

ALEKSANDER SZWEDEK

University of Social Sciences, Warsaw

When Do Nouns Control Sentence Stress Placement?¹

Abstract

The relation between sentence stress and grammatical category is not a new problem, but largely ignored in recent research, in which such related topics as given/new information, focus and its scope and sentence stress have often been misdirected and misconstrued. Sentence stress placement has traditionally been described in terms of two conditions: (i) the stress must fall on a contextually new lexeme; (ii) it must fall as far towards the end of the utterance as possible. The main claim of the present paper is that in **neutral intonation**, the place of the “neutral” stress, as contrasted with the “emphatic”/“contrastive”/“corrective” stress, is controlled by the contextual information value of the noun. The analysis of simple transitive sentences in English, German and Polish, each with a different syntactic structure, allows for the following, specific claims: (a) sentence stress must fall on the contextually “new” noun if such is present; (b) sentence stress must **not** fall on a contextually “given” noun; (a) and (b) lead to the conclusion that other grammatical categories, regardless of whether they are “new” or “given,” get the stress only in the absence of a “new” noun. It is also suggested that in some cases the prosodic parameters may be irrelevant in distinguishing “neutral” from “emphatic” stress.

Keywords: sentence stress placement, neutral intonation, end-focus principle, givenness, contextual information value of nouns, emphasis, contrastive/corrective interpretation.

1. Introduction

The problem of the relation between sentence stress and grammatical category is not new. However, the results of very early research have been either purely statistical or intuitive and inconclusive. As early as in 1551 John Hart (edited by Bror Danielsson 1955) observed that the more important a word is,

¹ I wish to thank dr Samuel Bennet for proofreading the text and insightful comments and Małgorzata Waryszak for preparing the phonetic analyses with the Praat program.

the stronger is its stress. He proposed that the most important words are nouns, adjectives, demonstrative and interrogative pronouns, principle verbs and adverbs. The order of that list might be taken to be indicative of the order of importance. Two centuries later, John Walker distinguished “two kinds of emphasis; namely, emphasis of passion, and emphasis of sense” (1787: 18), clearly referring to the phonetic and semantic aspects of sentence stress, the latter mentioned in the context of categories: “substantive, adjective, verb, adverb, and participle” (1787: 19). Worth noting is also Barsov’s (1783–1788) account of various configurations of stress and word order, so clear that it can match Jackendoff’s (1972: 231 ff.) explications. The problem was also mentioned by Mathesius ([1911] 1964) in his comments on earlier works of some German grammarians. He wrote that Moritz (1786) had proposed “a descending scale of word-categories, according to their inherent stresses, starting from nouns and adjectives and ending in proclitic and enclitic pronouns and particles” (Mathesius [1911] 1964: 17).

Mathesius went on reporting that Benedix (1888) established “an analogous scale, taking into consideration various contextual circumstances” ([1911] 1964: 17), while Saran (1907) denounced “these theories of the specific stress degrees inherent in different word-categories as untenable. In his opinion, stresses are not determined by word-categories or by syntactic functions” ([1911] 1964: 17).

Mathesius also recalled Meyer’s (1906) and Viëtor’s (1907) statistical surveys which revealed sharp differences between the number of stressed and unstressed substantives: 77.5% and 14.8% respectively in Meyer’s survey, and 84.2% and 15.8% respectively in Viëtor’s. Main verbs did not show a similar divergence. The statistical approach was continued by Quirk *et al.* (1964) and Crystal (1969). Crystal found that 58% of all instances of “tonicity” (= “the placement of the nuclear tone”) occur within the Nominal Group structure (the percentage corresponds to Quirk’s *et al.* three-fifths of such cases) (Crystal 1969: 263). In 65% of these instances, tonicity occurred on a noun (as compared to 88% in Quirk *et al.*). From the point of view of the correlation between tonicity and form-classes, Crystal distinguished four major lexical classes: nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs (about 93% of all cases). Since the ratio between the nouns and verbs in his data was fairly balanced, Crystal was surprised to find that tonicity on nouns was significantly predominant. He concluded that “tonicity does have a regular and linguistically significant connection with form-class and group structure” (Crystal 1969: 267), but did not propose any rules.

With the emergence of the generative grammar more formal solutions have been proposed to describe the various aspects of the information structure, such as context, focus, givenness and stress placement. The restricted topic of the present paper does not necessitate a separate, comprehensive discussion of theoretical foundations of those approaches separately. Therefore, I offer only a few general comments in the present section, and discuss specific problems of context, givenness, focus, and stress in the appropriate sections below.

As Riester (2005) suggested, there are two perspectives from which the problems related to the meaning of stress can be approached. The first question is “On which word must one place an accent in order for an utterance to sound natural?” and the other is “How does a given accent contribute to the meaning of an utterance?” (Riester 2005: 299). Attempts to answer the first questions have been of phonological (Ladd 1980), syntactic (Chomsky 1971; Cinque 1993) and semantic (Schwarzschild 1999) nature. The other required “the integration of focus semantics into an existing theory of meaning as Rooth (1985) or Krifka (1992)” (Riester 2005: 299).

The first question is precisely the issue that the present paper addresses, but neither phonological nor syntactic proposals can answer it. Firstly, phonological proposals exclude meaning, which is against the main principle forcefully expressed by Leech (1967) that the study of meaning is central to the study

of communication. It is by now a trivial truth that all language forms have meaning. Stress is one of such language signs, and its semantic significance in the information structure cannot be ignored. Secondly, it also has to be remembered that communication always involves more than just one sentence, so syntactic solutions, ignoring context, will also produce incorrect or at best unsatisfactory, incomplete results. The semantic proposal by Schwarzschild (1999) concentrates on the nature of givenness and will be dealt with in the section on givenness below.

The other perspective begs the question about a semantic theory, best for handling the focus semantics. Riester (2005) suggests that that question requires “the integration of focus semantics into an existing theory of meaning as Rooth (1985) or Krifka (1992).” It has to be emphasized that “existing theory of meaning” does not necessarily mean the best one and universally accepted. This was forcefully pointed out by Leech (1974: ix–x) in the following words: “... each new book is its author’s unique attempt to shed new light on a subject which always threatens to return to primeval darkness, and such is the diversity of approaches that one may read two books on semantics, and find scarcely anything in common between them.”

I do not wish to claim that formal theories of language have not contributed to our understanding of some phenomena. However, none of them have proposed a comprehensive solution of the problems at issue (*cf.*, for example, German *et al.* (2006) for his criticism of Selkirk (1984, 1995) and Schwarzschild (1999)), and some are simply misconceived. For example, within the minimalist framework, Tajsner (2008: 263) suggested that the stress in *The BABY disappeared* is explained by postulating a structure of two identical subjects in one sentence [_{TP} The baby disappeared {the baby}]. Tajsner claims that the application of the NSR [Nuclear Stress Rule] in the latter structure is “automatically to the most embedded constituent, namely the copy of the raised subject” (2008: 263). Next, “of the two copies the one which carries less stress, i.e. the higher one, is deleted. The ultimate order is a result of a PF [phonetic form] stylistic fronting of the subject which restores a canonical SV order” (Tajsner 2008: 264). Putting it bluntly, “the baby” is added in order to get the stress in the final position. Once the second “baby” gets the stress (put there by Tajsner), the first “baby” is deleted and the second “baby” is raised to the subject position to get the canonical word order. All this means that minimalists can add, move, and delete constituents at will, simply to satisfy some thought up rules without any regard whatsoever to the function such manipulations serve. Equally disturbing is Tajsner’s claim that “[t]he ultimate order is a result of a PF stylistic fronting...”. What it means is that the difference between *The baby disappeared* and *Disappeared the baby* is only stylistic.

Apart from all deficiencies of the formalistic programs, some of which will be discussed under specific subjects, what is important from the perspective of the present paper is that none of them has even mentioned the relation between stress placement and category membership.

In 1986, Szwedek set out to find some more coherent backing to the earlier statistics and intuitions, but his interpretations were based on a limited language material, imperfect methodology and inadequate evidence. The present paper examines a much wider range of linguistic data, with improved methodology and additional evidence for the claim that in neutral intonation nouns control sentence stress placement, which, more generally, is yet another argument for the claim that nouns are a unique category in language (*cf.* Szwedek 1986, 1987, 2012).

2. Basic elements and terminology

148

In view of the abundant research on the subject, the consequence of which has been the diversified and often inconsistently used terminology, it is necessary, for the sake of clarity, to explain what concepts and terms will be used in the present paper, and in what sense. The terms that I want to make as precise as possible include such items as neutral vs emphatic/contrastive/corrective stress, context, information value in terms of contextually new/given lexical items, focus and its scope. The particular elements will be accompanied by brief critical discussions of some more popular research programs.

2.1. “Neutral” vs “emphatic” sentence stress

I think it is first necessary to clarify the distinction between “neutral” (at times also called “normal”) and “emphatic”/“contrastive”/“corrective” sentence stress. Particularly the latter terms require an explanation. The term “emphatic”² was claimed to represent a “larger than life” suprasegmental complex of features (Lehiste 1970: 151). On the other hand, the terms “contrastive”/“corrective” refer to semantic relations. One of the questions is whether there is any relation between prosodic emphasis and those semantic functions. Some observations on that issue will be offered in section 6. The problem was raised by Schmerling (1976) who came to the conclusion that it is in principle possible to characterize contrastive stress in two ways: phonetically and semantically. She rejects both characterizations claiming, among others, that “the notion of ‘contrastive stress’, like the notion of ‘normal stress’, is not a particularly useful one; contrastive stress does not seem to be a clearly definable entity unto itself” (Schmerling 1976: 66).³ This view corresponds to Enkvist’s observation that “[e]mphatic focus exists to signal [...] the relative weight that a speaker wants to attach to a particular element in the speech stream” (1980: 135). This means that the prosodic complex is an attitudinal device while contrast/correction are semantic phenomena. It is possible then that those functions do not necessarily need a “larger than life” prosodic realization, putting in doubt a correlation between prosody and those functions.⁴

2.2. Context

The term “context” is often used in the broad sense – the knowledge activated in both participants’ minds in a given communicative situation. It does not have to be verbal. This is clear in Mathesius’ (1939/1947) description of the “point of departure” (theme) as “that which is known or at least obvious in the given situation” (tr. into English by Firbas, 1964). Similarly, Chafe observed that “[g]iven (old, known) information is that knowledge which the speaker assumes to be in the consciousness of the addressee at the time of utterance. So called new information is what the speaker assumes he is introducing into the addressee’s consciousness by what he says” (1976: 30). Discourse context is utilized rather sparingly by formalists, who only repeat what Chafe and other linguists formulated explicitly earlier. Those “new” ideas on the context are always couched in the specific formalistic jargon. For example, Steedman proposes the following,

2 Classical Latin *emphasis* (in rhetoric) use of language in such a way as to imply more than is said (Quintilian) (OED).

3 For an extensive discussion of various approaches to sentence stress, see Szwedek (1986), and for a criticism of generative approaches, see Szwedek (2010). I only wish to make one exception and mention Barsov’s (1783–1788) account of sentence stress, which does not differ from, for example, Jackendoff’s (1972) account, two centuries later.

4 A pilot prosodic analysis was done by Małgorzata Waryszak with Praat program, and those informal results presented in section 7 below confirmed the doubts.

“his own,” description: “I’ll assume that the speaker’s knowledge can be thought of as a database or set of propositions in a logic (second-order, since themes etc. may be functions), divided into two subdomains, namely: a set S of information units that the speaker claims to be committed to, and a set H of information units which the speaker claims the hearer to be committed to” (Steedman 2004: 249).

I do not intend to play the role of a mind-reader (*cf.* Bolinger 1972) and guess what knowledge is shared by the speaker and the hearer, and for the sake of clarity of argumentation, in my analyses, I provide the context *expressis verbis*. To make the matter simple and clear, the analysed texts consist of two sentences, the first of which provides the immediate context for the second simple transitive clause,⁵ which is analysed with respect to the place of the sentence stress. I wish to add at this point that it is inappropriate to talk about contextless utterances (for example, Bogusławski 1976) or “out-of-the-blue” utterances (Selkirk 1995; Tajsner 2008). As Ilene Lanin aptly pointed out in the title of her 1977 paper, “You can take the sentence out of the discourse, but you cannot take the discourse out of the mind of the speaker” (see also Schmerling 1976: 53, on the inevitability of taking context into consideration in any discussion of sentence stress).

2.3. Given/new information distinction

Continuing the brief description of the context, it is necessary to emphasize that dependent on the context is the information structure of the sentence in terms of contextually given or new information. As many scholars observed (beginning with the Prague School – Mathesius (1929, 1939), Halliday (1967), Daneš (1974), and later Lakoff (1971), Jackendoff (1972), and many others), a typical sentence consists of two segments,⁶ variously called and defined in the literature, as theme and rheme, topic and comment, presupposition and focus, given and new information, already activated and newly activated, *etc.* In the methodology of the minimal, two sentence texts adopted in the present paper, I prefer to call those sections “contextually given,” and “contextually new” segments, or simply “given” and “new” information. In other words, in a two sentence discourse, the second sentence consists of the “given” information segment, that is shared with the first sentence, and the “new” information segment, that is, the information absent from the first sentence.

There have been numerous proposals of formalization of that distinction, but in an attempt to find some universal, ultimate rule, some convoluted reasoning, false analyses and interpretations produced poor results. For lack of space, I will only discuss Schwarzschild’s (1999) views at some length. He admits that “the distinction between ‘given’ and ‘new’ plays an important role in explaining patterns of intonational prominence,” and agrees with Halliday (1967) that the following examples require different interpretations of “newness” (Schwarzschild’s numbering):

- (1) A. Why don’t you have some French TOAST?
B. I’ve forgotten how to MAKE French toast.

- (2) {John’s mother voted for Bill.}
No, she voted for JOHN.

5 I realise, of course, that such sentences are not very frequent in real discourse, but it is a common practise in descriptions of syntax to devote one of the first chapters to the simple sentence as basic to other structures.

6 Though, occasionally, the number of segments identified in connection with the FSP, ranged from 3 to 6 (*cf.* Hajičová & Sgall 1975 and Firbas 1983).

- (3) {Who did John's mother vote for?}
She voted for JOHN.

Schwarzschild (1999: 142) concludes that Halliday's "definitions" constitute an unrelated mix. One can wonder why Halliday's interpretations are taken for definitions in the first place. Secondly, Schwarzschild disregarded the fact that the capitalized words simply **are** new information, no matter whether they are textually non-derivable (1), express contrast (2) or answer a *wh*-question. On that misconceived basis, Schwarzschild suggests that "new" be eliminated from the theory" (1999: 142) and concludes that while the generalization "Lack of prominence indicates givenness" is robust, the generalization "Prominence indicates novelty" is not robust. His examples (1)–(3) testify that the latter generalization is as robust as the first one, particularly that there are cases where "new" items **lack** prominence. Consider, for instance, the E.1 discourse in section 3 below (quoted here for convenience):

- E.1.a. *What were you doing last night?*
E.1.b. *I was reading a BOOK.*

where "reading" lacks prominence and is obviously not "given," but definitely contextually "new."

Even more astonishing is Schwarzschild's (1999: 142) explanation that "[t]his asymmetry is supported by the fact that deictics and other words appear to be inherently given (Halliday 1967, 206), but one doesn't find words that are inherently novel." It has to be noted first that unfortunately Schwarzschild **distorts** Halliday's description, which reads as follows: "Anaphoric items are inherently 'given' in the sense that their interpretation depends on identification within the preceding text." It is not "other words" as Schwarzschild has it, which might be read as "and all other words" beside deictics, but very precisely only "anaphoric items."

Schwarzschild then repeats Halliday's definition in his own formalistic parlance: "An utterance is *given* iff it is entailed by prior discourse" (1999: 147). If we recall Mathesius' (1939/1947) definition of "the point of departure" ("theme") as "that which is known or at least obvious in the given situation" (1947: 234; tr. into English by Firbas, 1964), it is impossible to see how Schwarzschild's formulation substantially differs from Mathesius', Halliday's or Lanin's (1977) descriptions. Thus, we cannot share German's *et al.* (2006) view that Schwarzschild's is a significant contribution to the identification of givenness. Praising Schwarzschild, German *et al.* simply repeat what Halliday (1967) wrote, only using different, what they call "technical formulation": "[t]he very significant contribution of Schwarzschild (1999) is a technical formulation of givenness. He proposes that accent placement is predictable for any sentence if the set of entailments of the discourse context are known" (German *et al.* 2006: 152).

Schwarzschild's attempt reminds me of Leech's (1981) conclusion that "a definition in terms of a scientific formula, such as *salt* = NaCl, simply exchanges one set of linguistic symbols for another, and so postpones the task of semantic explication one step further" (Leech 1981: 3). It is also clear, that if "an utterance is *given* iff it is entailed by prior discourse," then what is **not** entailed by prior discourse, must be new (which is called "focus" by formalists). Schwarzschild (1999: 155) comes close to accepting the existence of informational "newness" when he tentatively proposes a rule that "[i]f a constituent is F-marked, it must not be GIVEN" – again, if not "given," then what? Moreover, he does not explain the reason why constituents are F-marked in the first place. He only comes up with such rules as *AVOIDF*: "F-mark as little as possible, without violating Givenness," as if F-marking possibility depended on our

whim to F-mark as little or as much. Another, very “illuminating” rule is the *Basic F-Rule*: “An accented word is F-marked,” which means no less than if a word happens to be accented it has to be F-marked. In other words it is the accent that determines Focus rather than the other way round. The question how the accent gets in its place remains unanswered except for a very general rule “*Foc*: A *Foc* phrase contains an accent” (1999: 173) which is a trivial observation in view of the many discussions of that issue (*e.g.*, Chomsky 1971; Jackendoff 1972; Szwedek 1976, 1986). That problem of the relation between *Foc* (focus) and stress (accent) will be addressed in the next section of the present paper.

In his conclusions, Schwarzschild (1999: 175–176) repeats that:

Discourse appropriateness is calculated for units defined in terms of standard syntactic constituency and F-marking and it distinguishes constituents that are GIVEN from those that are not. A constituent that is GIVEN presupposes an antecedent with the same meaning, up to F-marked parts. F-marking is used parsimoniously and is constrained by discourse appropriateness and the positioning of pitch accents, the only factor contributing to intonational prominence that is considered here. F-markers that must correspond to alternatives in the discourse must dominate an accent. Non-discourse related rules of syntax/phonology regulate accent placement.

Apart from the dishonest distortion of Halliday’s words, Schwarzschild’s treatment of givenness and focus is seriously questionable on many accounts:

1. How does his definition of givenness really differ from Halliday’s (1967)?
2. If some constituents are not-given, and thus not “new,” what are they?
3. Who makes decisions about the **parsimonious** use or as little F-marking as possible?
4. What criteria are applied in the parsimonious use of F-marking?
5. What are the non-discourse related rules of syntax/phonology regulating accent placement?

Without solid answers to those questions, Schwarzschild’s paper is “much ado about nothing much.”

Finally, and most importantly for the present paper, Schwarzschild comes nowhere near the problem of stress placement and category membership.

The interpretation of “new” information segment, which Schwarzschild unceremoniously discarded, has caused some problems in relation to focus, scope of focus and stress placement. The next section attempts to explain the relations between those notions.

2.4. New information, focus and stress placement

The commonly employed term “focus” will not be used here because of its vagueness. It has often been applied in the sense of the “scope of focus,” which is equivalent to the “new” information segment, but it was also used to refer to the “stressed item.”

The phrase “scope of focus” indicates that “focus” is used as an equivalent of stress whose scope extends over other items. A good example of this ambiguity is found in Jackendoff (1972) who, in one place, defined focus as “the information in the sentence that is assumed by the speaker not to be shared by him and the hearer” (Jackendoff 1972: 230), which simply means “new information” segment, and in another place he stated that focus is realized as stress when he wrote that “a mark F, realized by stress, marks focus constituents” (Jackendoff 1972: 353).

It is also obvious from Chomsky's (1971) discussion of example (45a)⁷ that focus, in the sense "new information," cannot be determined by the stress (intonation centre), a view that was experimentally proven by Pakosz (1981). In his discussion of example

(vi) *Was it an ex-convict with a red SHIRT that he was warned to look out for?*

the term "focus" is used in the sense "scope of focus" (= contextually new information). This is clear from his statement that this example can have as its focus any of the following phrases:

(51)

(i) *an ex-convict with a red shirt*

(ii) *with a red shirt*

(iii) *red shirt*

(iv) *shirt*

since all of them "contain the intonation center" (Chomsky 1971: 201).

Selkirk (1995) repeats Chomsky's observations on the same example only with different lexemes: *Mary bought a book on bats*, coming to the same conclusions that, what she calls Focus, can be one of the following:

- BATS;
- about BATS;
- a book about BATS;
- bought a book about BATS;
- or the whole sentence;
- Mary bought a book about BATS,

the last one as an answer to "What was happening?"

These foci she establishes on the basis of questions (only in parentheses) they are answers to (Selkirk 1995: 554). It is obvious from those examples that what she calls F-marked constituents are what used to be called simply "contextually new information" segments, that is those absent from the preceding context. The determining role of the context is beyond any doubt. Yet, Selkirk tries to formulate syntax-based rules of F-marking. First, she proposes a Basic Focus Rule:

An accented word is F-marked. (Selkirk 1995: 555)

This rule is trivial in the light of universal agreement that sentence stress falls within "new" information segment. Replacing "new" with Focus does not make Selkirk's rule a new revelation.

Once the accented word is F-marked, her "theory of focus projection hypothesizes that the F-marking of the Focus of a sentence is licenced by a chain of F-marked constituents at the bottom end of which is the word bearing the pitch accent" (Selkirk 1995: 555). She does not say, however, why a certain word is accented in the first place, and what the determination of the F-marked constituents depends on. She does not say that F-marking stops where given information begins, which in reality

⁷ The numbers of language expressions quoted in this section are those used in Chomsky (1971).

means, as I mentioned above, that she first has to determine the new and given information constituents, before starting her Focus projections, and then only as far as the context allows.

In other words, Selkirk describes hierarchy relations in the syntactic structure ignoring the semantic relations between the opening sentence and the response.

The only conclusion we can draw from such descriptions is that while the stress falls within the scope of focus, in no way does it **determine** the scope of focus understood as new information, which depends solely on the preceding context. In that sense the two phenomena are separate and a question which element within the scope of focus gets the stress remains unanswered.

2.5. Given vs definite

As indicated in the preceding point, the terms “given”/“new” will be used to refer to the contextual presence or absence of an item or segment. Related to the “given”/“new” distinction is the problem of definiteness. There is no need to discuss that problem in detail as it has been discussed in grammars of article-languages and in a number of works on the articleless languages (for example, Szwedek 1975, 1986 for Polish, and Chesterman 1991 for Finnish). In his 1991 book, Chesterman (Foreword) observed that languages differ “in the ways in which they draw the lines between syntax, semantics and pragmatics.” In the article-languages like English and German, the situation is relatively simple because definiteness/indefiniteness is realized lexically. In the majority of cases, the use of the definite article signals givenness. However, there are examples in which a definite expression is contextually new. This is clear in the following discourse (capital letters in (b) sentence indicate the stress):

- a. *I can lend you Moby Dick on DVD.*
- b. *I have read the BOOK, thanks.*

The word “book” refers here to two aspects: the contents and the medium.⁸ What, however, is most interesting is that the definiteness and newness do not refer to the book as a whole, but to different aspects of it. Thus, the book in (b) is clearly definite as to the contents (not any book, but the book about Moby Dick) while the medium, paper version vs DVD, is contextually new.

Definiteness in articleless languages like Polish (Szwedek 1976, 1986), or Finnish (Chesterman 1991) is similar to that in English and German, but realized differently. Disregarding such means as demonstrative pronouns as signals of definiteness, the indication of the definite/indefinite nature of nouns in Polish is syntactic, contextual and semantic. This is clear in the following example:

- P.7.a.⁹ *Mogę Ci pożyczyć Moby Dicka na DVD.*
 [Can_I you_{Dat} lend Moby Dick_{Acc} on DVD]
 ‘I can lend you Moby Dick on DVD.’

8 The problem was introduced by Reddy (1979) as “semantic pathology.” For a discussion of similar cases of metonymous readings within the cognitive framework, see, for example, Croft 1993, Barcelona 2000, Ruiz de Mendoza 2000: *The book is heavy* vs *The book is a history of Iraq*, which in the present paper would be exemplified by the pair: the content of *Moby Dick* or *the Whale* and the medium of that content – print vs DVD.

9 The numbers here are those used in the discussion later in the present paper.

P.7.b. *Dzięki, czytałem KSIĄżkę.*

[Thanks, read_{I; past; imperf} book_{Acc}]

'Thanks, I have read the book.'

In the absence of any structural indicator of definiteness, the addressee looks for other clues and assumes that Moby Dick and the book refer to the same content (as in English and German), so this part of the essential information is given. What is new is the medium, print vs DVD (also as in English and German), but as there is no way in which only one aspect, here, the medium, can be stressed, the word as a whole is stressed.

I think that this is an interesting observation, since so far, givenness and newness of nouns have been assigned to the whole referent.

3. Material

The present study is based on English, German and Polish simple transitive sentences. As I mentioned in fn. 5, I am aware that such simple structures are not very frequent in real discourse. However, just as infrequent, but basic, are simple sentences, and yet, it is common for grammars to begin the description of syntax with such simple sentence structures, no doubt with the authors' awareness of their infrequent occurrence. For example, Quirk *et al.* (1972, 1985) devote some 80 pages, out of over 2000 pages, to the simple sentence. Similarly infrequent, but basic stressing patterns merit a comparable analysis.

The reason behind the choice of those three languages is that they differ in syntactic structures. English is a fixed SVO language, German *das Perfekt* has the main verb in sentence final position, and Polish is a grammatically free word order language, so the relations between syntactic structures and the place of stress in the sentence are different in the three languages.

The analysed examples are two-sentence texts and they are divided into two parts. Part I examples, discussed in more detail in section 5, consist of a question, and an answer with both the object noun and the verb contextually new, while Part II examples, discussed in section 6, consist of an affirmative clause and a response with a contextually given object noun and a contextually new verb (and adverb). The responses are presented in various configurations of sentence stress and sentence structures. By way of introduction, here are some examples with the stressed syllable in capital letters.

The structure of Part I examples:

English

E.1.a. *What were you doing last night?*

E.1.b. *I was reading a BOOK.*

German

G.1.a. *Was hast du gestern Abend gemacht?*

G.1.b. *Ich habe ein BUCH gelesen.*

Polish

P.1.a. *Co robiłeś wczoraj wieczorem?*

[What did_{you;past;imperf.} yesterday evening]

‘What were you doing last night?’

P.1.b. *Czytałem KSIĄżkę.*

[Read_{I;past;imperf.} book_{Acc}]

‘I was reading a book.’

The structure of Part II examples:

English

E.3.a. *I can lend you Moby Dick.* (book in hand)

E.3.b. *Thanks, I’ve READ the book.*

German

G.3.a. *Ich kann dir Moby Dick ausleihen.* (book in hand)

G.3.b. *Danke, ich habe das Buch geLEsen.*

Polish

P.5.a. *Mogę Ci pożyczyć Moby Dicka.* (book in hand)

[Can_I you_{Dat} lend Moby Dick_{Acc}]

‘I can lend you Moby Dick.’

P.5.b. *Dzięki, czyTAłem książkę.*

[Thanks, read_{I;past;imperf.} book_{Acc}]¹⁰

‘Thanks, I have read the book.’

English

E.5.a. *I can lend you Moby Dick on DVD.*

E.5.b. *Thanks, I’ve read the BOOK.*

German

G.5.a. *Ich kann dir Moby Dick auf DVD ausleihen.*

G.5.b. *Danke, ich habe das BUCH gelesen.*

Polish

P.7.a. *Mogę Ci pożyczyć Moby Dicka na DVD.*

P.7.b. *Dzięki, czytałem KSIĄżkę.*

[Thanks, read_{I;past;imperf.} book_{Acc,def.}]

‘Thanks, I have read the book.’

10 The unmarked, imperfective form of the verb in Polish may in certain circumstances adopt the perfective meaning (cf. Szwedek 1998).

4. Methodology

4.1. Recordings

The two-sentence texts were recorded by native speakers in each language.¹¹ As the examples will show, the place of the sentence stress in some of them was left to the spontaneous judgment of the speakers by not indicating the place of the stress with capital letters, and in some of them the stressing was forced by capital letters. For example, in the English version, the neutral intonation is represented in example (E.1.b) of the questionnaire:

E.1.a. *What were you doing last night?*

E.1.b. *I was reading a book.* (no stress prompt)

while the stress is forced in example (E.2.b):

E.2.a. *What were you doing last night?*

E.2.b. *I was READing a book.* (stress prompt)

The recordings were then presented to other native speakers of each language,¹² who were asked (i) to judge the answers as either “correct” (good) or “incorrect” (bad, strange), and (ii) to indicate the stressed item.

4.2. Questionnaires and the interpretation of results

The recordings and questionnaires in English, German and Polish consist of almost the same set of two-sentence sequences: a question and an answer (see sections 5 and 6). While the lexical content in the three languages is the same, the number of Polish examples differs from the English and German ones in that the questionnaire has two more sequences in which the word order is changed to $O_s V^{13}$ (sentences (P.i.b) and (P.ii.b)).

In what follows I will analyse the respondents’ reactions in terms of two aspects formulated as requests – to judge whether the text is “good” or “bad” and to indicate the stressed item. The instructions were as simple as possible (for example, in terms of good–bad, or strange) adapted to the non-linguistic level of education of the respondents. For example, the question about the “goodness” might be supplemented by such words as “natural,” and about the stress, additionally, by such words as “stronger,” “heavier,” “with greater force,” *etc.* In addition to those two elements, the analysis includes my own linguistic description (in **bold** type) reflecting the interplay of three phenomena: place of the stress, stress and new information

11 For some prosodic observations concerning selected examples, see section 7.

12 The number of respondents was 9 for English, 9 for German and 14 for Polish, that is, the total of 32, but 8 were eliminated because the answers were predominantly of “I don’t know” type, leaving 7 + 7 + 10 (for English, German and Polish respectively) = altogether 24 that have been analysed.

13 The subscripted $_{<S>}$ indicates the finite form of the verb with the Subject signalled by the personal ending. In particular sentences I use a clearer form V_{you} , the pronoun representing $_{2nd.sg}$ ending. If the Subject pronoun is present, which is admissible in some cases, it would be added before the verb, for example, *Ja czytałem książkę* ($SV_1 O_{Acc}$), ‘I was reading the book.’

segment, and the information value of the noun(s). Thus the comments to each text have the following components in Part I examples:

1. Is the question–answer sequence/text good or bad? Does it sound natural or not?
2. Can you identify the word that is stressed/pronounced with greater force in the answer (b)?
3. **Position of the stress.**
4. **Stress vs new information segment.**
5. **Noun character: definite/indefinite, contextually given/new.**

Part II examples have additional comments on **definiteness** and **stress on grammatical category**.

5. An analysis of Part I examples

Hypothesis (a): in neutral intonation the sentence stress must fall on the contextually new noun.

5.1. English examples

E.1.a. *What were you doing last night?*

E.1.b. *I was reading a book.* (no stress prompt)

GOOD/bad 7/0

stress 5 “book”/2 “not sure”

stress in final position: yes

stress in new segment: yes

noun: indefinite, new, stressed

Description: the stress is within the new segment “reading a book,” in the final position; stress placement is consistent with the main principles.

E.2.a. *What were you doing last night?*

E.2.b. *I was READing a book.*

good/**BAD** 0/7

stress 7 “reading”

stress in end position: no

stress in new segment: yes

noun: indefinite, new

Description: the stress is within the new segment “reading a book”; **the new, final noun** is unstressed.

5.2. German examples

G.1.a. *Was hast du gestern Abend gemacht?*

G.1.b. *Ich habe ein Buch gelesen.* (no stress prompt)

GOOD/bad 7/0

stress 7 “Buch”

stress in end position:	no
stress in new segment:	yes
noun:	indefinite, new

Description: the stress is within the new segment “ein Buch gelesen,” but not in the final position; the stress is **on the new noun in non-final position**.

G.2.a. *Was hast du gestern Abend gemacht?*

G.2.b. *Ich habe ein Buch geLEsen.*

good/ BAD	0/7
stress	7 “gelesen”
stress in end position:	yes
stress in new segment:	yes
noun:	indefinite, new

Description: the stress is within the new segment “ein Buch gelesen,” in the final position; **the new, non-final noun** is unstressed. Though the two major principles (stress on the new information and in final position) apply, the (b) sentence is incorrect.

5.3. Polish examples

P.1.a. *Co robiłeś wczoraj wieczorem?*

(what did_{you} yesterday evening?)

‘What were you doing last night?’

P.1.b. *Czytałem książkę.*

(no stress prompt)

(Read_{I,pastimperf} book_{Acc})

‘I was reading a book.’

GOOD /bad	10/0
stress	6 “książkę”/4 “I don’t know”
stress in end position:	yes
stress in new segment	yes
noun:	indefinite, new

Description: the stress is within the new segment “czytałem książkę,” in the final position; the stress is **on the new noun in final position**.

P.2.a. *Co robiłeś wczoraj wieczorem?*

(what did_{you} yesterday evening?)

‘What were you doing last night?’

P.2.b. *CzyTAłem książkę.*

(Read_{I,pastimperf} book_{Acc})

‘I was reading a book.’

good/ BAD	0/10
------------------	------

stress	10 “czytałem”
stress in end position:	no
stress in new segment:	yes
noun:	indefinite, new

Description: the stress is in the new segment “czytałem książkę,” but in non-final position; **the new, final noun** is unstressed.

P.i.a. *Co robiłeś wczoraj wieczorem?*¹⁴

(what did_{you} yesterday evening?)

‘What were you doing last night?’

P.i.b. *KSIĄŻKĘ czytałem.* (no stress prompt)

(Book_{Acc} read_{1,past;imperf})

‘I was reading a book.’

GOOD/bad	9/1
stress	10 “książkę”
stress in end position:	no
stress in new segment:	yes
noun:	indefinite, new

Description: the stress is in the new segment “książkę czytałem,” but in non-final position; **the new, non-final noun** is stressed.

P.ii.a. *Co robiłeś wczoraj wieczorem?*

(what did_{you} yesterday evening?)

‘What were you doing last night?’

P.ii.b. *Książkę czyTAłem.*

(Book_{Acc} read_{1,past;imperf})

‘I was reading a book.’

good/BAD	0/10
stress	10 “czytałem”
stress in end position:	yes
stress in new segment:	yes
noun:	indefinite, new

Description: the stress is in the new segment “książkę czytałem,” and in the final position: **the new, non-final noun** is unstressed. Though the two major principles (stress on the new information and in final position) apply, the (b) sentence is incorrect.

14 The Roman numerals (i, ii) are used here in order to keep the numbers of Part II examples correspondent in the three languages. While Polish Part I examples with the Roman numerals differ in word order from those with Arabic numerals, no such variations are considered in Part II examples.

5.4. Interpretation of Part I examples

- A. The (b) sentences are correct as long as the stress falls on the new noun, independent of its position (G.1.b, P.1.b and P.i.b).
- B. The stress on the contextually new verb and in end position (G.2.b, P.2.b and P.ii.b) renders the sentence incorrect, even if the stress position complies with the main principles.
- C. (A) and (B) show clearly the relevance of my hypothesis that in neutral intonation only the stress on the new noun makes the text correct, while the stress on the new verb renders the meaning incorrect even in the situation when the two main principles apply.

6. An analysis of Part II examples

Hypothesis (b): in neutral intonation the contextually given noun must **not** be stressed in which case the stress falls on the nearest category respecting the end-focus principle.

6.1. English examples

E.3.a. <i>I can lend you Moby Dick.</i>	(book in hand) ¹⁵
E.3.b. <i>Thanks, I've read the book.</i>	(no stress prompt)
GOOD /bad	7/0
stress	7 "read" (3 corrections to <i>I've READ it</i>)
stress in end position:	no
stress in new segment:	yes
noun:	definite, given ¹⁶
stress on noun:	no
stress on verb:	yes

Description: the stress is within the new segment, and in non-final position; **the given, definite, final noun is unstressed.**

E.4.a. <i>I can lend you Moby Dick.</i>	(book in hand)
E.4.b. <i>Thanks, I've read the BOOK.</i>	
good/ BAD	0/7
stress	7 "book"
stress in end position:	yes

¹⁵ The "book in hand" situation is to strengthen the sense of Moby Dick as a book.

¹⁶ The definiteness of a noun does not necessarily make it contextually given as (E.6.b) shows. Cf. also *What happened? I was reading the BOOK when he came in*, where "the book" (new information) may refer to the Bible (this interpretation was suggested to me years ago by the late prof. Werner Winter in personal communication). For extensive discussions of the complex nature of definiteness in English and particularly in articleless languages, see Szwedek 1975, 1986 (for Polish), and Chesterman 1991 (for Finnish) who emphasized the complex nature of the phenomenon, involving syntax, semantics and pragmatics (see also section 2.4).

stress in new segment:	no
noun:	definite, given
stress on noun:	yes
stress on verb:	no

Description: the stress is within the given segment, in the final position; **the given, definite, final noun is stressed. The stress on the given noun makes the text incorrect.**

E.5.a. <i>I can lend you Moby Dick.</i>	(book in hand)
E.5.b. <i>Thanks, I read the book last WEEK.</i>	
GOOD/bad	7/0
stress	7 “week”
stress in end position:	yes
stress in new segment:	yes
noun:	definite, given
stress on noun:	no
stress on verb:	no
adverb:	final, new, stressed

Description: the stress is within the new segment, in the final position; **the given, definite noun is unstressed.**

E.6.a. <i>I can lend you Moby Dick on DVD.</i>	
E.6.b. <i>Thanks, I read the book last WEEK.</i>	
good/bad?	3 “rather correct”/4 “bad” ¹⁷
stress	7 “week”
stress in end position:	yes
stress in new segment:	yes
noun:	definite, given
stress on noun:	no
stress on verb:	no
adverb:	final, new, stressed

Description: the stress is within the new segment, in the final position; **the given, definite noun is unstressed.** The mixed reaction may be due to the *semantic pathology* (fn. 7). Though “book” is contextually new, in contrast to DVD,¹⁸ the “good” responses may be due to an intuitive assumption of the sameness of contents of Moby Dick and the book. Four respondents judged the text to be incorrect and suggested a change of stress to “book,” correctly assuming a contrast of “book” vs DVD.

¹⁷ The latter choice was sometimes accompanied by a comment “the stress on ‘book’ would be better.”

¹⁸ Semantically definite by metonymy: Moby Dick = book, with contrast of the medium which is new in the (b) sentence.

E.7.a. *I can lend you Moby Dick on DVD.*

E.7.b. *Thanks, I've read the book.* (no stress prompt)

GOOD/bad	7/0
stress	7 "book"
stress in end position:	yes
stress in new segment:	yes
noun:	definite, new
stress on noun:	yes
stress on verb:	no

Description: the stress is within the new segment; the stressed, final, definite "book" is contextually new, in a correct **contrast** to DVD.

E.8.a. *I can lend you Moby Dick on DVD.*

E.8.b. *Thanks, I READ the book last week.*

good/ BAD	0/7
stress	7 "read"
stress in end position:	no
stress in new segment:	yes
noun:	definite, new
stress on noun:	no
stress on verb:	yes
adverb:	final, new, unstressed

Description: the stress is within the new segment; the unstressed, definite "book" indicates its given status though it is contextually new (see fn. 16). In contrast to (E.6.b), this example has been judged to be definitely incorrect. I think the reason for the different judgment of (E.6.b) is the final position of the stress on "week."

E.9.a. *I can lend you Moby Dick on DVD.*

E.9.b. *Thanks, I read the BOOK last week.*

GOOD/bad	7/0
stress	7 "book"
stress in end position:	no
stress in new segment:	yes
noun:	definite, new
stress on noun:	yes
stress on verb:	no
adverb:	final, new, unstressed

Description: the stress is within the new segment; the stressed, new though definite (see fn. 16) "book" **contrasts** with DVD.

Interpretation of English Part II examples:

Excluding the incorrect stressing (E.4.b, E.6.b, E.8.b) and clearly contrastive cases (E.7.b and E.9.b), we are left with two crucial texts – (E.3) and (E.5).

The importance of the (b) sentences in the two latter texts rests in the fact that:

- (i) the stress clearly “avoids” the given noun even in the final position (E.3.b);
- (ii) the stress is placed on the nearest available major grammatical category,¹⁹ as far to the end as possible which in (E.3.b) is the **preceding** verb and in (E.5.b) the following adverbial phrase.

While (i) emphasizes the principle of “no stress on the given noun,” (ii) shows that stress placement is in agreement with the “stress on new item” principle.

It is important to add that the (i) strategy (no stress on a given noun) does not apply to the given verb which is naturally stressed also when given: *Have you read Moby Dick. Yes, I have READ it/the book.* (the most common answers would be *Yes, I have, I have*, or, simply, *Yes*).²⁰

6.2. German examples

G.3.a. <i>Ich kann dir Moby Dick ausleihen.</i>	(book in hand)
G.3.b. <i>Danke, ich habe das Buch gelesen.</i>	(no stress prompt)
GOOD /bad	7/0
stress	7 “gelesen”
stress in end position:	yes
stress in new segment:	yes
noun:	definite, given
stress on noun:	no
stress on verb:	yes

Description: the stress is within the new segment, and in the final position: **the given, definite noun is unstressed.**

G.4.a. <i>Ich kann dir Moby Dick ausleihen.</i>	(book in hand)
G.4.b. <i>Danke, ich habe das BUCH gelesen.</i>	
good/ BAD	0/7
stress	7 “Buch”
stress in end position:	no
stress in new segment:	no
noun:	definite, given
stress on noun:	yes
stress on verb:	no

¹⁹ Notice that even if the sentence stress falls within the prepositional phrase, the stress falls on the noun; the stress on the adjective renders the interpretation contrastive.

²⁰ In view of such examples (see also Polish and particularly German examples below), Šimík and Wierzba's (2015) constraint that “STRESS-GIVEN prohibits given elements from carrying sentence stress” is too general and, in consequence, wrong. See also Szwedek's (2010) criticism of the minimalist theory of focus.

Description: the stress is within the given segment, in non-final position: **the given, definite noun is stressed**. The answer implies an unjustified contrast of Moby Dick (book) vs book.

164

G.5.a. <i>Ich kann dir Moby Dick ausleihen.</i>	(book in hand)
G.5.b. <i>Danke, ich habe das Buch letzte WOche gelesen.</i>	
GOOD/bad	7/0
stress	7 "Woche"
stress in end position:	no
stress in new segment:	yes
noun:	definite, given
stress on noun:	no
stress on verb:	no
adverb:	prefinal, new, stressed

Description: the stress is within the new segment, in non-final position: **the given, definite noun is unstressed**.

G.6.a. <i>Ich kann dir Moby Dick auf DVD ausleihen.</i>	
G.6.b. <i>Danke, ich habe das Buch letzte WOche gelesen.</i>	
good/BAD	2/5 ²¹
stress	7 "Woche"
stress in end position:	no
stress in new segment:	yes
noun:	definite, new
stress on noun:	no
stress on verb:	no
adverb:	prefinal, new, stressed

Description: the stress is within the new segment, in non-final position: **the given, definite noun is unstressed**. The judgement of incorrectness is probably due to (G.6.b) speakers' assumption that the (G.6.a) speaker referred to a book, though "Buch" is contextually new, with a semantic contrast to DVD (see fns. 16 and 18). The two positive responses may be due to an intuitive assumption of the identity of contents of Moby Dick and the book.

G.7.a. <i>Ich kann dir Moby Dick auf DVD ausleihen.</i>	
G.7.b. <i>Danke, ich habe das BUCH gelesen.</i>	
GOOD/bad	7/0
stress	7 "Buch"
stress in end position:	no
stress in new segment:	yes
noun:	definite, new

21 Like in English, corrections were suggested to put the stress on "Buch."

stress on noun:	yes
stress on verb:	no

Description: the stress is within the new segment; the stressed, definite “Buch,” in non-final position, is contextually new, in correct **contrast** to DVD.

G.8.a. *Ich kann dir Moby Dick auf DVD ausleihen.*

G.8.b. *Danke, ich habe das Buch letzte Woche geLEsen.*

good/ BAD	2/5
stress	7 “gelesen”
stress in end position:	yes
stress in new segment:	yes
noun:	definite, new
stress on noun:	no
stress on verb:	yes
adverb:	prefinal, new, unstressed

Description: the stress is within the new segment; the unstressed, definite “Buch” indicates its given status though it is contextually new (see fns. 7 and 16). As in (G.6.b), the two positive responses may be due to an intuitive assumption of the identity of contents of Moby Dick and the book (see fn. 7).

G.9.a. *Ich kann dir Moby Dick auf DVD ausleihen.*

G.9.b. *Danke, ich habe das BUCH letzte Woche gelesen.*

GOOD /bad	7/0
stress	7 “Buch”
stress in end position:	no
stress in new segment:	yes
noun:	definite, new
stress on noun:	yes
stress on verb:	no
adverb:	prefinal, new, unstressed

Description: the stress is within the new segment; the stressed, new “Buch” correctly **contrasts** with DVD.

Interpretation of German Part II examples:

Excluding clearly incorrect stressing (G.4.b, G.6.b, G.8.b), and clearly contrastive readings (G.7.b and G.9.b) leaves for consideration two texts – (G.3) and (G.5).

The points meriting highlighting in (G.3.b) and (G.5.b) are the following:

- (i) the stress clearly “avoids” the given noun;
- (ii) the stress is put on the nearest available item, regardless of the category, as far to the end as possible, which is either on the final verb as in (G.3.b) or the non-final adverb as in (G.5.b).

While (i) emphasizes the principle of “no stress on the given noun,” (ii) shows that stressing is in agreement with the “stress on the new item” principle.

It is important to add, that like in English, the (i) strategy does not apply to the given verb, which is naturally stressed also when given: *Hast du Moby Dick gelesen? Ja* or *Ja, ich habe es geLEsen* (in German you cannot omit the verb in the clausal version of the answer; cf. English *Yes, I have*).

6.3. Polish examples

P.3.a. <i>Mogę Ci pożyczyć Moby Dicka.</i>	(book in hand)
[Can _I you _{Dat} lend Moby Dick _{Acc}]	
‘I can lend you Moby Dick.’	
P.3.b. <i>Dzięki, czytałem książkę.</i>	(no stress prompt)
[Thanks, read _{I;past;imperf} book _{Acc}]	
‘Thanks, I have read the book.’	
GOOD/bad	10/0
stress	9 “czytałem”/1 “I don’t know”
stress in end position:	no
stress in new segment:	yes
noun:	given, definite
stress on noun:	no
stress on verb:	yes

Description: the stress is within the new segment, in non-final position: **the given noun is unstressed** (6 suggestions: *Dzięki, czytałem* and 2: *Dzięki, czytałem tę* (‘this’) *książkę*).

P.4.a. <i>Mogę Ci pożyczyć Moby Dicka.</i>	(book in hand)
[Can _I you _{Dat} lend Moby Dick _{Acc}]	
P.4.b. <i>Dzięki, czytałem KSIĄŻKę.</i>	
[Thanks, read _{I;past;imperf} book _{Acc}]	
‘Thanks, I have read the book.’	
good/BAD	0/10
stress	10 “książkę”
stress in end position:	yes
stress in new segment:	no
noun:	given, definite
stress on noun:	yes
stress on verb:	no

Description: the stress is within the given segment, in the final position: **the given noun is stressed**. The text is incorrect due to the unjustified, imposed **contrast**: Moby Dick (book) vs book.

P.5.a. <i>Mogę Ci pożyczyć Moby Dicka.</i>	(book in hand)
P.5.b. <i>Dzięki, czytałem książkę w zeszłym tyGODniu.</i>	
[Thanks, read _{I;past;imperf} book _{Acc} in past week]	
‘Thanks, I read the book last week.’	

GOOD/bad	10/0
stress	10 “tygodniu”
stress in end position:	yes
stress in new segment:	yes
noun:	given, definite
stress on noun:	no
stress on verb:	no
adverb:	final, new, stressed

Description: the stress is within the new segment, in the final position: **the given noun is unstressed** (6 suggestions: *Dzięki, czytałem w zeszłym tygodniu* and 2: *Dzięki, czytałem tę książkę w zeszłym tygodniu*).

P.6.a. *Mogę Ci pożyczyć Moby Dicka na DVD.*

[Can_I you_{Dat} lend Moby Dick_{Acc} on DVD]

P.6.b. *Dzięki, czytałem książkę w zeszłym tyGODniu.*²²

[Thanks, read_{I;past;imperf} book_{Acc} in past week]

‘Thanks, I read the book last week.’

good/ BAD	0/10
stress	10 “tygodniu”
stress in end position:	yes
stress in new segment:	yes
noun:	given, definite
stress on noun:	no
stress on verb:	no
adverb:	final, new, stressed

Description: the stress is within the new segment, in the final position: **the given noun is unstressed**.

P.7.a. *Mogę Ci pożyczyć Moby Dicka na DVD.*

[Can_I you_{Dat} lend Moby Dick on DVD]

‘I can lend you Moby Dick on DVD.’

P.7.b. *Dzięki, czytałem KSIĄŻkę.*

[Thanks, read_{I;past;imperf} book_{Acc}]

‘Thanks, I have read the book.’

GOOD/bad	10/0
stress	10 “książkę”
stress in end position:	yes
stress in new segment:	yes
noun:	new, definite
stress on noun:	yes
stress on verb:	no

22 As pointed out earlier, Polish allows for a number of variations of word order. In addition to the short good/bad judgement of (P.6.b), some respondents suggested corrections, for example, *Dzięki, w zeszłym tygodniu czytałem KSIĄŻkę*.

Description: the stress is within the new segment; the stressed, definite “książkę,” in final position, is contextually new (see section 2.4), in a correct **contrast** to DVD.

168

P.8.a. *Mogę Ci pożyczyć Moby Dicka na DVD.*

[Can_I you_{Dat} lend Moby Dick on DVD]

P.8.b. *Dzięki, czyTAłem książkę w zeszłym tygodniu.*

[Thanks, read_{I;past;imperf} book_{Acc} in past week]

‘Thanks, I read the book last week.’

good/ BAD	0/10
stress	10 “czytałem”
stress in end position:	no
stress in new segment:	yes
noun:	new, definite
stress on noun:	no
stress on verb:	yes
adverb:	final, new, unstressed

Description: the stress is within the new segment; though formally contextually new, the unstressed “książkę” indicates its given status reinforced by the verb “czytałem.”

P.9.a. *Mogę Ci pożyczyć Moby Dicka na DVD.*

[Can_I you_{Dat} lend Moby Dick on DVD]

P.9.b. *Dzięki, czytałem KSIĄŻKę w zeszłym tygodniu.*

[Thanks, read_{I;past;imperf} book_{Acc} in past week]

‘Thanks, I read the book last week.’

GOOD /bad	10/0
stress	9 “książkę”/1 “I don’t know”
stress in end position:	no
stress in new segment:	yes
noun:	new, definite
stress on noun:	yes
stress on verb:	no
adverb:	final, new, unstressed

Description: the stress is within the new segment; the stressed, new “książkę” correctly **contrasts** with DVD. As pointed out above, here “książkę” refers to the contrast in medium, the identity of contents being assumed.

Polish examples II – conclusions:

Excluding clearly incorrect stressing (P.4.b, P.6.b, P.8.b), and clearly contrastive readings (P.7.b and P.9.b), leaves two texts for consideration – (P.3) and (P.5).

The points referring to (P.3.b) and (P.5.b) which merit highlighting are the following:

- (i) the stress clearly “avoids” the given noun even in the final position (P.3.b);
- (ii) the stress is put on the nearest available item, regardless of the category, as far to the end as possible, which is either on the non-final (in this case, initial) verb as in (P.3.b) or the final adverb as in (P.5.b).

While (i) emphasizes the principle of “no stress on the given noun,” (ii) shows that stressing is in agreement with the “stress on new item” principle.

Again, it is important to add that like in the case of English and German, that strategy (i) does not apply to the given verb which is naturally stressed also when given: *Czytales Moby Dicka? Tak; CzyTAlem; CzyTAlem tę książkę.*

6.4. Conclusions to Part I and Part II analyses

Part I examples

- A. The (b) sentences are correct as long as the stress falls on the new noun, independent of the position of the noun (E.1.b, G.1.b, P.1.b and P.i.b).
- B. The sentence stress **on the contextually new verb** and **in end-focus position** (G.2.b, P.2.b and P.ii.b), that is, when both major principles apply, still renders the sentence **incorrect**.
- C. As predicted by my hypothesis (a) (Abstract), the sentence stress in neutral intonation texts goes with the new noun; the stress on the new verb makes the texts incorrect despite the fact that the main principles, end-focus and newness, are satisfied.

Part II examples

- A. Excluding the clearly incorrect stressing (E.4.b, E.6.b, E.8.b, G.4.b, G.6.b, G.8.b, and P.4.b, P.6.b, P.8.b) and clearly contrastive cases (E.7.b and E.9.b, G.7.b and G.9.b, P.7.b and P.9.b), we are left with two crucial texts in each language – (E.3) and (E.5), (G.3) and (G.5), (P.3) and (P.5).
- B. The importance of the (b) sentences in the (3) and (5) texts rests in the fact that:
 - (i) the stress clearly “avoids” the given noun, even in the final position in English (E.3.b) and Polish (P.3.b);
 - (ii) the stress is placed on the nearest available major grammatical category, as far to the end as possible which is the **non-final** verb (E.3.b and P.3.b) or adverb (G.5.b), or the **final** verb (G.3.b) or adverb (E.5.b and P.5.b).

- C. While (i) emphasizes the principle of “no stress on the given noun,” (ii) shows that stressing is in agreement with the “stress on new item” principle.

It is important to add that the (i) strategy (no stress on a given noun) does not apply to the given verb which is naturally stressed also when given:

Have you read Moby Dick? Yes, I have READ it/the book. (or simply, I have; Yes, I have; or Yes)

Hast du Moby Dick gelesen? Ja, ich habe es/das Buch geLEsen. (or simply Ja)

Czytales Moby Dicka? CzyTAlem; CzyTAlem tę książkę. (or simply Tak)

The above analyses and ensuing conclusions show the correctness of my main hypothesis that in neutral intonation, it is the contextual information status of the noun that governs stress placement.

7. A digression on prosody

The prosodic nature of the “larger than life” emphasis sets it apart from the relation between the noun and the stress in neutral intonation, as well as from the semantic functions of the contrastive/corrective stress. It would not, therefore, be out of place to check, although rather as a digression in the context of the present paper, whether there might be any relations between the prosodic features and stress placement in relation to the category of nouns; in other words, whether it is true that emphatic stress, presumably characteristic of contrast and correction, is really “larger than life” in relation to the stress in neutral/normal intonation. The problem gains significance in view of the fact that in a few cases the respondents differed in their judgement of the (b) sentences and sometimes they were hesitant, or inclined to correct the place of the stress.

Therefore, although a prosodic analysis is of marginal significance for the main theme of the paper, I asked a specialist²³ to perform a prosodic analysis of pitch, duration and intensity of the stressed syllables. She analysed all (b) sentences in the present paper with Praat program. However, I will use only a few diagrams to present the problem.

The introductory assumption is that in neutral intonation the main features of sentence stress – pitch, intensity and duration²⁴ – would not differ significantly from sentence to sentence. One would expect, however, that there would be a noticeable difference between “normal” stress and “emphatic” stress, the latter signalling contrast or correction in a “larger than life” realization (Lehiste 1970), that is with a greater magnitude of pitch, or intensity, or duration or any combination thereof. The job of such a corrective stress would be, in Enkvist’s words, “to set right a poorly transmitted or wrongly received part of a message” and “to signal, not the difference between shared and new information but rather the relative weight that a speaker wants to attach to a particular element in the speech stream” (1980: 135).

The expression “the relative weight that a speaker wants to attach...” implies dependence on extralinguistic, subjective factors and thus a relative character of prosodic parameters. The examples below show the latter point quite clearly. The analyses are based on two kinds of answers: one neutral and one clearly contrastive.

ENGLISH (male voice)

E.1.a. *What were you doing last night?*

E.1.b. *I was reading a BOOK.*

Segment:	oo /o/		
Duration [s]:	0,09		
Pitch [Hz]:	max 137.60	min 125.70	difference 11.90
Intensity [dB]:	max 73.92	min 70.84	difference 3.08

23 Małgorzata Waryszak, MA in logopedia with audiology, and engineer in technical physics.

24 Cf. Halliday (1967: 203).

E.7.a. *I can lend you Moby Dick on DVD.*

E.7.b. *Thanks, I have read the BOOK.*

Segment:	oo /ʊ/		
Duration [s]:	0,10		
Pitch [Hz]:	max 80.90	min 76.55	difference 4.35
Intensity [dB]:	max 63.87	min 57.27	difference 6.60

Comment:

A comparison of (E.1.b) – clearly a neutral answer to a question, and (E.7.b) – clearly contrastive, show that:

- duration is practically the same;
- pitch difference is slightly, but insignificantly greater in the “neutral” stress!²⁵;
- intensity is insignificantly greater in the contrastive interpretation.

GERMAN (female voice)

G.1.a. *Was hast du gestern Abend gemacht?*

G.1.b. *Ich habe ein BUCH gelesen.*

Segment:	u		
Duration [s]:	0,08		
Pitch [Hz]:	max 224.14	min 216.48	difference 7.66
Intensity [dB]:	max 73.02	min 69.15	difference 3.87

G.7.a. *Ich kann dir Moby Dick auf DVD ausleihen.*

G.7.b. *Danke, ich habe das BUCH gelesen.* (G.6.b)

Segment:	u		
Duration [s]:	0,06		
Pitch [Hz]:	max 302.48	min 264.05	difference 38.43
Intensity [dB]:	max 74.45	min 68.23	difference 6.22

Comment:

Again, a comparison of (G.1.b) – clearly a neutral answer to a question, and (G.7.b) – clearly contrastive/corrective, show that:

- duration is practically the same;
- pitch difference is greater in the “contrastive” stress, as expected;
- intensity is slightly greater for the contrastive interpretation.

²⁵ As Lehiste (1970: 127) pointed out, the pitch correlate was found to differ from intensity and duration in that it “tended to produce an all-or-nothing effect: **the magnitude of the frequency change** seemed to be relatively unimportant, whereas the fact that a frequency change had taken place appeared to be all-important” (emphasis is my own – A. S.).

In this case, the prosodic features are in agreement with expected values, though the difference in intensity is insignificant.

172

POLISH (male voice)

P.1.a. *Co robiłeś wczoraj wieczorem?*

P.1.b. *Czytałem KSIĄŻkę.*

Segment:	ą /ã/		
Duration [s]:	0.19		
Pitch [Hz]:	max 141.63	min 70.31	difference 71.32
Intensity [dB]:	max 77.44	min 61.69	difference 15.75

P.7.a. *Mogę Ci pożyczyć Moby Dicka na DVD.*

P.7.b. *Dzięki, czytałem KSIĄŻkę.*

Segment:	ą /ã/		
Duration[s]:	0.16		
Pitch [Hz]:	max 130.34	min 94.76	difference 35.58
Intensity [dB]:	max 76.46	min 60.42	difference 16.04

Comment:

Like in English and in German, a comparison of (P.1.b) – clearly a neutral answer to a question, and (P.7.b) – clearly contrastive/corrective, show that:

- duration is practically the same;
- pitch difference is significantly greater in the “neutral” stress!;
- intensity is insignificantly greater in the contrastive interpretation.

Again, I can find no explanation for the unexpected “reverse” difference in pitch – greater in the neutral intonation, smaller in the contrastive one. The difference in intensity is negligible.

All these observation clearly indicate the validity of the view of the relative weight that can be attached to particular items by a speaker, depending on his attitude towards the topic at issue, hence my proposal to call such stress attitudinal.

A brief résumé:

1. The analyses revealed no connection between the stress prosody and the role of nouns in stress placement in neutral intonation.
2. Incidentally, it looks like there is no difference in prosody between non-contrastive and contrastive cases (no emphasis in the sense of “larger than life” realization).
3. Contrast/correction are semantic phenomena; prosody is irrelevant and may range from “normal” to “larger than life,” the latter being attitudinal in nature.
4. While stress-noun relations in neutral intonation is a language rule and predictable, the magnitude of prosody is purely subjective and predictable only “if you’re a mind reader” (Bolinger 1972).

In short, since emphasis may be realized in innumerable variations of prosodic features, it would not lend itself to an objective measurement, and thus would be of little use for semantic purposes. Therefore, I propose to call this kind of stress (Enkvist's "focus") attitudinal, reflecting Enkvist's description of "a relative weight that a speaker wants to attach to a particular element in the speech stream" (1980: 135). As attitudinal, it would obviously be impossible to predict (*cf.* Bolinger 1972).

The only prediction that we can make about stress placement refers to its neutral form in connection with the contextual information value of nouns, as has been shown in section 5. The impression of the "larger than life" realization may be due to the stress placement other than normal.

8. Conclusions

In the present paper I argue that in neutral intonation it is the information value of the noun that determines stress assignment according to two simple rules:

1. The stress falls on the new information noun if such is present.
2. The stress must not fall on the given information noun. In the latter case, the stress falls on any other major lexical item as far to the end of the sentence as possible.

The reason for that behaviour rests in the fact that, unlike verbs, nouns represent many referents (except the so-called "unique nouns," for example, the Bible, the sun, the moon, *etc.*). In communication, it is of utmost importance to know whether the interlocutors are talking about the same referent or introduce a new referent. However, while in the structure "X reads Y," referents of X and Y may vary in innumerable ways ($X_1 - X_n$ and $Y_1 - Y_n$), the relation between them, the activity "read" remains basically the same independent of who is the Agent and what is the Object of reading. In other words, we do not distinguish $READ_1$ through $READ_n$.

It is worth mentioning that again, unlike in verbs, the noun referring function is signalled by more than one linguistic means: articles and stress in some languages, stress and word order in others, plus demonstrative pronouns in both categories. Such an accumulation of means for one category is a clear evidence of the importance of referent identification in communication.

The importance of nouns is cognitively grounded in the fact that nouns represent objects which, as Langacker (1987) pointed out are conceptually independent, while relations, represented by verbs, are conceptually dependent, a relation that was obvious in the structure of Chomsky's (1965) selectional restrictions in which verbs are described in terms of accompanying noun features.

In his 2012 paper Szwedek argued for the primacy of the noun over other categories on the basis of linguistic (selectional restrictions, clefting, American Sign Language), cognitive (metaphorical process of objectification²⁶) and psychological (language acquisition) phenomena. The determining role of the contextual information value of nouns in stress assignment in neutral intonation is yet another evidence for the uniqueness of nouns among other categories.

26 For metaphorical conceptualization of abstract entities (mental, emotional, relations, *etc.*) as objects see Reddy (1979), Jäkel (1995) and Szwedek (2011).

References

- Barsov, Anton A. ([1783–1788] 1981) *Rossijskaja grammatika*. Text preparation and comments by M. P. Tobolov; ed. by B. A. Uspenskij. Izd. Moskovskogo Universiteta.
- Baumann, Stefan, Martine Grice (2006) “The Intonation of Accessibility.” [In:] *Journal of Pragmatics* 38; 1636–1657.
- Beaver, David I., Brady Clark (2008) *Sense and Sensitivity: How Focus Determines Meaning*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Benedix, Roderich (1888) *Der mündliche Vortrag*. Leipzig: J. J. Weber.
- Bogusławski, Andrzej (1977) *Problems of the Thematic-Rhematic Structure of Sentences*. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
- Bolinger, Dwight (1972) “Accent is Predictable (If You’re a Mind-Reader).” [In:] *Language* 48; 633–644.
- Chafe, Wallace (1976) “Givenness, Contrastiveness, Definiteness, Subject, Topic and Points of View.” [In:] Charles Li (ed.) *Subject and Topic*. New York: Academic Press; 25–55.
- Chesterman, Andrew (1991) *On Definiteness. A Study with Special Reference to English and Finnish*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Chomsky, Noam (1971) “Deep Structure, Surface Structure, and Semantic Interpretation.” [In:] Danny Steinberg, Leon Jakobovits (eds.) *Semantics. An Interdisciplinary Reader in Philosophy, Linguistics and Psychology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press; 183–216.
- Crystal, David (1969) *Prosodic Systems and Intonation in English*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Daneš, František (1974) “Functional Sentence Perspective and the Text Organization.” [In:] František Daneš (ed.) *Papers on Functional Sentence Perspective*. Prague: Academia; 106–128.
- Danielsson, Bror (ed.) (1955) *John Hart’s Works on Orthography and Pronunciation*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell.
- Enkvist, Nils-Erik (1980) “Marked Focus: Functions and Constraints.” [In:] Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech, Jan Svartvik (eds.) *Studies in English Linguistics for Randolph Quirk*. London: Longman; 134–152.
- Firbas, Jan (1964) “On Defining the Theme in Functional Sentence Analysis.” [In:] *Travaux Linguistiques de Prague* 1; 267–280.
- Firbas, Jan (1983) “On Bipartition, Tripartition and Pluripartition in the Theory of Functional Perspective.” [In:] Teresa Dobrzyńska, Elżbieta Janus (eds.) *Tekst i zdanie*. Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich; 69–79.
- German, James, Janet Pierrehumbert, Stefan Kaufmann (2006) “Evidence for Phonological Constraints on Nuclear Accent Placement.” [In:] *Language* 82 (1); 151–168.
- Hajičová, Eva, Petr Sgall (1975) “Topic and Focus in Transformational Grammar.” [In:] *Papers in Linguistics* 8; 3–58.
- Halliday, Michael A. K. (1967) “Notes on Transitivity and Theme in English.” [In:] *Journal of Linguistics* 3; 177–274.
- Jackendoff, Ray (1972) *Semantic Interpretation in Generative Grammar*. Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
- Jäkel, Olaf (1995) “The Metaphorical Concept of Mind: Mental Activity Is Manipulation.” [In:] John Taylor, Robert MacLaury (eds.) *Language and the Cognitive Construal of the World*. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter; 197–229.
- Langacker, Ronald (1978) *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar: Theoretical Prerequisites*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Lanin, Ilene (1977) “You Can Take the Sentence Out of the Discourse but You Cannot Take the Discourse Out of the Mind of the Speaker.” [In:] *Papers from the Thirteenth Regional Meeting*. Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society; 288–301.
- Leech, Geoffrey (1974) *Semantics*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

- Leech, Geoffrey (1981) *Semantics: The Study of Meaning*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Lehiste, Ilsa (1970) *Suprasegmentals*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Lehmann, Christian (1991) "Predicate Classes and Participation." [In:] Hansjakob Seiler, Waldfried Premper (eds.) *Partizipation. Das sprachliche Erfassen von Schverhalten*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr; 183–239 (Language Universals Series (LUS) 6).
- Li, Charles. (ed.) (1976) *Subject and Topic*. New York: Academic Press.
- Mathesius, Vilém (1929) "Zur Satzperspektive im Modernen Englisch." [In:] *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 155; 202–210.
- Mathesius, Vilém (1939) "O tak zvaném aktuálním členění věty." [In:] *Slovo a slovesnost* 5; 171–174. Reprinted in: Vilém Mathesius (1947) *Čeština a obecný jazykozpyt*. Praha; 234–242.
- Mathesius, Vilém ([1911] 1964) "On the Potentiality of the Phenomena of Language." [In:] Josef Vachek (ed.) *A Prague School Reader in Linguistics*. Transl. by Josef Vachek. Bloomington: Indiana University Press; 1–32.
- Meyer, Ernst A. (1906) *Deutsche Gespräche mit phonetischer Einleitung and Umschrift*. Leipzig.
- Moritz, Karl P. (1786) *Versuch einer deutschen Prosodie*.
- Pakosz, Maciej (1981) "Prosodic Manifestation of the Scope of Focus in English." [In:] *Kwartalnik Neofilologiczny* XXVIII (1); 85–99.
- Quirk, Randolph, Anne Duckworth, Jan Rusiecki, Jan Svartvik, Andrew Colin (1964) "Studies in the Correspondence of Prosodic to Grammatical Features in English." [In:] Horace Lunt (ed.) *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Linguists*. The Hague: Mouton; 679–691.
- Quirk, Randolph, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech, Jan Svartvik (1972) *A Grammar of Contemporary English*. London: Longman.
- Quirk, Randolph, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech, Jan Svartvik (1985) *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. London, New York: Longman.
- Reddy, Michael (1979) "The Conduit Metaphor: A Case of Frame Conflict in Our Language About Language." [In:] Andrew Ortony (ed.) *Metaphor and Thought*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press; 164–201.
- Riester, Arndt (2005) "Context and Focus Projection. A Compositional Intonation-Based Account of Focus Interpretation." [In:] Emar Maier, Corien Bary, Janneke Huitink (eds.) *Proceedings of Sinn und Bedeutung 9, 2005*. Nijmegen: University of Nijmegen; 299–313.
- Schmerling, Susan (1976) *Aspects of English Sentence Stress*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Schwarzschild, Roger (1999) "Givenness, AvoidF, and Other Constraints on the Placement of Accent." [In:] *Natural Language Semantics* 7; 141–177.
- Selkirk, Elisabeth (1995) "Sentence Prosody: Intonation, Stress, and Phrasing." [In:] John Goldsmith (ed.) *The Handbook of Phonological Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell; 550–569.
- Šimik, Radek, Marta Wierzba (2015) "The Role of Givenness, Presupposition, and Prosody in Czech. Experimental Study." [In:] *Semantics & Pragmatics* 8 (3); 1–103.
- Steedman, Mark (2004) "Information-Structural Semantics for English Intonation." [In:] Chungmin Lee, Matthew Gordon, Daniel Büring (eds.) *Topic and Focus: Cross-linguistic Perspectives on Meaning and Intonation*, no. 82 in *Studies in Linguistics and Philosophy*; 245–264. Dordrecht: Kluwer. Proceedings of the LSA Workshop on Topic and Focus, Santa Barbara CA July, 2001.
- Szwedek, Aleksander (1986) *A Linguistic Analysis of Sentence Stress*. Gunter Narr Verlag: Tübingen.
- Szwedek, Aleksander (1987) "The Role of Category Membership in the Thematic Structure of the Sentence." [In:] *Folia Linguistica* XXI (2–4); 249–259.
- Szwedek, Aleksander (1999) "Interpretation of Some Cases of Aspect in Polish." [In:] *Acta Universitatis Wroclaviensis* No 2127. *Anglica Wratislaviensia* XXXV; 117–124.

- Szwedek, Aleksander (2010) "Focus on Focus: A Review Article of *Aspects of the Grammar of Focus: A Minimalist View* by Przemysław Tajsner." [In:] *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia* 46 (2); 45–80.
- Szwedek, Aleksander (2011) "The Ultimate Source Domain." [In:] *Review of Cognitive Linguistics* 9 (2); 341–366.
- Szwedek, Aleksander (2012) "More Evidence on the Primacy of the Noun Over the Verb." [In:] Zdzisław Wąsik, Piotr Chruszczewski (eds.) *Languages in Contact 2011*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Filologicznej we Wrocławiu; 213–223 (Philologica Wratislaviensia: Acta et Studia. Vol. 9).
- Tajsner, Przemysław (2008) *Aspects of the Grammar of Focus: A Minimalist View*. Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang.
- Viëtor, Wilhelm (1909) *Die Aussprache des Schriftdeutschen*. Leipzig: O.R. Reisland.
- Walker, John (1787) *The Melody of Speaking*. Menston, England: The Scholarly Press Limited.