

# **EFL Teacher challenges in suprasegmental stress**

**Dr. Emad Ahmed Mohamed Albaaly**  
**Lecturer of Curriculum and Instruction of English**  
**Suez Canal University**

## Abstract

Stress as a suprasegmental feature of pronunciation is important for clarity and accuracy of English. However, EFL teachers at public schools in Ismailia inconsistently lacked knowledge and production relating to this feature as evidenced at a workshop on Stress Teaching in Ismailia in 2015. This study aimed at intensively examining the situation of EFL teachers at the Educational Directorate of Ismailia in Egypt with respect to their knowledge and production of word stress, related types and patterns, and knowledge of other terms pertinent to the feature. The participants were ninety nine examinees working at public schools in Ismailia. The study also investigated fifteen EFL superiors' and nine TEFL professors' suggestions and recommendations for the situation. The study adopted the qualitative approach, so it held interviews with both teachers and experts. Findings revealed that both stress types and patterns (in addition to the terms of prosody and rhythm) were problematic to teachers. Moreover, findings also indicated that there were problems with stress uses. Expert suggestions and recommendations offered included pre-service preparation and in-service professional development.

**Key words:** challenges, stress, prosodic features, EFL teachers, Egypt

### الملخص باللغة العربية

إن التشديد كملح للنطق لأمر مهم من أجل وضوح ودقة اللغة الإنجليزية ، ومع ذلك ، فإن مدرسي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في المدارس العامة بالإسماعيلية عازتهم المعرفة وانتاج التشديد النطقي بصورة غير كاملة ، طبقا لما تأكد أثناء ورشة عمل تتعلق بتدريس التشديد والتي عقدت بالإسماعيلية في ٢٠١٥ ، لذا هدفت الدراسة الحالية إلى فحص مكثف لموقف المدرسين في مديرية الاسماعيلية التعليمية في مصر فيما يخص معرفتهم وانتاجهم للتشديد المرتبط بالكلمة وأنواعه ونماذجه ومعرفتهم بالمصطلحات الأخرى وثيقة الصلة بهذا المظهر النطقي ، و شملت الدراسة تسعا وتسعين مفحوصا يعملون في واحد وأربعين مدرسة من المدارس العامة بمديرية التربية والتعليم في محافظة الاسماعيلية ، كما استطلعت الدراسة آراء خمسة عشر من موجهي اللغة الانجليزية بالمحافظة وتسعة من أساتذة الجامعات المتخصصين في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية فيما يتعلق بمقترحاتهم وتوصياتهم حول الموقف ، تبنت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي فشملت مقابلات مع المدرسين والخبراء ، وأوضحت النتائج أن أنواع التشديد ونماذجه (بالإضافة إلى مصطلحات النغمة والإيقاع) كونت مشكلة للمشاركين ، كما أوضحت الدراسة أن التشديد (إضافة إلى النغمة والإيقاع) كان به مشاكل في الاستخدام أيضا ، كما أوضحت الدراسة أن مقترحات وتوصيات الخبراء قد تجسدت في الحاجة إلى اعداد معلمي ما قبل الخدمة والتنمية المهنية للمعلمين أثناء الخدمة.

## **Introduction**

The prosodic feature of stress helps in accurate pronunciation of languages with such a feature. In many of them, it refers to a phenomenon where there is a certain position in a word with a higher degree of “prominence” than the other positions (Spahr, 2016). In English, like the other features of pronunciation, i.e. intonation, rhythm, and timing, word stress stands as a pivotal prosodic feature (Saito, 2016) which applies to individual syllables and involves loudness or strength, length or duration, and higher pitch or prominence (Roach, 1983:73).

Word stress also has an effect on the vowel sounds in a word (Pierrel, 2010: 41-43). It can closely be linked to reduction of vowel sound in a syllable originally containing a strong vowel sound into either /ə/ or /ɪ/ in order to make it unstressed. The main types of word stress are unmarked tonic stress, contrastive stress, emphatic stress, and new information stress, according to Celik (2001). Sometimes, the term ‘stress’ is confused with the term ‘accent’ which may also refer to intonation and rhythm, and this causes an area for ambiguity (van der Hulst, 2014b; Spahr, 2016).

Two levels of stress are straightforwardly known as stressed and unstressed (Ladefoged, 1973). At the level of an utterance, content words are stressed while function words are not except when they have an important meaning to clarify within discourse. The last content word syllable stressed is normally called unmarked tonic syllable (Celik, 2001). Content words include nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs while function words include articles, prepositions, determiners, etc. Content words are usually polysyllabic while function words are not.

It is worth noting, however, that not all the syllables in a polysyllabic word obtain the same level of stress (Rusadze and Kipiani, 2015). A syllable in most words can receive primary, secondary, tertiary, or weak stress (Celik, 2001). To speakers of other languages than English, a primarily-stressed syllable is known as ‘the stressed syllable’ while the others, secondary,

tertiary, and weak, are recognized as unstressed syllables (Ibid.). This clarifies how knowledge is imperfect.

Stress is known as a suprasegmental feature of pronunciation, just as intonation and rhythm are, and is related to them. According to Noble (2014), it is important that learners focus on those features of pronunciation relating to larger units of speech such as stress, rhythm, intonation, and voice quality (well known as supra-segmental aspects) as well as on how the various sounds of English (known as segmental aspects) are uttered.

Intonation, as one correlate to stress, is used to convey the speaker's attitude and clarifies speech function (Nolan, 2006: 445). For example, it can help to signal turn-taking in conversation, or, conversely, show that the speaker in utmost flow and don't desire to be interrupted. Also, intonation meaning modifies the lexical meaning of a sentence (Liu, 2010; Celik, 2001). Intonation is generally seen as related to stress in that a tonic syllable is the stressed syllable in the last content word in an intonation unit. However, intonation is a difficult area for practitioners. Even, researchers up to date clarified that there was an inconsistent and incomplete pre-service teacher preparation among graduating bodies in this area (Albaaly, 2017).

Rhythm, in turn, means the patterns of companionship and combination of stressed and unstressed syllables or the relationship between those syllables in an utterance (Liu, 2010). It is seen as strongly related to stress in its own right.

Not only can misperception of stress be related to the term 'accent', as noted earlier, but also it sometimes comes from the presentation of stress in a word. For instance, the presentation of correlates of a word at phrase level, but then a reporting of a single-word at the lexical level is made (Gordon, 2014). Confusion also arises from the factors affecting stress such as utterance-level rhythm, functional consequences related to edge marking, or weight of syllable (van der Hulst, 2012). Other causes for confusion may lie in mother tongue interference, as will be detailed later in this study.

In the following sections, research to date was reviewed and reported. The purpose of this process was to show that there had not been much research reflecting teachers' practice of the prosodic feature of stress and that there

had been a gap for not covering teacher related knowledge and production in Egypt, thus finding rationale for the present study. Having reviewed literature carefully, it was only possible to classify it into three sections: (1) stress and intelligibility and accuracy of speech, (2) little ‘stress’ instruction and research but a big challenge, and (3) teaching techniques and considerations.

### **Stress and intelligibility and accuracy of speech**

Stress, and even other supra-segmental instruction, is regarded as helping with overall intelligibility of the language. Studies supporting such views are represented in Noble (2014), Heidari-Shahreza (2012), Saito (2012), Bohn and Hansen (2017), and Saito (2016), and Saito and Saito (2016).

Noble (2014: 4-8) drew much evidence that intelligibility of speech had become a goal of instruction. Intelligibility training was concerned much about producing correct stress on words at word level (Heidari-Shahreza, 2012). Word stress, together with the other prosodic features, leads to overall intelligibility and *accuracy* of speech (Bohn and Saito, 2012; Hansen, 2017; Saito, 2016).

### **Little ‘stress’ instruction and research but a big challenge**

Literature implied that the area of stress needs more practical efforts for more instruction and research for the encounter of the mother tongue challenge. Claims regarding little instruction are supported by the findings of Noble (2014). (Reasons for this may be found in the study of Foote et al. (2011) as to insufficient training.) Saito (2012), in turn, blames researchers for their humble contribution in the area.

According to (Noble, 2014, IV), many courses do not allot much time for the instruction of pronunciation. Foote et al. (2011) explains that few language teachers have sufficient hands-on training in the area of word-stress teaching. Saito (2012: 842) states that there is almost no research in the area of pronunciation to which word stress is undoubtedly pertaining.

A considerable number of studies make clear that the main challenge lies in mother tongue interference. Findings highlighting this challenge were represented in the studies of El Zarka (2013), Helal (2014), Heidari-Shahreza (2012), Domahs (2012), and Chen et al. (2016).

Research suggests that difficulties by learners come from their international mother languages. El Zarka (2013) relates Arab learners' mistakes in suprasegmental and segmental pronunciation to the way they use their native Arabic tongue. Helal (2014) attributes these mistakes (i.e. of Arab learners) to their local dialects. Heidari-Shahreza (2012: 521) states that Persian EFL learners misplace primary stress of English words causing a problem to intelligibility of speech due to their Persian tongue.

Domahs (2012) declares that for the Turkish Language, the aspect related to mother tongue interference is unique. The study explains that Turkish most of the time places stress on the final syllable of a word, thus affecting stress patterns of English words when produced.

According to Chen et al. (2016), a majority of Chinese learners, influenced by their mother tongue, do not follow the rules of stress patterns of English words. The researchers describe that the students do it randomly and put stress on any syllable in the word, resulting in the definite change of meaning.

### **Teaching techniques and considerations**

New non-traditional and traditional interventions to overcome the aforementioned causes as to the area of stress have been attempted. Non-traditional techniques are related to the studies of Heidari-Shahreza (2012), Gill (2013), Soon et al. (2017), Olson (2014), Jesse et al. (2017), Wipple et al. (2017), Noble (2014), and Chang et al (2014) while traditional techniques can be attributed to Saito and Saito (2016), Saito (2016), Chen et al. (2016), Amer and Amer (2011), Ellis (2012), and Cooper (2012).

Heidari-Shahreza (2012:521) tested the impact of a musically-simulated pattern on improving stress at word-level. The study used the technique for teaching four stress patterns in two to three syllable words. His experimental group (i.e. of elementary level adults) outperformed the control one, especially on two-syllable words.

Gill (2013) observed a group of ten English as a Foreign Language students in order to identify the effects of drama on the oral skills of English including using proper word stress patterns. Results show initial introduction of the technique did not cause an effect while at later stages a positive one was obtained. It must here be noted that Gill's (2013) study did not focus merely on stress.

Soon et al. (2017: 24) used an oral production instructional technology support in order to improve Chinese learners' oral pronunciation accuracy. The study utilized a 'pinyin text to speech system' in order to attain this purpose. The researchers reached the conclusion that the 'system' helped in students gaining pronunciation accuracy of their oral production. The study also revealed that particularly low level learners benefitted most compared to the learners at the intermediate and advanced levels. (However, it might be argued that this study rather focused on 'sound' production, and that stress was not the only focus.) Moreover, Olson (2014: 47) found out that the 'use of automatic speech recognition software' provided learners with instant feedback regarding their pronunciation. (Again, it is argued that Olson's study rather focused on sound production and stress instruction was not the sole purpose.)

Jesse et al. (2017) made use of an eye-tracking technique to explore whether listeners used suprasegmental information about lexical stress to accelerate the recognition of spoken words. The study revealed that a shorter time regarding speaking a word was attained if information about stress of the target word with competitor ones had been known in advance. It is noteworthy that this study suggests that if suprasegmental information about a word is added then, it makes it faster to reach the target word and avoid similar ones which have other background information. Here, this clarifies

the role of learner knowledge of stress patterns to speed up time of targeted, spoken words.

Wipple et al. (2017) found out that Syllable Circles representative of interactive visuals for demonstrating prominence as a feature for word stress in words or phrases were useful for both learners and teachers in computer-aided instruction of English. They could improve the learners' recognition of prominence, or stress generally. The study found that interactive visuals of Syllable Circles made easier learners' recognition of prominence.

Towards the same direction, Noble (2014) researched suprasegmental instruction with Web 2.0 tool, VoiceThread, and Covert Rehearsal Model strategy within a mixed language background classroom. Noble (Ibid.) found that it was possible for students to learn suprasegmental targets and to learn these targets through direct instruction in classroom. The study argued that despite the increasing research on suprasegmental instruction, a little number of language learners received direct instruction of suprasegmentals (p.49). It is noteworthy that Noble's study (2014) was of multiple goals of which stress was only one, as suprasegmentals she targeted included intonation, rhythm, pausing, and timing.

Chang et al. (2014) investigated the effects of a gesture-based as a learning system for learning the patterns of word stress in English. The study adopted visual-based and gesture-based systems in order to compare the effects of gestures or bar graphs on the word stress patterns in a sequence of learning activities. Results indicated that the effect of visual-based system was equal to that of the gesture-based learning system on learning word stress patterns. However, further analysis within the study was in favour of gesture-based learning which led to enhanced performance on stress patterns of new words for learners with low performance, while the use of visual learning led to regressed performance.

Saito and Saito (2016) explored the effects of suprasegmental-based instruction for improving word stress among other aspects such as rhythm, and intonation of Japanese learners. The findings were positive for direct



instruction, for all learners including beginners. Saito (2016) argued that direct instruction of segmental, suprasegmental, and temporal qualities of the oral ability of Second Language students had the potential to make some difference in improving students' related abilities. The study depicted that more benefits could be added outside the boundaries of school syllabi.

Chen et al. (2016) recommends that although students' listening to a cassette or a teacher and subsequent repetition might help in imitation of word rhythm (i.e. emanating from stressed syllables of content words), teachers are encouraged to determine problems and then find specific ways to solve them.

It is worth mentioning that most of the above-mentioned studies had other focuses than stress. Their targets were suprasegmentals, not merely stress. This means stress as a feature was not the only focus.

In a study by Amer and Amer (2011) on Palestinian university students receiving three weeks' explicit instruction on the rules for word stress. Pre- and post-test results indicated that there was a correlation between the method and the rules of word stress and students performance in a related assignment. Ellis (2012) found that corrective feedback and recasts could improve learners' learning of word stress.

Literature have drawn a number of teaching considerations for teachers to take into account while teaching stress. Many suggestions and recommendations have been offered, e.g. de Wolf (2017), Muller (2016), Rossiter et al (2016), Li et al. (2015), and Cooper (2011; 2012). de Wolf (2017) reached the conclusion that oral fluency, including the ability to use proper word stress and stress patterns, was much more affected by factors existing outside school than by direct teaching of the oral skills.

Muller (2016) suggested that online corpora was useful as references for language learners as for vocabulary learning, including word stress, as compared with electronic dictionaries. The study had a sample of Japanese learners at a basic level of proficiency of English as a foreign language.

Results showed that online corpora had a marginally more positive effect on learners' proficiency than when they used online dictionary. Here, it must be noted that the study focused on other aspects relating to vocabulary learning such as spelling

Li et al. (2015:171) clarified that the younger a learner knew and practises stress, the more native-like they could be later in their lives. They declared that systems within a language could have influence on the learning of similar systems in another language. Accordingly, languages with similar lexical stress patterns, e.g. English and Spanish, made it easier for their learners to learn stress in one another, dissimilar to languages which had different linguistic systems, e.g. English and Chinese (Ibid.).

Based on the concept of language transfer stressed by Li et al. (Ibid.) discussed above, a study conducted by them showed that both early and late Chinese learners of EFL did not show knowledge of stress patterns of English, nor did they place stress properly on mock English words, as Chinese did not incorporate a similar stress set of rules.

Cooper (2011; 2012) further advises that working teachers endeavouring to achieve better results in teaching word-stress should take into consideration learners' background. For instance, teachers should (Ibid.: 11) start from what students already know about stress and build their new knowledge upon it.

In addition, the study (Ibid.) offers a set of recommendations for teachers. It encourages teachers to (1) make sure that both they and the learners are in line together as to producing and hearing the same sounds and syllables, (2) help learners to find the differences between their perceptions of the target language phonology and the perceptions of their native language, (3) do the same thing for production for accuracy purposes, and (4) allow students to practise, and give feedback, ensuring facilitating learners' previous learning. In a study quite similar to the present study as to purpose, Rossiter et al. (2016) investigated vocabulary knowledge (i.e. including word stress knowledge), beliefs, and practices of English as a second language teachers. They concluded that professional development of teachers as far as these areas are concerned should boost second language vocabulary teaching and

learning. This study of Rossiter et al. focused on teacher's all aspects related to vocabulary, not just stress.

Thus, it is seen that research to date makes clear that despite the fact that word stress helps in the intelligible and precise pronunciation of a word (Bohn and Hansen, 2017; Saito, 2016; Noble, 2014), it is presumed that the area is of confusion and is difficult to teachers (Cooper, 2012; Noble, 2014, Saito, 2016). Most research to date has not also focused on stress as a sole feature of pronunciation. It was also remarked that *no* research has addressed teachers' knowledge and production of prosodic stress in the Egyptian context.

What also instigated the administration of the present study was teachers' apparent ignorance of most word stress rules clear at a training workshop dedicated for stress teaching and attended by the researcher. Their number was thirty six teachers from different public primary, preparatory and secondary. The two-day workshop took place in Ismailia Official School for Girls in Ismailia City in 2015. *All* of teachers did know the majority of straightforward rules (i.e. as stated in Really Learn English.com, 2015) in governing the primary stress pattern of nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and verbs. For instance, they never knew where to place stress syllables in words ending in the suffixes *ment*, *ary*, *ory*, *ee*, *ify*, *ty*, *graphy*, *ious*, *ique*, *al*, and *-mental*. The case was witnessed and reported by four expert supervisors including the Inspector General, Mr. Alaa Tarboosh (2015).

The **aim of this paper**, then, was to have more insights into the situation of EFL teachers (i.e. at the Educational Directorates in Ismailia, Egypt) with respect to their knowledge and production of word stress, related types and patterns, and knowledge of related terms. Thus, the study attempted to answer the following **questions**:

1. What has the most recent research relating to word stress addressed so far? (Answered during the course of literature review.)
2. What is the present status quo of teachers knowledge of word stress and related types and patterns?
3. To what extent do teachers use proper word stress in their speech production?
4. To what extent do teachers focus on word stress while they are teaching pronunciation?

5. To what extent do teachers have knowledge of the terms (prosody, intonation, and rhythm) relating to word stress?
6. To what extent do teachers use such prosodic features relating to word stress as intonation and rhythm?
7. What are suggestions and recommendations in experts' views for addressing the situation?

## **Methods**

To achieve the aim of the study, the following methods were utilized:

### **Participants of the study**

The study examined of a group (n. 99) of EFL teachers. They were randomly selected out of seven educational directorates, presenting forty one schools in the governorate of Ismailia.

### **Approach of the study**

The study adopted the descriptive approach. This is obvious in the **Instruments of the study** and the **Results and discussion** sections as addressed below and later.

### **Instruments of the study**

#### **1. An interview with teachers**

An interview with ninety nine EFL teachers was designed by the researcher in order to explore the teachers' knowledge and production related to prosodic stress and other prosodic features relating to it. The interview took place at Ismailia Official School in Al-Marhala Al-Kamsa in January 2017.

Interview questions included six questions covering the scope and purpose of the study. The questions asked them to (1) define the term, term specifics, and other related terms, (2) to identify the extent to which they used correct word stress types and patterns in their speech, (3) to identify the extent to which they had been using related prosodic features such as intonation and rhythm (4) to state if they had been focusing on word stress while they were teaching pronunciation, (5) to give reasons for their answers to the fourth question if the answer is negative), and (6) to give their suggestions for addressing the situation and for sustaining a higher level of professional development.

It is worth noting that first question, in specific, asked the participating teachers to define ‘word stress, word stress types (unmarked tonic, contrastive, emphatic, and new information stresses) and patterns (primary, secondary, tertiary, and weak), and related terms (prosody, intonation, rhythm, pausing)’. The other questions focused on practical aspects.

The interview questions showed content validity, as four jurors specialized in Teaching English as a Foreign Language amended the questions for it and reached a consensus on its final form and content.

## **2. Interview with experts**

After the interview with the teachers, there was another one with EFL supervisors (n. 15) and TEFL professors (n. 5) and lecturers (n. 4). The purpose was to brief them on the teachers’ situation regarding knowledge and practice of word stress and to request their views for addressing the imperfect situation. The interview with supervisors took place at the same school where the first interview was made in January 2017 and the one with the professors and lecturers at the Faculty of Education in Ismailia in March 2017. The question embedded requesting their suggestions and recommendations for improving the prosodic feature of teacher word stress in terms of knowledge and practice. For validity purposes, three jurors of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) addressed earlier agreed on the question of the interview without change of content.

## **Data collection**

Both interviews were held before the beginning of workshop on ‘suprasegmentals’ at the lecture theatre at Ismailia Official Secondary School near the end of the first term of the academic year 2016-2017. It is worth mentioning that answers to all interview questions were collected by two specialists: the researcher and a TEFL colleague. A consensus for the meanings of answers and results relating to both interviews was reached by the colleague and the researcher.

## **Results and discussion**

With respect to research question 1 (What has the most recent research relating to word stress addressed so far?), the literature reviewed and discussed earlier answers this question (see research categorized into the sections for ‘**Stress and intelligibility and accuracy of speech, Little**

**‘stress’ instruction and research but big challenge, and Teaching techniques and considerations’** discussed earlier).

Question 2 (What is the present status quo of teachers’ knowledge of word stress and related types and patterns?) can be answered by analyzing the data collected from the interview with EFL teachers. Interview answers covering this research point are those for the first three definitions under the first interview question (See first question of interview with the EFL teachers.). Answers for stress, stress types, and stress patterns were as follows: for the definition of stress, a majority of teachers (n. 67 out of 99) said, “It is prominence or strength of a part in a word.” while the rest, uncertain (as agreed with the other interviewer), produced no answer. This answer reflects how shallow and inaccurate the teachers’ response is. They referred to a ‘syllable’ by ‘part’. Also, as defined by roach (1973), the definition contains not only extra prominence and strength but also *duration* given to a certain syllable in a word.

When the teachers were asked to define primary stress, secondary stress, tertiary stress, and weak stress (i.e. stress patterns), a majority (n. 56) gave a near-correct answer when they defined primary stress. To cite their words, “the most prominence and strength allocated to a part of a word.” Again, this reflected how shallow their answer was.

When the teachers defined ‘secondary stress’, a considerable number (n. 64) failed to give a correct answer while the rest struggled, except one teacher who produced a near-correct answer. On their attempt to give a definition for both tertiary and weak stresses, they (the whole number, 99) failed.

The answer to this question concludes that there was a general failure and inaccuracies in the teachers’ knowledge of stress, stress types and patterns because the vast majority of them failed to give proper answers to the majority of definitions, which can be referred to their lack of preparation (i.e. as student teachers when they had been students at English departments), absence of professional training, and shallow personal development. Generally, this finding supports what Noble (2014) and Foote et al. (2011) stressed in terms of insufficient teacher efforts and is probably consistent with what El Zarka (2013) clarified as mother tongue effects.

The present study finding is in line with that of Rossiter et al. (2016) who investigated vocabulary knowledge (i.e. including word stress knowledge), beliefs, and practices of English as a second language teachers. The study concluded that professional development of teachers as far as these areas are concerned should boost second language vocabulary teaching and hence learning, as clarified earlier in the study. However, there is a difference between Rositta's and the present study in that the present study was dedicated to examining stress knowledge and production while Rositta's on other vocabulary aspects together with stress.

Question 3 (To what extent do teachers use proper word stress in their speech production?) was answered by obtaining an answer to the second interview question (see **Instruments of the study** – interview with teachers). A considerable minority (n. 14) expressed that they always used it while another considerable minority (n. 13) declared they used it to some extent. Other participant responses were divided into: "We use it often." (n.6) and no answer at all, (n. 66), indicating no proper use of the term in their speech at all in the majority of the sample.

Of the above answer, it was clear that most teachers did not use proper word stress all the time when they had been speaking, which was stunning. Again, this may have been due to their lack of preparation, absence of professional training, and shallow personal development. Generally, this finding supports what Cooper (2012), Noble (2014), and Saito (2016) expressed in terms of stress ambiguity. It was clear that teachers suffered from ambiguity in the area of stress and therefore they did not use it properly all the time.

The present study finding is in line with that of Rossiter et al. (2016) who investigated the practices of English as a Second Language teachers, as clarified earlier. The study concluded that professional development of teachers should boost second language vocabulary teaching, as clarified earlier in the study. However, again, there is a difference between Rositta et al.'s and the present study in that the present study, prosodic stress as a feature was the main focus while Rositta et al.'s focused on other features together with stress.

To answer question 4 (To what extent do teachers focus on word stress while they are teaching pronunciation?), answers (i.e. to teacher interview fourth question) addressing this point were analysed. A minority (n. 25) said

they usually had done that while a majority (n. 74) declared that they had not focused on word stress in teaching.

This answer is line with the findings of Noble (2014), Foote et al (2011)., and Saito (2016) declaring little stress instruction. Reasons for the present study finding appear to be due to textbooks not including exercises in this area and, again, teachers' lack of preparation and professional training.

This finding supports what Rositta et al. (2016) concluded in terms of teachers' need to professional development as far as practice was concerned. However, again, it is worth noting that the present study had prosodic stress as the main focus while Rossiter et al.'s had other focuses as well.

To answer question 5 'To what extent do teachers have knowledge of the terms (prosody, intonation, rhythm) relating to word stress?', answers to teacher interview part of the first question (see **Tool of the study** - interview with teachers) addressing this point were analysed. It was recorded that a majority of teachers (n. 56) were only able to give a near-correct, incomplete answer as to the definition of 'intonation'. (They said, "it is how to deliver a word; it is also movement of voice - falling or rising.") However, the whole number of participants failed to define the terms of prosody and rhythm.

This finding reflects and reveals how ignorant the teachers were especially in terms of knowledge of the terms prosody and rhythm.

The answer to this question concludes that there was a general weakness in the teachers level of knowledge, which, again, can be referred to their lack of preparation as student teachers (when they had been students at English departments), absence of professional training, and shallow personal development. Again, this finding supports what Noble (2014) found in terms of lack of training what Foote et al. (2011) stressed in terms of insufficient learning as students.

This present study finding conforms to what Rossiter et al. (2016) found in terms of teachers' incomplete knowledge. Rossiter et al. (2016), as clarified earlier, investigated vocabulary knowledge (i.e. including word stress knowledge). The study concluded that professional development of teachers should boost second language vocabulary teaching and hence learning, as mentioned earlier. However, once again, it is worth noting that the present



study had prosodic stress as the main focus while Rossiter et al.'s had other focuses as well.

To answer question 6 (To what extent do teachers use such prosodic features relating to word stress as intonation and rhythm?), answers to teacher interview third question addressing this point were analysed. Only eleven teachers said that they always did and five said they often did. The rest showed a negative response, indicating that never used the features.

This finding is consistent with that of Rusadze and Kipiani (2015) and Gilakjani (2013) who stated that teachers avoided teaching these two features as they were quite vague to them. Indeed, this appeared to be reasoning ground for the present study participants not focusing on these two important features of pronunciation.

Also, the above finding of the present study copes with that of Gilkani (2016) in terms of teachers not concentrating on prosodic features of pronunciation and therefore students needed more focus in this respect, accordingly.

To answer question 7 (What are suggestions and recommendations in experts' views for addressing the situation?), the second interview with both supervisors (n. 15) and professors and lecturers (n. 9) obtained answers which were analysed as follows:

All suggested proper pre-service teachers' preparation, and in-service training courses and workshops, laboratory exposure to language, native speaker interaction, authentic audio and video material including website audios, CDs, cassettes, etc.

The present study finding above is finally in line with that of Rossiter et al. (2016) who recommended that professional development of teachers as far as such areas as vocabulary knowledge (i.e. including word stress knowledge), beliefs, and practices of teachers were necessary. According to Rossiter et al.'s, professional development should boost second language vocabulary teaching and hence learning.

However, there are two differences here between Rositta's and the present study in that (1) the present study stress as a feature was the main focus while Rositta et al.'s focused on other features together with stress and (2)

the present study has offered detailed pre-service and in-service development.

### **Conclusions**

Teachers failed to give accurate and complete answers to all interview questions. Let alone they also failed to answer the majority of them. Straightforwardly, they all did not know stress types (unmarked tonic, emphatic, contrastive, and new information), and such stress patterns as tertiary and weak in addition to the terms of prosody and rhythm. Almost all of them failed to use features related to stress such as intonation and rhythm and gave inaccurate definitions of the stress, primary stress, and intonation. Likewise, a considerable majority did not use stress in their speech production and did not teach stress to their students, either.

Thus, it is concluded that the EFL teachers at public schools within the educational directorates in Ismailia need training, and the pre-service preparation at the English departments at colleges of education reconsidered in terms of prosodic feature of stress as well as the other features of intonation and rhythm. The teacher professional development should utilise training workshops, authentic exposure and interaction with language, and live situations with native speakers or instructors.

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