

Lesson plan on

# English Word Stress



(Image generated using Adobe Firefly)

**Topic:** AI & corpus-aided instruction on English word stress

**Target students:** Secondary school students (S3)

**Duration:** 60 minutes

**Prior knowledge:**

Before the lesson, students have learned:

- (1) International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols
- (2) some terminologies (e.g., vowel, consonant, syllable)

**Teaching aids and materials:**

- (1) PowerPoint
- (2) Online videos/audios
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-sOjBpYJCM>
  - [https://corpus.eduhk.hk/english\\_pronunciation/index.php/word-stress-teaching-kit/](https://corpus.eduhk.hk/english_pronunciation/index.php/word-stress-teaching-kit/)
  - <https://lml-learning.eduhk.hk/englishspeechcorpus/ViewTaskPart.aspx?id=15&partid=1&categoryid=4&key=wstr&displayid=15>
- (3) Corpus
  - The Speech Corpus with Different Proficiency Levels  
[https://corpus.eduhk.hk/english\\_speech\\_corpus/](https://corpus.eduhk.hk/english_speech_corpus/)
- (4) ChatGPT on Poe: <https://poe.com/ChatGPT>
- (5) Mentimeter: <https://www.menti.com/alghtub7e4h4>
- (6) Murf: <https://murf.ai/>
- (7) Worksheets

**Learning objectives:**

After the lesson, students are able to:

- (1) self-identify their own features for English word stress
- (2) use text-to-speech AI tools to generate samples specifically focusing on word stress
- (3) use conversational AI tools to generate ideas
- (4) use conversational AI tools to receive feedback on English word stress

**Procedures:**

**Stage I: Engage (8 minutes)**

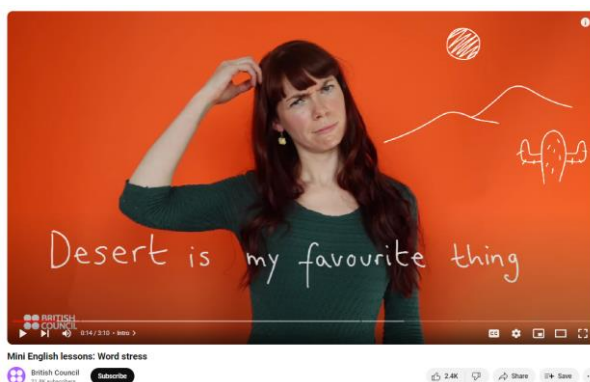
**Purpose:**

- (1) To spark students' interests in the topic
- (2) To build up the context for the whole lesson
- (3) To activate prior knowledge

**Step 1 (3 mins)**

T plays a video clip (0:08-0:18) where a speaker says three sentences containing inappropriate use of word stress and asks Ss to read aloud the sentences and infer

what the speaker wants to convey.



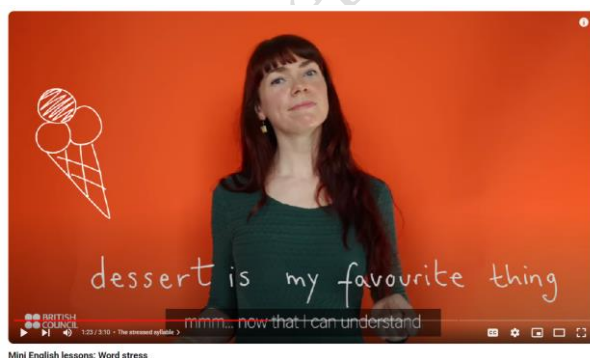
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-sOjBpYJCM>

Target sentences:

1. I just want to be a pea.
2. Desert is my favourite thing.
3. Some people have school for beer.

### Step 2 (3 mins)

T continues to play the video clip (0:51-1:48) to show what the speaker really wants to say and then lets Ss focus on the changed words and read again the sentences.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-sOjBpYJCM>

Target sentences:

1. I just want to be happy.
2. Dessert is my favourite thing.
3. Some people have school phobia.

### Step 3 (2 mins)

T introduces the importance of appropriate use of word stress in daily communication and leads in the focus of the lesson – word stress, in the meantime, emphasizes that the major concern of word stress is the identification of the stressed syllable within a word.

## Stage II: Study (30 minutes)

### Purpose:

- (1) To raise Ss' awareness on English word stress
- (2) To familiarize Ss with learners' common features on word stress using corpus
- (3) To let Ss self-reflect their own features on English word stress

### Step 1 (3 mins)


T plays recordings of two sentences (i.e., S3&S5 from Speaker HK05 of *The Spoken English Corpus of Chinese and Non-Chinese learners in Hong Kong*) without showing the annotation and asks Ss to identify the words which are inappropriately pronounced in terms of word stress.

Does this mean **that acCENTS(ILS)** can't be changed?

Will you MANage to **make proGRESS(ILS)**, or will you just give up?

### Step 2 (4 mins)

T demonstrates how to show the annotations for word stress of Speaker HK01 using the browse function of the corpus (direction: click on 'Browse' → click 'Filter' → click Passage One of Speaker HK01 → tick 'Inappropriate lexical stress (ILS)')



Passage One

Speaker: HK01

Hometown: Cantonese (Hong Kong)	Gender: female	Age: 20	Education Level: Bachelor	Major: (N/A)
English Level: (N/A)	L1: Cantonese (Hong Kong)	L2: English	L3: Mandarin (Standard Chinese)	

Notes: "HK", "ML" and "SA" in the speaker's name stand for "Hong Kong", "Mainland" and "South and Southeast Asia" respectively

Remarks:

- The blue contour in pictures is pitch contour to indicate the **intonation (pitch)**.
- The yellow contour in pictures is intensity contour to indicate the **intensity** of the speech.
- The **suprasegmental features** that have been spotted. Please tick the boxes to show features.

☐ Inappropriate pausing(IP)
 ☐ Absence of CV linking(AL)
 ☒ Inappropriate lexical stress(ILS)
 ☐ Inappropriate intonation(II)

### Step 3 (5 mins)

Ss are asked to work in pairs to perform corpus-based analysis of word stress using Worksheet 1.

#### Worksheet 1

##### Hands-on corpus search task

Please complete the task following the steps below:

1. Use browse function of the corpus *The Spoken English Corpus of Chinese and Non-Chinese learners in Hong Kong* to access the data pages of the target speakers listed in the provided table.
2. Listen carefully to the recordings of all sentences for each target speaker. As you listen, determine whether the speaker has any inappropriate use of word stress. If yes, write down the words with inappropriate stress.
3. Check the accuracy of your observations based on the annotations.

Speakers	If the speaker has inappropriate use of word stress (Y/N)		List the words pronounced with inappropriate word stress
	Your assessment	Corpus annotation	
e.g., HK01	Y	Y	accent
HK05			
ML07			
ML25			

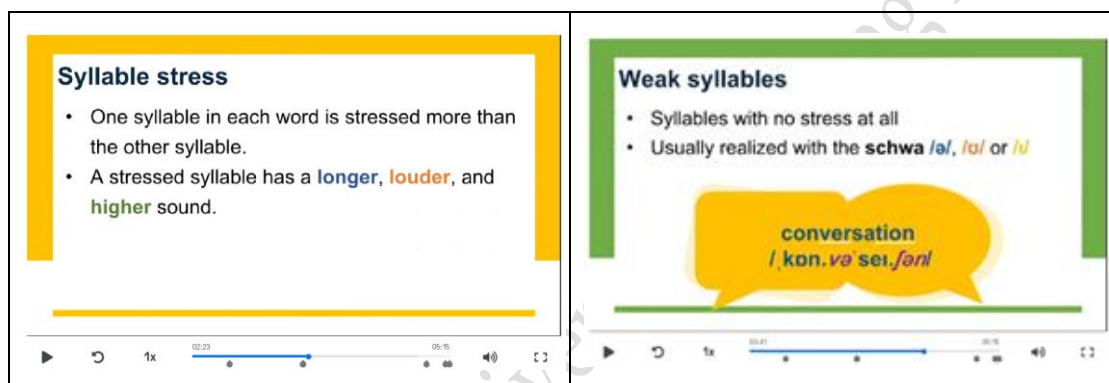
#### Step 4 (4 mins)

T demonstrates the use of the corpus again and then plays the recordings of the sentences containing inappropriate word stress from learners and of native speakers provided by the corpus.

T explains that the speakers listed in Worksheet 1 mispronounced the words 'accents', 'progress', 'native' and 'recognize' by emphasizing wrong syllables. Additionally, T introduces another inappropriate stress pattern: putting equal emphasis on all the syllables of a word.

#### Step 5 (8 mins)

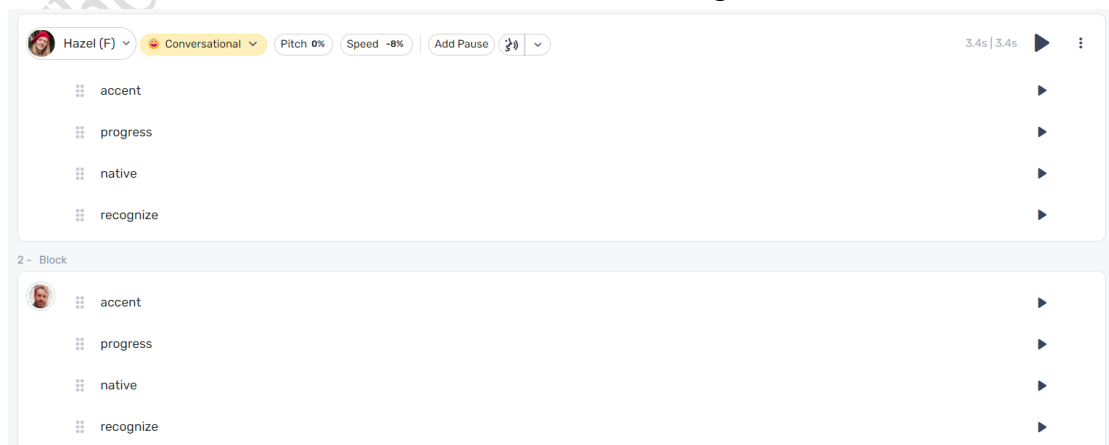
T gives explicit instructions on word stress using an online instructional video, including basic concepts and rules of English word stress.



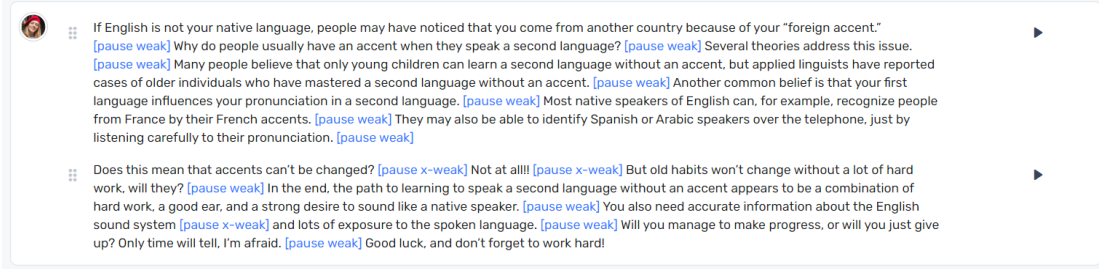
[https://corpus.eduhk.hk/english\\_pronunciation/index.php/word-stress-teaching-kit/](https://corpus.eduhk.hk/english_pronunciation/index.php/word-stress-teaching-kit/)  
(\*Note: The video is uploaded to EdPuzzle, with 3-5 questions inserted. For example, before presenting the rules, a list of words following the same rule are provided to give Ss opportunities to self-explore the possible rule.)

#### Step 6 (6 mins)

T further introduces the text-to-speech tool 'Murf' where users can create sample recordings using different voices and accents from native speakers, catering to their specific requirements. T generates recordings of the words with inappropriate word stress found in the task and has Ss to listen to recordings.



T also generates one recording of the whole passage containing the five sentences analyzed in the corpus.



The screenshot shows a text passage with annotations for word stress and pauses. The text is: "If English is not your native language, people may have noticed that you come from another country because of your 'foreign accent.' [pause weak] Why do people usually have an accent when they speak a second language? [pause weak] Several theories address this issue. [pause weak] Many people believe that only young children can learn a second language without an accent, but applied linguists have reported cases of older individuals who have mastered a second language without an accent. [pause weak] Another common belief is that your first language influences your pronunciation in a second language. [pause weak] Most native speakers of English can, for example, recognize people from France by their French accents. [pause weak] They may also be able to identify Spanish or Arabic speakers over the telephone, just by listening carefully to their pronunciation. [pause weak] Does this mean that accents can't be changed? [pause x-weak] Not at all! [pause x-weak] But old habits won't change without a lot of hard work, will they? [pause weak] In the end, the path to learning to speak a second language without an accent appears to be a combination of hard work, a good ear, and a strong desire to sound like a native speaker. [pause weak] You also need accurate information about the English sound system [pause x-weak] and lots of exposure to the spoken language. [pause weak] Will you manage to make progress, or will you just give up? Only time will tell, I'm afraid. [pause weak] Good luck, and don't forget to work hard!" The annotations are in blue and green boxes.

T then summarizes the passage:

'People often have accents when speaking a second language, and there's a lot of debate about why accents happen and if they can be changed. While some think only kids can learn without an accent, the key to sounding like a native speaker seems to be a mix of hard work, good listening skills, and strong motivation. But in the end, it's up to each person to put in the effort and see what happens.'

### Stage III: Activate (22 minutes)

#### Purpose:

- (1) To provide Ss opportunities to apply their learned knowledge in a real context
- (2) To encourage the sharing of ideas among Ss
- (3) To allow Ss to appreciate and learn from each other Ss' performances
- (4) To guide Ss to use conversational AI tools to receive feedback.

#### Step 1 (2 minutes)

T asks each group of Ss to list words that fit other word stress rules and can be used to respond to the question 'Do you think that English is difficult to learn? Why?' (Worksheet 2). T encourages Ss to include as many words as possible that they consider difficult in terms of word stress placement.

#### Step 2 (4 minutes)

Ss prepare answers using the target words (including 'accent', 'progress', 'native' and 'recognize').

#### Step 3 (3 minutes)

T demonstrates how to use ChatGPT on Poe to get more ideas as to which multisyllabic words can be included. (*\*Note: T needs to emphasize that the responses from conversational AI tools may not be entirely correct.*)



Certainly! Here are some multisyllabic words with different stress patterns, along with a response:

1. **accent** ('æk.sənt) - first syllable stress
2. **progress** ('prɒɡ.res) - first syllable stress
3. **native** ('neɪ.tɪv) - first syllable stress
4. **recognize** ('rek.əɡ.naɪz) - first syllable stress
5. **pronunciation** (prəˌnʌn.si.eɪʃən) - penultimate syllable stress
6. **communication** (kəˌmjuː.ni.keɪʃən) - penultimate syllable stress
7. **syllable** ('sɪlə.bəl) - first syllable stress
8. **difficulty** ('dɪfɪ.kəl.ti) - first syllable stress
9. **understand** (ˌʌn.dəˈstænd) - ultimate syllable stress
10. **complexity** (kəmˌplek.sə.ti) - penultimate syllable stress

Response:

English is often seen as difficult because of its varied pronunciation and different accents. Many learners struggle to recognize which syllable to stress, affecting communication. As they make progress, understanding native speakers becomes more manageable. The complexity of pronunciation rules can be challenging, but practice helps. Over time, students can confidently express themselves and improve their skills.

Please list frequently used multisyllabic words that fit different English word stress rules and can be used by secondary school student to respond to the question 'Do you think that English is difficult to learn? Why?' focusing on pronunciation and form a 5-sentence response containing words 'accent', 'progress', 'native' and 'recognize' in a natural way.

#### Step 4 (6 minutes)

After checking the responses from all the groups, T invites Ss to share their answers (2 pairs) and generates the sample recordings of the two responses and asks Ss to imitate.

#### Step 5 (3 minutes)

T demonstrates how to give commands to conversational AI tools to receive feedback on English word stress. One pair of Ss is then invited to use these AI tools to get feedback on their own pronunciation. T then play again the recordings of words produced with inappropriate word stress (found in corpus search task) and further gives feedback on the pronunciation of target words, helping Ss focus specifically on word stress.

#### Step 6 (2 minutes)

T recaps the learned content in this lesson. T then assigns after-class activity to Ss.

#### After-class activity

1. Use Murf to generate a recording of the sample answer

#### Sample answer to the question 'Do you think that English is difficult to learn? Why?'

Yes, I do think English can be quite challenging, especially when it comes to pronunciation. Many learners struggle with an **accent** influenced by their **native** language, making it hard to **recognize** and **imitate** certain English sounds **accurately**. However, with regular practice and **exposure** to native speakers, it's possible to make good **progress**. While achieving a **completely** native-like accent might be difficult, anyone can **improve** their fluency significantly. Success in learning English really comes down to a **combination** of **consistent** effort and **motivation**. It might seem **daunting** at first, but it gets easier as you build your skills over time.

2. Use conversational AI tools to practice the answer (either your own answer or the sample answer)

## Worksheet 1

### Hands-on corpus search task

Please complete the task following the steps below:

1. Use browse function of the corpus [\*The Spoken English Corpus of Chinese and Non-Chinese learners in Hong Kong\*](#) to access the data pages of the target speakers listed in the provided table.
2. Listen carefully to the recordings of all sentences for each target speaker. As you listen, determine whether the speaker has any inappropriate use of word stress. If yes, write down the words with inappropriate stress.
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	Your assessment	Corpus annotation	
e.g., HK01	Y	Y	accent
HK05			
ML07			
ML25			



## Worksheet 2

### Production task

Please answer the question ‘Do you think that English is difficult to learn? Why?’ using multisyllabic words that fit different stress rules introduced.

Stress pattern/rule	Words fit the pattern/rule	Indicate the stressed syllable
$\sigma\sigma CVV(C)$	imitate	Ooo
suffix ‘-tion’	combination	ooOo
suffix ‘-tion’	motivation	ooOo

Your answer:

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