Pronunciation: Sentence Stress (Prominence)

Film: *Family Man* (adaptable for other films)

This lesson is best used as a follow-up to pronunciation work on sentence stress. By the time you do this lesson your students should have some idea as to what is involved.

This lesson uses the scene where Jack (Nicholas Cage) returns home after abandoning his family on Christmas day and has to take a tongue-lashing from his wife Kate (Tea Leoni). From “Go get ‘em, Tiger” as Jack walks towards the house to “You missed Christmas Jack” as Kate tires of arguing.

Stage One: Pre-listening task
Students work in pairs answering the orientation question:
- Why do married couples argue? (A big question!) Students discuss this in pairs and list reasons. The class report back to the teacher.

Stage Two: While-listening task
With the T.V. turned away (vision off) students listen to the scene answering the gist question:
- Why does this couple have an argument?
Answer: Jack missed Christmas. Ask them if they remember any of the words used in the rather one-sided argument. List any they can remember on the board, this will help them in the next exercise.

Stage Three: While-listening task
Give a copy of the handout to each student. Instruct them to listen to the scene again (vision off) and indicate how many words are in each blank space. (They don’t write the actual words at this stage) Students compare results. This may have to be repeated. Check and correct answers.

Stage Four: While-listening task
Students listen again and try to write the missing words in the spaces provided. They then compare notes. This part will probably have to be repeated several times. Check and correct answers.

Stage Five: Pronunciation work
Students underline the stressed syllables in the phrases on the worksheet. You will probably have to guide them here or play the scene one more time. To let your students get a feel for the pronunciation work in the last part of the lesson, practise the sentence stress of the phrases. Back-chaining is a good method.
Stage Six: First Viewing
To help set up the role-play activity, it’s time to let the students see the scene for the first time. It’s an emotional scene, lots of gestures and great facial expressions, so it should put them in the mood for an argument.

Stage Seven: Post-viewing task
Role-play preparation. Turn your students’ attention to the second part of the worksheet and give them time to prepare their argument. This will give you time to help them find the correct stress patterns in their sentences and give them some rehearsal time.

Stage Eight: Role-play
Students then act out their role-play without reading the script. (They have already rehearsed) Give the other students a task like writing down stressed words and giving a summary of each argument afterwards.
Worksheet Sentence Stress (Family Man)

Listen to the argument and (1) indicate the number of words which are missing from the spaces. Then (2) write the missing words in the spaces.

- ___________________________ idea what you put us through today?
- You walk ___________________________ in the morning.
- ___________________________ where you’re going or even that you’re going.
- And ___________________________ till hours later.
- I ___________________________ friends. I had the state troopers looking for you.
- ___________________________ with the hospital for God’s sakes.
- What ___________________________ leaves his family on Christmas morning ___________________________ where he’s going?
- What ___________________________ does that Jack?
- I ___________________________
- Could you please stop yelling ___________________________?

Having an Argument

First, decide which of the following couples you want to be.

- mother and daughter
- father and son
- mother and son
- father and daughter
- two friends
- two work colleagues
- brother and sister
- two drivers

Make a list below of the reasons why these two people may argue then write a short script of a typical argument. Underline the stressed parts of the sentences.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

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Worksheet Sentence stress (Family Man)

Teacher’s copy

- Do you have any idea what you put us through today?
- You walk **out of here** at 7.30 in the morning.
- You don’t tell me where you’re going or even that you’re going.
- And I don’t see you till hours later.
- I called all of our friends. I had the state troopers looking for you.
- I was on the phone with the hospital for God’s sakes.
- What kind of a man leaves his family on Christmas morning **without a word about** where he’s going?
- What kind of a man does that Jack?
- I don’t know
- Could you please stop yelling **at me**?