

**RESEARCH TITLE**

**DIFFICULTIES OF USING STRESS IN ENGLISH  
LANGUAGE AT SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

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HNSJ, 2023, 4(3); <https://doi.org/10.53796/hnsj4318>

**Published at 01/03/2023**

**Accepted at 12/02/2023**

**Abstract**

The study carried out at university of Kordofan, Faculty of Education, Department of English language during the study period (2022-2023) to investigate the difficulties of using stress in English language at Secondary School. It also aims to highlighting the rules of stress in English language to master pronunciation and Authorizing new methods and ways for learning stress in English language. The study followed the descriptive analytical methods. The sample of this study was taken randomly through simple random sampling technique which comprises 50 teachers of English language. The data were collected through primary sources "Library books, Reference and the internet" and the secondary sources "questionnaire". data were analyzed through percentages. The results revealed that, Secondary schools students facing some difficulties in learning stress in English language and Stress help Students in connected speech in English language besides knowing the stress patterns of words was helped students to pronounce it correctly. It was concluded that students faced difficulties in learning stress in English language at Secondary School. The study recommended that, knowing the stress patterns of words was helped students to learn and remember the correct pronunciation of words and Knowing correct word stress was helped students to improve their listening skills.

## صعوبات النطق في اللغة الإنجليزية في المدارس الثانوية

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HNSJ, 2023, 4(3); <https://doi.org/10.53796/hnsj4318>

تاريخ القبول: 2023/02/05م

تاريخ النشر: 2023/03/01م

### المستخلص

أجريت هذه الدراسة في جامعة كردفان ، كلية التربية ، قسم اللغة الإنجليزية خلال الفترة الدراسية (2022-2023) للتحقيق في صعوبات تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية في المدارس الثانوية. كما يهدف إلى تسليط الضوء على قواعد اللغة الإنجليزية لإتقان النطق ووضع أساليب وطرق جديدة لتعلم النطق في اللغة الإنجليزية. اتبعت الدراسة المنهج التحليلي الوصفي. اخذت عينة هذه الدراسة بشكل عشوائي من خلال تقنية أخذ العينات العشوائية البسيطة وكانت حجمها 50 مدرساً للغة الإنجليزية. تم جمع البيانات من خلال المصادر الأولية "كتب المكتبة والمراجع والإنترنت" والمصادر الثانوية "الاستبيان". تم تحليل البيانات من خلال النسب المئوية. أظهرت النتائج أن هنالك بعض الصوبات التي تواجه طلاب المدارس الثانوية في تعلم نبر النطق في اللغة الإنجليزية ، ويساعد نبر الصوت الطلاب في ربط التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية، إلى جانب معرفة أنماط نبر الكلمات الصحيحة يساعد الطلاب على نطقها صحيحا. وخلصت الدراسة إلى أن هنالك بعض الصوبات واجهة طلاب المدارس الثانوية في تعلم نبر النطق في اللغة الإنجليزية. أوصت الدراسة بأن معرفة أنماط نبر الكلمات و النطق سيساعد الطلاب على تعلم وتذكر النطق الصحيح للكلمات ومعرفة نطق الكلمة الصحيحة سيساعد الطلاب على تحسين مهارات الاستماع.

## Introduction

In linguistics, and particularly phonology, stress or accent is relative emphasis or prominence given to a certain syllable in a word, or to a certain word in a phrase or sentence. That emphasis is typically caused by such properties as increased loudness and vowel length, full articulation of the vowel, and changes in pitch. The terms stress and accent are often used synonymously in that context but are sometimes distinguished. For example, when emphasis is produced through pitch alone, it is called pitch accent, and when produced through length alone, it is called quantitative accent. When caused by a combination of various intensified properties, it is called stress accent or dynamic accent; English uses what is called variable stress accent. Since stress can be realized through a wide range of phonetic properties, such as loudness, vowel length, and pitch, which are also used for other linguistic functions, it is difficult to define stress solely phonetically.

**Statement of the Problem:** The study investigates the hindrance of Learning Stress in English Language at secondary School, stress is actual problems form for most learners, many of students use stress in daily speaking whereas the majority is not used it properly which lead to the ambiguity.

## Questions of the Study

- 1-What are the problems that encounter secondary schools' students in English stress?
- 2-To what extent teachers help students to overcome stress problem in English language?

**Hypotheses :** If the English Language teachers at Secondary schools help students in learning stress through specific strategies ,they will lead students to master their skills .

## Objectives of the study

1. To investigate the difficulties facing students in learning stress in English language.
2. To highlight the rules of stress in English language to master pronunciation.
3. Authorize new methods and ways for learning stress in English language.

**Methodology:** This paper depends on the descriptive analytical method. Then data were collected through questionnaire which distributed to 50 English Language teachers to participate their ideas about the problem.

**Significance of the Study :** This paper is important because it will try to find the real ambiguity of English Language stress which face secondary schools students.

**Key words:** stress , strategies , secondary schools students.

## What is stress?

Fry, D.B. (1955). 765–768) stated that, In linguistics, and particularly phonology, stress or accent is relative emphasis or prominence given to a certain syllable in a word, or to a certain word in a phrase or sentence. That emphasis is typically caused by such properties as increased loudness and vowel length, full articulation of the vowel, and changes in pitch. The terms stress and accent are often used synonymously in that context but are sometimes distinguished. For example, when emphasis is produced through pitch alone, it is called pitch accent, and when produced through length alone,

it is called quantitative accent. When caused by a combination of various intensified properties, it is called stress accent or dynamic accent; English uses what is called variable stress accent.

Since stress can be realized through a wide range of phonetic properties, such as loudness, vowel length, and pitch, which are also used for other linguistic functions, it is difficult to define stress solely phonetically.

The stress placed on syllables within words is called word stress or lexical stress. Some languages have fixed stress, meaning that the stress on virtually any multi syllable word falls on a particular syllable, such as the penultimate (e.g. Polish) or the first (e.g. Finnish). Other languages, like English and Russian, have variable stress, where the position of stress in a word is not predictable in that way. Sometimes more than one level of stress, such as primary stress and secondary stress, may be identified. However, some languages, such as French and Mandarin, are sometimes analyzed as lacking lexical stress entirely.

The stress placed on words within sentences is called sentence stress or prosodic stress. That is one of the three components of prosody, along with rhythm and intonation. It includes phrasal stress (the default emphasis of certain words within phrases or clauses), and contrastive stress (used to highlight an item, a word or part of a word, that is given particular focus).

#### Stress patterns

Paul Skandera & Peter Burleigh (2011:72) stated that, the stress carried by a syllable within a word is refer to word stress or lexical stress. It must be distinguish from the stress carried by a word within an utterance which is refer to a sentence stress.

**The Nature of Stress:** Roach, P. (2000: 93) mentioned that, the nature of stress is simple enough; practically everyone would agree that the first syllable of words like , father, open, ...etc, is stressed, that the middle syllable is stressed in potato, relation,..etc, and the final syllable is stressed in about, perhaps,...etc. We will mark a stressed syllable in transcription by placing a small vertical line (') high up, just before the syllable it relates to. We can study stress from the point of view of production and of perception.

**Lexical Stress :** Mirakyan, Norayr (2016: 91) viewed that, Lexical stress, or word stress, is the stress placed on a given syllable in a word. The position of lexical stress in a word may depend on certain general rules applicable in the language or dialect in question, but in other languages, it must be learned for each word, as it is largely unpredictable. In some cases, classes of words in a language differ in their stress properties; for example, loanwords into a language with fixed stress may preserve stress placement from the source language, or the special pattern for Turkish place names.

**Phonemic stress :** Languages in which the position of stress in a word is not fully predictable are said to have phonemic stress. For example, English, Russian, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish. Stress is usually truly lexical and must be memorized as part of the pronunciation of an individual word. In some languages, such as Spanish, Portuguese, Lakota and, to some extent, Italian, stress is even represented in writing

using diacritical marks, for example in the Spanish words *célebre* and *celebré*. Sometimes, stress is fixed for all forms of a particular word, or it can fall on different syllables in different inflections of the same word.

Dialects of the same language may have different stress placement. For instance, the English word *laboratory* is stressed on the second syllable in British English (*labóratry* often pronounced "labóratry", the second o being silent), but the first syllable in American English, with a secondary stress on the "tor" syllable (*láboratory* often pronounced "láboratory"). The Spanish word *video* is stressed on the first syllable in Spain (*vídeo*) but on the second syllable in the Americas (*vidéo*). The Portuguese words for Madagascar and the continent Oceania are stressed on the third syllable in European Portuguese (*Madagáscar* and *Oceânia*), but on the fourth syllable in Brazilian Portuguese (*Madagascar* and *Oceania*).

**Non-phonemic stress :** In some languages, the placement of stress can be determined by rules. It is thus not a phonemic property of the word, because it can always be predicted by applying the rules. Languages in which the position of the stress can usually be predicted by a simple rule are said to have fixed stress. For example, in Czech, Finnish, Icelandic and Hungarian, the stress almost always comes on the first syllable of a word. In Armenian the stress is on the last syllable of a word. In Quechua, Esperanto, and Polish, the stress is almost always on the penult (second-last syllable). In Macedonian, it is on the antepenult (third-last syllable).

Other languages have stress placed on different syllables but in a predictable way, as in Classical Arabic and Latin, where stress is conditioned by the structure of particular syllables. They are said to have a regular stress rule.

Statements about the position of stress are sometimes affected by the fact that when a word is spoken in isolation, prosodic factors come into play, which do not apply when the word is spoken normally within a sentence. French words are sometimes said to be stressed on the final syllable, but that can be attributed to the prosodic stress that is placed on the last syllable (unless it is a schwa, when it is the second-last) of any string of words in that language. Thus, it is on the last syllable of a word analyzed in isolation. The situation is similar in Standard Chinese. French (some authors add Chinese) can be considered to have no real lexical stress.

**Levels of stress:** Ladefoged (1975:83) viewed that, some languages are described as having both primary stress and secondary stress. A syllable with secondary stress is stressed relative to unstressed syllables but not as strongly as a syllable with primary stress. As with primary stress, the position of secondary stress may be more or less predictable depending on language. In English, it is not fully predictable, but the different secondary stress of the words organization and accumulation (on the first and second syllable, respectively) is predictable due to the same stress of the verbs organize and accumulate. In some analyses, for example the one found in Chomsky and Halle's The Sound Pattern Of English, English has been described as having four levels of stress: primary, secondary, tertiary, and quaternary, but the treatments often disagree with one another.

Peter Ladefoged and other phoneticians have noted that it is possible to describe English with only one degree of stress, as long as unstressed syllables are phonemically

distinguished for vowel reduction. They believe that the multiple levels posited for English, whether primary–secondary or primary–secondary–tertiary, are mere phonetic detail and not true phonemic stress, and often, the alleged secondary stress is not characterized by the increase in respiratory activity normally associated with primary stress in English or with all stress in other languages. (For further detail see Stress and vowel reduction in English.)

### Data Analysis and Discussion

**Table (1) Secondary students face difficulties in learning stress in English language.**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Agree	45	90.0	90.0	90.0
Disagree	3	6.0	6.0	94.0
Not sure	2	4.0	4.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Fig. (1) Secondary students face difficulties in learning stress in English language.**

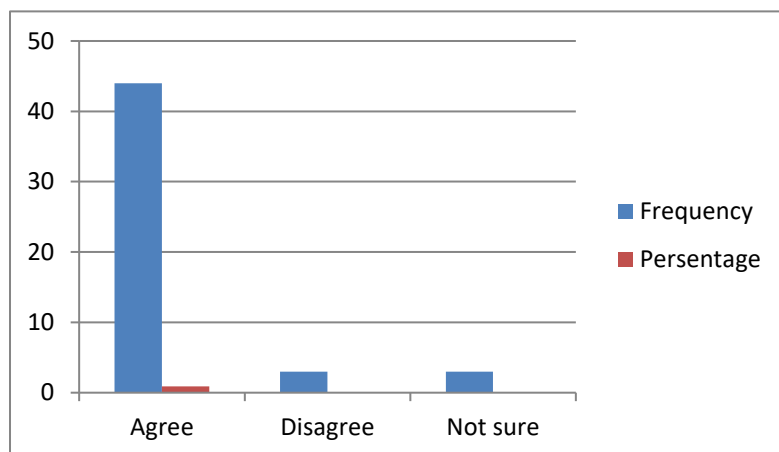


Table and figure (1) illustrated that 45 (90%) of the respondents agreed that Secondary students face difficulties in learning stress in English language, three respondents by (6%) disagreed and two respondents by (4%) were not sure.

**Table (2) Stress helps students in connected speech.**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	43	86.0	86.0	86.0
	Disagree	3	6.0	6.0	94.0
	Not sure	4	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Fig. (2) Stress helps students in connected speech.**

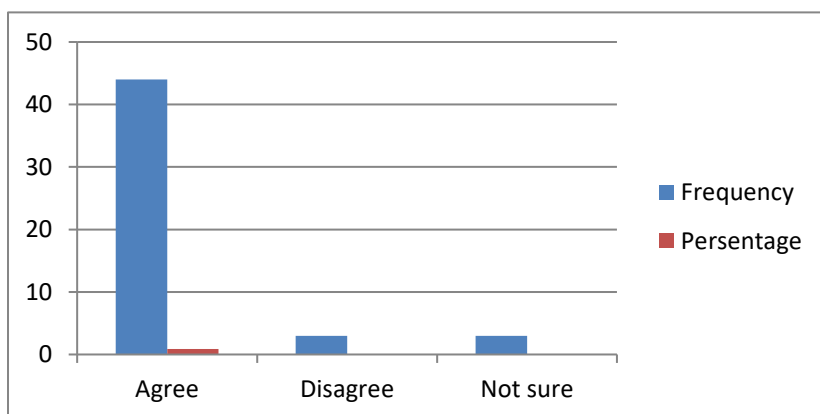


Table and figure (2) indicated that 43 (86%) of the respondents agreed that Stress help students in connected speech, three respondents by (6%) disagreed and four respondents by (8%) were not sure.

**Table (3) Knowing the stress patterns of words help students to pronounce it correctly.**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Agree	44	88.0	88.0	88.0
Disagree	3	6.0	6.0	94.0
Not sure	3	6.0	6.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Fig. (3) Knowing the stress patterns of words was helped students to pronounce it correctly**

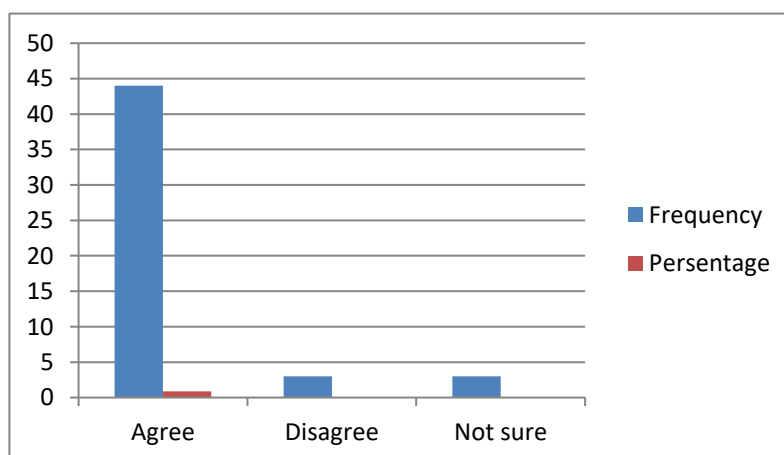




Table and figure (3) indicated that 44 (88%) of the respondents agreed that, knowing the stress patterns of words was helped students to pronounce it correctly, three respondents by (6%) disagreed and three respondents by (6%) were not sure.

**Results** 1-Secondary students face difficulties in learning stress in English language.90%

2- Stress helps students in connected speech 86%

3- Knowing the stress patterns of words help students to pronounce it correctly.88%

**Recommendations :** The study recommended that

1-Teachers should have to facilitate stress for students when teaching English Language properly.

2-Teachers should have to follow different strategies to help their students to overcome the problem of stress in English Language.

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