

**NATALIA VI. PARKER**  
**University of Leeds**

### **SOLVING THE PUZZLE OF THE RUSSIAN STRESS**

Since Russian stress was declared a puzzle by Michael Shapiro in 1986, the upsurge of research developments in prosody has made “the study of word stress [...] one of the best developed areas of modern phonology” (Kijak, 2009: 6). Yet, acquiring the Russian stress remains one of the biggest challenges for English speaking learners, while, surprisingly, there is still no methodology for teaching it.

This paper summarises various characteristics of the word stress systems in Russian and English, identified in the recent research literature, including the construction of word stress from the point of view of metrical theory, as well as some psycholinguistic aspects of stress encoding in mental representations. The main idea is to analyse the factors that affect the stress acquisition process, in order to then suggest how my original word-string methodology could be used to facilitate stress production at beginner level.

The high effectiveness of this approach will be demonstrated by the data from the recent teaching intervention experiment, within which a group of complete beginners, after 8 hours of tuition, outscored Russian Studies students with regard to stress performance. The examples of word strings of unfamiliar Russian words selected according to particular stress patterns and used for reading out practice, will be used to illustrate the main principles of the new methodology. This research has vast implications for the teaching of Russian as a foreign language and pronunciation teaching in general, as well as for phonology acquisition research.