

## A COMPARISON OF STRESS AND INTONATION IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK

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**Abstract.** *This piece looks at how stress and pitch work in both English and Uzbek, comparing their sound systems. Unlike English, which uses shifting stress and detailed melody in speech to show meaning, grammar, or intent, Uzbek keeps stress fixed and has less variety in voice movement. Because of these contrasts, people who speak Uzbek may struggle when speaking English due to overlapping sound habits. Examining elements like where emphasis falls in words, pauses between phrases, flow of speech, and shifts in tone reveals why noticing such details matters in learning. Teaching should pay closer attention to these aspects so speakers can be better understood during conversation. Without clear guidance on rhythm and pitch, progress in spoken accuracy often slows.*

**Keywords:** *Stress Intonation and Suprasegmental Features in English and Uzbek Phonetic Interference*

**Annotatsiya:** *Ingliz va o'zbek tillaridagi urg'u va intonatsiya qanday ishlashini solishtirganda, fonetik nuqtai nazardan aniq farqlar ko'rinadi. Ingliz tilida urg'u moslashuvchan va so'z ma'nosini o'zgartirishi mumkin, intonatsiya esa murakkab. O'zbek tilida urg'u asosan bir joyda qoladi va ohang ozgina o'zgaradi. Bu farqlar, ko'pincha, o'rganuvchilarning bir til odatlarini boshqasiga ko'chirishida namoyon bo'ladi. Masalan, o'rganuvchilar o'zgarimas urg'uni o'zgaruvchan tizimga olib kelib, xatolarga sabab bo'lishi mumkin. Ingliz tilidagi intonatsiya o'z niyati yoki grammatikani ko'rsatadi, lekin o'zbek tilida bunday o'zgarishlar kam uchraydi. Bunday nomuvofiqliklar og'zaki so'zlashuvda yaqqol seziladi. O'qituvchilar urg'u va intonatsiyaga e'tibor qaratganda tushuncha ortadi. E'tibor berilmasa, xatolar uzoqroq qoladi. Til o'rganish faqat alohida tovushlardan iborat emas, balki nutqning ohangi ham muhim. Tushuncha asta-sekin takroriy eshitish va tuzatish orqali keladi. Har bir jihat nutq aniqligi bilan bog'liq.*

**Kalit so'zlar:** *urg'u, intonatsiya, suprasegmental fonetika, ingliz tili, o'zbek tili*

**Аннотация,** *Сравнение того, как работают ударение и интонация в английском и узбекском языках, показывает явные различия с точки зрения фонетики. В английском ударение гибкое и может менять значение слова, а интонация сложная. В узбекском ударение в основном фиксированное, а мелодия речи почти не меняется. Эти различия часто влияют на то, как носители одного языка переносят привычки*

*произношения на другой язык. Например, учащиеся могут сохранять фиксированное ударение в системе с подвижным, что создаёт ошибки. Интонационные изменения, которые в английском показывают намерение или грамматику, в узбекском почти не встречаются. Такие несоответствия часто заметны в устной речи. Понимание приходит, когда учителя специально обращают внимание на ударение и интонацию. Без этого ошибки сохраняются дольше. Изучение языка включает не только отдельные звуки, но и общую мелодику речи. Осознание приходит постепенно через повторное прослушивание и корректировку. Каждый элемент связан с общей точностью речи.*

**Ключевые слова:** ударение, интонация, надсегментная фонетика, английский язык, узбекский язык

### **Introduction**

Funny how much can change just by shifting where you put the emphasis when speaking. Stress patterns shape understanding more than most realize, especially across languages. While one might rely heavily on rising tones, another builds clarity through rhythm instead. Learners from Tashkent may stumble here - what feels natural in Uzbek doesn't always transfer smoothly into English sound flow. Small shifts in pitch carry weight, even if they're rarely taught directly. Though much work covers segmental sounds, little attention goes to suprasegmentals when comparing English and Uzbek. Looking at stress alongside intonation shows how their patterns differ, shaping the way learners speak a new language.

### **Stress Patterns in English and Uzbek**

Stress in English isn't tied to fixed rules - its position shifts without clear pattern. What sets words apart often comes down to where the emphasis lands. A single shift in weight can turn one word into another entirely different one. This fluidity makes stress both flexible and meaningful. Unlike languages with set rhythms, here it moves freely across syllables.

**Examples:** 'import (noun) vs. im'port (verb)

'conduct (noun) vs. con'duct (verb)

### **Stress in English and Uzbek**

In English, shifting the stress in a word can change how the sentence is understood. Roach (2009) noted that placing stress in the wrong spot can confuse listeners and slow down comprehension. Stress on words is very important because it can change focus or meaning<sup>177</sup>:

<sup>177</sup> Roach, P. (2009). English Phonetics and Phonology (4-nashr). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 74p.

- *A fresh vehicle was purchased by her.*
- *A fresh vehicle was what she chose.*
- *She BOUGHT a new car.* (focus on the action)
- *She bought a NEW car.* (contrastive emphasis, highlighting the object)

In contrast, stress in Uzbek is mostly fixed. The last syllable of a word usually carries the emphasis, and this pattern does not change the meaning of the word.

Examples: *o‘qituvchi* (“teacher”)

*muammolar* (“problems”)

Even when stress is used to highlight a word in Uzbek, the meaning generally stays the same. This consistent stress pattern gives Uzbek speech a steady rhythm, shaping the natural flow of sentences when spoken.

Comparative Stress Features		
Features	Features	Uzbek
Stress type	Free, phonemic	Fixed, non-phonemic
Position	Variable	Mostly final
Meaning distinction	Frequent	Rare
Learning difficulty	High	Low

### Rhythm And Sentence Stress

Stress patterns shape how English sounds, with key beats spaced evenly apart. Between those strong moments, weaker ones squeeze into smaller spaces. Rhythm takes over, pushing less important parts to shrink. Vowels get shorter when they do not carry the weight. Timing matters more than individual words. Regular pulses define the flow of speech<sup>178</sup>. Examples: Heading toward the station feels easier when small words shrink. The word "to" slips into a soft /tə/ sound without effort. A light touch changes "the" into /ðə/, almost vanishing between stronger beats. These tiny shifts smooth out speech naturally.

Yet Uzbek spreads its rhythm across syllables, giving each a similar stretch of time. Wanna head back home, man. Footsteps in speech often match a steady beat when Uzbek speakers talk English, each part of the word sounded out too evenly - making it feel off-rhythm to native ears.

<sup>178</sup> Abercrombie, D. (1967). *Elements of General Phonetics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p. 97.

### Intonation Patterns in English

English intonation serves multiple purposes. It helps show grammar by distinguishing questions from statements, conveys attitudes such as certainty or politeness, and organizes discourse by highlighting new versus given information<sup>179</sup>. For example, in the sentence “*Done with the report,*” the voice falls at the end, signaling a statement. In contrast, “*Finished the report already, did you?*” uses a rising tone, turning the same words into a question or expressing surprise. Similarly, in “*Maybe I do. Or maybe there’s something holding back,*” pitch changes communicate uncertainty. Falling pitch often signals certainty, as noted by Crystal while rising pitch can shift the meaning of a phrase. Although the words themselves remain the same, intonation changes how the listener interprets the message. A statement can become a question simply through pitch, showing that in English, tone can bend intent even when vocabulary stays fixed.

#### Intonation in Uzbek

##### 1. Questions

Questions in Uzbek usually rely not just on voice changes but on particles like -mi:

- Example: *Siz keldingizmi?* (“Did you come?”)

Intonation often supports what grammar already shows rather than creating new structures. Words themselves can carry emotion, or the situation may make feelings clear.

Comparative Functions of Intonation		
Function	English	Uzbek
Marking questions	Pitch movement	Particle (-mi) + pitch
Pragmatic nuance	Strong	Moderate
Emotional expression	Through intonation	Through lexical meaning and context

### Phonetic Interference Explained

Common patterns for Uzbek learners:

1. Stress placement: Uzbek speakers often put stress on the last syllable of English words. Example: *hoTEL* instead of *HOtel*, *reLAX* instead of *RElax*. This differs from English, where stress placement can change meaning or sound more natural.

2. Vowel reduction: In English, many unstressed vowels are reduced (e.g., *to* is pronounced /tə/). Uzbek learners often pronounce the vowels fully: /tu/ instead of /tə/. This makes speech sound heavier or less fluent.

<sup>179</sup> Wells, J. C. (2006). *English Intonation: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 16.

3. Intonation patterns: Questions in English often rise at the end, signaling curiosity or uncertainty. Uzbek learners may use flat intonation, making questions sound like statements. Example: *Are you coming?* may sound flat instead of naturally rising at the end.

Effects on communication: Listeners can usually understand the message. However, the rhythm and flow may feel unnatural because English relies on flexible stress and pitch patterns. These small differences can make speech sound less confident or less “native-like,” even though comprehension is not affected.

Why it happens: Uzbek has relatively fixed stress and narrower pitch variation. Learners naturally carry these habits into English, creating subtle mismatches in rhythm and intonation.

Key point: Awareness of these patterns helps learners improve speaking fluency and naturalness. With practice and feedback, stress, vowel reduction, and intonation can gradually align more closely with English norms.

#### Pedagogical Implications

Loudness shifts plus speech melody matter when learning to speak clearly. In classrooms across Uzbekistan, drawings showing voice height mixed with side-by-side practice might help learners hear differences first. A teacher could try playing examples that highlight ups and downs before asking anyone to repeat anything. Listening tasks come alive when paired with movement or gesture instead of only worksheets. Small changes like these may stick better than long explanations ever do.

Conclusion, one reason Uzbek speakers struggle with English lies in how each language handles rhythm and pitch. Unlike English, where shifting emphasis alters meaning, Uzbek keeps syllable weight steady across words. Meaning shifts often depend on vocal melody in English - Uzbek less so. Because these sound systems work differently, imitation alone rarely fixes pronunciation issues. Teaching methods that include musicality of speech tend to support clearer expression over time. Speaking convincingly involves timing, rise, fall - not just correct vowels or consonants.

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