WORD STRESS AND PROMINENCE

Alamova Shaxnoza

2nd-year student, Group 2414 Faculty of English Language
Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages
Scientific supervisor: **Shamuradova Naima Muxtarovna**

Abstract. *Word stress and prominence are essential components of spoken English, influencing how meaning is created, interpreted, and transmitted in communication. They help learners develop clearer pronunciation, understand natural speech patterns, and express information effectively. This extended article examines how stress operates on individual words, how prominence functions in discourse, and why these features are important for developing strong speaking skills. Additional examples and explanations are provided to create a more detailed and academically appropriate work.*

Keywords: *Word stress, prominence, prosody, pronunciation, speaking skills, discourse analysis, stress patterns, intelligibility, communication*

Word stress and prominence play a key role in spoken English. Word stress strengthens one syllable in a word, making it more noticeable and helping listeners identify the word correctly. Prominence, however, highlights important parts of a sentence, showing emphasis, intention, or contrast. According to McCarthy (2009), prosody is a central aspect of spoken discourse and helps organize meaning in real communication. Correct use of stress and prominence affects clarity, fluency, and listener comprehension. To be successful communicators, students must master not only grammar and vocabulary, but also prosodic features such as stress and prominence.

Word stress helps listeners recognize words quickly in natural speech. Because English is stress-timed, stressed syllables occur at regular intervals, while unstressed syllables become shorter or reduce to the schwa sound. Misplacing stress can change meaning entirely. For example, the word pair 'record and re'cord differ in both meaning and grammatical category. Learning correct stress patterns also improves spelling, reading comprehension, and vocabulary retention. Understanding stress helps students sound more natural and improves overall speech intelligibility.

Prominence shows what part of a message is most important. Speakers use prominence naturally to highlight new information, correct misunderstandings, or show emotional tone. Prominence is created with pitch movement, loudness, length, or a combination of these. For example: "I wanted the GREEN notebook, not the blue one." This shows the contrast

_____

clearly and helps the listener interpret meaning correctly. Prominence is also used in polite disagreement, emphasis, storytelling, and expressing feelings such as excitement or frustration. Prominence can change the meaning of an entire sentence. Consider the sentence: "She didn't say he stole the money." Depending on which word is emphasized, the meaning changes completely. This demonstrates how powerful prominence is for shaping meaning. Word stress also creates important differences. Words like PHOtograph, phoTOgrapher, and phoTOGraphy require correct stress to sound natural. If the stress is incorrect, communication may break down even if the pronunciation of sounds is correct. These examples show that both stress and prominence must be learned carefully.

Students often struggle with stress and prominence because they lack practice or feel afraid of making mistakes. Some learners also come from syllable-timed languages, where every syllable has similar length, which makes English stress patterns difficult. Teachers can support students with pronunciation drills, minimal pair activities, stress-marking worksheets, and speaking exercises focused on emphasis. Learners should practice by listening to authentic materials, repeating natural speech, engaging in conversations, and using English in daily life. Over time, regular exposure helps students naturally internalize correct prosodic patterns.

In conclusion, word stress and prominence are essential components of spoken English that strongly influence meaning, clarity, and communication. Stress supports correct pronunciation and helps listeners quickly recognize words, while prominence highlights key information and structures spoken messages. Mastering these prosodic features helps learners communicate more confidently, naturally, and effectively in academic and real-life situations.

Reference

1.McCarthy, M. (2009). Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers. Cambridge University Press.

2.Brown, H. D. (2007). Principles of Language Learning and Teaching. Pearson Education.

3.Thornbury, S. (2005). How to Teach Speaking. Longman.

4.Yule, G. (2014). The Study of Language. Cambridge University Press.

5.Shamuradova N. Kauzallik Va Kauzativlikning Ingliz Va O'zbek Tillarida Qiyosiy Tadqiqi //Conference Proceedings: Fostering Your Research Spirit. – 2024. – C. 305-307.

6.Shamuradova N. Usage of parts of body in uzbek and english idioms //Мир исследований. – 2021. – Т. 2. – №. 2.

_____

7.Muxtarovna S. N. Independent learning //Евразийский научный журнал. – 2017. – №. 4. – С. 374-375.

8.Naima S. The effect of using songs on young learners and their motivation for learning English. – 2021.