

## ***Word Stress***

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### **1. Definition. The Nature of Stress.**

The sequence of syllables in the word is not pronounced identically: some syllables are more prominent than the others. They are called stressed syllables. Therefore, *stress* is a greater degree of prominence of a syllable or syllables as compared to the other syllables of the word. A particular combination of varying prominence of syllables in a word forms its *stress pattern*.

Stress is defined differently by different scientists. B.A. Bogoroditsky defined stress as an increase of energy, accompanied by an increase of expiratory and articulatory activity. D. Jones defined stress as the degree of force, which is accompanied by a strong force of exhalation and gives an impression of loudness. H. Sweet also stated that stress is connected with the force of breath. A.C. Gimson admits that a more prominent syllable is accompanied by pitch changes in the voice, quality and quantity of the stressed sounds.

The nature of word stress can be studied from the point of view of production and perception; the two are obviously closely related but are not identical. The production of stressed syllables requires more muscular energy. Greater muscular effort and muscular activity produce higher subglottal pressure and an increase in the amount of air expelled from the lungs. On the acoustic level this extra articulatory activity leads to the increase of intensity, duration and fundamental frequency of the stressed syllable. On the perception level it corresponds to the increase of loudness, length and pitch.

The effect of prominence of the stressed syllable is achieved by a number of phonetic parameters such as pitch, loudness (force of utterance), length, vowel quality or their combination. As a result, there appears a contrast between stressed and unstressed syllables.

If to compare stressed and unstressed syllables in the words *contract* ['kɒntrækt] *договор* and *to contract* [kən'trækt] *заключатъ договор*, one may note that in the stressed syllable:

– the force of utterance is greater, which is connected with more energetic articulation;

– the pitch of the voice is higher, which is connected with stronger tenseness of the vocal cords and the walls of resonance cavity;

– the quantity of the vowel [æ] in [kən'trækt] is greater, the vowel becomes longer;

– the quality of the vowel [æ] in the stressed syllable is different from the quality of this vowel in the unstressed position, in which it is more narrow.

Generally, these four factors work together in combination, though syllables may sometimes be made prominent by means of only one or two of them. Experimental work has shown that these factors are not equally important. The strongest effect is produced by pitch and length. Loudness and quality have much less effect.

*Word stress* can be defined as the singling out of one or more syllables in a word, which is accompanied by the change of the force of utterance, pitch of the voice, qualitative and quantitative characteristics of the sound, which is usually a vowel.

Stress in connected speech is termed *sentence stress*.

## 2. The types of word stress, distinguished in different languages.

I. The balance of the components of word stress may be different in different languages, so we can distinguish different types of word stress.

- ❖ If special prominence in a stressed syllable or syllables is achieved by greater force with which the syllable is pronounced, such type of stress is called *dynamic (force) stress*. European languages such as English, German, French, Russian, have dynamic word stress.
- ❖ If special prominence in a stressed syllable is achieved mainly through the change of pitch, or musical tone, such type of stress is called *musical (tonic) stress*. It is characteristic of the Japanese, Korean and other oriental languages.
- ❖ If special prominence in a stressed syllable is achieved through the changes in the quantity of the vowels, which are longer in the stressed syllables than in the unstressed ones, such type of stress is called *quantitative*.
- ❖ *Qualitative* type of stress is achieved through the changes in the quality of the vowel under stress.

English word stress is traditionally defined as dynamic, but in fact, the special prominence of the stressed syllables is manifested in the English language not only through the increase of intensity, but also through the changes in the vowel quantity, consonant and vowel quality and pitch of the voice.

All English vowels may occur in stressed syllables, the only exception is [ə], which is never stressed. English vowels [ɪ, ʊ, əʊ] tend to occur in unstressed

syllables. Syllables with the syllabic [l, m, n] are never stressed. Unstressed diphthongs may partially lose their glide quality.

**II.** The syllables in a word are characterized by different *degrees of prominence*. Objectively, there are as many degrees of stress in a word as there are syllables (stress is distributed through the word).

In English they generally distinguish three degrees of stress: *primary* (*strong, main, principal*), *secondary* (*half-strong, half-stressed*) and *weak* (*unstressed*).

American phoneticians distinguish four contrastive degrees of word stress: primary, secondary, *tertiary* and weak. Tertiary stress does not show much difference from secondary stress, but it has a different placement in a word. It is generally associated with American English, where it marks the last but one syllable in the words with suffixes *-ary, -ory, -ony* (*,revo'lutio ,nary, 'dictio ,nary*).

However, in terms of teaching English as a foreign language the British conception of three degrees of word stress is more acceptable.

Stress is indicated in transcription by placing the stress mark before the symbol of the first sound of the stressed syllable. Primary stress is marked by a raised short vertical stroke and secondary stress is marked by a lowered one: *examination* [ɪg,zæmɪ'neɪ(ə)n]. Most English scientists do not mark monosyllabic words.

**III.** According to its placement in a word, stress can be *fixed* and *free*. In languages with a **fixed stress**, the position of the word stress is always the same. It is restricted to a particular syllable in a multisyllabic word. For example, in French word stress is normally fixed on the last syllable of the word, in Finnish and Czech it falls on the first syllable, in Polish it falls on the last but one syllable.

In languages with a **free stress**, its location is not confined to a specific position. It can fall on any syllable of the word. The number of languages with free word stress is relatively small: English, Russian, Italian, Greek, Spanish and some others.

In English the word stress is not only free, but it is also *shifting*, which means that it can change its position in different forms of the word and its derivatives (*'music – mu'sician*).

**IV.** According to the placement in a word the stress in a word may be on the last syllable, **the ult**; on the next-to-last (the second from the end), **the penult**; on the third syllable from the end, **the antepenult**; and a few words are stressed on the fourth syllable from the end, **the pre-antepenult** [Kreidler 1997: 156].

### **3. The effect of prominence. The variations in force, pitch, quantity and quality.**

According to A.C. Gimson, **the effect of prominence** is achieved by any or all of four factors: *force, tone, length and vowel colour* [1970].

*The dynamic stress* implies greater force with which the syllable is pronounced. In other words in the articulation of the stressed syllable greater

muscular energy is produced by the speaker. European languages such as English, German, French, Ukrainian are believed to possess predominantly dynamic word stress. In Scandinavian languages the word stress is considered to be both dynamic and musical.

*The musical (or tonic) word stress* is observed in Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese. It is effected by the variations of voice pitch in relation to neighbouring syllables.

Recent investigations of lexical stress in English show the existence of *a hierarchy of acoustic cues to the stressed status of a syllable in English*:

- ❖ the perceptually most influential cue is (higher) pitch,
- ❖ the second most important cue in the hierarchy is (longer) duration,
- ❖ the third is (greater) intensity and the last is segmental (sound) quality [Laver 1995: 513].

The English linguists (D. Crystal [1969], A.C. Gimson [1970]) agree that in English word stress or accent is a complex phenomenon, marked by the variations in force, pitch, quantity and quality. *The dynamic and the tonic features of English word stress prevail* over the others. It should be noted that when the tonic or musical component of word stress is involved it is the change of pitch level that is significant in making the syllable prominent, but not the type of tone direction.

As to *the quantitative and qualitative components of word stress* they are also significant. Certain distinctions of the vowel length and colour are reduced or lacking in unstressed syllables. The fact strengthens the idea that the accentuation is influenced by the vowel length and quality. The vowel of the stressed syllable is perceived as never reduced or obscure and longer than the same vowel in the unstressed syllables. Thus, the word "stress" or "accent" is also defined as qualitative where the vowel colour or quality is a means of stress and quantitative with relatively increased length of the stressed vowel.

The term prominence seems to cause some ambiguity when related to word stress. The stressed syllables are often said to be the most prominent syllables in the word. According to G.P. Torsuev *the notions "stressed" and "prominent" should not be used synonymically* [1960]. Prominence in speech is a broader term than stress. It is obtained by the components of word stress, such as the loudness, the length, the quality of the vowel plus the inherent sonority of the vowel and its historical length. In a discourse the effect of prominence may be strengthened by the melody which is the component of intonation.

#### **4. The placement of word stress. The systems of notation for marking stress in a written word.**

Languages are also differentiated according to *the placement of word stress*. The traditional classification of languages concerning place of stress in a word is into those with *a fixed stress* and those with *a free stress*.

In languages with a fixed stress the occurrence of the word stress is limited to a particular syllable in a multisyllabic word. For instance, in French the stress

falls on the last syllable of the word (if pronounced in isolation), in Finnish and Czech it is fixed on the first syllable, in Polish on the one but last syllable.

In languages with a free stress its place is not confined to a specific position in the word. In one word it may fall on the first syllable, in another on the second syllable, in the third word — on the last syllable, etc.

*The word stress in English* as well as in Ukrainian is not only *free* but it may also be *shifting*, performing the semantic function of differentiating lexical units, parts of speech, grammatical forms. It is worth noting that in English word stress is used as a means of word-building, in Ukrainian it marks both word-building and word formation, e.g.

*'contrast – con'trast 'habit – ha'bitual 'music – mu'sician*

The opinions of phoneticians differ as to how many degrees of stress are linguistically relevant in a word.

The majority of British (D. Jones, R. Kingdon, A.C. Gimson) usually distinguish *three degrees of stress* in the word. The primary stress is the strongest, the secondary stress is the second strongest. All the other degrees are termed weak stress. Unstressed syllables are supposed to have weak stress.

The American scholars B. Bloch and G. Trager find *four contrastive degrees of word stress*, namely: loud, reduced loud, medial and weak stresses [1942]. Other American linguists also distinguish four degrees of word stress but term them: primary stress, secondary stress, tertiary stress and weak stress. The difference between the secondary and tertiary stresses is very subtle and seems subjective. The criteria of their difference are very vague. Secondary stress differs from tertiary in that it usually occurs on the 3rd or 4th pretonic syllable, and tertiary is always post-tonic. The second pre-tonic syllables of such words as *,libe'ration*, *,recog'nition* are marked by secondary stress in RP, in General American they are said to have a tertiary stress. In GA a tertiary stress also affects the suffixes -ory, -ary, -ory of nouns and the suffixes -ate, -ize, -y of verbs, which are considered unstressed in RP, e.g. *'terri,tory*, *'cere,mony*, *'dictio,nary*; *'demonst,rate*, *'orga,nize*, *'simpli,fy*.

There are several *systems of notation for marking stress in a written word* that can make the concept visual for the language users:

CAPitals,  
**boldface**,  
in *italics*,  
underlining.

Most dictionaries mark primary stress with a **vertical superscript stress mark** – [ ' ] before the main stress syllable, and secondary stress with a **subscript stress mark** – [ , ] before the syllable bearing secondary stress; tertiary stress is marked with [ . ] before the appropriate syllable: *interchangeability* [ɪntə tʃeɪndʒə'biləti].

The stress in a word may be on the last syllable, **the ult**; on the next-to-last (the second from the end), **the penult**; on the third syllable from the end, **the**

**antepenult**; and a few words are stressed on the fourth syllable from the end, **the pre-antepenult** [Kreidler 1997: 156].

### **5. This recessive tendency. The rhythmical tendency. The retentive tendency. The semantic factor.**

Phoneticians generally distinguish the following tendencies in the placement of word stress: *recessive tendency*, *rhythmic tendency*, *retentive tendency* and *semantic factor*.

*Recessive tendency* is the tendency to stress the beginning of the word. It can be of two sub-types. Unrestricted recessive tendency is observed in the native English words with no prefix ('*mother*, '*daughter*, '*brother*, '*swallow*) and in assimilated French borrowings ('*reason*, '*colour*). Restricted recessive tendency is characterized by placing the word stress on the root of the word if this word has a prefix, which has lost its meaning (*fore*'*see*, *with*'*draw*, *be*'*gin*).

The *rhythmic (rhythmical) tendency* reflects the rhythm of alternating stressed and unstressed syllables. This tendency caused the appearance of the secondary stress in the multisyllabic French borrowings (, *revo*'*lution*, , *organi*'*sation*). It also explains the placement of primary stress on the third syllable from the end in three- and four-syllable words ('*cinema*, sig'*nificant*). The interrelation of recessive and rhythmic tendencies can be traced in borrowed three-syllable words ('*family*, '*library*, '*faculty*). In most cases, however, these two tendencies contradict each other, which leads to the existence of such accentual variants as '*hospitable* – *hos*'*pitable*, '*distribute* – *dist*'*ribute*. The stress on the initial syllable is caused by the diachronical recessive tendency and the stress on the second syllable is under the influence of rhythmic tendency. In sentences, words with two stresses can be pronounced with one singular stress under the influence of rhythm: , *thir*'*teen* / *Her* '*number* is '*thirteen* , *hundred*. Under the influence of rhythm compounds of three elements may have a strong stress on the second element (*hot* '*water* *bottle*, *waste* '*paper* *basket*). The rhythmic tendency is very strong in modern English.

The third tendency is called *retentive*. A derivative retains the stress of the original word ('*similar* – *as*'*similate*). Sometimes in the derivative the primary stress of the original word turns into secondary stress ('*demonstrate* – , *demonst*'*ration*).

The *semantic factor* is observed in compound words. The stress generally falls on the elements, which have a greater semantic, distinctive weight. For example, in such pairs as '*gentleman* – '*gentle* '*man*, '*blackboard* – '*black* '*board* the placement of stress on the first morpheme signifies that these words have a single meaning, which is not made up from the meanings of their sub-parts. Two equal stresses on both parts of these word combinations show that each element has its own meaning. The semantic factor is also observed when the first element of the compound is more important ('*birthday*), when it is contrasted with some other word ('*flute* *player*, not '*violin* *player*), or when a compound is very common and frequently used ('*midsummer*, '*midnight*).

Given below are **the most common rules of word-stress in English:**

Two-syllable words:

– if a word is a verb the basic rule is that if the second syllable contains a long vowel or a diphthong, or if it ends with more than one consonant, the second syllable is stressed: *apply* [ə'plai], *assist* [ə'sɪst]; if the final syllable contains a short vowel and one (or no) final consonant, the first syllable is stressed: *enter* ['entə], *open* ['əʊpən]; a final syllable is unstressed if it contains [əʊ]: *follow* ['fɒləʊ];

– two-syllable simple adjectives are stressed according to the same rule: *lovely* ['lʌvli], *alive* [ə'laɪv] (as with most stress rules there are exceptions: *honest* ['ɒnɪst] – ends in two consonants);

– nouns require a different rule – if the second syllable contains a short vowel the stress is usually on the first syllable, otherwise it is on the second syllable: *money* ['mʌni], *estate* [ɪs'teɪt];

– other two-syllable words such as adverbs and prepositions seem to behave like verbs and adjectives.

Three-syllable words:

– in verbs if the last syllable contains a short vowel and ends with not more than one consonant, that syllable is unstressed, and stress is on the preceding syllable: *determine* [dɪ'tɜ:mɪn]; if the final syllable contains a long vowel or a diphthong, or ends with more than one consonant, that final syllable is stressed: *entertain* [ˌentə'teɪn];

– in nouns if the final syllable contains a short vowel or [əʊ], it is unstressed; if the syllable preceding this final syllable contains a long vowel or a diphthong, or if it ends with more than one consonant, that middle syllable will be stressed: *disaster* [dɪ'zɑ:stə]; if the final syllable contains a short vowel and the middle syllable contains a short vowel and ends with not more than one consonant, both final and middle syllables are unstressed, and the first syllable is stressed: *cinema* ['sɪnəmə];

– adjectives seem to need the same rule: *insolent* ['ɪnsələnt].

Words with suffixes or prefixes:

– in words with prefixes the primary stress typically falls on the syllable following the prefix: *im'possible*, *re'call*;

– in words with prefixes with their own meaning, the place of secondary stress is on the prefix: *,ex-'minister*, *,anti-'capitalist*;

– in prefixal verbs which are distinguished from similarly spelt nouns and adjectives, the place of stress is on the second syllable, nouns and adjectives have their stress on the initial syllable: *to com'pound* - *'compound*, *to in'crease* - *'increase*;

– suffixes *-esce*, *-esque*, *-ate*, *-ize*, *-fy*, *-ette*, *-ique*, *-ee*, *-eer*, *-ade* have the place of stress on themselves (or on the preceding syllable): *,mari'nade*, *,specia'lize*;

– suffixes *-ical, -ic, -ion, -ity, -ial, -cient, -iency, -eous, -ual, -uous, -ety, -itous, -ive, -ative, -itude, -ident, -inal, -ital, -wards* have the place of stress on the preceding syllable: *eco'nomiC, ma'jority*;

– in words of 4 or more syllables the place of stress is on the antepenultimate syllable (third from the end): *e'mergency, his'torical*.

In compound words the first element is stressed when:

– compounds are written as one word: *'appletree, 'bedroom*;

– nouns are compounded of a verb and an adverb: *'pickup, 'make-up*;

– nouns in the possessive case are followed by another noun: *'doll's house, 'lady's maid*;

In compound words the second element is stressed when:

– food items have the first element which is of a material used in manufacturing the whole: *,apple 'tart*;

– parts of the house and other buildings are implied: *,front 'door*;

– adjectives with past participles characterize people: *,thick 'skinned*;

– compound nouns ending in *-er* or *-ing* are followed by adverbs: *,passer'by*;

– the first element of compounds is a number: *second-'class, three-'wheeler*;

– compounds function as adverbs: *head-'first*;

Two equal stresses are observed:

– in composite verbs: *to 'give 'up* (in speech stress may be neutral);

– in numerals from 13 to 19: *,six'teen*.

According to the data given by phoneticians **the most common types of English stress pattern** are: ' \_ \_ (*after*), \_ ' \_ (*before*), ' \_ \_ \_ (*family*), \_ ' \_ \_ (*importance*).

All the rules have exceptions and the learner of English may feel that the rules are so complex that sometimes it is best to learn the stress for each word individually when the word itself is learned. Besides, learners of English should be aware of the fact that some words have two variants of stress and they are both considered to be correct: *kilometer* [kɪ'lɒmɪtə], [kɪlɒmɪ:tə].

## **6. The typology of accentual structure of English words worked out by G.P. Torsuev.**

The numerous variations of English word stress are systematized in **the typology of accentual structure of English words** worked out by G.P. Torsuev [1960]. He classifies them according to the number of stressed syllables, their degree or character (the main and the secondary stress).

The distribution of stressed syllables within the word accentual types forms accentual structures of words, e.g. the accentual type of words with two equal stresses may be presented by several accentual structures: *'well-'bred* [ˈwɛl-ˈbrɛd], *'absent-minded* [ˈæbsɪnt-ˈmaɪndɪd], or *'good-looking* [ˈɡʊd-ˈlʊkɪŋ].

Accentual types and accentual structures are closely connected with the morphological type of words, with the number of syllables, the semantic value of the root and the prefix of the word.

The *accentual types* are:

I. [ + - ] This accentual type marks both simple and compound words. The accentual structures of this type may include two and more syllables, e.g. 'father, 'possibly, 'mother-in-law, 'gas-pipe.

II. [ + + ]. The accentual type is commonly realized in compound words, most of them are with separable prefixes, e.g. 'radio-'active, 're'write, 'diso'bey.

III. [ + + + ] and

IV. [ + + + + ]. The accentual types are met in initial compound abbreviations like 'U'S'A, 'R'S'V'P.

V. [ + - + - ] The type is realized both in simple and compound words, very common among compound words, e.g. 'hair-,dresser, 'sub,structure.

VI. [ - + - ]. The accentual type marks a great number of simple words and some compound words as well.

In simple words the stresses fall onto: the prefix and the root:

1. ,maga'zine; the root and the suffix:

2. ,hospi'tality; the prefix and the suffix:

3. ,disorgani'zation.

VII. [ + - + - ] The type includes rather a small number of simple words with the separable prefixes, e.g. 'mis,repres'ent.

VIII. [ - - + - ]. The type is found in a very small number of words, usually simple words with the stresses on the prefix, the root and the suffix, e.g. ,indi,viduali'zation.

IX. [ + + - - ]. The type is met in rare instances of compound words with separable prefixes, e.g. 'un'sea,worthy.

X. [ + - - - ]. The type is represented by rare instances of simple and compound words, e.g. 'soda-,water ,bottle.

XI. [ - + - ]. The type is found in rare instances of compound words consisting of the three components, e.g. ,ginger'beer-,bottle.

The data given above suggest an idea of the great variability in the accentual structure of English words.

*The most widely spread* among the enumerated *accentual types* are supposed to be Type I [ + - ], Type II [ + + ], Type V [ + - + - ] and Type VI [ - + - ]. Each type includes varieties of definite accentual structures with different numbers of syllables and marks thousands of words. So the four of them cover the main bulk of most common English words and are therefore most typical for the English vocabulary.

As we may see, *the typical feature of English accentual structure* is its *instability*. There is a great number of words having variants of their accentual patterns. They may differ in: number of stresses:

1. RSVP [ + + + + ] or [ + - + - ]; the place of stress:

2. hospitable [<sup>+</sup> —] or [–<sup>+</sup> —];

3. individualization [<sup>+</sup> –<sup>+</sup> –<sup>+</sup> –] or [<sup>+</sup> –<sup>+</sup> –<sup>+</sup> –].

The variability of the word accentual structure is multiplied in connected speech. The accentual structure of words may be altered under the influence of rhythm, e.g. *An 'unpolished 'stone. But: The 'stone was un'polished. 'Find 'page four'teen. But: We 'counted 'fourteen 'birds.*

## 7. The functional aspect of word stress.

Word stress performs the following functions:

1. Word stress organizes the syllables into a word. It creates a particular pattern of relationships among syllables, making some syllables more prominent than others and shapes the word as a whole. Thus word stress performs the *constitutive function*.

J. Laver holds the view that lexical stress shows *a culminative function*: being a characteristic property of the word, it is thought to help the listener to judge how many individual words the speaker has produced in a given utterance [Laver 1995:517].

2. Word stress makes it possible for the listener to identify a succession of syllables with a definite recurrent stress pattern as a word. In other words, it helps us to recognise the word in the chain of speech. This function is called *recognitive (identificatory)*.

3. Word stress is capable of differentiating the meaning of words or their forms, thus performing its *distinctive function*. Primary stress placement can distinguish the grammatical category of the word in the opposition (*'import – im'port*), the meaning of the word (*'billow – be'low*), compound nouns from free word combinations (*'greenhouse – 'green 'house*).

## 8. The term "accenteme" for word stress as a suprasegmental phonological unit having different degrees and placement in a word, introduced by VA.Vassilyev. The three groups of words with identical spelling, representing different parts of speech, which are opposed by means of shifting of the stress, established by A.C. Gimson.

The accentual patterns of words or the degrees of word stress and their positions form oppositions. There are about 135 pairs of words of identical orthography in English which could occur either as nouns (with stress on the penultimate syllable) or as verbs (with stress on the final syllable), with a very small number of cases the location of lexical stress alone being the differentiating factor: *'import* (noun) – *im'port* (verb), *'insult* (noun) – *in'sult* (verb) [Laver 1995: 516].

**Orthographically identical word-pairs in English differentiated by word-stress as nouns (penultimate stress) or verbs (ultimate stress):**

|          |          |          |          |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| abstract | contest  | extract  | produce  |
| accent   | contrast | fragment | progress |

|          |           |          |           |
|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| addict   | convict   | import   | protest   |
| address  | defect    | impact   | rebel     |
| affect   | desert    | impress  | recess    |
| affix    | detail    | incline  | record    |
| annex    | digest    | increase | refill    |
| collect  | discard   | insert   | refuse    |
| combat   | discharge | insult   | segment   |
| commerce | discount  | intern   | survey    |
| commune  | discourse | object   | subject   |
| compound | escort    | outrage  | suspect   |
| compress | envelope  | perfume  | torment   |
| confine  | exploit   | pervert  | transfer  |
| conflict | export    | present  | transport |

**V.A. Vassilyev** introduces the term "*accenteme*" for word stress as a *suprasegmental phonological unit having different degrees and placement in a word* [1970]. For instance the primary accenteme is opposed to the weak word accenteme (unstressed position), in *'import – im'port* differentiating the noun from the verb.

**A.C. Gimson** establishes *three groups of words with identical spelling representing different parts of speech* which are opposed by means of shifting of the stress [1970]:

1. A small group of words where the noun is differentiated from a verb by the opposition of the accentual pattern of the word alone, e.g.

increase ['inkris] vs. [in'kri:s]  
 i n s u l t ['ins^lt] vs. [in's^lt]  
 impress ['impres] vs. [im'pres]  
 inlay ['inlei] vs. [in'lei]

2. The second group where the shifting of the stress which means the change of the accentual pattern of the word may be or may not be accompanied by the reduction of the vowel in the unstressed syllable of the verbs, e.g.

transport ['trænsɹɔ:t] vs. [træns'pɔ:t] or [træns'pɔ:t]  
 torment ['tɔ:ment] vs. [tɔ:'ment] or [tə'ment]

3. The largest group of such pairs of words manifests the change of their accentual pattern together with the qualitative reduction of the unstressed vowel, e.g. combine ['kɔmbain] vs. [kəm'bain]

conduct ['kɔnd^kt] vs. [kən'd^kt]  
 contrast ['kɔntra:st] vs. [kən'tra:st]

## 9. Guidelines to English word stress placement.

To define the position of word stress in each individual word it is necessary to take into account a number of factors:

- phonological structure of the syllables;
- the number of syllables in the word;
- morphological factor (whether the word is simple, complex or compound);
- the part of speech the word belongs to (noun, verb, adjective, etc.).

1) The phonological structure of the syllable is related to the status of a particular syllable in terms of the degree of sonority. The sounds that possess a greater degree of sonority contribute to the greater prominence of the syllable. A syllable is considered to be strong when it contains a long vowel or a diphthong or a short vowel followed by two consonants. For example, in English verbs the stress falls on the last syllable if it is strong and on the last but one syllable if the last one is weak (*a'rrive* - *de'velop*).

2) The number of syllables in a word influences the number of stresses and to a certain extent the position of stress. There are stress patterns typical of two-syllable words, three-syllable words and so on. In multi-syllable words there appears secondary stress.

3) Morphological factor shows that in complex words the placement of stress depends on the type of suffix. Suffixes are divided into those which do not affect the stress placement in the stem (*stress-neutral*), those which influence stress in the stem (*stress-fixing*) and those which carry stress themselves (*stress attracting*).

In the words with stress-neutral suffixes the stress remains on the same syllable in the stem (*re'fuse* - *re'fusal*, *'comfort* - *'comfortable*). This group of suffixes includes: *-al*, *-able*, *-en*, *-ful*, *-ing*, *-ish*, *-less*, *-ness*, *-ly*, *-ment*, and others. Stress-fixing suffixes (*-ion*, *-ic*, *-ity*, *-ial*, *-ive*) determine the placement of stress on a particular syllable of the stem and attract stress to the syllable that precedes them, i.e. the last syllable of the stem (*'curious* - *curi'osity*). Stress attracting suffixes include such suffixes as *-ade*, *-eer*, *-ee*, *-esque*, *-ette*, *-ain* (*refu'gee*, *ciga'rette*). But in some cases this factor is to be considered together with another one – the number of syllable in a word. For example, the verbal suffix *-ate* is stress attracting in the words containing two syllables (*mig'rate*), and in words containing more than two syllables it is stress-fixing: it fixes the stress on the third syllable from the end (*com'municate*).

Compound nouns contain more than one root or more than one word, but they function as one word. The rules of word stress in such words will be presented later in the text.

4) The fourth factor to be considered is the grammatical category the word belongs to. The influence of this factor can be illustrated by the pairs of words, in which adjectives and nouns are contrasted to verbs: *'insult* – *to in'sult*, *'record* – *to re'cord*, *'present* – *to pre'sent*.

## 10. The status of alternative pronunciation forms.

The stress patterns of some English words are liable to variations of different kinds. There is free variation of stress location due to some rhythmic and analogical pressures, both of which entail in addition considerable changes of sound pattern in words [Gimson 1001:231], e.g.

1) in some words of three syllables, there is variation between '- - - and -' - - patterns: *deficit*, *integral* (adj), *exquisite*;

2) similarly, in words of four syllables, there is variation between first and second syllable stressing: *hospitable*, *formidable*, *despicable*.

Pronunciation patterns of such words due to the variation in stress placement have **the status of alternative pronunciation forms** which occur in educated usage.

Cases of variable stress placement caused by the context is known as 'stressshift' [EPD 1997: xii].

When a word of several syllables has a stress near the end of the word, and is followed by another word with stress near its beginning, there is a tendency or the stress in the first word to move nearer the beginning if it contains a syllable that is capable of receiving stress, e.g. the word *academic* in isolation usually has the stress on the penultimate syllable [-dem-]; however, when the word *year* follows, the stress is often found to move to the first syllable [æk-]; the whole phrase '*academic year*' will have the primary stress on the word *year*, so the resulting stress pattern will be ,*academic* 'year. In isolation, we say *fundamental* and *Japanese* with primary stress on *-ment*, and *-nese*, in connected speech these words may have a different pattern: greater stress on *fund-* and *Jap-*.

There are also often differences between the stressing of compounds in RP and General American, e.g.

| RP              | GenAm           |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 'season ,ticket | ,season 'ticket |
| ,Adam's 'apple  | 'Adam's ,apple  |
| ,peanut 'butter | 'peanut ,butter |
| ,vocal 'cords   | 'vocal ,cords   |