

# Word stress. Types of word stress

# Questions to be answered :

- 1) What is a word stress?
- 2) What are the types of word stress ?
- 3) What are tendencies of word stress?

# Word stress

**Stress** is the relative emphasis that may be given to certain syllables in a word, or to certain words in a phrase or sentence. The term is also used for similar patterns of phonetic prominence inside syllables. The word **accent** is sometimes also used with this sense.

**The phonetic manifestation of stress varies from language to language. In different languages one of the factors constituting word stress is usually more significant than the others. According to the most salient feature the following types of word stress are distinguished in different languages:**

- ❖ **dynamic or force stress if special prominence in a stressed syllable(syllables) is achieved mainly through the intensity of articulation;**
- ❖ **musical or tonic stress if special prominence is achieved mainly through the change of pitch, or musical tone.**
- ❖ **quantitative stress if special prominence is achieved through the changes in the quantity of the vowels, which are longer in the stressed syllables than in the unstressed ones.**
- ❖ **qualitative stress if special prominence is achieved through the changes in the quality of the vowel under stress. Vowel reduction is often used as a manipulation of quality in unstressed syllables.**



# Place and degrees of Word Stress

One of the ways of reinitiating the prominence of syllables is **manipulating the degree of stress.**

There is controversy about degrees of WS in English and their terminology. Strictly speaking, polysyllabic word has as many degrees of stress as there are syllables in it.

The majority of British phoneticians (D. Jones, Kingdon, A. C. Gimson among them) and Russian phoneticians (V. A. Vassilyev, Shakhbagova) consider that there are three degrees of word-stress in English:

- ◆ **primary -- the strongest**
- ◆ **secondary -- the second strongest, partial, and**
- ◆ **weak -- all the other degrees.**

The syllables bearing either primary or secondary stress are termed stressed, while syllables with weak stress are called, somewhat inaccurately, unstressed.

**Stress can be characterized as fixed and free. In languages with fixed type of stress the place of stress is always the same.**

- ❖ In English and Russian word-stress is free, that is it may fall any syllable in a word;
- ❖ Stress in English and in Russian is not only free but also shifting. In both languages the place of stress may shift, which helps to differentiate different parts of speech, e.g. `insult--to in`sult, `import--to im`port.

# Examples of shifting:

❖ preSENT (verb) – PRESent (noun)

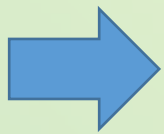
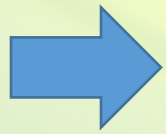
❖ reFER (verb) – REFerence (noun)

❖ exTRACT (verb) – EXtract (noun)

❖ inCREASE (verb) – INcrease (noun)

❖ OBject (noun) – obJECT (verb)

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**Recessive.** The accentual structure of English words is liable to instability due to the different origin of several layers in the Modern English word-stock. In Germanic languages the word stress originally fell on the initial syllable or the second syllable, the root syllable in the English words with prefixes. It is seen in the native English words having no prefix, e.g. *mother, daughter, brother, swallow*; in assimilated French borrowings, e.g. *reason, colour, restaurant etc.*

**Rhythmical.** The rhythm of alternating stressed and unstressed syllables gave birth to the rhythmical tendency in the present-day English which caused the appearance of the secondary stress in the multisyllabic French borrowings, e.g. *revolution, organi'sation, assimilation, etc.*

**Retentive.** Was traced in the instability of the accentual structure of English word stress: a derivative often retains the stress of the original or parent word, e.g. *'similar — as'similate, recom'mend — recommen'dation.*



**The phonetic manifestation of stress varies from language to language. In different languages one of the factors constituting word stress is usually more significant than the others. According to the most salient feature the following types of word stress are distinguished in different languages:**

- ❖ If special prominence is achieved through the increased loudness (i.e. intensity of articulation), such word stress is termed **DYNAMIC**.
- ❖ If special prominence in a stressed syllable is achieved mainly through the change of pitch, such type of word stress is **MUSICAL**, or **TONIC**.
- ❖ **QUANTITATIVE** stress is when prominence is achieved through the changes in the quantity of vowels, i.e. their duration.
- ❖ **QUALITATIVE** stress is when the stressed vowel is made prominent due to its clear and distinct character.