speak because they use stress in words, phrases, and sentences. To find it easy to understand what the native speakers speak, we turn now to a discussion of **stress in English** consisting of **word stress** and **sentence stress** that will help learners or students to understand when the native speakers speak easily.

Stress in English

According to Dale and Poms (2005: 84), “stress refers to the amount of volume that a speaker gives to a particular sound, syllable, or word while saying it. Stressed sounds and syllables are louder and longer than unstressed ones.” In English, stress is a syllable that is emphasized more than the others while a speaker is saying it. That is, there is only one stress to a certain syllable within words, called **word stress**, and to a certain word within sentences, called **sentence stress**.

1. Word stress

In English, we do not say each syllable with the same force or strength. Try saying the following words to yourself: *important, development, understand*. All of them have three particular stressed syllables, and one of the syllables within each word has only one syllable that is louder or higher than the others: so, we get *imPORTant, deVELOPMENT, and underSTAND*. (The syllables symbolized in capitals are the stressed syllables.) We assume that word stress is a phonological feature by

which a syllable is heard to be more prominent than others. Thus, “word stress (EnglishClub, 1997-2015) is a magic key to understanding spoken English.” Every word in English has a stressed-syllable pattern shared between speaker and the listener. The ability to communicate in English successfully requires the ability to stress syllables correctly.

1.1 Problems of word stress

Let’s begin by examining why we accentuate the stressed syllables within words. The stressed syllables in English are essential parts of words for native speakers or those who use English in communication. When they listen to the speakers’ voice, they listen to the stressed syllables in each word. It is important to try recognizing the difference between stressed and unstressed syllables that are greater in English than in most other languages. “In classroom, learners whose first language is syllable-timed often have problems producing the unstressed sounds in a stress-timed language like English, tending to give them equal stress (British Council, 2006).” For example, some students in my class about learning English phonetics have got the problems of using stress in words because Thai language is syllable-timed. So, it is difficult to understand what the native speakers speak because English is a stress-timed language. So far, to correctly understand and communicate with native speakers, we have to learn about the syllables in English (as discussed in Chapter 5) concerning the stressed and unstressed syllables in words. Let’s compare the syllable-timed pattern in Thai and the stressed-timed pattern in English. (We can show stress with circles: each circle is a syllable and the bigger circle in the bold type shows which syllable has the stress.)

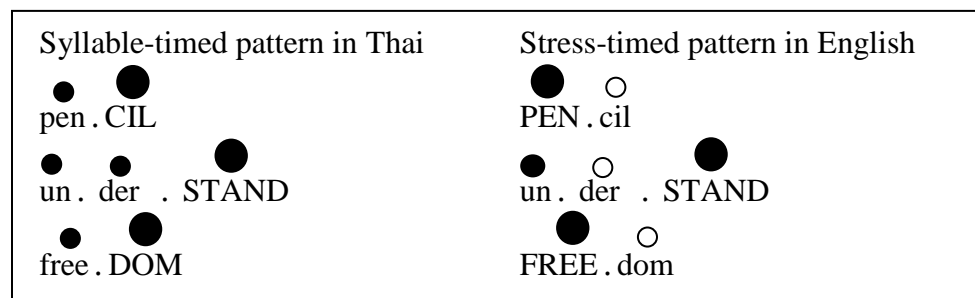


Figure 6.1 Comparison of syllable-timed and stress-timed patterns

As the problems of word stress mentioned above, Onnicha Geeratayaporn (2010:18) stated in her research on word stress problems that “the problem of English stress for Thais is the difference between the stress system of the Thai language and the stress system of the English language. That is, polysyllabic words in Thai usually have stress on the final syllable and stress placement also affects the meaning and the function of the words in Thai. While English polysyllabic words have a variety of stress placements, most are on the first syllable. This is different from Thai polysyllabic stress placement. While English polysyllabic words have a variety of stress placements, most are on the first syllable. This is different from Thai polysyllabic stress placement.” For example:

Thai polysyllabic words

โทรทัศน์ (โท - รั - ทัศน์)
● ● ●

ศักดิ์ศรี (สัก - ดิ์ - ศรี)
● ●

บริการ (บอ - ร์ - กาน)
● ● ●

English polysyllabic words

in . stru . ment
● ○ ○

pro . TECT . ion
○ ● ○

en . gi . NEER
● ○ ●

“Benrabah (1997; Celce-Murcia; et al, 2013: 185) cites the following examples from the research studies on lexical stress: misplaced stress on *normally* (norMALLY) misheard as *no money*; misplaced stress on *written* (wriTTEN) misheard as *retain*; and misplaced stress on *secondary* (seCONDary) misheard as *country*. These findings suggest that lexical stress is important to teach—especially for those learners (for Thais) from syllable-timed languages that may have difficulty correctly placing stress in English words.” They also find it difficult when trying to emphasize syllables correctly, as shown here:

1. If they put the stress on the wrong syllable, e.g., **DE**sert /'dezət/ (dry barren region) will sound like **de**SSERT /di'zɜ:t/ (sweet foods).

2. If they stress every vowel in a word equally and forget to reduce vowels in unstressed syllables, e.g., **YE**Sterday /'jestədeɪ/ will sound like **YES** . TER . DAY. (Adapted from Dale & Poms, 2005)

1.2 Understanding syllables

“Syllables are the beats of a word. The center of a syllable is usually a vowel, which can be preceded or followed by consonants (Lane, 2005:130).” To understand word stress, we need to understand **syllables**. Every word stress in English is made from syllables. Each word has one or two or more syllables. Every syllable has at least one vowel or vowel sound. Let’s take a look at the words with the underlined syllables below and tap the syllables of these words on your fingers:

| | | | |
|---------------|---|-------------|----------|
| man | → | 1 syllable | = 1 tap |
| receive | → | 2 syllables | = 2 taps |
| prominent | → | 3 syllables | = 3 taps |
| disappointed. | → | 4 syllables | = 4 taps |
| university | → | 5 syllables | = 5 taps |



1.2.1 The stressed syllable

Celce-Marcia; et al (2013: 184) stated that “stressed syllables are most often defined as those syllables within an utterance that are longer, louder, and higher in pitch.” In such the definition, we can assume that the polysyllabic word has more than one syllable; the vowel in that syllable is longer or more prominent than the other vowels. When this happens, we can say that the syllable has a stress or that it is stressed. “Stressed syllables in English are usually held longer than unstressed syllables. They may also be louder and higher in pitch.” (Lane, 1993:108)

To give it stress, try this with the word: *morning*.

| | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| Make it longer: | M O R . ning |
| Make it louder: | MOR . ning |
| Make it higher: | MOR . ning |

Let’s practice saying or pronouncing the stressed syllables which can fall on the first, middle or last syllables by making the stressed syllables in each word longer, louder, and higher, as shown here:

| | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| ● ○ ○ AC . ci . dent | ○ ● ○ pre . DICT . ion | ○ ○ ● di . sap . PEAR |
| ● ○ ○ MU . sic . al | ○ ● ○ to . MA . to | ○ ● mis . TAKE |

1.2.2 The unstressed syllable

The unstressed syllables symbolized in the light circle in each word above are shortly and quietly pronounced. Lane (2005) stated in her book on Focus on Pronunciation that “in English, unstressed syllables are reduced and short. The vowel is usually pronounced /ə/ (known as ‘schwa’ that is a vowel heard in the unstressed syllable of a word that are spoken without stress) or /ɪ/, regardless of how it is spelled.” The alternation of long stressed syllables and reduced unstressed syllables is a key to natural-sounding English.” Let’s consider the vowel sound /ə/ occurring in the unstressed syllables in each word above again. This sound can be heard in the first syllable of *tomato* /tə'mɑ:təʊ/, in the second syllable of *disappear* /,dɪsə'piə(r)/, and also in the third syllable of *accident* /'æksɪdənt/.

1.3 Stress shift

Varshney (2000-2001: 106) stated that “words with the same stem do not keep the primary stress (stressed syllable) on the same syllable. The stress shift is quite normal in derivatives.” We accent only ONE syllable in each word. The stressed syllable in each word is not always the same syllable. So, the shape of each word is different. Let’s consider the following words below. (Each circle stands for a syllable and the bigger bold circle stands for a stressed syllable.)

| Word | Shape | Phonetic transcription | Total syllables | Stressed syllable |
|--------------|---------|------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Final (stem) | ● ○ | /'fɑml/ | 2 | #1 |
| finally | ● ○ ○ | /'fɑnəli/ | 3 | #1 |
| Finality | ○ ● ○ ○ | /fɑr'næləti/ | 4 | #2 |

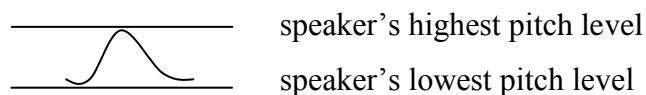
Figure 6.2 Comparison of stressed syllables with stress shift

From the figure 6.2, we can say that *final* is the stem (root) of *finally* and *finality* by adding the derivational suffixes: -ly and -ity. *Final* and *finally* are both stressed on the first syllable, while *finality* is stressed on the second. Compare the pronunciation of the second vowel in each word. We notice that when the vowel in the second syllable is unstressed, as in *finally*, it is pronounced as schwa /ə/. When this vowel is stressed, it is not pronounced as /ə/. So, the vowel in the second syllable that changes from /ə/ to /æ/, as in *finality*, is called stress shift.

1.4 Levels of word stress

Up to this point, we have talked about the syllables in terms of stressed syllable and unstressed syllables. In English, every word with two or more syllables always has only one stressed syllable, and the other syllables within a word are unstressed syllables (usually pronounced as schwa /ə/). However, Lane (1993: 111) stated that “words with three or more syllables may have both *primary stress* and *secondary stress*.” According to Celce-Murcia; et al (2013), English teaching texts and dictionaries for English learners mainly refer to only three levels of word stress: *strong*, *medial*, and *weak*. For purposes of teaching methods, there are three levels of word stress adhering to this general designation: *strongly stressed*, *lightly stressed* and *unstressed*. So, it is worth noting that there are at least three levels of word stress: *primary stress (strongly stressed syllable)*; *secondary stress (lightly stressed syllable)*, and *weak stress (unstressed syllable)*, as shown below.

1.4.1 *Primary stress* is a type of stress that has the strongest and highest pitch level. Each word has one syllable that is STRESSED. The other syllables in the word are UNSTRESSED. Roach (2010: 75) cites “the diagram of the pitch movement as shown below, where the two parallel lines represent the speaker’s highest and lowest pitch level. The prominence that results from this pitch movement, or tone, gives the strongest type of stress; this is called primary stress.”



Let us take a look at the word *about* /ə'baʊt/, where the primary stress always falls clearly on the last syllable and the first syllable is the weak stress (unstressed syllable). In the phonetic transcription, it is usually symbolized with a high stress mark (') before the syllable to indicate the highest stressed syllables in the following words:

| | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------------|
| police | /pə'li:s/ | hospital | /'hɒspɪtl/ |
| building | /'bɪldɪŋ/ | computer | /kəm'pjʊ:tə(r)/ |
| people | /'pi:pl/ | difficult | /'dɪfɪkəlt/ |
| today | /tə'deɪ/ | salary | /'sæləri/ |

1.4.2 *Secondary stress* is “a type of stress that is weaker than primary stress but stronger than that of the first syllable of *about*; for example, consider the first syllable of the word *photographic* /,fəʊtə'græfɪk/ (Roach, 2013).” The secondary stress usually occurs in polysyllabic or longer words (but not every word) that may have three or more syllables, normally coming before the primary stress. In the phonetic transcription, it is usually represented with a low stress mark (') before the syllable to indicate lighter stressed syllables before the primary stress in the following words:

| | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| introduce | /,ɪntrə'dju:s/ | instrumental | /,ɪnstrə'mentl/ |
| interchange | /,ɪntə'tʃeɪndʒ/ | contradiction | /,kɒntrə'dɪkʃn/ |
| represent | /,reprɪ'zent/ | independent | /,ɪndɪ'pendənt/ |
| oversleep | /,əʊvə'sli:p/ | understanding | /,ʌndə'stændɪŋ/ |

1.4.3 *Weak stress* is a type of stress that is weaker or softer or quieter than normal speaking pitch level, coming before or after the primary stress. The vowel in an unstressed syllable is usually either /ə/ or /ɪ/ (See the section 1.2.2). In the phonetic transcription, it is usually represented without stress mark.

For example:

| | | | |
|-----------|--------------|---------|-----------|
| policeman | /pə'li:smən/ | college | /'vɪlɪdʒ/ |
| yesterday | /'jestədeɪ/ | orange | /'ɒrɪndʒ/ |
| famous | /'feɪməs/ | pocket | /'pɒkɪt/ |
| breakfast | /'brekfəst/ | village | /'vɪlɪdʒ/ |

Now, let us identify the pronunciation with *primary stress*, *secondary stress* and *weak stress* in the excerpted dictionary below.

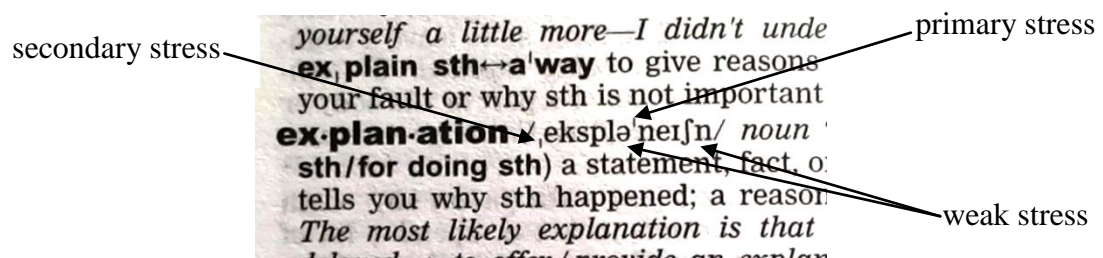


Figure 6.3 The placement of the *primary*, *secondary* and *weak stresses*

Source: Hornby (2000: 462)

1.5 Placement of word stress

In English, placing of stress on the right syllable is very important. Stress in words is not always on the same syllable, like in some languages. It is undeniable that learning how to stress in words is a large number of difficulties to non-native speakers, especially to some Thai students in my class who are studying English phonetic course. When learning a new word, they often ask a question: How can we know how to select the correct syllable to stress in an English word? “In order to decide on stress placement in an English word, it is necessary to use some or all of the following information (Roach, 2010: 76):

1. Whether the word is morphologically simple, or whether it is complex as a result either of containing one or more affixes (i.e. prefixes or suffixes) or of being a compound word.
2. What the grammatical category of the word is (noun, verb, etc.)
3. How many syllables the word has.
4. What the phonological structure of those syllable is.”

Students should also learn its stress pattern. If they learn a new word, make a note to show which syllable is stressed. If they do not know, they can look in a dictionary. All dictionaries give the phonetic transcription of a word (See the section 1.4.3).

1.6 General rules of word stress

In English, there are usually stress patterns in word stress; but it is not easy or perfect to say there are fixed rules to predict which syllable the stress falls. According to Proromrat Jotikasthira (1999: 30), “there are no exact rules for determining which syllable of a word should be stressed.” As a rule, “there are two very simple rules about word stress (EnglishClub, 1997-2015): 1) One word has only one stress. One word cannot have two stresses. If you hear two stresses, you hear two words. Two stresses cannot be one word. It is true that there can be a "secondary" stress in some words. But a secondary stress is much smaller than the main primary stress, and is only used in long words, and 2) we can only stress vowels, not consonants.”

Here are some general rules of word stress in English:

1.6.1 *Two-syllable words* generally have the primary stress on the first or the second syllable. Proromrat Jotikasthira (1999: 30) stated that “nearly 75% of two-syllable words are stressed on the first syllable.” The following observations can be of help.

1) *Two-syllable nouns* usually have the primary stress on the first syllable, e.g.:

| | | | |
|---------|--------------|---------|-------------|
| apple | /ˈæpl/ | table | /ˈteɪbl/ |
| capture | /ˈkæptʃə(r)/ | student | /ˈstjuːdnt/ |
| mother | /ˈmʌðə(r)/ | paper | /ˈpeɪpə(r)/ |

Exceptions, e.g., police /pəˈliːs/, hotel /həʊˈtel/),

2) *Two-syllable adjectives* usually have the primary stress on the first syllable, e.g.:

| | | | |
|--------|-----------|--------|-----------|
| happy | /ˈhæpi/ | hungry | /ˈhʌŋɡri/ |
| active | /ˈæktɪv/ | ugly | /ˈʌɡli/ |
| useful | /ˈjuːsfl/ | angry | /ˈæŋɡri/ |

Exceptions, e.g., correct /kəˈrekt/, alive /əˈlaɪv/

3) *Two-syllable verbs* usually have the primary stress on the second syllable, e.g.:

| | | | |
|--------|-----------|---------|-----------|
| begin | /bɪˈɡɪn/ | believe | /bɪˈliːv/ |
| arrive | /əˈraɪv/ | become | /bɪˈkʌm/ |
| invite | /ɪnˈvaɪt/ | allow | /əˈlaʊ/ |

Exceptions, e.g., open /ˈəʊpən/, enter /ˈentə(r)/, follow /ˈfɒləʊ/

4) *Two-syllable words used as both nouns and verbs* are pronounced with the stress on either the first or the second syllable. That is, if words are nouns, they are stressed on the first syllable, and if words are verbs, they are stressed on the second syllable, e.g.:

| <u>nouns</u> | | <u>verbs</u> | |
|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| record | /ˈrekɔːd/ | record | /rɪˈkɔːd/ |
| object | /ˈɒbdʒɪkt/ | object | /əbˈdʒekt/ |
| contract | /ˈkɒntrækt/ | contract | /kənˈtrækt/ |

Exceptions, e.g., respect /rɪˈspekt/, witness /ˈwɪtnəs/ (n & v)

5) *Two-syllable reflexive pronouns* are usually stressed on the second syllable, e.g.:

| | | | |
|---------|------------|------------|-------------|
| myself | /maɪ'self/ | yourself | /jɔ:'self/ |
| himself | /hɪm'self/ | themselves | /ðəm'selvz/ |
| itself | /ɪt'self/ | herself | /hɜ:'self/ |

6) *Two-syllable prepositions* are usually stressed on the second syllable, e.g.

| | | | |
|---------|-----------|---------|------------|
| beside | /bɪ'saɪd/ | between | /bɪ'twi:n/ |
| among | /ə'mʌŋ/ | along | /ə'lɒŋ/ |
| against | /ə'ɡenst/ | behind | /bɪ'hɑɪnd/ |

1.6.2 *Words ending with the suffixes: -ic, -ical, -ible, -ian, -ial, -ious(-eous), -(s)ion, -(t)ion, -ity, -ify, -itive, -(t)ive, -meter, -graphy and -logy* normally have the primary stress on the syllables before these suffixes, e.g.:

1) The suffix: **-ic**

| | | | |
|----------|---------------|-----------|--------------|
| romantic | /rəʊ'mæntɪk/ | historic | /hɪ'stɔrɪk/ |
| semantic | /sɪ'mæntɪk/ | statistic | /stə'tɪstɪk/ |
| economic | /,i:kə'nɒmɪk/ | domestic | /də'mestɪk/ |

2) The suffix: **-ical**

| | | | |
|------------|--------------|------------|-------------|
| musical | /'mju:zɪkl/ | electrical | /ɪ'lektɪkl/ |
| physical | /'fɪzɪkl/ | practical | /'præktɪkl/ |
| historical | /hɪ'stɔrɪkl/ | critical | /'krɪtɪkl/ |

3) The suffix: **-ible**

| | | | |
|----------|-----------|------------|--------------|
| possible | /'pɒsəbl/ | incredible | /ɪn'kredəbl/ |
| audible | /'ɔ:dəbl/ | flexible | /'fleksəbl/ |

4) The suffix: **-ian**

| | | | |
|------------|------------------|------------|--------------|
| historian | /hɪ'stɔ:riən/ | politician | /,pɒlə'tɪʃn/ |
| musician | /mju'zɪʃn/ | magician | /mə'dʒɪʃn/ |
| vegetarian | /,vedʒə'teəriən/ | Italian | /ɪ'tæliən/ |

5) The suffix: **-ial**

| | | | |
|------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| financial | /faɪ'nænjl/ | memorial | /mə'mɔ:riəl/ |
| artificial | /,ɑ:tɪ'fɪʃl/ | commercial | /kə'mɜ:ʃl/ |
| colonial | /kə'ləʊniəl/ | substantial | /səb'stænjl/ |

6) The suffix: **-ious(-eous)**

| | | | |
|--------------|-------------------|------------|--------------|
| delicious | /dɪ'liʃəs/ | religious | /rɪ'li:dʒəs/ |
| advantageous | /,ædvəntə'ʃi:ʒəs/ | infectious | /ɪn'fektʃəs/ |
| courageous | /kə'reɪdʒəs/ | rebellious | /rɪ'beljəs/ |

7) The suffix: **-(s)ion**

| | | | |
|---------------|-------------------|------------|-------------|
| occasion | /ə'keɪʒn/ | discussion | /dɪ'skʌʃn/ |
| comprehension | /,kɒmpri'hensjən/ | cohesion | /kəʊ'hi:ʒn/ |

8) The suffix: **(t)ion**

| | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|------------|-------------|
| invitation | /,ɪnvɪ'teɪʃn/ | donation | /dəʊ'neɪʃn/ |
| suggestion | /sə'dʒestʃən/ | prediction | /prɪ'dɪkʃn/ |
| examination | /ɪg,zæmɪ'neɪʃn/ | promotion | /prə'məʊʃn/ |

9) The suffix: **-ity**

| | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|----------|-------------|
| electricity | /ɪ,lek'trɪsəti/ | ability | /ə'bɪləti/ |
| personality | /pɜ:sə'næləti/ | activity | /æk'tɪvəti/ |
| community | /kə'mju:nəti/ | purity | /'pjʊərəti/ |

10) The suffix: **-ify**

| | | | |
|----------|---------------|----------|--------------|
| purify | /'pjʊərɪfaɪ/ | qualify | /'kwɒlɪfaɪ/ |
| classify | /'klæsɪfaɪ/ | clarify | /'klærəfaɪ/ |
| identify | /aɪ'dentɪfaɪ/ | simplify | /'sɪmplɪfaɪ/ |

11) The suffix: **-itive**

| | | | |
|-------------|---------------|------------|--------------|
| acquisitive | /ə'kwɪzətɪv/ | repetitive | /rɪ'petətɪv/ |
| competitive | /kəm'petətɪv/ | positive | /'pɒzətɪv/ |

12) The suffix: **-(t)ive**

| | | | |
|------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| detective | /dɪ'tektɪv/ | attractive | /ə'træktɪv/ |
| protective | /prə'tektɪv/ | affective | /ə'fektɪv/ |
| aggressive | /ə'ɡresɪv/ | progressive | /prə'ɡresɪv/ |
| impressive | /ɪm'presɪv/ | expressive | /ɪk'spresɪv/ |

13) The suffix: **-meter**

| | | | |
|-------------|----------------|-----------|----------------|
| parameter | /pə'ræmɪtə(r)/ | barometer | /bə'rɒmɪtə(r)/ |
| thermometer | /θə'mɒmɪtə(r)/ | kilometer | /kɪ'lɒmɪtə(r)/ |

14) The suffix: **-graphy**

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|-----------------|
| photography | /fə'tɒgrəfi/ | geography | /dʒi'ɒgrəfi/ |
| biography | /baɪ'ɒgrəfi/ | radiography | /,reɪdi'ɒgrəfi/ |

15) The suffix: **-logy**

| | | | |
|------------|---------------|---------|--------------|
| technology | /tek'nɒlədʒi/ | biology | /baɪ'ɒlədʒi/ |
| psychology | /saɪ'kɒlədʒi/ | apology | /ə'pɒlədʒi/ |

1.6.3 Words ending with the suffixes: *-cy*, *-ize*, and *-ate*, generally have the primary stress on the third syllables before these suffixes counted from the end, e.g.:

1) The suffix: **-cy**

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------|----------|-------------|
| sufficiency | /sə'fɪʃnsi/ | infancy | /'ɪnfənsi/ |
| democracy | /di'mɒkrəsi/ | tendency | /'tendənsi/ |
| efficiency | /'ɪfɪʃnsi/ | legacy | /'legəsi/ |

2) The suffix: **-ize**

| | | | |
|-----------|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| modernize | /'mɒdənaɪz/ | memorize | /'memərəɪz/ |
| apologize | ə'pɒlədʒaɪz/ | realize | /'ri:əlaɪz/ |
| criticize | /'krɪtɪsaɪz/ | recognize | /'rekəɡnaɪz/ |

3) The suffix: **-ate**

| | | | |
|-------------|----------------|------------|----------------|
| appreciate | /ə'pri:ʃiət/ | abbreviate | /ə'bri:vɪət/ |
| communicate | /kə'mju:nɪkət/ | articulate | /ɑ:'tɪkjuleɪt/ |
| activate | /'æktɪvɪt/ | motivate | /'məʊtɪvɪt/ |

1.6.4 Words ending with the suffixes: *-ee*, *-eer*, *-ette* and *-ese* generally have the primary stress on these suffixes, e.g.:

1) The suffix: **-ee**

| | | | |
|-----------|---------------|---------|-------------|
| guarantee | /,gærən'ti:/ | trainee | /,treɪ'ni:/ |
| refugee | /,refju'dʒi:/ | payee | /,peɪ'i:/ |
| addressee | /,ædre'si:/ | nominee | /,nɒmɪ'ni:/ |

2) The suffix: **-eer**

| | | | |
|-------------|------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| engineer | /,endʒɪ'nɪə(r)/ | profiteer | /,prɒfɪ'tɪə(r)/ |
| mountaineer | /,maʊntə'nɪə(r)/ | pioneer | /,paɪə'nɪə(r)/ |

3) The suffix: **-ette**

| | | | |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| cigarette | /,sɪgə'ret/ | kitchenette | /,kɪtʃɪ'net/ |
| novelette | /,nɒvə'let/ | brunette | /bru:'net/ |

4) The suffix: **-ese**

| | | | |
|------------|----------------|---------|--------------|
| Japanese | /,dʒæpə'ni:z/ | Chinese | /,tʃaɪ'ni:z/ |
| Vietnamese | /,vjetnə'mi:z/ | Burmese | /bɜ:'mi:z/ |

1.7 The variety of word stress patterns

1.7.1 *One-syllable words—stressed* (The intonation should go down):

| | | | | | |
|-------|---|---------|-------|---|---------|
| eat | ↘ | /ɪt/ | ship | ↘ | /ʃɪp/ |
| drink | ↘ | /drɪŋk/ | sign | ↘ | /saɪn/ |
| well | ↘ | /wel/ | know | ↘ | /nəʊ/ |
| watch | ↘ | /wɒtʃ/ | sound | ↘ | /saʊnd/ |
| boil | ↘ | /bɔɪl/ | smile | ↘ | /smaɪl/ |

1.7.2 *Two-syllable words—stressed on the first syllable:*

| | | | | | |
|-----|---------|-----------|-----|--------|------------|
| O o | action | /'ækjən/ | O o | follow | /'fɒləʊ/ |
| O o | fashion | /'fæʃən/ | O o | moment | /'məʊmənt/ |
| O o | also | /'ɔ:lsəʊ/ | O o | lesson | /'lesn/ |

1.7.3 *Two-syllable words—stressed on the second syllable:*

| | | | | | |
|-----|--------|-------------|-----|---------|------------|
| o O | before | /bɪ'fɔ:(r)/ | o O | behind | /bɪ'hænd/ |
| o O | today | /tə'deɪ/ | o O | accept | /ək'sept/ |
| o O | begin | /bɪ'gɪn/ | o O | between | /bɪ'twi:n/ |

1.7.4 *Three-syllable words—stressed on the first syllable:*

| | | | |
|-----------|-------------|-----------|---------------|
| O o o | | O o o | |
| difficult | /ˈdɪfɪkəlt/ | excellent | /ˈeksələnt/ |
| O o o | | O o o | |
| energy | /ˈenədʒi/ | memory | /ˈmeməri/ |
| O o o | | O o o | |
| operate | /ˈɒpəreɪt/ | minister | /ˈmɪnɪstə(r)/ |

1.7.5 *Three-syllable words—stressed on the second syllable:*

| | | | |
|-----------|--------------|-----------|-------------------------|
| o O o | | o O o | |
| memorial | /məˈmɔːriəl/ | example | /ɪɡˈzɑːmpl/ or /ˌzæm../ |
| o O o | | o O o | |
| exception | /ɪkˈsepʃn/ | important | /ɪmˈpɔːnt/ |
| o O o | | o O o | |
| addition | /əˈdɪʃn/ | infection | /ɪnˈfekʃn/ |

1.7.6 *Three-syllable words—stressed on the third syllable:*

| | | | |
|------------|-----------------|-----------|----------------|
| o o O | | o o O | |
| understand | /ˌʌndəˈstænd/ | introduce | /ˌɪntrəˈdjuːs/ |
| o o O | | o o O | |
| engineer | /ˌendʒɪˈniə(r)/ | personnel | /ˌpɜːsəˈnel/ |
| o o O | | o o O | |
| represent | /ˌreprɪˈzent/ | disappear | /ˌdɪsəˈpiə(r)/ |

1.7.7 *Four-syllable words—stressed on the first syllable:*

| | | | |
|------------|-----------------|------------|---------------|
| O o o o | | O o o o | |
| applicable | /ˈæplɪkəbl/ | commentary | /ˈkɒməntri/ |
| O o o o | | O o o o | |
| educated | /ˈedʒuketɪd/ | criticism | /ˈkrɪtɪsɪzəm/ |
| O o o o | | O o o o | |
| helicopter | /ˈhelɪkɒptə(r)/ | capitalize | /ˈkæpɪtəlaɪz/ |

1.7.8 *Four-syllable words—stressed on the second syllable:*

| | | | |
|---------|-----------------------------|---------|--------------------------|
| o Oo o | grammatical /grə'mætɪkl/ | o Oo o | certificate /sə'tɪfɪkət/ |
| o O o o | intelligence /ɪn'telɪdʒəns/ | o O o o | democracy /dɪ'mɒkrəsi/ |
| o Oo o | particular /pə'tɪkjələ(r)/ | o Oo o | activity /æk'tɪvəti/ |

1.7.9 *Four-syllable words—stressed on the third syllable:*

| | | | |
|---------|-------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------|
| o o O o | instrumental /,ɪnstrə'mentl/ | o o O o | emigration /,emɪ'greɪʃn/ |
| o o O o | understanding /,ʌndə'stændɪŋ/ | o o O o | contradiction /,kɒntrə'dɪkʃn/ |
| o o O o | independent /,ɪndɪ'pendənt/ | o o O o | comprehension /,kɒmpri'henʃn/ |

1.7.10 *Compound nouns (1)—the first part is given on the primary stress and the second one on the secondary stress.*

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| O o | O o | O o | O o |
| airplane | black-list | raindrop | teaspoon |
| /'eəpleɪn/ | /'blæklist/ | /'reɪndrɒp/ | /'ti:pʊt/ |
| O o | O o | O o | O o |
| daydream | lunchtime | lipstick | homework |
| /'deɪdrɪ:m/ | /'lʌntʃtaɪm/ | /'lɪpstɪk/ | /'həʊmwɜ:k/ |
| O o | O o | O o | O o |
| hotdog | housework | shorthand | doorbell |
| /'hɒtdɒg/ | /'haʊswɜ:k/ | /'ʃɔ:thænd/ | /'dɔ:bel/ |

1.7.10 *Compound nouns (2)—if the modifying noun describes the characteristic and features of the head noun; the stress is placed on the second part.*

| | | | |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| o o O | o o O | o o O | o O |
| bamboo soup | plastic hat | pumpkin pie | string beans |
| o O o | o o O | o O | o o O |
| brick building | iron gate | roast beef | gravel road |

1.7.11 Compound nouns (3)—*If the modifying noun has an –ing form to describe the use of the noun or the property of the head noun, the stress is placed on the first part.*

| | | | |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| O o o | O o o | O o o | O o o |
| chewing gum | dining room | walking stick | sleeping bag |
| O o o | O o o | O o o | O o o |
| walking stick | sailing boat | melting salt | waiting room |
| O o o | O o o | O o o | O o o |
| sitting room | smoking room | sleeping car | living room |

1.7.12 Compound nouns (4)—*If the modifying noun has an –ing form and modifies a noun to describe the action being happening, the stress is on the head noun.*

| | | |
|--------------|---|------------------|
| o o O | = | Boat is sailing. |
| sailing boat | | |
| o o O | = | Girl is working. |
| working girl | | |
| o o O | = | Van is moving. |
| moving van | | |

1.7.13 Compound adjectives—for compound adjectives, the Primary stress is on the second part and the secondary stress is on the first part.

| | |
|---------------|--------------|
| o o O o | o O o |
| absent-minded | good-looking |
| o O o | o O o |
| bad-tempered | hard-working |
| o O | o O |
| well-trained | handmade |

1.7.14 *Compound verbs (1)*—compound verbs consisting of a noun and a verb usually have a primary stress on the first part and the secondary stress on the second part.

| | |
|-------------|-------------|
| O o o | O o |
| baby-sit | daydream |
| O o | O o |
| lip-sing | sightsee |
| ● o o | O o |
| window-shop | breast-feed |

1.7.15 *Compound verbs (2)*—compound verbs which are made up of an adverbial prefix plus a verb have a primary stress on the verb and the secondary stress on the prefix.

| | |
|------------|----------|
| o o O | o O |
| oversleep | outrun |
| o o O | o o O |
| undergo | interact |
| o o O | o o O |
| understand | overdo |

1.7.16 *Two-word verbs*—two-word verbs can be used as nouns. The stress is usually on the first part for a noun and on second part for a verb.

| <u>Nouns</u> | <u>Verbs</u> |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Oo | o O |
| a setup (arrangement) | to set up (to arrange) |
| O o | o O |
| handout (giving sth to people) | to hand out (to give sth to people) |
| O o | o O |
| a look out (a high place from which to see better) | to look out (to be careful) |

2.3 Weak and strong forms

With reference to the *structure words*, there are some common words in spoken English that have two contrastive pronunciations—the *reduced pronunciation* referred to as *weak form* whereas *the clear pronunciation* as *strong form*. The *weak forms* are much more commonly used than the *strong forms*. The *strong forms* are used only when the word has some special emphasis or is said on its own. So, it is extremely necessary to learn weak forms because many non-native speakers of English, who generally use only strong forms of these words in their pronunciation, fail to approximate to the characteristic rhythm of English. Take a look at comparing some examples of the unstressed (weak) and stressed (strong) forms of structure words below.

| Structure words | Strong forms | Weak forms | Examples |
|-----------------|--------------|---------------|-------------------------------|
| of | /ɒf/ | /əv/ or /ə/ | A glass <i>of</i> water |
| to | /tu:/ | /tə/ | I'm going <i>to</i> downtown. |
| at | /æt/ | /ət/ | Look <i>at</i> that man. |
| and | /ænd/ | /ənd/ or /ən/ | Tom <i>and</i> Tim |
| from | /frɒm/ | /frəm/ | I come <i>from</i> England. |
| can | /kæn/ | /kən/ or /kn/ | <i>Can</i> I sit here? |
| an | /æn/ | /ən/ | I'd like <i>an</i> apple. |
| should | /ʃʊd/ | /ʃəd/ | What <i>should</i> I do? |
| him | /hɪm/ | /(h)ɪm/ | She like <i>him</i> . |

Figure 6.4 Showing how weak and strong forms are pronounced

Almost all the weak form words are affected by the replacement of a vowel phoneme by either /ə/, /ɪ/, or /ʊ/ according to the following pattern:

| Strong Form | Weak form | Example |
|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| /i:/ | → /ɪ/ | me /mɪ/ |
| /u:/ | → /ʊ/ | to /tʊ/ |
| /æ/ | /ə/ | at /ət/ |
| /e/ | | them /ðəm/ |
| /ɜ:/ | | her /hə(r)/ |
| /ʌ/ | | but /bət/ |
| /ɑ:/ | | are /ə(r)/ |
| /eɪ/ | | a /ə/ |
| /eə/ | | there /ðə/ |
| /ʊ/ | | to /tə/ |

Figure 6.5 Showing weak forms affected by the replacement of a vowel phoneme by either /ə/, /ɪ/, or /ʊ/

2.4 Sentence stress patterns

In the sentence stress pattern below, the big circle [O] stands for a stressed syllable, and the small one [o] for an unstressed one.

2.4.1 Pattern 1: O o O

- 1) Thanks a lot.
- 2) Put it back.
- 3) Draw a line.

2.4.2 Pattern 2: O o o O

- 1) Come for a swim.
- 2) Where have you been?
- 3) What do you do?

2.4.3 Pattern 3: o O o o o O

- 1) She wanted me to go.
- 2) You only have to say.
- 3) I promised to be good.

2.4.4 Pattern 4: o O o O o O

- 1) She goes to work by bus.
- 2) I think he'll come at night.
- 3) We played a game of chess.

2.4.5 Pattern 5: o O o O o O o O

- 1) It's time he came to take us home.
- 2) I'll try my best to pass the test.
- 3) I think he ought to come in time.

2.4.6 Pattern 6: o O o o O o o O o o O

- 1) He says that he wanted to come in the day.
- 2) You turn to the left at the end of the street.
- 3) He tried up the files and then sent them by post.

Summary

Word stress is the key to understanding spoken English. Every word is made from syllables. Each word has one, two, three or more syllables. Every syllable contains at least one vowel or vowel sound. Each word has one syllable that is **stressed**, while the other syllables in the word are **unstressed**. A multi-syllable word has a prominent syllable. This is called a **stressed syllable**. In English, there are at least three degrees of word stress: *primary stress*; *secondary stress*, and *weak stress*.

Sentence stress is the "music" of language. it gives **rhythm** or "beat" to English language for speaking and understanding spoken English. In sentence stress, some words in a sentence are stressed (loud) and other words are unstressed (weak). Sentence stress is accent on **certain words** within a **sentence**. Most sentences in spoken English have two types of words: *content words* (stressed words) and *structure words* (unstressed words). Rhythm in sentence stress is timing patterns among syllables in words. So, English is a **stress-timed rhythm**. That is, the speakers try to make the stressed syllables come at the same rhythm or time.

Question reviews

1. What is stress in English?
2. How many types of stress in English? What are they?
3. What is word stress?
4. What are the problems of Thai learners or students about word stress?
5. Try to find only one word that has the different stressed syllable pattern in each list by making a circle.

- 5.1 o O behind, chicken, postpone, guitar, correct
- 5.2 O o under, Japan, student, reason, handsome
- 5.3 o O o exciting, telephone, tomorrow, October, injection
- 5.4 O o o policeman, difficult, yesterday, politics, cinema
- 5.5 o o O o information, supermarket, immigration, intonation,
unemployment

6. What is sentence stress?
7. What types of words are stressed or unstressed in sentence stress?
8. Explain the rules for sentence stress in English briefly.
9. What is the difference between weak forms and strong forms?
10. Write these sentences in the correct sentences stress column below.
 - 10.1 The water's cold.
 - 10.2 Come and look.
 - 10.3 What do you want?
 - 10.4 It's cold and wet.
 - 10.5 Close the window.

| O o o O | o O o O | O o O | O o O o |
|---------|---------|-------|---------|
| | | | |