

Fixed Stress and the Hungarian Speaker's Mind

Irene Vogel (University of Delaware)

Within the field of prosody, fixed stress would seem to be rather uninteresting. For example, the rule for stress assignment in Hungarian can be simply stated as: stress the first syllable of a word. While the placement of stress in the right location may not be particularly noteworthy, there are interesting consequences of fixed stress for speakers of such languages. With respect to production, it will be shown that the redundancy of fixed stress allows speakers to acoustically manifest stress with relatively less precision than speakers of non-predictable stress languages. With regard to perception, it will be shown that the lack of a contrastive role of stress in fixed stress languages results in speakers being insensitive to stress in other languages, or "stress deaf." Hungarian is a particularly consistent fixed-stress language, and it will be used as a basis for comparison with other types of predictable and non-predictable stress languages.