

# Is there posttonic stress in English?

Péter Szigetvári

Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest  
szigetvari@elte.hu

OCP17



2020-02-05

is the red o stressed?

		EPD	LPD	K&K	M-W	cf	
robot	rəw <b>bot</b>	no	no	no	yes	Probert	prəw <b>bət</b>
autopsy	ó:t <b>opsij</b>	no	no	no	yes	leprosy	léprə <b>sij</b>
apricot	éjprə <b>kot</b>	no	no	yes	yes	advocate	ádvəkə <b>t</b>
monsoon	m <b>onsúwn</b>	no	yes	no	no	platoon	plə <b>túwn</b>
October	oktəw <b>bə</b>	no	no	no	no	opponent	əpəw <b>nənt</b>
novelette	novəl <b>ét</b>	yes	yes	yes	yes		

## why the confusion?

1. stress is a **segmental/melodic** phenomenon:  
full vs reduced vowel, flapping vs its absence, syncope, epenthesis, loss of **j**, loss of **w**, etc
2. but “stress” is also used for a **rhythmic/prosodic** phenomenon:  
involving feet, “stress” clash, “stress” shift, the tonic etc,  
let’s call this **accent** (like Vanderslice & Ladefoged 1972, Schane 1979, Gussenhoven 1991)
3. stress is a lexical property of certain vowels
4. the connection between stress and accent is only that accent usually (thought not always) falls on a vowel which is stressed

## assumptions about the vowel inventory of BrE

1. “centring diphthongs” have all monophthongized: NEAR *iː*, SQUARE *eː*, CURE *oː/uː/əː* (Cruttenden 2014)
2. FLEECE and GOOSE are not long monophthongs, but *ij* and *uw* (Sweet 1900)
3. “diphthongs” are VC (Trager & Bloch 1941)
4. STRUT is schwa (cf Fabricius 2007)
5. HAPPY-tensing (Wells 1982) has gone through:  
\**i*{#,V}: *happy alien hápij éjlijən*  
(also \**u*{#,V}: *usual value júwɜuwəl váljuw*)

# vowel categories in BrE: a phonotactic classification

## checked

KIT **i**, DRESS **e**, TRAP **a**, STRUT **ə**, LOT **o**, FOOT **u**  
only before a consonant

## “nonchecked”

NEAR **i:**, SQUARE **e:**, START **a:**, NURSE **ɜ:**, FORCE **ɔ:**, CURE **u:**  
before a consonant **and** word finally

## note 1

“diphthongs” are VC, vowels can’t occur next to each other at all  
(*neon* **níjɒn** ≈ *Nissan* **nísan** or *vowel* **váwəl** ≈ *vassal* **vásəl**)

## note 2

unstressed **ə** is nonchecked: it occurs word finally

# full vs reduced vowels

vowels that may occur unstressed: i ə u

KIT (*comic kómik*), STRUT (*comet kómət*), FOOT (*volume vóljum*)  
FLEECE (*volley vólij*), GOAT (*willow wíləw*), GOOSE (*value vóljuw*)

vowels that only occur stressed: e a o

DRESS e, TRAP a, LOT o

FACE ej, PRICE aj, MOUTH aw, CHOICE oj

long vowels only occur stressed (i: ə: u: e: a: o:)

*idea* ajdǐjə~ajdǐ:, *mature* mətʃúwə~mətʃú:,

*European* júwərəpǐjən~jú:rəpǐ:n,

but *India* índijə~índjə, \*índi:; *usual* júwzuwəl~júwzʷəl, \*júwzu:l

stress cannot be unambiguously guessed from vowel quality

*ugly* églǐj vs *agree* əgrǐj

*Kennedy* kénədǐj vs *Kentucky* kentəkǐj

*colander* kéləndə vs *Columbus* kələmbəs

## vowel(+glide) alternations in English

ablaut *sing* ~ *sang*, *get* ~ *got*

umlaut *full* ~ *fill*, *goose* *guws* ~ *geese* *gijs*, *man* ~ *men*

vowel shift *hide* *hajd* ~ *hid* *hid*, *tone* *tawn* ~ *tonic* *tónik*

vowel reduction *ironic* *ajrónik* ~ *irony* *ájɾənij*, *combine* *kəmbájn* ~  
*combination* *kómbinéjʃən*

these alternations are not phonological, they are historic relics

- ▶ they are not systematic  
*idi[ó]tic* ~ *idi[ə]t* vs *rob[ó]tic* ~ *rob[o]t*  
*t[əw]ne* ~ *t[o]nic* vs *ph[əw]to* ~ *ph[əw]tic*
- ▶ they are phonetically arbitrary (Kaye 1995)

# accent is mobile, stress is stable

accent moves. . .

Taiwán ~ Táiwān miracle

thirtéén ~ thírteen chápters

Piccadílly ~ Píccadilly Círcus

. . . but only to a stressed vowel

Madríd ~ Madríd súmmit

betwéen ~ betwéen chápters

cf

tájwón vs mædríd

θá:tíjn vs bətwíjn



## stress is segmental/melodic: no flapping before stress

cartoon kà:túwn vs cartoon network ká:tùwnnétwè:k

latex léjtèks vs latest léjræst

levitate lévitèjt vs lemmata léməṛə

Wotan véwtàn vs quota kwéwrə

habitat hábitàt vs palatal pálərəl

atoll átòl vs atom árəm

Minotaur májnətò: vs monitor mónirə

autism ó:tìzəm vs nautilus nó:riləs

magnetism mágnətìzəm vs magnetic màgnérik

manatee mánətìj vs vanity vánərij

ketone kíjtèwn vs mosquito mæskíjrəw

orotund órəwtènd vs orator órərə

# stress is segmental/melodic: syncope and epenthesis

## no syncope before stress

memory *mémərij* vs memorize *méməràjz*

radically *rádikəlij* vs radicalize *rádikəlàjz*

barbarous *bá:bəərəs* vs barbarism *bá:bərizəm*

family *fáməlij* vs jubilee *dʒúwbəlij*

summary *sémərij* vs bummaree *bémərìj*

## no epenthesis before stress

prince *prín<t>s* vs princess *prìnsés*

insolent *ín<t>sələnt* vs insect *ínsèkt*

conscious *kón<t>ʃəs* vs insure *inʃó:*

Gimson *gím<p>sən* vs Gimsonian *gìmsəwnijən*

nymphet *ním<p>fət~ním<p>fit* vs *nímfèt*

## stress is segmental/melodic: loss of [j] and [w]

[j]/palatality is lost after coronal C before stress

volume *vóljuw*m vs voluminous *vəlúw*minəs

Danube *dánjuw*b vs Danubian *dən(j)úw*bijən

congratulate *kəngrát*fələjt vs AmE gratuitous *grətúw*itəs

assiduous *əsíd*zwəs vs AmE assiduity *àsədúw*ətij

value *váljuw* vs absolute *ábsəl*ùwt

venue *vénjuw* vs revenue *révən(j)ùw*

statute *stát*fw vs AmE constitute *kónstít*ùwt

[w] is optionally retained before stress (and word finally)

stimulus *stímju*ləs vs stimulate *stímju(w)l*èjt

botulin *bót*fulin vs botulism *bót*fwlizəm

fortunate *fó:t*fwnət vs fortune *fó:t*fwn

# stress patterns of English: one- and two-vowel words (48%)

legend: w = unstressed, s = stressed,  $\acute{s}$  = accented

source: <http://cube.elte.hu>

## one-vowel words (10%)

w (.64%) and  $\acute{a}nd$  (these are clitics, not words)

$\acute{s}$  (99%) ant  $\acute{a}nt$

## two-vowel words (38%)

ww (0%)

$\acute{s}w$  (54%): atom  $\acute{a}t\grave{a}m$

w $\acute{s}$  (9%): amok  $\grave{a}m\acute{o}k$

$\acute{s}s$  (30%): atoll  $\acute{a}t\grave{o}l$

s $\acute{s}$  (7%): antique  $\grave{a}nt\acute{i}k$

## stress patterns of English: three-vowel words (30%)

www (0%)

1s: *śww* (28%): abacus *ábəkəs*

*wśw* (18%): abandon *əbándən*

wwś (0%)

2s: *śws* (20%): acrobat *ákrəbət*

*swś* (6%): arabesque *àrəbésk*

*śsw* (9%): ancestor *ánsètə*

*sśw* (11%): ambition *àmbífən*

*wśs* (2%): amortize *əmó:tàjz*

*wsś* (.07%): returnee *ritə:níj*

3s: *śss* (3%): adumbrate *ádəmbrèt*

*sśs* (1%): asbestos *àzbéstòs*

*ssś* (2%): addressee *àdrèsíj*

## so what?

- ▶ stress is binary, a vowel is either stressed or unstressed
- ▶ stress is a lexically specified property of vowels
- ▶ stress is stable, a lexically stressed vowel remains stressed, a lexically unstressed vowel remains unstressed
- ▶ accent is partly lexical (śs vs sś, śws vs swś, etc)
- ▶ accent is mobile (sś → śs / \_\_\_ś)

thank you for your attention

special thanks to

Karolina, Bartłomiej, & co, NKFI #119863, George Soros

slides available at

<http://seas3.elte.hu/szigetva/papers.html#ocp17>

