

Stress in English and in Hungarian

Level: B1+

Age: 12+

Time needed: 20 minutes

Materials needed: “Stress in English and in Hungarian” handout (“handout 1”), “Stress deafness test” handout (“handout 2”), loudspeakers, frontal check slideshow, smartphones for the students

Classroom organisation: frontal, individual, pair work

Procedure:

1. Inform the students that during the following activity they are going to learn about stress. It is advisable to point out the Hungarian equivalent of the word (‘hangsúly’) so that the students will not think of the other meaning of the word (‘stressz, nyomás’).
2. Tell the students that English and Hungarian are very different in terms of stress placement. Give the students the “Stress in English and Hungarian” handout and demonstrate the difference between stress placement by pronouncing the vocabulary items on the handout (H Japán – E Japan, H fantasztikus – E fantastic). Pronouncing the Hungarian words with the English stress patterns can facilitate the learners’ understanding of what stress is.
3. After having explained the concept of stress, make the students underline the stressed syllables in each of the words. (Do this frontally to ensure that the students do not just guess where the stress falls.)
4. Elicit, using the examples on the handout, that in Hungarian it is always the first syllable of words that is stressed, while in English word stress may fall on any syllable and it is part of knowing a vocabulary item where the stress falls in it.
5. To further demonstrate the difference in stress placement between English and Hungarian, play the following video to the students, in which Iain Lindsay speaks with English-accented Hungarian:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7B_v3zehgLc

You might want to ask the group to write down words in which they hear Lindsay pronounce non-initial stresses.

Key:

nagykövetként, látogatásaik, segítsége, beszélgethetem, eredményeként, kerülhettem, segített, tanárokkal

6. After making sure that everyone in the group has understood the concept of stress, tell them that they are going to participate in a challenge and take a stress deafness test to see who hears where the stress falls in English words.
7. Hand out the “Stress deafness test” sheets to the students and tell them to listen to the words and underline the syllable where they hear the stress. (It does not matter if the students do not know the words since this is not a vocabulary task.) There are two levels to go through: the first one is less difficult because it involves words containing the same vowel in all syllables so that students can concentrate on stress only and will not be misled by long vowels (which students often mistake for stress). Make sure the students understand that this task might be difficult for some learners and that you don’t expect them to produce perfect results.

Play each words twice from an online dictionary. For convenience, the links to each of the words are provided below – click on the words to open them in Macmillan dictionary.

Level 1

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Level 2

e ssay	bac te ri a	u nique	ho tel	a lly
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8. Check the answers to Level 2 (with the help of the frontal check slideshow) first because they are more likely to be problematic. You may want to ask how many points the students have scored, but do not forget to reassure them that it is all right if they do not hear where the stress is placed. (You may want to introduce the concept of stress deafness as well.)
9. Tell the students that it is not a problem if they cannot hear stresses because there is a reliable way of detecting stressed syllables.
10. Write the IPA transcription of a word from the exercise and circle the upper mark (denoting primary stress). Tell the students that this mark signals that the *following* syllable is stressed, and this is how they can detect stressed syllables. (You may want to explain that in some words they might find lower marks as well in the transcriptions, but they should not pay attention to those as the upper mark denotes the strongest stress.)

bæk⁰tɪəriə

11. Ask the students to take out their phones and in pairs check their answers in Level 1 using Macmillan dictionary.
12. Check answers frontally with the help of the slideshow.