Ahi Evran Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi (AEÜSBED)
2026, Cilt 12, Sayı 1, Sayfa 124-143

A Contrastive Overview of Stress and Prominence Patterns in English and French

Ruhan GÜÇLÜ
Gaziantep University
ruhang@gantep.edu.tr
0000-0002-2748-8363

Araştırma Makalesi		DOI: 10.31592/aeusbed.1685065
Geliş Tarihi: 27.04.2025	Revize Tarihi: 31.01.2026	Kabul Tarihi: 23.03.2026

Atıf Bilgisi
Güçlü, R. (2026). A contrastive overview of stress and prominence patterns in English and French. *Ahi Evran Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi, 12*(1), 124-143.

ABSTRACT

Word stress is a significant topic in phonology because it shapes pronunciation, rhythm, and meaning differentiation. This study applies a contrastive analysis approach to lexical stress in English and phrase-final prominence patterns in French, providing a qualitative comparative account of the structural and functional differences between the two languages. It examines how stress interacts with morphology, grammatical category, and communicative intent in English, and how prominence in French functions primarily as phrase-final prominence. Data were compiled through purposive sampling from authoritative grammar books and phonological descriptions, selecting canonical examples that represent (i) stress levels and prominence patterns, (ii) suffix-driven stress tendencies, and (iii) noun–verb alternations and minimal pairs in English, alongside phrase-final stress patterns and syntactic phrasing effects in French. The analysis follows Krzeszowski's (1990) three-stage procedure (description, juxtaposition, and comparison), systematically mapping the two systems across matched dimensions such as stress domain (lexical and phrasal), variability/predictability, morphological sensitivity, and rhythmic organization within the broader prosodic system (stress-timed and syllable-timed). The findings indicate that lexical stress in English operates as a central organizing resource for grammatical distinction and information highlighting, whereas prominence in French contributes mainly to rhythmic regularity and boundary marking at the phrasal level. These differences have direct pedagogical implications for second-language pronunciation, particularly in preventing L1-based rhythm transfer. Future research could test these contrastive generalizations using corpus-based and acoustic analyses of spontaneous speech and examine learner production and perception to identify which stress and prominence patterns pose the greatest difficulty across proficiency levels.
Keywords: Stress, Prominence, English, French, Contrastive analysis.

İngilizce ve Fransızcada Vurgu ve Belirginlik Örüntülerine Karşılaştırmalı Bir Genel Bakış

ÖZ

Sözcük vurgusu, telaffuzu, ritmi ve anlam ayrımını şekillendirdiği için sesbilimde önemli bir konudur. Bu çalışma, karşılaştırmalı çözümleme yaklaşımını İngilizcedeki sözcüksel vurgu ile Fransızcadaki öbek-sonu belirginlik örüntülerine uygulayarak iki dil arasındaki yapısal ve işlevsel farkların nitel bir karşılaştırmalı çözümlemesini sunmaktadır. Çalışma, İngilizcede vurgunun biçimbilim, sözcük türü ve iletişimsel amaçla nasıl etkileşime girdiğini; Fransızcada ise belirginliğin ağırlıklı olarak öbek-sonunda sınır işaretleyici bir işlev gördüğünü incelemektedir. Çalışmanın veri seti, yetkin başvuru dilbilgileri ve sesbilimsel betimlemelerden amaçlı örnekleme yoluyla derlenmiştir. Bu kapsamda, (i) vurgu düzeyleri ve belirginlik örüntülerini, (ii) ek temelli vurgu eğilimlerini ve (iii) İngilizcede ad–eylem karşıtlıkları ile en küçük çiftleri; Fransızcada ise öbek-sonu vurgu örüntülerini ve sözdizimsel öbekleme etkilerini temsil eden kanonik örnekler seçilmiştir. Çözümleme, Krzeszowski'nin (1990) üç aşamalı yöntemini (betimleme, yan yana getirme ve karşılaştırma) izleyerek vurgu alanı (sözcüksel ve öbek düzeyi), değişkenlik/öngörülebilirlik, biçimbilime duyarlılık ve daha geniş bürünsel sistem içindeki ritmik örgütlenme (vurguya dayalı ritim ve heceye dayalı ritim) gibi eşleştirilmiş boyutlar üzerinden iki sistemi sistematik biçimde ortaya koymaktadır. Bulgular, İngilizcede sözcüksel vurgunun dilbilgisel ayrım ve bilgi vurgulamada merkezi bir düzenleyici kaynak olarak işlediğini; Fransızcada ise belirginliğin esas olarak ritmik düzenliliğe ve öbek düzeyinde sınır işaretlemeye katkıda bulunduğunu göstermektedir. Bu farklar, özellikle ana dil temelli ritim aktarımını önlemede, ikinci dil telaffuzu öğretimi açısından doğrudan pedagojik sonuçlar taşımaktadır. Gelecek araştırmalar, bu karşılaştırmalı genellemeleri doğal konuşmaya dayalı derlem ve akustik çözümlemelerle sınayabilir; ayrıca öğrenenlerin üretim ve algılarını inceleyerek yeterlik düzeylerine göre hangi vurgu ve belirginlik örüntülerinin öğrenenler açısından en fazla güçlük yarattığını belirleyebilir.
Anahtar Kelimeler: Vurgu, Belirginlik, İngilizce, Fransızca, Karşılaştırmalı çözümleme.

Introduction

Contrastive analysis is a linguistic method that compares languages systematically to establish cross-linguistic typologies. It functions not only as a descriptive tool but also as a framework for understanding structural differences between languages. It helps both teachers and learners develop effective strategies, address learning difficulties, and improve academic success. As an interlinguistic approach, it treats language both as a system and as a resource for learning. Its main aim is to predict and identify second-language difficulties influenced by the first language and to support the development of teaching and assessment tools (James, 1980). Therefore, contrastive analysis holds an important place between linguistic description and applied studies.

Traditionally, contrastive analysis is defined as a method for identifying similarities and differences between languages (Filipović, 1975, p. 13). It includes phonological, grammatical, and lexical comparisons and belongs to the broader field of contrastive linguistics. This field combines theoretical and descriptive linguistics: theory provides the framework, and description provides the data. Thus, the validity of comparisons depends on the theoretical model used (Krzeszowski, 1990). Within this framework, phonology, and especially stress and prominence, is a key area for examining cross-linguistic differences.

From a contrastive phonological perspective, stress is analyzed in terms of prominence, mainly primary and secondary stress. Languages differ in how they assign this prominence. Some languages have fixed patterns (e.g., initial stress in Czech and Finnish or final stress in Turkish), while others are more flexible (Cruttenden, 1997). English belongs to the flexible group, where stress depends on morphology, grammar, and meaning. French, however, is usually described as having fixed stress on the final syllable of the last lexical item in a phrase (Vaissière, 2002; Roach, 1991). Although this may seem like a simple positional difference, it actually reflects deeper structural differences in how prominence is organized.

Phonologically, stress refers to the relative prominence of a syllable, realized through duration, intensity, and pitch (Gordon, 2011). It plays an important role in word recognition and intelligibility and works together with segmental features (Underhill, 1994). Therefore, stress is not only a phonetic feature but also a core part of linguistic structure. It interacts with rhythm, syllable structure, and meaning. Languages also differ in how predictable stress is. In some, it is fixed; in others, it is variable. English allows flexible stress to signal grammatical and informational differences. French, however, does not use lexical stress in the same way. Instead, prominence appears at the phrase level as phrase-final prominence. This difference is essential for understanding the prosodic systems of the two languages.

Although prosody, rhythm, and intonation have been widely studied, lexical stress has received less attention from a contrastive perspective. Research on English and French has mostly focused on sentence-level prosody, leaving word-level stress less explored. This is important because lexical stress plays a key role in phonological structure, rhythm, and meaning in English. A major problem arises when stress is treated as directly comparable across languages. English uses lexical stress to mark word identity and meaning, whereas French uses prominence mainly at the phrase level. If this distinction is ignored, analyses may mix lexical and phrasal levels and lead to misleading conclusions.

This issue also has pedagogical consequences. In second-language learning, learners often transfer prosodic patterns from their first language. Learners of English may misuse lexical stress, while learners of French may overuse it instead of producing correct phrase-final prominence. These problems can reduce intelligibility and affect communication. Therefore, a clear contrastive explanation of lexical stress in English and phrase-final prominence in French is necessary. Based on this need, the present study offers a focused contrastive analysis of these features. It aims to go beyond surface comparison and examine how prominence functions in different structural domains. In this way, the study contributes to contrastive phonology and provides useful insights for pronunciation teaching.

Literature Review

Previous research on stress has examined many language pairs, such as English and Arabic (Betti & Ulaiwi, 2018), Singapore English and British English (Ling & Grabe, 1999), English and Kurdish (Abbas & Ahmad, 2012), English and Cairene Colloquial Arabic (Khalifa, 2017), and English and French (Frost, 2011). Most of these studies focus on sentence-level prosody, intonation, and rhythm rather than stress within individual words. As a result, lexical stress has rarely been treated as a central variable in contrastive analysis.

Studies on English and French have mainly focused on grammatical and discourse features, such as the present progressive (De Wit et al., 2013), question formation (Curry, 2021), subject–focus mapping (Lambrecht, 2010), and cognitive verbs (Fetzer & Johansson, 2010). Other research includes contrastive lexicology (Van Roey, 1990), causative constructions (Gilquin, 2015), reflexive verbs (Hafissatou, 2021), and causal connectives (Zufferey & Cartoni, 2012). Although these studies offer detailed insights into syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, they do not directly focus on lexical stress as a main area of comparison.

Research on the syntax–phonology interface highlights an important difference between English and French. Selkirk (1980) shows that English encodes prominence at the lexical level, while French organizes it at the phrasal level through post-lexical processes. This distinction helps separate lexical stress from phrase-final prominence. Perception studies support this view. Hallé et al. (1999) show that French listeners have difficulty perceiving certain English contrasts, suggesting that phonetic realization plays an important role in cross-linguistic perception. This means that prominence differences should be understood both phonologically and phonetically.

Recent studies in applied and developmental linguistics also show the importance of lexical stress. Research on bilingual children indicates that lexical development supports phonological awareness and literacy (Krenca et al., 2023). Similarly, studies on second-language processing show that incorrect stress and pausing can reduce comprehension and intelligibility (Coulange et al., 2024; Baek, 2024; Lee & Shin, 2024). Pedagogical and clinical studies also highlight the role of stress and prosody. Prosodic training improves learners' perception and production (Schwab & Dellwo, 2022), and clinical studies show that phonological structure is important for language processing and recovery (Masson-Trottier et al., 2024).

Overall, the literature shows a clear imbalance: while higher-level prosody has been widely studied, lexical stress has received limited attention in contrastive research. This study addresses this gap by focusing on lexical stress in English and phrase-final prominence in French.

Aim of the Study and Research Questions

This study provides a focused contrastive account of stress and prominence by distinguishing two domains of prominence: variable lexical stress in English and predominantly phrase-final demarcative prominence in French. Using canonical examples drawn from authoritative descriptions, it systematically compares the two systems across key dimensions, including stress domain, predictability, morphological sensitivity, and rhythmic organization. Accordingly, the study seeks to clarify how prominence functions differently across languages and to refine existing contrastive models of prosody. In line with this aim, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do stress and prominence patterns in English and French differ in terms of variability, predictability, and rhythmic organization?
2. How does lexical stress in English interact with morphology, grammatical category, and communicative intent, and how does this compare with phrase-final prominence in French?
3. What are the phonological and pedagogical implications of these differences for second-language pronunciation and instruction?

Methodology

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative contrastive design to examine how lexical stress in English and phrase-final prominence in French are organized and function in their prosodic systems. It follows a theory-driven, concept-oriented approach rather than an empirical one. The aim is not to measure stress acoustically or provide corpus-based frequencies, but to explain how stress works at the system level in each language. The focus is on morphology, grammatical categories, rhythm, and pedagogical relevance. In this sense, the study belongs to interpretive contrastive phonology, where the goal is to explain structural differences rather than quantify them.

Data and Sources

In this study, "data" includes two elements: (i) established descriptions of lexical stress in English and phrase-final prominence in French, and (ii) the typical examples used to illustrate these descriptions. The main sources for English are Brasart (2021), Gabilan (2016), and Swan (2005). These are supported by key phonological studies such as Roach (1991), Cruttenden (1997), Vaissière (2002), and Hirst (2000). These sources were chosen because they are reliable, pedagogically relevant, and provide clear and widely accepted examples. Since the study is based on established descriptions, it does not include recordings, experiments, surveys, or corpus data. Because the study is conceptual and contrastive, the dataset consists only of published descriptions and their examples. It relies on secondary sources and does not use primary empirical data. Therefore, "data" refers to structured linguistic knowledge rather than raw language use.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was document-based. The selected sources were examined to extract (a) clear statements about stress patterns and (b) the examples used to illustrate them. This ensures that the data is transparent and traceable. Each example was recorded with its source and categorized according to the feature it represents (e.g., stress level, suffix effects, noun–verb alternation, minimal pairs, phrase-final prominence). Additional phonological studies were used to ensure consistent terminology across the two languages and to confirm that the descriptions reflect widely accepted views. This supports both reliability and comparability.

Selection of Data

Examples were selected through purposive sampling. The aim was not to list all patterns but to choose representative and contrastively relevant cases. An example was included if it met at least one of these criteria: (1) it is commonly used in authoritative sources, (2) it clearly shows key differences between English and French (e.g., variability vs. predictability, lexical vs. phrasal), or (3) it is pedagogically important and frequently used in teaching. This ensures that the dataset is both theoretically meaningful and useful for teaching. Based on this selection, the tables in the Findings section present structured summaries of common patterns, such as affix-driven stress, noun–verb alternations, minimal pairs, and phrase-final prominence in French. These tables are not a corpus but organized representations of patterns reported in the literature.

Analytical Instrument and Procedure

To operationalize the comparison, the analysis uses a fixed set of descriptive categories. Each example is examined using the same criteria: stress level (if applicable), stress domain (lexical vs. phrasal), morphological conditioning (e.g., base–affix relations, suffix effects), and functional role (e.g., grammatical distinction, information highlighting). This ensures a systematic and transparent comparison.

The analysis follows Krzeszowski's (1990) three-stage model. In the description stage, stress patterns are outlined separately. For English, this includes stress levels, morphological effects, and grammatical contrasts. For French, the focus is on phrase-final stress, the limited role of secondary stress, and its link to syntactic phrasing (Hirst, 2000; Vaissière, 2002). In the juxtaposition stage, the two languages are compared across shared dimensions such as stress domain, variability, morphological sensitivity, meaning differentiation, and rhythm. In the comparison stage, these differences are interpreted in terms of phonological structure and second-language learning. Thus, the analysis proceeds step by step from description to comparison.

To ensure consistency, the same categories are used throughout. Generalizations are based on established descriptions and, where possible, supported by more than one source. This avoids reliance on isolated examples. The findings are also in line with previous corpus-based and acoustic studies on English and French prosody (e.g., Coulange et al., 2024; Frost, 2011; Hallé et al., 1999; Vander Klok et al., 2018). However, contrastive analysis has some limitations. First, it relies on standard descriptions and does not account for dialectal variation or performance differences. Second, the study does not use original acoustic data or large corpora, so it reflects general tendencies rather than statistical patterns. Third, it does not assume a direct link between structural differences and learner errors but highlights potential areas of difficulty. This allows for a cautious interpretation.

Finally, this study is theoretical and descriptive. It does not generate new data but interprets existing phonological accounts within a contrastive framework. Its conclusions are therefore limited to the selected sources and examples. The findings represent a system-level comparison rather than experimentally tested results. Nevertheless, the study clarifies key differences between the two languages and provides a basis for future research.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the results of the contrastive analysis of lexical stress in English and phrase-final prominence in French. Instead of listing examples individually, it focuses on how these patterns function in each language and how they differ systematically.

Following Krzeszowski's (1990) framework, the discussion is organized in three stages. First, the description stage outlines the main rules of lexical stress in English and phrase-final prominence in French. Second, the juxtaposition stage compares these patterns to identify similarities and differences. Finally, the comparison stage interprets these differences in terms of phonological structure, rhythm, and pedagogical implications. Throughout the section, the findings are linked to the research questions. The analysis shows how stress and prominence differ in predictability and flexibility, how they interact with morphology and grammar, and how they shape rhythm and meaning. Special attention is given to the role of stress in grammatical distinction in English, compared to its mainly boundary-marking role in French.

The discussion also places stress within the broader prosodic system, showing that English and French organize prominence in fundamentally different ways. In other words, the analysis goes beyond surface patterns and explains how each language structures prominence at different levels. These differences are also considered in relation to second-language learning, especially pronunciation difficulties caused by cross-linguistic transfer. The following subsections present the findings in a structured way, starting with English lexical stress, then French stress patterns, and finally a systematic comparison.

English Lexical Stress Placement

Lexical stress levels and prominence in English

English lexical stress is complex and influenced by several interacting rules. It cannot be reduced to a single fixed pattern. As noted by Brasart (2021), base morphemes usually receive more

stress than affixes, and stress placement helps identify word class. For example, nouns typically stress the first syllable (TAble), while verbs often stress the second (reLAX).

Gabilan (2016) states that English has three stress levels: primary, secondary, and tertiary. Primary stress is the strongest, secondary is weaker, and tertiary is the weakest. This shows that stress operates hierarchically rather than as a simple strong–weak contrast. These levels can be seen in sentences such as "I RAN all the WAY to the STAtion," where the main stress is on sta- (station), secondary stress is on ran, and tertiary stress is on way. This example shows that stress placement can vary within a sentence depending on emphasis. In other words, stress distribution is dynamic and sensitive to both rhythm and meaning. The speaker's intention also affects stress placement. As Swan (2005) explains, stress functions not only as a phonological feature but also as a way of highlighting meaning. For example, in "JOHN deCIDEd to RUN all the WAY to the STAtion," the primary stress shifts to "run," while secondary stresses appear on "John," "cide," "way," and "sta." This shift changes how information is structured and interpreted. Such flexibility is less common in French, where stress is more fixed and linked to syntactic structure. English rhythm is also shaped by tone units. A typical unit includes a pre-head (unstressed syllables), a head (from the first stressed syllable to the nucleus), and a tail. The nucleus is the most prominent syllable. For example, in the utterance the man bought a new clock, the segment a new may form the head, while clock functions as the nucleus. This shows how prominence and stress interact with rhythmic timing.

Overall, these examples show that English organizes prominence at the lexical level and allows stress to shift with communicative intent. This flexibility highlights the central role of lexical stress in shaping both meaning and rhythm.

Morphological conditioning of lexical stress in English

Brasart (2021) identifies several affixes that influence stress placement in English. These affixes often determine where stress falls within a word. In other words, stress placement is closely linked to morphological structure rather than being random. For example, stress usually falls on the syllable before certain suffixes, while in some cases it falls directly on the suffix itself. Importantly, these patterns are systematic rather than accidental. Stress placement follows regular morphological patterns that speakers use for word recognition and interpretation. This also shows that speakers are sensitive to these patterns, even if they are not consciously aware of them. In this sense, stress functions as a morphologically conditioned cue rather than just a phonetic feature. The following table summarizes the most common suffix-based stress patterns observed in the data.

Table 1
Stress Patterns Associated with Common Suffixes in English

Common Suffix	Stress Rule	Example Word	Stressed Syllable
-ic	Stress on penultimate syllable	graphic	GRAPH-ic
-sion, -tion	Stress on penultimate syllable	conversion	con-VER-sion
-ee, -eer	Stress on the suffix itself	employee	employ-EE
-ese	Stress on the suffix itself	Japanese	Jap-a-nESE

Table 1 indicates that suffixes such as "-ic" and "-sion" typically place stress on the penultimate syllable, while suffixes like "-ee" and "-ese" attract stress to the suffix itself. This shows that suffix type plays a predictable role in stress placement and highlights the link between affixation and syllabic stress. In general, stress tends to occur on the syllable before certain suffixes, confirming its importance in word formation. This morphology-sensitive behavior contrasts with French, where prominence is assigned at the phrasal level rather than within the word and is independent of derivational morphology. This supports the view that English stress operates within the lexical domain, while French prominence operates at a higher structural level. However, some lexicalized

forms show deviations, suggesting that morphological conditioning interacts with lexical storage rather than functioning as a strict rule. Because stress in English is both lexically contrastive and morphology-driven, it also plays a key role in rhythmic organization. In stress-timed languages like English, stressed syllables tend to recur at regular intervals (isochrony), regardless of the number of unstressed syllables. To maintain this rhythm, unstressed elements are often reduced. For example, grammatical words may be reduced (boys 'n' girls, cup of tea → cuppa tea), and some words may lose internal vowels (camera → /ˈkæmrə/) (Crystal, 1997). These reductions show that stress interacts with rhythm not only at the word level but also across larger units of speech.

Grammatical variability in English stress placement

According to Brasart (2021), stress placement in English is systematically linked to grammatical category, especially in noun–verb alternations. This shows that stress is not only a phonological feature but also a marker of grammatical function. In many cases, nouns receive stress on the first syllable, while verbs are stressed on the second. This regular pattern indicates that lexical stress functions as a grammatical cue, signalling syntactic role without any segmental change. In other words, the same sequence of sounds can express different grammatical meanings depending only on stress placement. An illustrative example is presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Stress Placement Based on Word Form

Word Form	**Example**	**Stress Placement**	Grammatical Function
Noun	RECORD	First syllable	Nominal reference
Verb	reCORD	Second syllable	Verbal action/process

Table 2 shows that stress placement in English systematically distinguishes grammatical categories without any change in segmental structure. This stress-based alternation allows speakers to identify word class through prosody alone, demonstrating the high functional load of lexical stress. It also highlights how deeply stress is integrated into the grammatical system of English. In contrast, French does not use stress to mark grammatical distinctions within words. Instead, it relies mainly on syntactic structure and word order. This difference reflects the contrast between a lexically organized stress system and a phrasally organized prominence system. This grammatical role of stress is also linked to the stress-timed rhythm of English, where prominence is unevenly distributed across syllables, unlike in syllable-timed languages such as French. As a result, stress contributes not only to grammatical distinction but also to the overall rhythmic pattern of the language.

Lexical stress as a meaning-distinguishing device: minimal pairs

Minimal pairs such as "present" (noun) and "present" (verb) show how stress influences both meaning and grammatical category. These pairs are among the clearest examples of how stress alone can carry meaning in English. In such cases, stress is the only feature distinguishing otherwise identical forms, making it a key resource for meaning differentiation. This contrast is illustrated by minimal pairs such as present (noun) and present (verb), as shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Stress in Minimal Pairs

Minimal Pair Word	**Noun (Stress)**	**Verb (Stress)**
Present	PRE-sent	pre-SENT
Contract	CON-tract	con-TRACT
Export	EX-port	ex-PORT

Table 3 shows that stress is crucial for distinguishing grammatical forms in minimal pairs. As Brasart (2021) notes, stress is a key indicator that helps listeners identify meaning without any change in segmental structure. In other words, stress alone can signal a shift in grammatical meaning. This

demonstrates the high functional load of lexical stress in English, where prosody can encode grammatical contrast. Recent experimental research supports this view. Ghosh and Levis (2021) show that incorrect stress placement affects listener perception and comprehensibility, depending on vowel quality and the direction of stress shift. This confirms that lexical stress functions as an active meaning-bearing cue rather than a redundant phonetic feature. In contrast, this effect is much weaker in French, where stress does not change according to grammatical differences within words. This highlights a key difference: English uses stress contrastively at the lexical level, whereas French does not. Minimal pairs clearly show that lexical stress in English has a meaning-distinguishing function, which is largely absent in French.

All in all, the findings indicate that English lexical stress is structurally embedded and interacts with morphology, grammatical category, and information structure. Stress therefore functions not as an isolated feature but as part of a broader system, an organizing principle rather than a superficial phonetic element. In this sense, the findings answer Research Questions 1 and 2 by showing that English lexical stress is variable, morphologically constrained, grammatically contrastive, and rhythmically central within a stress-timed system.

French Prominence Patterns

Phrase-final stress and the domain of prominence in French

French is generally described as having fixed stress placement, typically realized on the final syllable of the last lexical item within a prosodic phrase (Hirst, 2000). In this sense, stress is not assigned at the word level but emerges at the phrase level. Rather than serving a contrastive lexical function, stress in French mainly has a demarcative, phrase-level role. As a syllable-timed language, French is often perceived as having relatively even timing between syllables, known as isosyllabism. This contributes to its rhythmic regularity. Unlike English, where stress varies with word function, French follows a more stable pattern that applies to most words and phrases. This pattern can be seen in examples such as *Crois-tu que c'est bien?* ("Do you think it's all right?"), where the main stress falls on the final syllable of the last lexical item, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Stress Placement in French Phrases

Phrase	Stressed Syllable
Crois tu que c'est bien?	*bien*
C'est un bon garçon	*garçon*

Table 4 shows that in French, prominence is assigned at the phrasal level, with stress consistently placed on the final syllable of the last lexical item. This regularity makes stress placement in French highly predictable compared to English. In contrast, English allows stress to operate within the lexical domain, where its placement can vary depending on grammatical category, meaning, or speaker intent. This difference confirms that French stress mainly has a demarcative function, marking prosodic boundaries rather than encoding lexical or grammatical contrasts. In other words, stress in French signals where a phrase ends rather than what a word means. It does not distinguish lexical meaning but supports phrasal cohesion and boundary marking. As a result, prominence in French is closely linked to structure rather than lexical identity.

Secondary stress and rhythmic regularity in French

Grammont (1966) argues that French does not have a systematic secondary stress system. This suggests that prominence is not layered as it is in English. Instead of being assigned within individual words, stress in French often extends across groups of words and is realized on the final syllable of the last lexical item in a phrase (Hirst, 2000). In this sense, stress operates over larger units rather than within single words. This reflects a prosodic system where stress serves a demarcative function, unlike

English, where secondary stress contributes to emphasis and meaning. As a result, secondary stress is minimal or effectively absent in French, and rhythm is organized syllabically rather than through strong–weak stress alternations. This leads to a more even and regular distribution of prominence across syllables.

Table 5
Secondary Stress in French Phrases

Word Group	Primary Stress Location
La majeure partie	*-tie*
Une belle maison	*-son*

As shown in Table 5, French consistently assigns primary stress to the final syllable of the phrase, while secondary stress, if present, remains weak. In other words, prominence is concentrated at the phrase boundary rather than distributed within the word. This contrasts with English, where longer or morphologically complex words often show secondary stress that supports rhythmic organization and prominence relations. This difference is closely linked to the syllable-timed rhythm of French, where syllables tend to have relatively equal temporal weight. Rhythmic differences also shape how prosody is perceived across languages. English speakers are used to varied stress and rhythm patterns, whereas French speakers typically perceive a more uniform pattern. This becomes more noticeable in longer phrases. For example, in *La majeure parTIE* ("the greater part"), the primary stress falls on the final syllable, usually the last full syllable of the most important word in the phrase (Hirst, 2000). This pattern reinforces the idea that stress in French is tied to phrase structure rather than lexical identity. Overall, the limited role of secondary stress in French supports its function as a rhythm-organizing and boundary-marking device rather than a marker of lexical or grammatical contrast.

Syntax–prosody interface in French stress placement

Hirst (2000) argues that stress placement in French is closely governed by syntactic structure. This means that prominence does not operate independently but emerges from syntactic organization. Rather than being assigned at the word level, prominence in French is distributed according to syntactic phrasing and boundary structure. For example, in the phrase *Un marCHAND d'ETOFFES naTIF de PaRIS* ("A cloth merchant native to Paris"), primary stress falls on the final syllable of the last lexical item. This shows that prominence aligns with syntactic boundaries rather than individual words. It also demonstrates the strong connection between prosody and syntax in French. This syntactically conditioned placement of prominence can be observed across different phrasal structures, as illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6
Final Stress Word in French Phrases

Phrase	Final Stress Word
Un marchand d'étoffes natif de Paris	*Paris*
La ville la plus célèbre du monde	*monde*

As shown in Table 6, stress placement in French is systematically aligned with syntactic phrasing, with prominence assigned to the final syllable of the last lexical item. This contrasts with English, where stress is not strictly constrained by syntax and can shift depending on information structure and speaker intention. This syntactically driven pattern reflects the characteristics of syllable-timed languages, where prominence supports rhythmic regularity and boundary marking rather than lexical contrast. As a result, French stress follows highly predictable patterns based on syntactic boundaries, clearly differing from English, where stress placement is more flexible and sensitive to discourse-level emphasis.

Interim contrast with English stress patterns

A descriptive comparison of English and French reveals clear differences in both the domain and function of stress. These differences reflect two fundamentally different ways of organizing prominence. English shows variable lexical stress that depends on meaning, morphology, and speaker intention, and it allows for primary, secondary, and tertiary stress. French, in contrast, follows a largely fixed pattern, with prominence placed on the final syllable of the last lexical item in a phrase and little or no secondary stress. These structural differences are also reflected in rhythm. English is a stress-timed language with considerable variation, whereas French is syllable-timed, producing a more regular, uniform rhythm. Thus, stress and rhythm are closely connected in both languages, but they operate at different structural levels.

English uses flexible lexical stress to encode grammatical distinctions and information structure. This is clearly seen in minimal pairs such as *present* (noun) vs. *present* (verb), where stress alone signals word class. French, however, does not use stress to distinguish meaning at the lexical level. Instead, grammatical relations are expressed through syntax and word order. This highlights the different functional roles of stress in the two languages. From a prosodic perspective, this difference aligns with rhythmic organization: English shows dynamic stress shifts and variable rhythm, whereas French maintains a more stable and predictable pattern. As a result, prominence in English is linked to lexical identity, while in French it is linked to phrasal structure. Overall, these findings answer Research Questions 1 and 2 by showing that French stress is phrasally determined, highly predictable, minimally influenced by morphology, and rhythmically organized within a syllable-timed system. Unlike English, French does not use stress as a lexical contrastive device. Instead, prominence aligns with syntactic structure and functions as a boundary marker. These results show that the difference between the two languages is not only quantitative but fundamentally structural. This structural asymmetry forms the core contrast identified in this study.

Comparative Analysis of Stress Placement in English and French

In accordance with Krzeszowski's (1990) model, the analysis proceeds through description, systematic juxtaposition, and interpretive comparison. While the tables present structural alignment, the interpretive stage clarifies the functional asymmetries between the two systems. In this sense, the comparison moves beyond formal description to highlight how the two systems operate differently.

Rhythmic organization: stress-timed vs. syllable-timed systems

English and French differ fundamentally in their rhythmic organization, reflecting distinct prosodic systems. English is a stress-timed language, where stressed syllables tend to occur at regular intervals, leading to the reduction of unstressed syllables. French, by contrast, is a syllable-timed language, where syllables are produced with more equal timing, resulting in a smoother and more regular rhythm. This difference in timing reflects deeper differences in how prominence is distributed in the two languages. These differences are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7
Rhythmic Organisation in English and French

Feature	English	French
Rhythm Type	Stress-timed	Syllable-timed
Domain of Prominence	Lexical and post-lexical	Phrasal (phrase-final)
Stress location	Variable (word- and meaning-dependent)	Fixed (final syllable of phrase)
Secondary/tertiary stress	Present	Minimal or absent
Speech Flow	Dynamic and varied	Smooth and predictable

Table 7 shows how rhythmic organisation interacts with stress placement in the two languages. Beyond structural alignment, this comparison reveals a deeper functional difference: in English, rhythm interacts dynamically with lexical stress, whereas in French, rhythmic organisation

does not affect individual lexical items in the same way. In other words, rhythm in English is shaped by lexical prominence, while in French it is shaped by phrasal structure. This contrast goes beyond timing differences and reflects a distinction in structural domain. In English, variation in stress placement leads to clear differences in syllable duration, creating the characteristic contrast between stressed and unstressed syllables. This variability is a key feature of English prosody.

Importantly, recent L2 phonetics research shows that these rhythmic differences are perceptually strong for both listeners and learners. Henderson and Skarnitzl (2022) demonstrate that learners' sensitivity to stress-based timing improves when prominence patterns are acoustically enhanced. This suggests that stress-timed rhythm in English is closely tied to the salience of lexical stress cues. In this sense, stress and rhythm in English function as an integrated system rather than as separate features. In French, by contrast, rhythmic regularity is achieved by distributing temporal weight more evenly across syllables, with prominence emerging mainly at phrase boundaries rather than within individual words. As a result, lexical items are less affected by prominence variation. The key difference lies in timing: in English, syllable duration varies significantly depending on stress placement, whereas in French it remains more stable. As Roach (1991) notes, stress-timed languages like English show considerable variation in syllable length, while syllable-timed languages such as French display more regular temporal patterns. This stability contributes to the perception of smoothness and regularity in French speech.

Isochrony and temporal regularity in English and French

Table 8 summarizes the contrast between English and French in terms of isochrony, explicitly linking rhythmic timing to the domain in which prominence is realized in each language. In this way, timing patterns are directly connected to how prominence is structured in each system.

Table 8
Rhythmic Classification of English and French in terms of Isochrony

Language	Type of Rhythm	Domain of prominence	Isochrony Pattern	Example/Feature
English	Stress-timed	Lexical and post-lexical	Subjective isochrony: regular intervals between prominent stressed syllables; variable syllable durations	Rapid articulation of unstressed syllables (e.g. *The CONsequences of his ACtion are SEveral*)
French	Syllable-timed	Phrasal (phrase-final)	More equal timing of syllables; rhythm tied to syllable count rather than stress	Even pacing of syllables regardless of prominence (e.g., *Je vais à la maison* – each syllable is similarly timed)

As shown in Table 8, rhythm in English is organised around stressed syllables that stand out through differences in pitch, duration, and intensity. These stressed syllables tend to occur at relatively regular intervals, a phenomenon known as subjective isochrony, where equal timing is perceived despite variation in the number of intervening syllables. To maintain this pattern, unstressed syllables are often shortened in rapid speech, producing the characteristic stress-timed rhythm of English. This temporal organisation reinforces the role of lexical stress as a central organising principle, allowing it to function not only as phonetic prominence but also as a marker of grammatical and informational structure.

In contrast, French follows a syllable-timed rhythm in which temporal weight is distributed more evenly across syllables. No single syllable stands out strongly within the word, and each syllable tends to take roughly equal time. This reduces prominence variation and minimizes tempo fluctuation. As a result, prominence aligns more closely with prosodic or syntactic boundaries than with rhythmic beats, creating a smoother and more regular flow. Rather than serving a lexical contrastive function,

prominence in French acts mainly as a demarcative cue at phrase boundaries. This confirms that prominence in French is tied to phrasing rather than lexical identity.

This rhythmic regularity highlights a key prosodic difference between the two languages, with important implications for phonological theory and second-language acquisition. Neurocognitive evidence further supports this distinction. Ivanova et al. (2023) report ERP differences in how learners process English lexical stress, showing that stress perception depends on language-specific cue weighting rather than the transfer of a single rhythmic pattern. This finding reinforces the need to clearly distinguish between lexical stress in English and phrasal prominence in French.

Functional load of stress: meaning differentiation across languages

In English, stress plays a crucial role in conveying meaning. Stress patterns, as seen in minimal pairs such as *permit* (noun) vs. *permit* (verb), show how English uses stress to distinguish word classes. This demonstrates that stress is not optional but an integral part of meaning construction. In such cases, stress acts as the main distinguishing feature between segmentally identical forms, carrying a high functional load in the lexicon. In contrast, French relies mainly on context and word order rather than stress to determine word class. In other words, meaning in French is resolved syntactically rather than prosodically. Table 9 presents the role of stress in meaning differentiation in English and French.

Table 9
The Role of Stress in Meaning Differentiation

Language	Example	Function of Stress
English	PREsent (noun) vs. preSENT (verb)	Differentiates grammatical categories
French	*maison* (noun)	No shift; syntax clarifies meaning

As shown in Table 9, English uses stress to distinguish word classes, whereas in French these distinctions are mainly determined by syntax rather than stress. This contrast shows that lexical stress in English functions as an active meaning-bearing device, while in French it plays a largely non-contrastive, post-lexical role. In other words, stress in English encodes meaning, whereas in French it primarily marks structure.

Syntax–prosody relations in English and French

In English, stress placement often varies depending on speaker intent and word morphology, allowing flexibility. This enables speakers to highlight different parts of an utterance according to communicative needs. For example, different syllables can be emphasized to signal importance. This flexibility shows that stress responds to information structure rather than being fixed by syntax. In contrast, French follows a more rigid system closely tied to syntactic structure. Stress typically falls on the final syllable of the last lexical item in a phrase, regardless of emphasis. As a result, prominence in French is largely determined by syntactic phrasing rather than discourse-level choices. This makes French prosody more predictable but less flexible than English. As illustrated in Table 10, syntax plays a key role in stress placement in both languages: English allows variable stress shaped by emphasis, whereas French follows more fixed syntactic patterns.

Table 10
Influence of Syntax on Stress Placement in English and French

Language	Influence of Syntax on Stress
English	Indirect (stress may vary based on emphasis, not structure)
French	Direct (stress follows syntactic phrase boundaries)

Table 10 demonstrates the influence of syntax on stress placement in English and French, highlighting their contrasting patterns. While English allows prosodic adjustment independently of syntactic form, French integrates stress directly into its syntactic and prosodic structure. This shows that French prosody is structurally constrained, whereas English prosody remains more flexible.

The comparison reveals that the primary asymmetry between the two languages lies not only in rhythmic classification but in the domain and functional load of prominence. In other words, the difference is not just how stress sounds, but how it functions within the system. The findings confirm that lexical contrastivity is central in English, whereas French organizes prominence as a predictable phrasal boundary marker. These differences can be partly interpreted through Stetson's (1951) chest-pulse theory, which links each syllable to a physiological pulse of air. According to this view, each syllable corresponds to an increase in air pressure. However, this model cannot fully explain cases in which multiple syllables are produced within a single articulatory effort, such as in *going* /gəʊɪŋ/. This limitation suggests that physiological explanations alone are insufficient for describing prosodic organisation.

In English, as a stress-timed language, chest pulses tend to align with stressed syllables. However, stress placement remains flexible and is influenced by pragmatic emphasis rather than strict grammatical rules. This supports the idea that stress in English functions as a dynamic prosodic resource. In contrast, French, as a syllable-timed language, places stress consistently on the final syllable of a phrase. Here, syntactic structure plays a dominant role, challenging the assumption of one pulse per syllable. French, therefore, reflects a system in which grammatical boundaries, rather than physiological timing, determine prominence. This makes the chest-pulse theory more applicable to English than to French (Roach, 1991).

A similar contrast can be examined through the Prominence Theory, or Sonority Hierarchy (Jespersen, 1904), which ranks sounds according to their acoustic strength. This model operates at the segmental level and focuses on the inherent sonority of sounds rather than broader prosodic timing. In English, the interaction between sonority and stress supports flexible prominence within words, with stress often falling on syllables with higher sonority peaks (e.g., vowels and liquids). In French, however, fixed phrase-final stress limits the role of sonority in shaping rhythm. Overall, these theoretical perspectives help explain, but do not fully determine, the contrast observed in this study. The findings suggest that prominence in English is more acoustically and lexically driven, whereas in French it is structurally and syntactically constrained.

Interim synthesis: implications for prosody and rhythm

The rhythmic and stress patterns of English and French strongly influence how each language is perceived. English exhibits a stress-timed rhythm, resulting in dynamic and variable prosody, whereas French follows a syllable-timed rhythm, producing a more regular and predictable flow. This contrast reflects a deeper difference in how prominence is structured: lexically organised and flexible in English, but phrasally organised and structurally constrained in French. In this sense, rhythm is not merely a surface feature but a reflection of underlying prosodic organization. These differences affect both spoken and written communication. In English, stress functions as an active prosodic resource that interacts with morphology, information structure, and grammatical category to express emphasis and meaning distinctions. In French, by contrast, prominence mainly serves a boundary-marking function shaped by syntax rather than lexical contrast. Thus, the two systems differ not only in form but also in function. Overall, the findings show that stress fulfils different functional roles in the two languages, shaping rhythm, intelligibility, and meaning in distinct ways. At the same time, labels such as "stress-timed" and "syllable-timed" should be treated as idealised tendencies rather than fixed categories. Empirical research shows that rhythmic behaviour varies across speech styles, speaking rates, and individuals, and that languages display gradient properties in natural discourse (Roach, 1991; Arvaniti, 2012). Accordingly, this study treats rhythm typology as a descriptive tool for contrastive explanation and pedagogical reflection rather than a rigid model.

These insights also highlight the importance of stress awareness in second-language learning. Stress placement directly affects pronunciation and meaning. Research shows that explicit, feedback-oriented training improves learners' production and perception of stress. In particular, learners benefit from understanding how stress encodes meaning in English. Meta-analytic evidence further indicates that CAPT and automatic speech recognition significantly improve learners' mastery of English word stress, especially for speakers of syllable-timed languages such as French (Rogerson-Revell, 2021). These findings strengthen the pedagogical relevance of the contrastive distinctions identified in this study and connect theoretical analysis with practical application. Although the findings align with traditional classifications of English as stress-timed and French as syllable-timed (e.g., Roach, 1991), the analysis suggests that the crucial difference lies less in rhythm labels and more in the functional load and domain of stress. In other words, the key issue is not only how rhythm is classified but how stress operates within each system. In English, lexical contrastivity and morphological sensitivity give stress a structurally central role that goes beyond rhythm-based typologies. In French, predictability is not merely rhythmic but structurally grounded in syntax–prosody alignment. Thus, this study refines existing classifications by shifting the focus from broad rhythm types to functional distribution and grammatical integration. The findings therefore address Research Question 1 by clarifying differences in variability, predictability, and rhythm; Research Question 2 by contrasting morphology- and grammar-sensitive stress in English with syntactically aligned prominence in French; and Research Question 3 by identifying phonological asymmetries that may create challenges in second-language pronunciation. At an interpretive level, the comparison shows that the fundamental distinction is structural rather than purely phonetic. English integrates stress into the lexical system, allowing it to carry grammatical and contrastive meaning, whereas French restricts stress to a post-lexical, demarcative role tied to syntactic phrasing. This structural difference underlies the broader rhythmic contrast between the two languages. Ultimately, the findings confirm that prosodic systems are best understood through their functional organization rather than surface rhythm labels alone.

Conclusion

This study advances the contrast between English and French beyond descriptive typology by distinguishing lexical contrastivity from post-lexical demarcative prominence and by relating stress patterns to functional load and domain of realization. The analysis reveals clear differences: English shows a stress-timed rhythm with flexible stress placement, allowing prominence to vary for emphasis, whereas French follows a syllable-timed rhythm with fixed phrase-final stress. Thus, the contrast reflects fundamentally different prosodic organizations rather than surface variation.

The study reframes this contrast in terms of functional load and domain of prominence. The fundamental asymmetry lies in whether stress operates lexically (English) or post-lexically at the phrasal boundary (French). While English uses stress to express emphasis and meaning distinctions, French relies on stable patterns to maintain rhythmic coherence. This shows that the contrast is not only rhythmic but also structural, reflecting how prominence interacts with grammar and meaning. In other words, stress in English is meaning-bearing, whereas in French it is primarily boundary-marking.

Although previous research has described English as stress-timed and French as syllable-timed, this study integrates rhythm, morphological conditioning, grammatical contrast, and functional load within a single framework. This approach clarifies how lexical stress functions differently in the structural organization of the two languages and shows that prosodic differences are better explained through functional distribution than through typological labels alone. However, the findings should be considered in light of certain limitations. The analysis is based on canonical descriptions rather than corpus data or acoustic measurements, and therefore does not capture fine phonetic variation, speaker differences, or discourse effects. The conclusions thus reflect system-level tendencies rather than empirically generalizable patterns.

The pedagogical implications should also be viewed as conceptually grounded. The analysis highlights key challenges in second-language learning: learners from syllable-timed backgrounds may struggle with variable stress in English, while learners of French from stress-timed backgrounds may overgeneralize lexical stress and have difficulty adapting to phrase-final prominence. These

differences emphasize the need for targeted pronunciation instruction. Raising learners' awareness of the functional role of stress may improve both production and comprehension.

Future research could extend this framework through corpus-based and acoustic studies, as well as investigations of learner perception and production across proficiency levels. Within this contrastive perspective, lexical stress alternations in English, especially noun–verb shifts and minimal pairs, appear to be particularly demanding for learners from syllable-timed backgrounds. This suggests that such patterns should be prioritized in pronunciation-focused pedagogy.

Author Contribution

The author confirms sole responsibility for the study.

Conflict of Interest

It is declared that there are no potential conflicts of interest in this study.

Ethical Statement

This study is based on published grammatical and phonological sources and does not involve human participants or ethically sensitive data.

References

Abbas, A. M., & Ahmad, R. S. (2012). Contrastive analysis of stress in English and Kurdish. *Alustath Journal for Human and Social Science*, (202).

Arvaniti, A. (2012). The usefulness of metrics in the quantification of speech rhythm. *Journal of Phonetics*, 40(3), 351–373.

Baek, H. (2024). Acoustics of the alignment of narrow focus prosody and lexical stress in native and nonnative English productions. *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, 156(4), 2340–2350. https://doi.org/10.1121/10.0029737

Betti, M. J., & Ulaiwi, W. A. (2018). Stress in English and Arabic: A contrastive study. *English Language and Literature Studies*, 8(1), 83–91. https://doi.org/10.5539/ells.v8n1p83

Brasart, C. (2021). *L'essentiel de la grammaire anglaise* (2nd ed.). Armand Colin.

Coulange, S., Kato, T., Rossato, S., & Masperi, M. (2024). Exploring impact of pausing and lexical stress patterns on L2 English comprehensibility in real time. In *Proceedings of Interspeech 2024* (pp. 1030–1034).

Cruttenden, A. (1997). *Intonation* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Crystal, D. (1997). *A dictionary of linguistics and phonetics* (4th ed.). Blackwell.

Curry, N. (2021). *Academic writing and reader engagement: Contrasting questions in English, French and Spanish corpora*. Routledge.

Curry, N., & Chambers, A. (2017). Questions in English and French research articles in linguistics: A corpus-based contrastive analysis. *Corpus Pragmatics*, 1, 327–350. https://doi.org/10.1007/s41636-017-0009-z

De Wit, A., Patard, A., & Brisard, F. (2013). A contrastive analysis of the present progressive in French and English. *Studies in Language*, 37(4), 846–879. https://doi.org/10.1075/sl.37.4.04dew

Fetzer, A., & Johansson, M. (2010). Cognitive verbs in context: A contrastive analysis of English and French argumentative discourse. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 15(2), 240–266. https://doi.org/10.1075/ijcl.15.2.05fet

Filipović, R. (1975). *Contrastive analysis of English and Serbo-Croatian*. University of Zagreb.

Frost, D. (2011). Stress and cues to relative prominence in English and French: A perceptual study. *Journal of the International Phonetic Association*, 41(1), 67–84. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0025100310000253

Gabilan, G. (2016). *Grammaire expliquée de l'anglais*. Editions du Séminaire.

Ghosh, M., & Levis, J. M. (2021). Vowel quality and direction of stress shift in a predictive model explaining the varying impact of misplaced word stress. *Frontiers in Communication*, 6, 628780. https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2021.628780

Gilquin, G. (2015). Contrastive collostructional analysis: Causative constructions in English and French. *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik*, 63(3), 253–272. https://doi.org/10.1515/zaa-2015-0025

Gordon, M. (2011). Stress: Phonotactic and phonetic evidence. In M. van Oostendorp, C. J. Ewen, E. Hume, & K. Rice (Eds.), *The Blackwell companion to phonology* (pp. 924–948). Wiley-Blackwell.

Grammont, M. (1966). *Traité pratique de prononciation française*. Delagrave.

Hallé, P. A., Best, C. T., & Levitt, A. (1999). Phonetic vs. phonological influences on French listeners' perception of American English approximants. *Journal of Phonetics*, 27(3), 281–306. https://doi.org/10.1006/jpho.1999.0097

Hafissatou, K. A. N. E. (2021). A contrastive study of reflexive verbs in English and French. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 3(4), 25–31.

Henderson, A., & Skarnitzl, R. (2022). "A better me": Using acoustically modified learner voices as models. *Language Learning & Technology*, 26(1). https://doi.org/10.10125/73462

Hirst, D. (2000). ProZed: A multilingual prosody editor for speech synthesis. In *IEE Seminar on State of the Art in Speech Synthesis* (pp. 4/1–4/6). IEE.

Ivanova, M., Neubert, C. R., Schmied, J., & Bendixen, A. (2023). ERP evidence for Slavic and German word stress cue sensitivity in English. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1193822. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1193822

James, C. (1980). *Contrastive analysis*. Longman.

Jespersen, O. (1904). *Lehrbuch der Phonetik*. B. G. Teubner.

Khalifa, M. F. (2017). *A contrastive metrical analysis of main word stress in English and Cairene colloquial Arabic*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Krenca, K., Segers, E., Verhoeven, L., Steele, J., Shakory, S., & Chen, X. (2023). Lexical restructuring and phonological awareness in English–French bilingual children. *Journal of Child Language*, 50(3), 685–709. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305000922000547

Krzeszowski, T. P. (1990). *Contrasting languages: The scope of contrastive linguistics* (Vol. 51). Walter de Gruyter.

Lambrecht, K. (2010). Constraints on subject-focus mapping in French and English. In C. Féry & M. Zimmermann (Eds.), *Information structure: Theoretical, typological, and experimental perspectives* (pp. 77–100). Oxford University Press. (Not: Kitap adı bazı kaynaklarda farklı geçebilir; editör ve başlık doğrulanabilir.)

Lee, G., & Shin, D. J. (2024). Vowel epenthesis and stress-focus interaction in L2 speech perception. *Phonetics and Speech Sciences*, 16(2), 11–17.

Ling, L. E., & Grabe, E. (1999). A contrastive study of prosody and lexical stress placement in Singapore English and British English. *Language and Speech*, 42(1), 39–56. https://doi.org/10.1177/00238309990420010201

Masson-Trottier, M., Marcotte, K., Rochon, E., Leonard, C., & Ansaldo, A. I. (2024). Effectiveness of French phonological components analysis in individuals with chronic aphasia. *International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1111/1460-6984.13080

Roach, P. (1991). *English phonetics and phonology: A practical course* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Rogerson-Revell, P. M. (2021). Computer-assisted pronunciation training (CAPT): Current issues and future directions. *RELC Journal*, 52(1), 189–205. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688220976590

Schwab, S., & Dellwo, V. (2022). Explicit versus non-explicit prosodic training in L2 stress learning. *Journal of Second Language Studies*, 5(2), 266–306. https://doi.org/10.1075/jsls.21006.sch

Selkirk, E. O. (1980). *The phrase phonology of English and French*. Routledge.

Stetson, R. H. (1951). *Motor phonetics*. North-Holland.

Swan, M. (2005). *Practical English usage* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

Underhill, A. (1994). *Sound foundations: Learning and teaching pronunciation*. Heinemann.

Van Roey, J. (1990). *French-English contrastive lexicology*. Peeters.

Vander Klok, J., Goad, H., & Wagner, M. (2018). Prosodic focus in English and French. *Glossa: A Journal of General Linguistics*, 3(1), 1–27. https://doi.org/10.5334/gjgl.172

Vaissière, J. (2002). Cross-linguistic prosodic transcription: French vs. English. In *Speech Prosody 2002* (pp. 53–56).

Zufferey, S., & Cartoni, B. (2012). English and French causal connectives in contrast. *Languages in Contrast*, 12(2), 232–250. https://doi.org/10.1075/lic.12.2.06zuf

Genişletilmiş Özet

Giriş

Karşılaştırmalı çözümleme, dilleri karşılaştırarak ters tipolojiler oluşturan ve öğretim-öğrenme süreçlerinde akademik başarıyı destekleyen bir dilbilimsel yöntemdir. Dil tanımlayıcı bir sistem ve edinim aracı olarak ele alındığında, karşılaştırmalı çözümleme hem dilbilimsel araştırmalar için temel bir araç haline gelir hem de ikinci dil öğrenicilerinin hata eğilimlerini ve kaynaklarını belirlemede kullanılır. (James, 1980).

Vurgu, bir sözcükteki hecelerin üzerinde yapılan vurgu anlamına gelir ve bir sözcüğün doğru şekilde telaffuz edilmesi için oldukça önemlidir. Underhill (1994, s. 57), doğru telaffuz için vurgunun yerinin belirleyici olduğunu savunmuştur. Dilbilimciler, bir sözcükteki birincil vurguyu, yani en güçlü vurguyu ve ikincil vurguyu ayırt ederler. Önceki çalışmalar, vurgunun dil çiftleri arasındaki farklılıkları incelemiştir. Bunlar arasında İngilizce ve Arapça (Betti & Ulaiwi, 2018), Singapur İngilizcesi ve Britanya İngilizcesi (Ling ve Grabe, 1999), İngilizce ve Kürtçe (Abbas & Ahmad, 2012), İngilizce ve Kahire Arapçası (Khalifa, 2017), İngilizce ve Fransızca (Frost, 2011, p. 70) gibi karşılaştırmalar bulunmaktadır. Bununla birlikte, bu çalışmalar genellikle cümle düzeyindeki intonasyon ve ritme odaklanmışken, sözcük düzeyindeki vurgu yerleşimi üzerine yapılmış daha derinlemesine bir inceleme eksiktir. Ayrıca, Fransızca ve İngilizce arasındaki karşılaştırmalı çalışmalar, genellikle dilbilgisel özelliklere odaklanmakta ve dildeki belirli yapıları incelemektedir. Bu çalışmalara örnek olarak, şimdiki zamanın sürekli hali (De Wit et al., 2013), soru cümlesi yapıları (Curry & Chambers, 2017), özne ve odak ilişkisi (Lambrecht, 2010) ve bilişsel fiillerin bağlama dayalı kullanımı (Fetzer & Johansson, 2010) gibi konular sayılabilir. Özellikle İngilizce'de sözcüksel vurgu ile dilbilgisel kategori arasındaki sistematik ilişki ile Fransızca'da vurgu ile öbek düzeyindeki belirginlik arasındaki ayrım çoğu çalışmada açık biçimde formüle edilmemiştir.

Bu çalışma, karşılaştırmalı çözümleme yaklaşımını İngilizcedeki sözcüksel vurgu ile Fransızcadaki öbek-sonu belirginliğe uygulayarak İngilizce ile Fransızca arasındaki yapısal ve işlevsel ayrımları sistem düzeyinde ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, her iki dildeki vurgulama kalıplarını sistematik bir şekilde çözümleyerek, bu diller arasındaki sesbilimsel farklılıkları açığa çıkarmayı hedeflemektedir. Bu doğrultuda, araştırmacı aşağıdaki araştırma sorularını cevaplamayı amaçlamaktadır:

1. İngilizce ve Fransızcada vurgu yerleşimi, vurgu alanı (sözcüksel ve öbek düzeyi), öngörülebilirlik ve ritmik örgütlenme bakımından nasıl farklılaşmaktadır?
2. İngilizcede vurgu; biçimbilim, sözcük türü ve iletişimsel amaçla nasıl etkileşime girer ve bu etkileşim Fransızcadaki öbek-sonu belirginlikle nasıl karşılaştırılabilir?
3. Bu sistem farklarının ikinci dil telaffuzu öğretimi açısından (özellikle ritim aktarımı ve anlaşılabilirlik) ne tür sonuçları bulunmaktadır?

Yöntem

Bu araştırma, İngilizcedeki sözcüksel vurgu ile Fransızcadaki öbek-sonu belirginliği karşılaştırmalı ve nitel bir yaklaşımla incelemektedir. Çalışmada birincil deneysel veri yerine, yetkin dilbilgisi ve sesbilim betimlemelerine dayalı kanonik örnekler temel alınmıştır. Bu kapsamda Charles Brasart'ın *L'Essentiel de la Grammaire Anglaise* (2021), Gabilan'ın *Grammaire Expliquée de l'anglais* (2016) ve Michael Swan'ın *Practical English Usage* (2005) başta olmak üzere, her iki dile ilişkin yerleşik betimlemeler sunan kaynaklardan yararlanılmıştır. Ayrıca İngilizce ve Fransızca üzerine yapılan karşılaştırmalı dilbilgisel ve sesbilimsel çalışmalara da başvurulmuştur.

Çözümleme, karşılaştırmalı dilbilimin sistematik çerçevesine uygun olarak üç aşamada yürütülmüştür: (1) Tanımlama aşaması, her iki dilde sözcüksel vurgu yerleşimini belirleyen kuralların ve eğilimlerin ayrı ayrı özetlenmesini; (2) Yan yana getirme aşaması, iki dildeki vurgu örüntülerinin aynı karşılaştırma boyutları (vurgu alanı, öngörülebilirlik, biçimbilime duyarlılık ve ritmik örgütlenme) üzerinden hizalanmasını; (3) Karşılaştırma aşaması ise İngilizce ve Fransızca arasındaki

işlevsel ve yapısal farkların yorumlanmasını içermektedir. Bu yöntem sayesinde çözümleme, yalnızca yüzeysel betimleme düzeyinde kalmamış; vurgunun her iki dilde hangi düzlemde (sözcüksel ya da öbek düzeyi) işlediği ve hangi işlevsel yükü taşıdığı sistematik biçimde ortaya konmuştur.

Bulgular

Bu bölüm, İngilizce ve Fransızcadaki sözcüksel vurgu yerleşimini karşılaştıran çözümlemeden elde edilen bulguları özetlemektedir. Bulgular, vurgu alanı (sözcüksel vs. öbek düzeyi), öngörülebilirlik, biçimbilimsel duyarlılık ve ritmik örgütlenme olmak üzere dört temel boyut üzerinden değerlendirilmiştir.

İngilizcede sözcüksel vurgu yerleşimi karmaşık ve değişkendir; vurgu çoğunlukla sözcüğün biçimbilimsel yapısına bağlıdır ve sözcük türüne göre farklılaşabilir (ör. isimlerde ilk hece, fiillerde ikinci hece). Ayrıca birincil, ikincil ve üçüncül düzeylerde gerçekleşen vurgu, konuşmacı niyetine göre değişebilmekte ve bu durum İngilizceyi esnek kılmaktadır. Bu bulgular, vurgunun yalnızca sesbilimsel değil, dilbilgisel kategori ve bilgi yapısıyla etkileşime giren işlevsel bir unsur olduğunu ve sözcük kimliğinin ayrılmaz bir parçası olarak yüksek işlevsel yük taşıdığını göstermektedir. Buna karşılık Fransızcada vurgu büyük ölçüde sabittir ve genellikle öbek-sonu konumda, son heceye yerleşir. Hece-zamanlı ritme sahip olan Fransızcada ikincil vurgu zayıf ya da yoktur ve vurgu, anlam farklılaştırmaktan ziyade prosodik sınırları belirleyen bir işlev üstlenir. Dolayısıyla belirginlik sözcük içinde değil, öbek düzeyinde gerçekleşir ve vurgu sözcüksel karşıtlık üretmez.

İki dil arasındaki temel fark, vurgunun işlediği düzlemdedir: İngilizcede vurgu sözcüksel düzeyde değişkenlik gösterirken, Fransızcada öbek-sonu belirginlik olarak post-leksik düzeyde ortaya çıkar. Bu fark, İngilizcenin daha dinamik ve değişken, Fransızcanın ise daha düzenli ve öngörülebilir bir ritmik yapı sergilemesine yol açar. Ancak bu ayrım yalnızca zamanlama ile değil, vurgunun taşıdığı işlevsel yükün dağılımıyla da ilişkilidir. İngilizcede vurgu, anlam ve sözcük sınıfı ayrımında belirleyici bir rol oynar (ör. *permit*), bu da vurgunun segmental değişim olmaksızın dilbilgisel karşıtlık kodlayabildiğini gösterir. Fransızcada ise anlam büyük ölçüde sözdizimsel yapı ve sözcük sırası ile belirlenir; vurgu bu süreçte belirleyici değildir. Bu durum, İngilizcede vurgu ile bilgi yapısı arasında dinamik bir ilişki bulunduğunu, Fransızcada ise vurgu ile sözdizimsel sınırlar arasında daha doğrudan bir hizalanma olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Sonuç olarak, İngilizce ve Fransızcanın vurgu ve ritim sistemleri arasındaki farklar yalnızca ritmik değil, aynı zamanda yapısal ve işlevsel düzeydedir. İngilizcenin esnek ve çok katmanlı vurgu sistemi anlam üretiminde aktif rol oynarken, Fransızcanın sabit vurgu yapısı ritmik düzen ve prosodik sınırların korunmasına hizmet etmektedir. Bu bulgular, araştırma sorularının ilk ikisini doğrudan yanıtlamakta ve iki dil arasındaki temel ayrımın vurgunun işlevsel rolü ve gerçekleştiği düzlemde yattığını göstermektedir.

Sonuç

İngilizce ve Fransızcadaki sözcük vurgusunun karşılaştırmalı çözümlemesi, iki dilin vurgu sistemlerinin hem ritmik hem de işlevsel açıdan belirgin biçimde farklılaştığını göstermektedir. İngilizce vurgu-zamanlı bir ritme sahip olup esnek ve çok katmanlı bir vurgu yerleşim sistemi sunar; vurgu, sözcüksel ve dilbilgisel karşıtlıkları işaretleyerek anlam üretiminde aktif rol oynar. Buna karşılık Fransızca hece-zamanlı bir ritme dayanır ve vurgu genellikle öbek-sonu konumda sabittir. Bu nedenle vurgu, İngilizcede sözcük düzeyinde anlam ayırt edici bir işlev üstlenirken, Fransızcada daha

çok prosodik sınırları belirleyen bir unsur olarak ortaya çıkar. Dolayısıyla iki dil arasındaki temel fark yalnızca ritmik değil, vurgunun işlevsel yükü ve gerçekleştiği düzlemle ilgilidir.

Bu farklılıklar, anlam ve iletişim üzerinde doğrudan etkilidir: İngilizce değişken vurgu yapısıyla anlam çeşitliliği sağlarken, Fransızca daha sabit ve öngörülebilir bir ritmik yapı sunar. Bu çözümleme, ikinci dil öğretimi açısından önemli çıkarımlar sunmaktadır. Vurgu-zamanlı ve hece-zamanlı ritimler arasındaki farklar, öğrenicilerin vurgu algısı ve üretimini etkileyerek telaffuzda zorluklara yol açmaktadır. Hece-zamanlı dillerden gelen İngilizce öğrenicileri değişken vurgu sistemine uyumda zorlanırken, vurgu-zamanlı dillerden gelen Fransızca öğrenicileri sabit vurgu yapısına adapte olmakta güçlük yaşayabilmektedir. Bu durum, fonolojik farkların anlaşılabilirlik, ritmik doğallık ve işlemleme yükü üzerinde etkili olduğunu göstermektedir.

Bu bağlamda, vurgu öğretimi için hedeflenmiş stratejiler kritik öneme sahiptir. İşitsel ayrım çalışmaları, vurgu farkındalığı geliştirme, ritim ve intonasyon odaklı konuşma görevleri ile teknoloji destekli telaffuz eğitimi, öğrenicilerin doğru vurgu desenlerini tanıma ve üretme becerilerini geliştirmede etkili araçlar sunmaktadır. Sonuç olarak bu çalışma, klasik "vurgu-zamanlı / hece-zamanlı" ayrımını aşarak iki dil arasındaki temel farkın vurgunun işlevsel yükü ve yapısal entegrasyonu olduğunu ortaya koymakta ve karşılaştırmalı sesbilime hem kuramsal hem pedagojik katkı sağlamaktadır.