

**Teaching word stress:
Learning from learners' perceptions**

by Graeme Couper

Abstract

This paper reports on a small scale exploratory study into the teaching of word stress. The study, extending earlier research (Couper, 2006, 2009, 2011), explored learners' perceptions of word stress and how they can be guided towards modifying those perceptions. The nine participants, enrolled in a university preparation course, attended a series of lessons developed specifically for this study. The approach taken was to begin with learners' current knowledge of stress in both their own languages and English and to work towards improved understanding and production of English word stress. By approaching it from the learners' perspectives it was easier to develop common understandings and achieve more effective communication both during explanations and in providing feedback. In this paper the teaching is described along with learners' reactions to it. Results of tests also show how learners' production of stress changed during the course of instruction. Finally, recommendations for teachers are put forward.

Introduction

During earlier studies into what makes pronunciation teaching of syllable codas effective (Couper, 2006, 2009, 2011), a number of principles were developed, refined and tested. These principles are based on a cognitive linguistics or, more specifically, a 'cognitive grammar' view that pronunciation depends on the ability to categorise sounds and is, therefore, a cognitive phenomenon 'grounded in the human ability to produce, perceive and above all, to categorise sounds, and to form mental representations of sounds' (Taylor, 2002: 79-80). New Zealand linguist John R. Taylor also identifies several other cognitive capacities, such as figure-ground organisation and 'automatization' (habit formation), which are important for pronunciation learning (Taylor, 2002: 10, 13). Figure-ground organisation has a special role to play in noticing what is salient to particular phonological categories.

A usage-based perspective on phonology, such as that offered by cognitive grammar, sees pronunciation as an integral part of the meaning-making process rather than the transfer of a set of underlying phonological rules. It ‘goes beyond structuralist models to show how language use gives rise to structure’ (Bybee, 2004: 34). Related to this, it is important to understand that there is a gap between idealised forms of language and the actual sounds produced. Indeed, ‘most people speaking their native language do not notice either the sounds that they produce or the sounds that they hear’ (Shockey, 2003: 10). This has been demonstrated in experiments showing that when sounds are omitted there is a phonemic restoration effect which leads the listener to be sure that they in fact heard those non-existent sounds (Warren, 1982).

For teachers, this insight implies the need to be aware of the relationship between the idealised form and the actual sounds, and also that there is potentially a gap between what we hear and what our learners hear. The implications for pronunciation teaching are significant and emphasise the essential role of learning concepts such as syllables, phonemes and word stress as a means to successfully categorising the sounds of the language (Fraser, 2006, 2011). More recently, the symbiosis between cognitive linguistics and sociocultural theory has also been noted (Lantolf, 2011).

Based on the author’s earlier findings, the current study investigated the application of the following principles to the teaching of word stress:

- 1 Make sure both you and your learners are talking the same language – what I term ‘socially constructed metalanguage (SCM)’. (See Appendix A)
- 2 Assist learners to compare and contrast the differences between their perceptions of the target language phonology (in this case, English) and the native speaker’s perceptions – this also involves critical listening (Fraser, 2009: 301). (See Appendix A)
- 3 Do the same for production – although, for the purposes of comparison, any reasonably accurate production is sufficient, i.e., it doesn’t have to be that of a native speaker.
- 4 Provide opportunities for practise and feedback, ensuring learners understand the feedback by couching it in terms you have previously developed as a group (i.e., using SCM – see Principle 1).

In my experience as both a language teacher and language learner, I am aware of how difficult it can be to get the stress just right. Many textbooks for learning English provide some help by presenting patterns of word stress placement (see, e.g., Smith & Margolis, 2007) and some go further by attempting to describe the nature of English stress (see, e.g., Hancock, 2003). However, the difficulty for teachers and for their students is how to make sense of this information in the classroom situation, that is, the teacher has to help translate the textbook into concepts which the learners understand.

While knowing where to place the stress is certainly a major problem, a more critical underlying impediment for many learners is the nature of stress in English. It should be noted that this concept is language specific (Gussenhoven, 2005: 47) as different languages give different weighting to the physical features (acoustics) of stress: duration, fundamental frequency (f_0) and amplitude (Alfano, Llisterra, & Savy, 2007: 1793). These features are perceived in terms of timing, pitch and loudness respectively (Cutler, 2005: 265). There are also differences in the functions of stress: it has a contrastive function in the more unpredictable free word stress languages such as English and only a demarcative function in the fixed word stress languages such as French (Cutler, 2005: 274). In tone languages and pitch accent languages (such as Tokyo Japanese), prominence is achieved through contrastive pitch. Given all the different ways in which stress is realised, it is hardly surprising that learning English word stress can present a number of challenges.

The aims of the small scale study reported in this paper were

- to explore the different ways in which learners may perceive word stress
- to explore ways to help them improve their understanding of the English language perception of word stress
- to explore ways to help with the accurate production of word stress
- to gain some measures of how effective the teaching has been for this particular group.

The study drew on the participants' various perspectives to create a dialogue leading to the co-construction of an understanding of word stress in English in comparison with how stress is understood in other languages. These insights then provided the teacher with the means to help learners both understand and produce word stress.

After a brief overview of the method adopted in the study, the lessons are described along with the learners' reactions, leading to conclusions and recommendations for the classroom.

Method

The participants, students attending a degree preparation course, were invited to free pronunciation classes on the basis of a diagnostic test undertaken by all students enrolled in the course. The classes were held during the mid-semester break, from 10 am to 3 pm over three days. A total of nine participants attended, although not all attended all classes. Their language backgrounds were: Chinese (3), Japanese (2), Indonesian, Korean, Spanish, and Russian. They have been given pseudonyms.

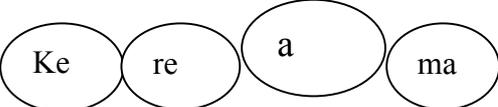
Quantitative data were collected through pre- and post speaking tests in which participants read a list of 40 words out of context and 25 words in sentences. The words were taken from the Academic

Word List (AWL) and the two thousand word list. The AWL was chosen as they were learning these words as part of their regular course and the two thousand word list was used as a source of words which they could be expected to be very familiar with.

Qualitative data were collected through recording of teaching and teacher reflection as well as from learner reflection through both discussion and feedback forms each day.

The teaching (see Appendix B for an overview)

The following transcript is excerpted from the beginning of Lesson 1 (T = teacher, S = student):

- [T writes his name on the board: *Graeme*]
- T How many parts do you hear in my name?
- S Three: Gra / e / me [all other Ss agree]
- T I hear two parts: Gra / eme
- T My name in Maori is 'Kereama'. How many parts?
- Ss Four.
- T So that tells me the Maori heard 4 parts in 'Graeme'.
- T So it's different in different languages
- T What about your names?
- T Say your name? [around the class, Ss say their names]
- T I hear ... parts.
- T How many do the rest of you hear?
- T How many do you hear?
- [They had a great deal of fun as they often came up with different numbers. The Japanese speakers also checked 'Graeme' again and decided it should have had four parts.]
- T So there are different ways of hearing pronunciation in different languages.
- T So that's the first thing. Different languages have different ways of hearing how many parts there are in a word.
- [The focus up until this point was on syllables and how the concept is different in different languages. The next stage moves onto word stress.]
- T Look at my name again: Gra / eme
- T What's the difference between the 2 parts?
- Ss First part: longer ... change in tone ... stronger ... accent ... stress.
- T How much more is the 1st part than the 2nd?
- S Double
- [T draws on board]
- 
- T So that's Graeme, now have a look at Ke / re / a / ma again. Where is the stress?
- Ss / a /
- T How much more? Twice?
- Ss No, just a little.
- [T draws on board]
- 

[After a pause, T brings the focus back to word stress in English]

T Notice how we make this part bigger, or this part smaller.

[T pointing to **Gra**eme Graeme]

T What about your language? How do you make the stress in your language? Is it as big a difference as in English?

[Ss draw circles for their names, then for each other's names]

[Following on from this exercise, T checks learning.]

S1 I saw the difference between English and other languages. There can be more than two sizes, different sizes in different languages.

T Yes, different sizes in different languages. Anyone else?

S2 My parents say my name Meimei [heard as 2 syllables, but could be four to my ears]. They say the second Mei very short /me/ but my friends say it long /mei/.

S3 Words sound different when people speak fast.

S1 Our language always stresses on the last syllable so it's very difficult for me to change.

This was the end of this stage of the lesson. Further practice followed but these ideas and learner observations were referred back to when giving feedback.

Further stages in the lesson

The students listened for stress in two-syllable words. The students listened to pairs of words, one with correct stress and one without (the sound tracks were cut and pasted from the participants' own production during the diagnostic tests). They noted if there was a difference, identified and described it, and indicated which of the two pronunciations sounded better. Then they discussed the sound of the unstressed syllable and differences in different languages. They concluded where the stress was and how it was produced. They also had a chance to note the effect of word class on stress.

The next stage provided practice with the words in context. Participants put words in sentences and recorded them in the computer laboratory using Wimba Voice Board, set up on Blackboard (Wimba is a tool which allows learners to record their voices and play back their recordings. These recordings can also be accessed by peers and the teacher to help with extra feedback. The teacher is also able to post a model on Wimba for learners to listen to.) The participants listened and made notes of their difficulties. Their peers and the teacher also listened and gave further feedback.

A further cycle was followed for three-syllable and longer words, focusing particularly on the sounds of the unstressed syllables, using the Cambridge online dictionary to check. This was followed by organising words according to their stress patterns and then pair work in which the participants said the words to each other and gave feedback, as did the teacher. They then put the words in sentences and recorded them as with the two-syllable words. This was followed by a role play involving making

a decision about giving a bank loan. This role play was set up to incorporate many of the words practised in the earlier lessons.

A final cycle involved the use of primary and secondary stress, with a special focus on the stress patterns commonly occurring with various suffixes.

Qualitative results

What participants said about the differences between English and other languages

The students' replies below (taken verbatim from the feedback forms) show that they had become much more aware of the nature of stress and the differences in different languages:

- Feng In Chinese we have kind of frozen stress for each word which is not like in English where we can't pronounce a word if we haven't heard it before. In Japanese it's more like change the wave of the sound.
- Junjie Chinese always use stress emphasis the sentence. English always use stress for understanding.
- Meimei Compare English with Chinese most English words have more than two syllables but there is only one syllable in each word in Chinese.
- Okjim [In Korean] we don't have stress in single word, instead we have intonation in sentence. Also, we pronounce the words exactly as they are written. People can understand without stress.
- Gracia Unlike Spanish, in English you don't have rules to put stress in words. In Spanish you use the *tilde* which tells you to put the stress in this part of the word.
- Tamiko When I hear English I identify a different number of syllables from English and other language speakers because my mother tongue is Japanese. In Japanese we pronounce only vowels and consonants and I don't pay attention to stress in Japanese therefore I heard English in different way.
- Sakura English stress is required to have accent, stress, intonation, rhythm very much. If we don't use it, especially native speakers can't understand the English. However, Japanese does not need to use strong accent, stress and rhythm. Only intonation is needed.

What participants said was the most difficult thing about understanding word stress

Some of the participants felt that stress in English was more complex than in their languages because of the length of words and the complexities of stressed and unstressed syllables. They also commented on the lack of guidance provided by the written word and the confusion around how the stress pattern changed according to the part of speech. A further difficulty was noted with loan words because it was necessary to get used to the correct English pronunciation:

- Feng In English we can't pronounce a word if we haven't heard it before, not like in Japanese in which all sound is from that sound chart.
- Junjie It's very difficult to understand the stress for same word (adjective-verb-noun).
- Meimei For me, the most difficult thing is pronouncing the long words because they have more stress and unstress.
- Okjim Even with the same spelling they pronounce differently and some words are silent and noun and verb have different stress. If the word has many syllables it's hard to find the stress. There is no exact pattern to pronunciation.
- Gracia I think the most difficult thing is pronunciation and spelling because English the way you write is different from the pronunciation.
- Tamiko The difficulty is where I should put the stress into words that change the position of the stress when they change, for example, 'economy' and 'economic'. Even though I understand the difference, I put the wrong stress when I say the sentence.
- Sakura In Japan, there are some Japanese English, e.g., intonation [*sic* – she is possibly referring to loan words]. It can be difficult to pronounce in English accent.

What participants said was the best way to improve

In commenting on how to improve, six of the seven respondents referred to the importance of practice (this also included things such as imitating, comparing and saying the words aloud). Five of them referred to listening activities, such as listening carefully to the media, and so forth. This suggests a fairly equal focus on production, through speaking practice, and reception, through listening. The value of the dictionary was mentioned by two participants as was the idea of learning patterns. One participant referred to getting help and feedback. These are their responses:

- Feng Listen carefully and study the pattern which might be helpful. I think watching the news is the fastest way to improve or watch an interesting movie over and over.
- Junjie Ask teacher and native speaker to help me, and correct my mistakes.
- Meimei I think the best way to improve is check with the dictionary and practise more.
- Okjim Listen a lot and practise a lot until you get used to it and try to pronounce correctly. Compare with model pronunciation, put the words in a sentence and read it.
- Gracia One way is use a dictionary but not always you have access to look at the word in the dictionary, so another way is to listen to the English speakers and try to imitate them. Listen to music, TV, radio, and practise them.
- Tamiko The best way to improve is to listen to the correct way to put stress and say the words aloud. Another way is to understand the pattern of English stress.
- Sakura Listen to native speakers' accent and dictate and imitate. Also, reading phonetic sign is helpful. Practise and listen well.

On the feedback form, participants were asked for other ideas. The following suggestions were made:

- Feng Do more listening and remember how they speak it.

Junjie The university builds pronunciation lessons for ESL students because word stress is difficult for us.

Feedback on the teaching

Feedback on the lessons was collected at the end of each of the three days of teaching. The following summary presents some of the main themes which emerged:

- The participants seemed to favour an analytical approach and saw the need for explicit instruction.
- They liked all aspects of the lessons.
- The cross-linguistic discussions helped them understand the abstract nature of phonology and the role of perception in pronunciation.
- The critical listening exercises and follow-up practice and feedback, both in the classroom and computer lab, were helpful.
- The role plays were enjoyable and a good chance for extra practice. Some noted that they still tended to get the stress wrong in such activities.
- The online dictionary, explanations and discovery of patterns with suffixes were all seen as useful.
- There was considerable concern with the mismatch between spelling and pronunciation.
- Overall, the participants felt the lessons had helped them to improve their pronunciation and they wanted more tuition.

The teacher/researcher also noted that in terms of the metalanguage used by the participants, they tended to refer to parts of words rather than syllables. They also used a range of words to describe stress, such as 'longer', 'change in tone', 'stronger', 'accent' and 'stress'. Interestingly, during some individual discussions it was observed that when participants were marking stress they were often focusing on the onset, the initial consonant of the syllable, rather than the vowel. These observations may warrant further investigation.

Quantitative results

The focus of this paper is on the qualitative outcomes of the study. However, the pre- and post speaking tests were also analysed to see how often the participants used stress correctly. Stress was considered to be incorrect if it was placed on the wrong syllable and/or if there was stress on the correct syllable but there was stress on all the other syllables as well. The data reported here are for the seven participants who attended all three days of pronunciation instruction. At this stage, these data have not been moderated so these results can be taken as indicative only. Nevertheless, as can be

seen from Figure 1, the results do suggest that the participants were correct in their belief that they had improved.

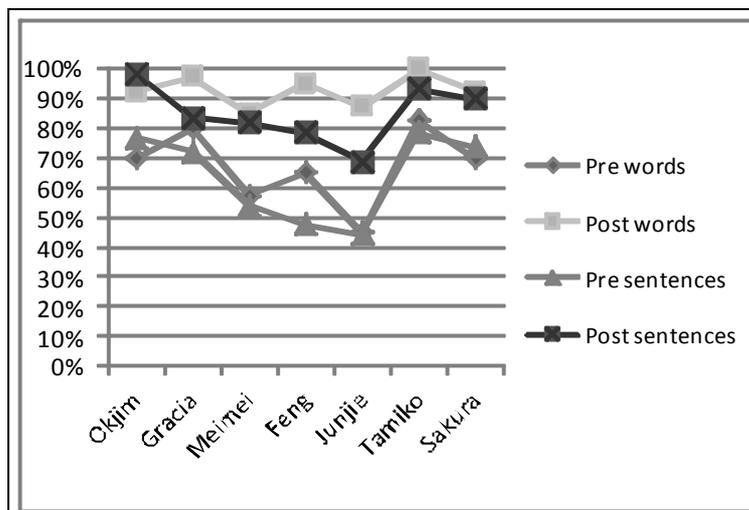


Figure 1 – Accuracy of production by participant (percentage correct): by test-type (words and words in sentences), pre- and post

Figure 2 shows the results for the group and makes it clear that there was improvement on both the tests of the words in isolation and in context. This was a reading task, so the degree to which this improvement has been transferred to extemporaneous speech is a matter for further investigation.

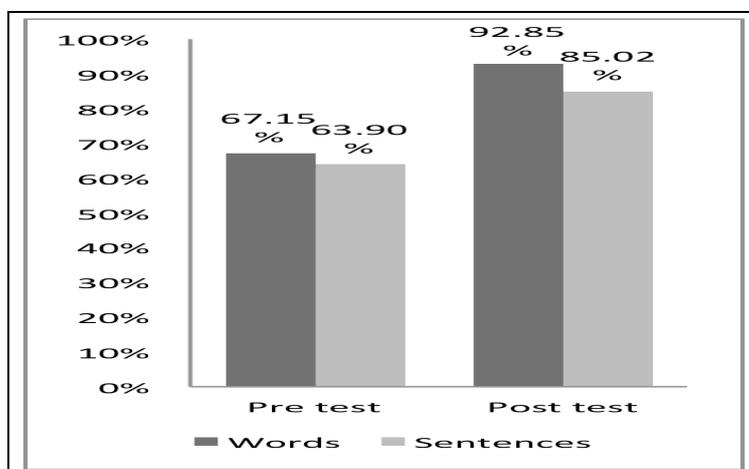


Figure 2 – Accuracy of production for the group as a whole (percentage correct): by test-type (words and words in sentences), pre- and post

Conclusions

It has been seen how both the teacher and learners can learn from focusing on each other's perceptions and how learners from different backgrounds slowly became aware that in their languages both stress and syllables were slightly different. In terms of cognitive grammar (Taylor, 2002), they were learning the differences in figure-ground organisation in order to understand the salient features

of the concept of word stress in different languages. For example, the Japanese participants realised how speakers of other languages might perceive a word such as the name 'Graeme'. They found it quite striking that for them it felt like four syllables whereas the English speaker felt that it was two syllables. The participants' comments on word stress and differences between different languages show the value of careful reflection and discussion with others. They became much more aware of the gap between their perceptions and those of target language speakers. Some noted that they still got the stress wrong during the role plays – needing 'automatization' in Taylor's terms (2002: 13) – but increasing learner awareness is still an important first step. These observations are in line with expectations from a cognitive linguistics perspective (Taylor, 2002) and reflect the practical application of cognitive theory (Fraser, 2010).

The concerns expressed regarding the mismatch between spelling and pronunciation remind us of the need to help learners to 'use their ears' and not be distracted by the written form (Fraser, 2006: 89). It is only natural to want to rely on the visual support provided by the written word as we have come to feel that this is more authoritative than the spoken word, a phenomenon described as literacy bias (Linell, 2005). The observation that participants appeared to be focusing on the onset, the initial consonant of the syllable, rather than the vowel raises some interesting questions. It may just be that the stress mark in the dictionary is shown there, but it may also be that they are really thinking of the consonant as being inseparable from the following vowel. This could be explained by having a first language which tends to think in C-V (consonant-vowel pattern) terms, such as Japanese and Chinese, rather than in terms of phonemes which seems to be more typical of English. This could be an observation worth pursuing in subsequent studies.

The present study focused on word stress in an attempt to extend the findings of earlier work that the right sort of explicit instruction led to improvements in learners' pronunciation of syllable codas (Couper, 2006, 2009, 2011). One key factor was socially constructed metalanguage (SCM) which starts with the learners' perceptions, their knowledge and experience, and aims to enable the cross-cultural communication required to be successful in explaining pronunciation and providing comprehensible feedback. The second main factor was the role of comparing and contrasting in forming new phonological concepts, as in critical listening (Fraser, 2009: 301). The qualitative evidence provided here certainly suggests that these ideas can be successfully applied to the teaching of word stress. Of course, this was very much an exploratory study, but taken in conjunction with earlier findings it does point the way to further productive lines of enquiry. In addition to a larger scale study, more work on understanding cross linguistic perceptual differences in relation to both word stress and other suprasegmental features would provide teachers with a greater understanding of how they can help their learners.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on both this study and earlier studies which have underscored just how important effective communication is in explicit pronunciation teaching (Couper, 2006, 2009, 2011):

- 1 Begin by focusing on learners' perceptions. Here, the main thing to remember is that concepts relating to the sounds of a language are specific to that language (Fraser, 2006, 2010). This means that the concept of word stress is different in different languages (see, e.g., Cutler, 2005; Gussenhoven, 2005) and accordingly we have to find ways of helping learners to understand how this concept works in English. I have found the best way to do this is to begin with each other's concepts and, through listening and reflection, come to common understandings. This led to the development of the idea of socially constructed metalanguage (Couper, 2011), finding a jointly understood way of talking about pronunciation. This approach is learner-centred in the sense that it endeavours to help learners analyse their own perceptions of word stress in English and notice how these are different from, for example, my perceptions. So, rather than negotiating the curriculum we are negotiating our common understandings of our own linguistic experiences. In other words, the starting point for pronunciation has to be with what the learners already understand and then one has to work with that rather than starting with the textbook explanation. It is in some ways as if the teacher has to be a translator of the textbook, which is not a criticism of the textbook, just a reminder to teachers that they have to adapt it to the needs of individual learners.
- 2 Compare and contrast perceptions. Helen Fraser in particular has argued that it is through comparisons between how speakers of different languages perceive sounds that we can help learners to become more aware of the need to think about pronunciation differently (Fraser, 2006, 2009, 2010). Here, critical listening comes to the fore in helping learners understand different ways of categorising sounds and learning where the boundaries are between those categories. When we have spent many years listening to sounds in a certain way we think of it as the only way of categorising them. So, to learn new ways, we have to understand the difference between the categories and the physical sounds. We have to get our ears to ignore the rest of our brain so that we can hear the difference. Teachers can help by making it clear that it is not the actual sound which is important, but the way the language categorises the sound. We have to use contrast to show what is and is not perceived as being in the target category, and we need to raise awareness of the gap and give feedback. Therefore, learners need to understand the salient differences: that there is a difference, precisely where it is, what it is and how to produce it.

Acoustic explanations, describing how sounds are physically produced, can give further support but on their own they are not enough because they are purely physical descriptions focusing on the actual sounds rather than their phonological interpretation. So, as teachers we need to consolidate what we have taught with a great deal of practice (especially involving listening, repeating, recording, comparing and getting feedback) to enable automatic use in fluent speech as concepts are not usually formed instantly, but rather they evolve slowly.

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Appendix A

Definitions of socially constructed metalanguage and critical listening

Socially constructed metalanguage (SCM) refers to the kind of metalanguage which is needed for effective metalinguistic communication. Such communication, as with all cross-cultural communication, relies on both parties having a common understanding of the concepts which are being discussed. SCM requires the teacher and the learners to work together to construct common ways of talking about these concepts. This involves the teacher in understanding how the learners interpret the sounds of the target language. One way the teacher can do this is by asking learners to describe the difference between two productions. Equally, it involves the learners in understanding how the sounds they produce are interpreted by the native speaker. It is social in the sense that it is owned by the class as a group and it refers to the social nature of language learning and the role of social construction of meaning. Once this metalanguage has been developed, it can be used throughout the course for quick and effective feedback. While the term SCM has been developed in relation to teaching pronunciation, it would just as easily apply to the use of explicit instruction in all aspects of language teaching.

Critical listening involves the learner in listening for the contrast between two productions: one which is acceptable and one which is not (Fraser, 2009: 301). Typically there should be a meaningful difference, and ideally it would involve comparing the learner's production when it is acceptable with when it is not. As with SCM, it involves helping learners to understand how the sounds are perceived by the native speaker. It involves a focus on developing speech perception, and learning where the boundaries are between the different phonological categories.

Appendix B

Overview of lessons on word stress

Day One: Part One (worksheet 1) Exploration of cross-linguistic concepts of syllables and stress
Introductions: Graeme, how many parts? Participants raise awareness of syllables in English
Kereama: How many parts in your names? Participants raise cross-linguistic awareness of differences in the concept of a syllable.

Graeme: describing the difference between the syllables. How prominence is realised: Participants raise awareness of word stress in English.
Kereama: describing the difference between the syllables. How prominence is realised: Participants raise cross-linguistic awareness of differences in the concept of word stress.
Day One: Part Two (worksheet 2/3): 2 syllable words
Listen to examples of correct/incorrect word stress (taken from diagnostics): Participants listen and compare, discuss how they hear the differences. Compare with other languages. Conclusion: 2 things – where and how
Reinforce listening with ordering and discussion: Participants organise words above in stress patterns. Notice fronting of nouns.
Speaking practice: Participants work in pairs to practise saying the words, giving each other feedback, teacher gives feedback
Practice in context: S's make up sentences, record, listen and compare (in computer lab). Teacher and peers give feedback
Day One: Part Three (worksheet 4-6): 3 syllable words
Listen to examples of correct/incorrect word stress (taken from diagnostics): Participants listen and compare, discuss how they hear the differences. Compare with other languages. Listen again for how the unstressed vowels sound. Listen through online dictionary. Conclusion: the stressed syllables are stronger, the vowels in the unstressed ones change and become very short.
Reinforce listening with ordering and discussion: Participants organise words above according to stress patterns.
Speaking practice: S's work in pairs to practise saying the words, giving each other feedback, teacher also provides feedback
Practice in context: Participants make up sentences (hwk for day 2) record, listen and compare. Teacher and peers give feedback
Day 2: (Part 3 cont'd)
Group discussion and feedback on recordings: Participants record, listen and compare. Teacher and peers give feedback
Role play: 2 groups choose the applicant: seemed to go well.
Part Four: Secondary stress: (worksheet 7/8)
Listen to examples of correct/incorrect word stress (taken from diagnostics): Participants listen and compare, discuss how they hear the differences. Compare with other languages. Listen again for how the unstressed vowels sound. Listen through online dictionary. Guess place of primary and secondary stress Conclusion: the stressed syllables are stronger, the vowels in the unstressed ones change and become very short, but some stay the same length and some have some stress.
Looking for patterns, controlled speaking practice: Listen to and record verb noun pairs, notice the patterns. (weak syllable between primary and secondary, primary before suffix, primary becomes secondary)
Further practice (examples from AWL): Participants make up sentences using words they have chosen, then record themselves.
Nouns and adjectives with other suffixes: Participants make up more pairs and record them.
Part Five: Bringing it all together (worksheet 9-10)
Day 3 begins with finishing off recording from day 2, teacher giving feedback.
Preparation for discussion topic: Auckland transport. Key words and sentences recorded on voice board to provide a model: Participants can record words and phrases from the model, then listen and compare, get feedback from teacher. Participants make up their own phrases, add other words they might want to use, record and listen, get feedback.
Group discussions: solve Auckland's transport problems.
Part Six: Group perceptions of word stress
Further group discussion: how you would explain word stress to someone else who has the same first language as you: First participants make notes about the differences between word stress in English and other languages, the most difficult thing about understanding English word stress and best ways to improve use of word stress.

Graeme Couper taught in Mexico, Germany, Turkey, Japan and Uruguay before returning home to New Zealand where he has been teaching at Auckland University of Technology since 1997. Recently he has been focusing on the teaching of pronunciation, the area in which he completed his PhD.

Graeme is particularly interested in research which has practical implications for the classroom, and in a wider sense for helping learners become empowered members of society.

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