**Word Stress - Lesson Objectives**

1. Learners will hear and produce word stress in two-syllable words
2. Learners will hear and produce unstressed syllables with schwa.
3. Learners will retell fables with varying degrees of linguistic assistance

**Rationale**

This lesson introduces word stress and its associated vowel sound, schwa. The lesson uses two-syllable words only, some of which have a STRONG-weak pattern and other which have a weak-STRONG pattern. There is no attempt made to predict word stress by using suffixes and prefixes. Rather, the attention is on recognizing word stress as an important feature in English pronunciation and in beginning to use variations in syllable length to mark stress.

The second important reason for this lesson is to introduce the unstressed vowel schwa [ə]. Schwa is the most common vowel in English (33% of the total vowels in one study of speech). It is a sound that can be spelled with any vowel letter or group of letters. And it is almost completely associated with unstressed syllables. As such, it is really a rhythmic feature of English and is not a vowel just like all the other vowels. For this reason, schwa is introduced in relation to word stress and not in Lesson 3, which focused on vowel and consonant sounds.

Finally, this lesson tries to move speaking practice beyond the sentence level by using retellings of Aesop’s fables. The gist of these stories is well-known in many cultures. We use them to scaffold controlled to freer speaking practice, moving from a story that is retold from full sentences, to one that is retold by
reconstructing sentences from key words written out, to retelling from listening. While the first story is told with a written text only, the second and third ones make use of pictures to help students retell the story and move away from complete dependence on written texts.

Finally, the emphasis on moving pronunciation of word-stress beyond the word level by embedding normal words in sentences and discourse level texts is an example of using bridging activities to encourage pronunciation practice while concentrating on other aspects of language and communication.

**Outline of the lesson**

I. Warmup – Cloze listening

II. Word stress

   Exercise 1 – Counting the number of syllables

III. Syllables

   Exercise 2 – Listening and marking word stress

IV. Stressed Syllables

   Exercise 3 – Saying word stress with rubber bands

V. Unstressed syllables

   Exercise 4 – Listen for unstressed syllables (word-level)

   Exercise 5 – Listen for unstressed syllables (sentence-level)

   Exercise 6 – Retelling the fable from full sentences

VI. Communicative Practice

   Exercise 7 – Retelling the fable from listening, written words and pictures

   Exercise 8 – Retelling the fable from listening and pictures

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