



## TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES TOWARDS USING ENGLISH STRESS IN TEACHING ORAL ACTIVITIES

Dr. Sabir Mirgani Ali Ahmed<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Saad Abbakar Bakheet Ahmed<sup>2</sup>,  
Dr. Tohami Mohammed Hassan Mohammed-Noor<sup>3</sup>, Dr. Elhady Ishag Hamouda Ishag<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>College of Education- Sudan University of Science and Technology,

Email: [sabirmirgani34@gmail.com](mailto:sabirmirgani34@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Education for Basic Level- University of Zalingei

<sup>3</sup>Faculty of Education - University of Dongola

Email: [Tohami.noor@uofd.edu.sd](mailto:Tohami.noor@uofd.edu.sd)

<sup>4</sup> College of Education- Sudan University of Science and Technology

doi: [10.33329/elt.11.1.1](https://doi.org/10.33329/elt.11.1.1)



### ABSTRACT

This study aims at investigating teachers' perspectives towards using English stress in teaching oral activities. The study adopted the descriptive analytical method. A questionnaire is used as a primary tool for data collection. The sample of study is consisted of 105 teachers who were selected randomly. This study used the statistical package for social science (SPSS) program to analyze and verify the hypothesis. The results showed that teacher's cultural background can greatly affect student's pronunciation of English stress. On the other hand, students are in sufficiently exposed to cassettes CD's recorded by native speakers of English which are needed for practicing stress. The study recommended that teachers should raise students' awareness about the importance of the stress. Furthermore, the English syllabus at university should provide English practice on stress

Keywords: Morphologically, Communication, Syllables, Stress, Connected speech.

### Introduction

Pronunciation, as an umbrella term to cover not only the sounds but also features beyond individual sounds, is an integral component of the language. These latter features are generally known as Suprasegmentals. In teaching the target language, however, not all language educators would agree that teaching the language through its spoken form is a better choice than through other means, for example, reading and little is known about how learners themselves attribute importance to aspects related to their development as language learners. This is mainly because, with the wide spread of English and its role as international languages in many arenas, nonnative speakers have far outnumbered its native counterpart and its ownership has been evolving. Even if a consensus is reached on this argument, the decision of which model or variety teachers should adopt in their classroom practice is a crucially pivotal one.

Based on the fact that there are many differences between Arabic and English stress rules; English stress is not predictable for Arab learners. As a result, students face many difficulties regarding the place where stress should be assigned on a syllable, a word, a sentence or connected speech. Word stress is an especially crucial



factor in proper pronunciation and language communication in English. Stress is not on the periphery of language as it is often treated in some language teaching curricula. Failing to pronounce a word correctly or misplacing a stress in a word often results in miscomprehension or changing the meaning of the word (Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin, 1996; Harmer, 2007; Hebert, 2002; Scrivener, 2005).

### **Statement of the problem**

This paper investigates teachers' perspectives towards using English stress in teaching oral activities; they have particular difficulties with stress patterns of long polysyllabic words unreduced function.

The researcher has found that teachers of English suffer a lot in terms of teaching stress. He has an experienced through teaching suprasegmental aspects to students of English at Sudan University of Science and technology, College of Education which prompted the researcher to tackle this issue so as to diagnose this problem.

### **Objective of the Study**

**This study sets out to achieve the following objective:**

- To examine students of English are exposed to activities on stress in the university syllabus.

### **Question of the Study**

**This study sets out to answer the following question:**

- To what extent are students of English exposed to activities on stress in the university syllabus?

### **Hypothesis of the study**

**This Study sets out to test the following hypotheses:**

- Students of English are exposed to activities on stress in the university syllabus.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study will help the curriculum developers to take the right decisions with regards to promoting the students oral communication competence by learning stress , which is badly needed in their studies so people need to act globally so as to keep space with the rest of world. Therefore, the significance of this study stems from its emphasis on addressing these problems.

### **Activities of Word Stress**

There are a number of activities teachers can do to help learners use word stress correctly. Lead perception exercises on duration of stress, loudness of stress, and pitch. These exercises will help learners recognize the difference between stressed and unstressed syllables (Field, 2005). For example, learners can be taught to recognize where stress falls in words with two or more syllables by learning the rules of parts of speech and word stress (e.g., the primary stress is on the first syllable in compound nouns such as airplane, landscape). Learners can also use a pronunciation computer program, such as American Speech sounds (Hiser & Kopecky, 2009), to learn the duration and loudness of stress. Do exercises on recognizing and producing weak, unstressed syllables (Field, 2005). For example, one exercise helps learners identify computer voice recognition mistakes that have occurred because of mispronunciation of weak vowel forms (e.g., —Alaska if she wants to come with us|| instead of —I'll ask if she wants to come with us . Present pronunciation rules for stress (Dalton & Seidlhofer, 1994). For example, teach learners that in reflexive pronouns, the stress is always on the syllable -self (e.g., herself, themselves. Teach word stress when teaching vocabulary. For example, any time that new words are



introduced, point out to learners where the major stress falls. Use analogy exercises. Words sharing similar stress patterns are easier for listeners to remember. For example, give learners a list of words with similar stress and ask them to state the rule (e.g., in compound adverbs of location, such as *outside*, *downtown*, and *indoors*, the stress is on the final syllable (Hancock, 1998, p: 69).

### Placement of Stress

House (1998: 148) claims:

*"In old English, many words were monosyllabic. If the word was multisyllabic, the first syllable of word was always stressed with the exception of those words beginning with a prefix. If the word began with a prefix the next syllable was automatically stressed. This straightforward and consistent pattern of syllable stress was disrupted when loan words from various languages entered into middle and Modern English".*

For this, it is extremely not easy for foreign learners to identify which syllables in the English words should be stressed. For this reason, English stress is unpredictable. Thus, Foreign Learners find it better to learn how to pronounce the word with the correctness at the same time they learn the meaning of it. However, in order to decide on stress placement, Roach (2002: 97) intended to draw non-native Speaker's attention to the following:

- A. Whether the word is morphologically simple, or whether it is complex as a result either of containing one or more affixes (that is, prefixes or suffixes) or of being a compound word.
- B. What the grammatical category of the word is (noun, verb, adjective,...)
- C. How many syllables the word has.
- D. What the phonological structure of those syllables is: Whether the syllable is strong or weak.
- E. In this section, the general rules of stress placement will be discussed. These rules are in particular dealing with:
  - i. Placement of stress within the word: simple and complex words.
  - ii. Placement of stress within the phrase.

### Stress Placement within the Word

Firstly, it is illogic to talk about placement of stress within the word without having a clear knowledge about the type of the word that we are going to stress.

In English, There are two types of words:

- Simple words.
- Complex words.

Simple words:

They are composed of no more than one grammatical unit. These words contain one, two, or three syllables.

For example:

- Care: simple word that has one grammatical unit and contains one syllable.
- Apply: simple word of two-syllables. Determine: simple word of three-syllables.
- But, the question here is: How to stress such words.

General Rules about Stress on Words Have One Syllable:



Roach (2002: 97) points out that single syllable words does not cause problem regarding stress placement. That is, if these words are pronounced in isolation, they are said with primary stress.

#### Words have Two syllables:

It is crucial to determine which of those two syllables are strong, and which of them are weak. This is because only strong syllables are stressed. Usually, strong syllables have a rhyme either has a syllable peak which is a long vowel or diphthong, or a vowel followed by a coda. On contrary, weak syllables have a syllable peak which is a short, and no coda unless the syllable peak is the schwa vowel ə or (in some circumstances) ɪ. Roach (2002:98) regarding two-syllable words as: verbs, adjectives, adverbs and prepositions, they seem to have the same rules of stressing. These rules are:

- 1) If the second syllable of the verb, adjective, or adverb is a strong syllable, then that second syllable is stressed.
  - i. For example:
  - ii. 'attract' (v) ə'trækt 'divine' (adj) dɪ'vaɪn
- 2) If the final syllable is weak, then the first syllable is stressed 'enter' (v) 'entə
  - i. 'lovely' (adj) 'lʌvli

In case of nouns, they have different rules as follows:

If the second syllable contains a short vowel, then the stress will usually come on the first syllable. Otherwise, it will be on the second syllable.

For example:

'money' 'mʌni

'estate' ɪ'steɪt

#### Words have three syllables:

The General Rule Concerning Stress on the Verbs has Three- Syllables:

- 1) If the final syllable is strong, then it will be stressed. As: 'entertain' entə'teɪn  
'resurrect' rezə'rekt
- 2) If the last syllable is weak, then it will be unstressed and stress will be placed on the penultimate syllable if that syllable is strong. As: 'encounter' ɪŋ'kaʊntə  
'determine' dɪ'tɜ:mɪn
- 3) If both the second and third syllable are weak, then the stress falls on the initial syllable:  
'parody' 'pærədi

Nouns and Adjectives (three- syllables) usually have Different Rule: Even if the final syllable is strong, stress is assigned on the first syllable. The final syllable usually has a secondary stress. As:

'intellect' (n) ɪntəlekt 'opportune' (adj) 'ɒpətju:n

Stress on Complex Words

Complex words are words that composed of two or more grammatical units.

They are of two major types:



- 1) Words made from a basic word form (called stem), with the addition of an affix; and
- 2) Compound words, which are made of two (or occasionally more) independent English words as: 'ice-cream', 'armchair'.( Roach, 2002:125).

### Method of the Study

Researchers used a descriptive analytical method to conduct the study. A diagnostic test is used as the primary tool for collecting the information relevant to the study. The data will be analyzed statistically by using the SPSS programme. The population of this study is the teachers of English at different Universities. The sample is drawn from teacher of English who were selected randomly.

### Data Analysis of the Questionnaire

The third Hypothesis: Students of English are exposed to activities on stress in the university syllabus.

Statement No (1): students are insufficiently exposed to cassettes CD's recorded by native speakers of English which are needed for practicing stress.

Table No (4.1) The Frequency Distribution for the Respondents' Answers of Statement No (1 )

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly agree	16	15.2	15.2	15.2
Agree	58	55.2	55.2	70.5
Neutral	15	14.3	14.3	84.8
Disagree	4	3.8	3.8	88.6
strongly disagree	12	11.5	11.5	100
Total	105	100	100	

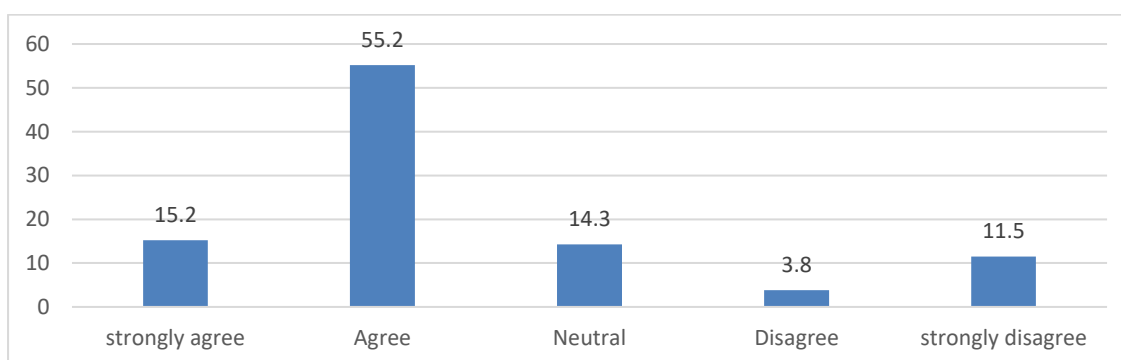


Fig (4.1 )

It is obvious from the above table (4.1 ) and figure (4.1 ) show that there are (16) respondents in the study sample with percentage (15.2%) strongly agreed with that " students are insufficiently exposed to cassettes CD's recorded by native speakers of English which are needed for practicing stress " There are (58) respondents with percentage (55.2%) agreed with that, and (15) respondents with percentage (14.3 %) were neutral, (4) respondents with percentage (3.8%) disagreed. Whereas, (12) respondents with percentage (11.5%) strongly disagreed. This demonstrates that students should be exposed to recorded materials by native speakers of English when learning stress.

Statement No (2): the university English syllabus insufficiently covers the primary and secondary stress.



Table No (4.2) The Frequency Distribution for the Respondents' Answers of Statement No (2 )

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly agree	22	21	21	21
Agree	62	59	59	80
Neutral	16	15.2	15.2	95.2
Disagree	4	3.8	3.8	99
strongly disagree	1	1	1.01	100
Total	105	100	100	

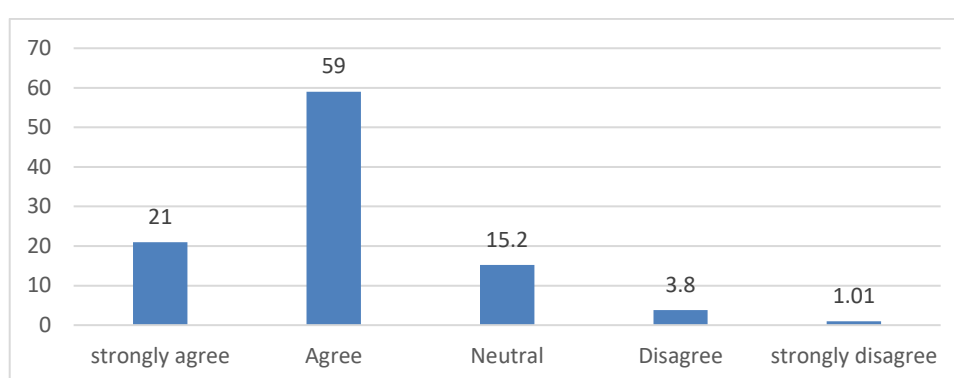


Fig (4.2 )

It is obvious from the above table(4.2 ) and figure(4.2 ) illustrates that there are (22) respondents in the study sample with percentage (21.1%) strongly agreed with that " the university English syllabus insufficiently covers the primary and secondary stress " There are (62) respondents with percentage (59.0%) agreed with that, and (16) respondents with percentage (15.2 %) were neutral, (4) respondents with percentage (3.8%) disagreed, while (1) respondents with percentage (1.0%) strongly disagreed. This justifies that students be given activities concerning stress, University English syllabus should be covered the area of primary and secondary stress.

Statement No (3): the inculcating technique adopted by the teacher of teaching English stress are out of date.

Table No (4.3) The Frequency Distribution for the Respondents' Answers of Statement No. (3)

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly agree	30	28.6	28.6	28.6
Agree	36	34.3	34.3	62.9
Neutral	16	15.2	15.2	78.1
Disagree	14	13.3	13.3	91.4
strongly disagree	9	8.6	8.6	100
Total	105	100	100	

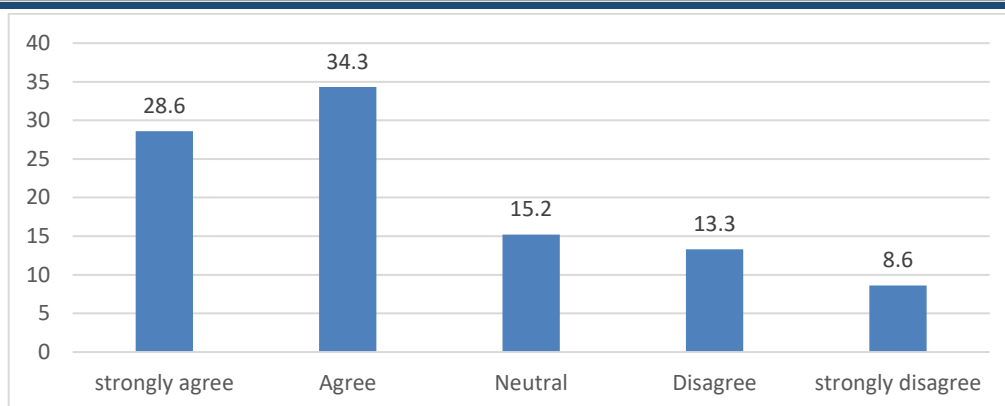


Fig (4.3)

It is obvious from the above table (4.3) and figure (4.3) show that there are (30) respondents in the study sample with percentage (28.3%) strongly agreed with that " the inculcating technique adopted by the teacher of teaching English stress are out of date" There are (36) respondents with percentage (34.3%) agreed with that, and (16) respondents with percentage (15.2 %) were neutral, (14) respondents with percentage (13.3%) disagreed. Whereas, (9) respondents with percentage (8.6%) strongly disagreed. This justifies that teachers of English should avoid inculcating method when teaching stress.

Statement No (4): teacher’s cultural background can greatly affect student’s pronunciation of English stress.

Table No (4.4) The Frequency Distribution for the Respondents’ Answers of Statement No. (14)

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly agree	47	44.8	44.8	44.8
Agree	30	28.6	28.6	73.3
Neutral	11	10.4	10.4	83.8
Disagree	11	10.4	10.4	94.3
strongly disagree	6	4.8	4.8	100
Total	105	100	100	

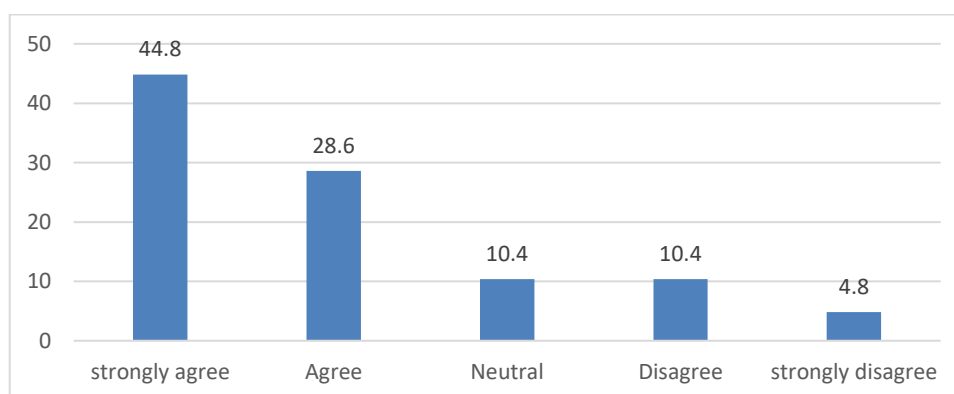


Fig (4.4)

It is obvious from the above table(4.4) and figure (4.4) illustrate that there are (47) respondents in the study sample with percentage (44.8%) strongly agreed with that " teacher’s cultural background can greatly affect student’s pronunciation of English stress " There are (30) respondents with percentage (28.6%) agreed



with that, and (11) respondents with percentage (10.4 %) were neutral, (11) respondents with percentage (10.0%) disagreed, while (6) respondents with percentage (4.8%) strongly disagreed. This demonstrates that teachers should reduce cultural background when teaching stress.

Statement No (5): the English syllabus at University does not provide enough practice on stress.

Table No (4.5) The Frequency Distribution for the Respondents' Answers of Statement No.(5 )

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly agree	22	21	21	21
Agree	42	40.1	40.1	61
Neutral	13	12.4	12.4	73.3
Disagree	11	10.5	10.5	83.8
strongly disagree	17	16.2	16.2	100
Total	105	100	100	

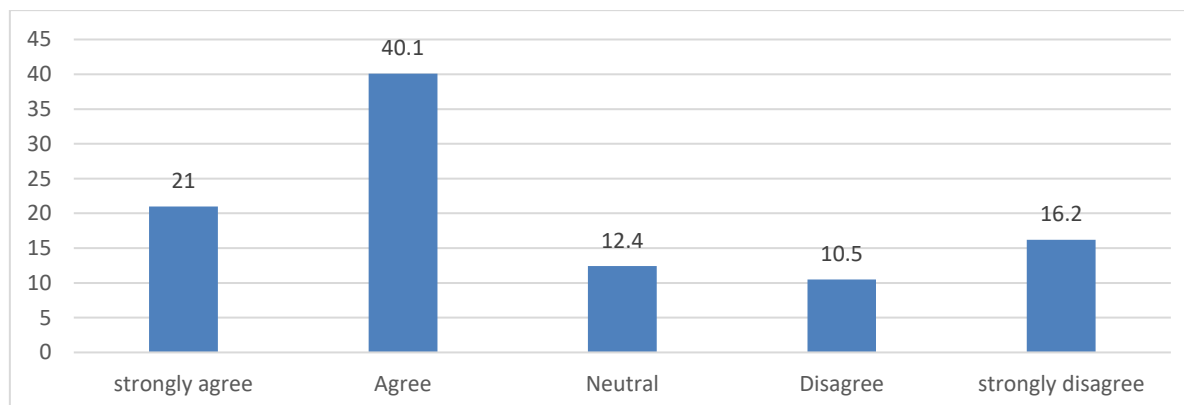


Fig (4.5)

It is obvious from the above table(4.3) and figure (4.3) show that there are (22) respondents in the study sample with percentage (21%) strongly agreed with that " the English syllabus at University does not provide enough practice on stress " There are (42) respondents with percentage (40.1%) agreed with that, and (13) respondents with percentage (12.4 %) were neutral, (11) respondents with percentage (10.5%) disagreed, while (17) respondents with percentage (16.2%) strongly disagreed. This indicates that University syllabus should provide enough practice on stress.

### Discussion

In this section, the data is analyzed and discussed in terms of the results of the questionnaire. There was one question and one hypothesis to be answered and tested respectively. The respondents, on whom the questionnaire was applied, were 104 respondents. The method used to analyze the data was descriptive statistics (frequency and percentages)

Statistical Package for the social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. Chi-Square tests were applied to examine the observed differences in the frequency distribution of responses on all the items of the questionnaire in order to guarantee their statistical significance.



**International Journal of ELT, Linguistics and Comparative Literature***(Old Title-Journal of ELT & Poetry)*<http://journalofelt.kypublications.com>**Vol.11.Issue.1. 2023(Jan-Feb)****ISSN:2455-0302****Results of the Study**

From the analysis and discussion of the data in the previous subsections, the following results are obtained:

1. Teacher's cultural background can greatly affect student's pronunciation of English stress
2. Students are insufficiently exposed to cassettes CD's recorded by native speakers of English which are needed for practicing stress.
3. The university English syllabus insufficiently covers the primary and secondary.

**Recommendations**

In the light of the results of the study, the followings are recommended:

- 1) The English syllabus at University should provide English practice on stress.
- 2) Teachers should raise students' awareness about the importance of the stress.
- 3) Students should be informed by their teachers about the different types of stress patterns so as to practice in producing them.

**References**

- Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D. & Goodwin, J. (1996). *Teaching pronunciation: A reference for teachers of English to speakers of other languages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dalton, C. & Seidlhofer, B. (1994). *Pronunciation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Field, J. (2005). Intelligibility and the listener: The role of lexical stress. *TESOL Quarterly* 39(3), pp. 399-423.
- Harmer, J. (2007). *How to teach English*. Essex: Pearson
- Hebert, H. (2002). Practical TESOL: It is not what you say, but how you say it! In Richards, C.J. & Renandya, W.A. (eds.) (2002). *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice*, (pp. 188-200).
- House, L. (1998): *Introductory Phonetics and Phonology: A workbook Approach*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associated: Hillsdale, NJ. Retrieved from: [www.questia.com](http://www.questia.com)  
[http://society.kisti.re.kr/~pmc/work/vol\\_12\\_2/03.pdf?q=consonants](http://society.kisti.re.kr/~pmc/work/vol_12_2/03.pdf?q=consonants)
- Roach, P. (2002): *English Phonetics and Phonology: Practical course*. 3rd Ed. CUP, UK.
- Scrivener, J. (2005). *Learning Teaching* (2nd ed.). London: Macmillan