

What is Advanced Stress and Intonation?

Worksheet

Advanced stress and intonation involves using word stress, sentence stress, and pitch contours to create meaning and emotion. Speakers control which words matter most, how to emphasize, and whether their voice rises or falls—all critical to sounding native and being understood.

Questions

1. In 'I saw him YESTERDAY,' what does the stress on YESTERDAY imply?
A) He came earlier than expected
B) The meeting was recent
C) The contrast to another day
D) He didn't see anyone
2. How does a native English speaker signal a question without changing word order?
A) Lowering pitch
B) Raising pitch at the end (intonation)
C) Pausing
D) Speaking faster
3. What is emphasis achieved through stress in advanced English?
A) Speaking louder in all words
B) Selecting which words to emphasize to highlight importance
C) Speaking more slowly
D) Using complex vocabulary
4. 'Can I help you?' vs. 'Can I HELP you?' — what's the difference?
A) No difference
B) Same question, different stress emphasizes the word 'help,' implying genuine willingness
C) Second is a different language
D) No one speaks the second way
5. Compare: 'I DIDN'T say he stole the money' vs. 'I didn't SAY he stole the money.' Same words, different meaning?
6. What does rising intonation at the end of a statement signal?
7. Explain emphasis through sentence stress in 'She never said that.'
8. Define: What is sentence stress?
9. Define: How does intonation differ from word stress?
10. Define: What does falling intonation signal?

Answer Key

1. C) The contrast to another day — Stress on YESTERDAY implies contrast: I saw him yesterday, not today or another time.
2. B) Raising pitch at the end (intonation) — Rising intonation at the end signals a question: 'You're coming?' instead of 'You're coming.'
3. B) Selecting which words to emphasize to highlight importance — Emphasis is selective stress on key words to highlight their importance and shift meaning.
4. B) Same question, different stress emphasizes the word 'help,' implying genuine willingness — Stressing HELP emphasizes genuine willingness to assist, adding warmth and sincerity.
5. Sentence stress changes meaning entirely: 'I DIDN'T say it' = I didn't utter those words 'I didn't SAY it' = I said it, but someone else did Advanced stress lets you communicate precision without changing words.
6. Normally, statements ↘ fall in pitch. If you use ↗ rising at the end, it signals: uncertainty, a question, or seeking agreement. Example: 'You're coming tonight?' (rising) = are you? vs. 'You're coming.' (falling) = certain.
7. Different emphasis creates different meanings: 'SHE never said that' = Someone else did 'She NEVER said that' = It's absolutely false 'She never SAID that' = She implied it but didn't state it Native speakers use these stress patterns constantly.
8. Emphasizing particular words in a sentence to highlight importance and change meaning.
9. Word stress = which syllable is emphasized; intonation = the pitch pattern across the whole sentence.
10. Finality, certainty, and statements—the voice drops at the end.

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