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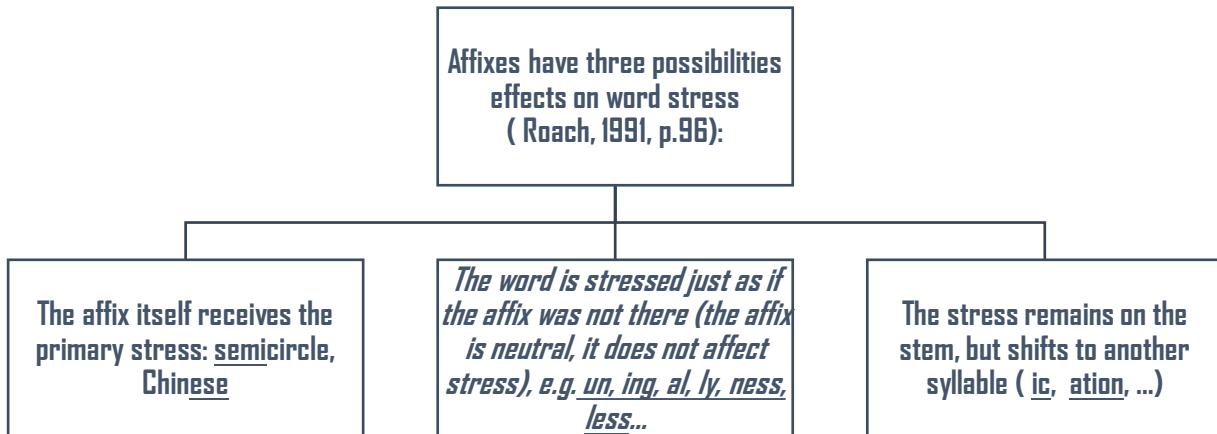
UNIT ONE: WORD STRESS

LESSON 04: STRESS PLACEMENT IN COMPLEX WORDS

Stress placement in **complex words is** made from the basic stem word with an addition of an affix

(prefix or suffix)

Affixes have three possibilities effects on word stress (Roach, 1991, p.96):

- **The affix itself receives the primary stress:** semicircle, Chinese
- *The word is stressed just as if the affix was not there (the affix is neutral, it does not affect stress), e.g. un, ing, al, ly, ness, less...*
- **The stress remains on the stem, but shifts to another syllable (** ic, ation, ...)

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1. **Stress assignment on prefixes (most of the prefixes do not receive stress)**

In the words with prefixes such as: **a- , ab- , an- , co- , de- , dis- , im- , in- , re- , un-**	the primary stress mostly does not fall on the prefix but on one of the stem syllables

(neutral prefixes)

Prefixes	Example words
a-	aside /əˈsaɪd/ , aback /əˈbæk/,
ab-	*abnormal* /æbˈnɔːməl/, *absolve* /əbˈzɒlv/
an-	*anachronis*m /əˈnækrənɪzm̩/, *another*/əˈnɒðə/
co-	*cooperative* /kəʊˈɒpr̩ətɪv/, *cohabit* /kəʊˈhæbɪt/
de-	*demotivate* /diːˈməʊtɪveɪt /, *decode* / diːˈkəʊd/
dis-	*dislike* /dɪsˈlaɪk/, di*sagree* /dɪsəˈgriː/, di*spatch* /dɪˈspætʃ/
im-	*impossible* /ɪmˈpɒsəbl̩/, *immortal* /ɪˈmɔːtl̩/, *imprison* /ɪmˈprɪzn̩/
in-	*intoxicate* /ɪnˈtɒksɪkeɪt/**,** *invaluable* /ɪnˈvæljʊbl̩/
re-	*resource* /rɪˈzɔːs/or_/rɪˈsɔːs/ , *reorder* /riːˈɔːdə/
un-	*uncertain* /ʌnˈsɜːtn/, *Unfaithful* /ʌnˈfeɪθfl/

Exceptions:
impotent **/**   **/**,
impulse **/**   **/**
impudent **/**   **/**,
infinite **/**   **/**

2. Stress assignment on suffixes

Unlike prefixes, suffixes can either be neutral, receive stress or
change stress placement from one syllable to another on the stem.

2.1. Neutral suffixes

The stress does not shift to another syllable when these suffixes are added to the stem
and they do not influence its pronunciation.

Suffixes that do not affect stress placement (neutral) are
able, *age,* **al,** *dom, ern, ful, ing, ist, less, ly, ment, ness, ship, some, wise, ish, ous, fy, y, hood...*

NEUTRAL SUFFIX	Words
able (adj)	considerable /kənˈsɪdərəbl/, unavoidable /ˌʌnəˈvɔɪdəbl/
age (adj)	marriage /ˈmærɪdʒ/, passage /ˈpæsɪdʒ/
al (adj/n)	actual /ˈæktʃʊəl/ refusal /rɪˈfjuːz(ə)l
dom (n)	kingdom /ˈkɪndəm/, wisdom /ˈwɪzdəm/
ern (adj)	Western /ˈwestn/, eastern /ˈiːstən/, northern /ˈnɔːðən/
ful (adj)	sorrowful /ˈsɒrəʊfl/, beautiful /ˈbjuːtɪfl/
ing (gerund)	educating /ˈedjʊkeɪtɪŋ/, interesting/ˈɪntrestɪŋ/,
ist (adj)	journalist /ˈdʒɜːnəlɪst/, physicist /ˈfɪzɪsɪst/,
less (adj)	bottomless /ˈbɒtəmləs/, defenseless /dɪˈfensləs/,
ly (adv)	apparently /əˈpærəntli/, rapidly /ˈræpɪdli/,
ment (n)	development /dɪˈveləpmənt/
ness (n)	tenderness /ˈtendənəs/, greatness /ˈɡreɪtnəs/,
ship (n)	censorship/ˈsensəʃɪp/, dictatorship/dɪkˈteɪtəʃɪp/
hood	Brotherhood, motherhood, neighborhood
some	Troublesome, awesome

Exceptions: admirable, advertisement, reference, preferable, resident. (Transcribe them)

2.2. Stress-carrying suffixes

The suffixes which attract the primary stress placement to the **final syllable** are also called *stress-attracting suffixes* or *stress-carrying suffixes*, which are summarized in the following rule:

Rule: the following suffixes carry the primary stress: **-aire, ee, eer, ese, -ette, esque, ique**

suffixes	Examples for Transcription
Aire	billionaire /bɪljəˈneə/, millionaire /mɪljəˈneə/
ee	absentee, /ˌæbs(ə)nˈtiː /referee /ˌrefəˈriː /
eer	engineer/ˌendʒɪˈnɪə/, volunteer /ˌvɒlənˈtɪə/
Ese	Vietnamese /ˌvɪetnəˈmiːz/, Portuguese /ˌpɔːtjʊˈɡiːz, -tʃʊ-/
ette	silhouette /ˌsɪluˈet/, marionette /ˌmarɪəˈnet/, launderette /lɔːnˈdret/, kitchenette
esque	romanesque/ˌrəʊməˈnesk/, picturesque /ˌpɪktʃəˈresk/
ique	critique /krɪˈtiːk/, technique /tekˈniːk/, unique /juːˈniːk/

Remark: 'ade' 'oo' and 'oon) can be either endings or suffixes; in both cases they receive stress, such as:

1. persuade /pəˈsweɪd/, dissuade/dɪˈsweɪd/,

2. kangaroo /ˌkæŋɡəˈruː/, shampoo /ʃæmˈpuː/

3. typhoon /taɪˈfuːn/, balloon /bəˈluːn/

Exceptions: Igloo /ˈɪɡluː/, Cuckoo /ˈkʊkuː/, decade /ˈdekeɪd/, comrade /ˈkɒmreɪd/

2.3. Stress-shifting suffixes

Some suffixes cause a change of the primary stress from one syllable to another one on the stem; it either moves to the **penultimate** syllable or **ante-penultimate syllable**.

2.3.1. Suffixes causing penultimate stress

When the following suffixes are added to the stem, the primary stress shifts to the last syllable of the stem (or the penultimate syllable, the syllable preceding the suffix)/;

Suffixes: eous, graphy, ial, ual, ian, ient, ic, ible, logy, ion, ious, ty ive, meter.

Suffix-ending		Examples for Transcription	
ic	Athletic /æθˈletɪk/,	economic /ˌiːkəˈnɒmɪk/, graphic/ˈɡræfɪk/,	geographic /ˌdʒiːəˈɡæfɪk/,
		philosophic/ˌfɪləˈsɒfɪk/, psychologic /ˌsaɪkəˈlɒdʒɪk/, specific /spəˈsɪfɪk/, scientific /ˌsaɪənˈtɪfɪk/,	
		syntactic sɪnˈtæktɪk/,	semiotics /ˌsemiˈɒtɪks/, theoretic /θɪəˈretɪk/, linguistics /lɪŋˈɡwɪstɪks/
ion	television / telɪˈvɪʒn/, revision /rɪˈvɪʒn/, elision /ɪˈlɪʒn/		
Tion	relation /rɪˈleɪʃn/, association /əˌsəʊsɪˈeɪʃn/		

Practice: Transcribe the words below:

Words	Transcription
eous:＿＿advantageous	
ial:＿＿commercial,financial	
ual:＿＿intellectual	
ient:＿＿efficient, sufficient	
ian:＿＿politician	
graphy:＿photography	
ible:＿＿flexible, impossible	
logy:＿＿psychology, physiology	
ion:＿＿perfection, interaction	
ious:＿＿injurious, furious	
ty:＿＿complexity,objectivity	
ive:＿＿attractive, collective	
ic:＿＿energetic, academic	
meter:＿parameter, kilometer	

Most common exceptions: Arabic/ˈærəbɪk/, arithmetic/əˈrɪθmətɪk/, arsenic/ˈɑːsənɪk/, Heretic /ˈherɪtɪk/, Catholic/ˈkæθəlɪk/, lunatic /ˈluːnətɪk/, politic/ˈpɒlɪtɪk/, rhetoric /ˈretərɪk/.

2.3.2. The verbal suffix –ish causing Penultimate stress:

This is a stress-shifting suffix found only in **verbs (**we can find the suffix –ish with adjectives, but it is a stress neutral suffix like in: Child – Childish /ˈtʃaɪldɪʃ/**)**

Remark: English **verbs** ending in –ish carry the stress on the penultimate syllable (before this suffix**)**

E.g: banish /ˈbænɪʃ/, nourish /ˈnʌrɪʃ/, polish /ˈpɒlɪʃ/, cherish /ˈtʃerɪʃ/, publish /ˈpʌblɪʃ/, abolish /əˈbɒlɪʃ/, distinguish/dɪˈstɪŋgwɪʃ/, demolish/dɪˈmɒlɪʃ/, establish/ɪˈstæblɪʃ/.

Exception: The only one exception to this rule is the verb ‘impoverish’ /ɪmˈpɒvərɪʃ/.

2.3.3. Verbal endings causing Antepenultimate stress: (2nd from the suffix or 3rd from the end)

Remark: English verbs of three syllable or more ending in –ate, –ise (ize) or –fy, are stressed on the antepenultimate syllable (3rd from the end).

Examples: –ate	Discriminate /dɪˈskrɪmɪneɪt/ Evaluate /ɪˈvæljueɪt/, Investigate /ɪnˈvestɪgeɪt/, Legitimate /ləˈdʒɪtɪmeɪt/, Participate /pɑːˈtɪsɪpeɪt/, Separate /ˈsepəreɪt/
–ise (ize)	Analyse /ˈænəlaɪz/ Paralyse /ˈpærəlaɪz/, Utilise /ˈjuːtɪlaɪz/
–fy	identify /aɪˈdentɪfaɪ/, nullify /ˈnʌlɪfaɪ/, qualify /ˈkwɒlɪfaɪ/

Practice :transcribe the following words and mark stress

Word	Transcription
operate,	
Exaggerate	
recognize	
criticize	
apologize	
associate	
aristocracy,	
democracy	
pharmacy	
ambiguity	
creativity	
credibility	
opportunity	
Necessity	
Reality	
Society	
Attitude	
Gratitude	