

COMPARING THE USE OF WORD STRESS IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH LANGUAGES

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Abstract: *This article explores the comparative features of word stress in the Uzbek and English languages, focusing on their phonetic, structural, and functional characteristics. English, a stress-timed language, employs variable stress placement that influences meaning and pronunciation, often leading to vowel reduction. In contrast, Uzbek features consistent final-syllable stress, maintaining vowel clarity. The study examines how these systems affect communication and pose challenges for language learners. Drawing on research by linguists such as Anne Cutler and S. Jalilov, the article underscores the importance of word stress in linguistic theory, phonetic analysis, and practical language education.*

Keywords: *Word stress, phonetics, dynamic accent, Uzbek language, English language, vowel reduction, suprasegmental feature, comparative linguistics, stress placement, language learning.*

Word stress is a critical phonetic feature in spoken languages, affecting pronunciation, rhythm, and even meaning. Defined as the emphasis placed on certain syllables within words, stress is a suprasegmental feature that varies across languages. English and Uzbek, despite belonging to different linguistic families—Indo-European and Turkic respectively—both employ dynamic stress, yet their systems differ in function, placement, and phonetic realization. Understanding these differences not only enhances our grasp of their phonetic structures but also aids language learners in mastering the intricacies of each language.

This article provides an in-depth comparative analysis of word stress in English and Uzbek, drawing on research from Elenora Khalmuratova, Anne

Cutler, S. Jalilov, and others. The exploration includes stress placement, its phonetic and communicative roles, and challenges faced by learners transitioning between these languages.

Word Stress in English

In English, word stress is integral to pronunciation and comprehension. It serves both a phonetic and a communicative function, distinguishing word meaning and enhancing clarity in speech. Stress in English is often characterized by:

1. Increased Loudness: Stressed syllables are louder than unstressed ones.
2. Longer Duration: They are held for a slightly longer period.
3. Higher Pitch: The pitch rises on stressed syllables, giving them prominence.

Phonetic Characteristics in English

English is a stress-timed language, meaning that stressed syllables occur at roughly equal intervals, while unstressed syllables are compressed. This feature leads to vowel reduction in unstressed syllables, often realized as the schwa /ə/ sound. For example:

- photograph (/ˈfəʊ.tə.grɑːf/) versus photographic (/ˌfəʊ.təˈgræf.ɪk/).

Anne Cutler highlights the importance of stress for maintaining intelligibility, noting, “Errors in stress and intonation can dramatically alter the meaning of words and sentences in English” [3;73].

Types of Stress in English

English employs several types of word stress, which influence rhythm and meaning:

1. Tonic Stress: Highlights the most important word in an utterance.
 - Example: I didn't SAY she stole the money.
2. Emphatic Stress: Adds emphasis to convey strong emotion.
 - Example: This is absolutely AMAZING.
3. Contrastive Stress: Distinguishes between alternatives.
 - Example: I said BLACK coffee, not WHITE.

4. New Information Stress: Introduces new details in a conversation.

- Example: Where are you going? To the LIBRARY.

Historical Perspective

The evolution of English stress patterns reflects the language's complex history. During the Anglo-Saxon period, stress typically fell on the first syllable of most words (e.g., 'holy, 'body). However, with the influx of polysyllabic words from Latin, French, and Greek, stress placement became more variable. According to Robert Stockwell and Donka Minkova, "The complexity of stress in modern English arose from the need to integrate borrowed words into its native phonological system" [6;11].

Word Stress in Uzbek

Uzbek, a member of the Turkic language family, exhibits a more consistent stress system. Unlike English, where stress placement varies widely, Uzbek typically places stress on the final syllable. This regularity simplifies pronunciation rules but introduces challenges for Uzbek speakers learning English, where stress patterns are less predictable.

Phonetic Characteristics in Uzbek

Stress in Uzbek is dynamic, marked by increased intensity on the stressed syllable. However, unlike English, vowel reduction is minimal, preserving clarity across syllables. As Khalmuratova notes, "The length and intensity of the stressed syllable in Uzbek are important, but the accent itself takes precedence over tonal or quantitative features" [4;232-242].

Stress Placement in Uzbek

Uzbek word stress often falls on the final syllable, regardless of word type or grammatical structure. This characteristic is seen even in borrowed words, where the original stress placement is usually overridden. For example:

- Telefon (телефон) – Stress on the final syllable.
- Universitet (университет) – Stress on the final syllable.

However, exceptions exist, particularly in compound words and certain fixed expressions.

Communicative Role

In Uzbek, stress primarily serves a structural function, distinguishing syllables within words rather than modifying meaning. For instance, stress does not change the grammatical category of a word as it might in English (record as a noun versus record as a verb).

Comparative Insight

Jalilov's research highlights a key difference: "In Uzbek, stress is less about modifying meaning and more about maintaining rhythmic balance and phonetic clarity" [3;52-53].

Comparative Analysis of Word Stress in English and Uzbek

1. Stress Placement and Flexibility

- English: Stress placement varies and can shift depending on the word's grammatical function, origin, or syntactic context.
- Example: object (noun) versus object (verb).
- Uzbek: Stress is predominantly fixed on the final syllable, creating a predictable rhythm.

2. Impact on Pronunciation

- English: Unstressed syllables often experience vowel reduction, leading to schwa sounds.
- Example: banana (/bə'nænə/).
- Uzbek: Vowel sounds remain clear and unaffected by stress.
- Example: olma (олма).

3. Function in Communication

- English: Stress serves as a tool for emphasis, contrast, and meaning modification.
- Uzbek: Stress plays a structural role, ensuring clear articulation without altering meaning.

4. Challenges for Language Learners

- Uzbek Speakers Learning English: Difficulty in predicting stress placement and mastering vowel reduction.

- English Speakers Learning Uzbek: Adjusting to the consistent stress on the final syllable and maintaining vowel clarity.

Theoretical Perspectives and Practical Implications

The differences in stress systems have implications for language teaching and learning. For instance, teaching English to Uzbek speakers requires explicit instruction on stress patterns, including practice with schwa sounds and shifting stress in polysyllabic words. Conversely, teaching Uzbek to English speakers involves training to maintain consistent stress placement and avoid vowel reduction.

Insights from Comparative Linguistics

Comparative studies, such as those by L. V. Sherban, highlight the role of stress in shaping linguistic identity. Sherban notes, “Stress is not merely a phonetic feature but a window into the rhythm and structure of a language” [5;15].

Future Research Directions

While much has been explored, further studies could delve into how stress interacts with intonation in Uzbek and English, particularly in connected speech. Additionally, examining stress in bilingual contexts could yield insights into phonetic transfer and adaptation.

The comparison of word stress in Uzbek and English reveals both the diversity and universality of phonetic systems. English, with its complex and variable stress patterns, contrasts sharply with Uzbek’s predictable and rhythmically consistent system. These differences underscore the importance of stress in communication, phonetics, and language learning.

By understanding these distinctions, linguists and educators can develop more effective teaching strategies, fostering cross-linguistic competence and appreciation. As language continues to evolve, the study of word stress remains a vital area of inquiry, bridging phonetics, phonology, and communication.

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