

Degree 3, (English Honours)

Paper – Eight

Section – 2

Lecture- 1

Subject- **Linguistics**

Suprasegmental Features

Stress

Stress or accent is an important feature of English. Stress is generally defined as the degree of prominence a syllable has. If a word has more than one syllable, one of the syllables stands out from the rest. For example, in the word table/**teible**/, the first syllable **/tei/** is more prominent than the second syllable **/bl/**. Similarly, in the word committee/**k`miti**/ the second syllable **/mi/** is more prominent than others. Taking another example, in the word recommend /rek`mend/ the third syllable/ mend/ is more prominent than others. The syllable which is more prominent than the other is said to receive the accent. The relative prominence of a syllable is generally due to stress, that is greater breath force, but very often stress and pitch change work together make a syllable more prominent. Every good dictionary indicates the location of word stress, it is necessary to refer to the dictionary to find out the accentual pattern. Most Indian speakers of English put stress

on wrong syllables. Consequently, their punctuation becomes very much unintelligible to the native speaker of English.

The syllable on which there is a pitch change, is said to have the primary or tonic accent. Any other prominent syllable is said to have secondary accent. Some linguists identify three levels of stress, others four. This happens with American linguists by and large.

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