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Intonation In English

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا
يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

صَدَقَ اللَّهُ الْعَظِيمُ

سورة الزمر (الآية ٩)

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my parents ,
My husband,
My teachers and my brother and sister .

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who helped us during our graduation project, starting with my endless thanks to our supervisor, **Prof. Dr. Abd Ali Nayif**, who made effort in encouraging us to do a great job, and providing us with valuable information and advice to be better every time. Thanks for the constant support and kind communication that made a huge impact on me.

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to know the importance and use of intonation in communicative English or spoken / day to day English. As it is well known fact that, knowing and using the right intonation patterns in day to day communicative English is a challenging and one of the most difficult tasks to non-native speakers and learners of English especially Indian speakers of English because we have many languages. Even though they are aware of theory, rules and regulations, when it comes to implementation and use they tend to make mistakes. In general, most of the schools and colleges, ESL learners are hardly ever trained and to use the right patterns of intonation. The problem is that, majority of the teachers of English are not confident in teaching intonation as it is difficult. Even though some of them are confident in teaching segmental features like consonants and vowel sounds when it comes to supra-segmental features; word stress, intonation and rhythm most of the English teachers dare not to attempt and teach. The reality is that, majority the teachers of English themselves feel difficulty in using right intonation patterns on right syllable.

المخلص

الهدف من هذا البحث هو معرفة أهمية واستخدام التنغيم في اللغة الإنجليزية التواصلية أو اللغة الإنجليزية المنطوقة / اليومية. كما هو معلوم جيدًا ، فإن معرفة واستخدام أنماط التجويد الصحيحة في اللغة الإنجليزية التواصلية اليومية يعد أمرًا صعبًا وواحدًا من أصعب المهام للمتحدثين غير الناطقين باللغة الإنجليزية ومتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية وخاصة المتحدثين الهنود باللغة الإنجليزية لأن لدينا العديد من اللغات . على الرغم من أنهم على دراية بالنظرية والقواعد واللوائح ، عندما يتعلق الأمر بالتنفيذ والاستخدام ، فإنهم يميلون إلى ارتكاب الأخطاء. بشكل عام ، معظم المدارس والكليات ، متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية نادرًا ما يتم تدريبهم على استخدام الأنماط الصحيحة للتنغيم. المشكلة هي أن غالبية معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية ليسوا واثقين من تدريس التنغيم لأنه صعب. على الرغم من أن البعض منهم واثق في تدريس السمات القطاعية مثل الحروف الساكنة وأصوات الحروف المتحركة عندما يتعلق الأمر بالميزات فوق القطعية ؛ التشديد على الكلمات والتنغيم والإيقاع يجرؤ معظم مدرسي اللغة الإنجليزية على عدم المحاولة والتدريس. الحقيقة هي أن غالبية مدرسي اللغة الإنجليزية أنفسهم يشعرون بصعوبة في استخدام أنماط التنغيم الصحيحة على المقطع الصحيح.

1.1 Introduction

Intonation, in phonetics, the melodic pattern of an utterance. It conveys differences of expressive meaning (e.g., surprise, anger, or delight), and it can also serve a grammatical function.

Intonation is primarily a matter of variation in the pitch of the voice. In such languages as English, it is often accompanied by stress and rhythm to produce meaning. (Tone is also a form of pitch modulation, but the term describes the use of pitch to differentiate words and grammatical categories). (Johan ,eta, 1990)

In many languages, including English, intonation distinguishes one type of phrase or sentence from another. The different intonations a person can use to say, “The cup of water is over there” demonstrate this grammatical function: when a person begins with a medium pitch and ends with a lower one (falling intonation), this sentence is a simple assertion, but when a person uses a rising intonation (high final pitch), it is a question.

The term ‘intonation’ has been defined in at least two different ways in the literature. A narrow definition equates intonation with ‘speech melody’, restricting it to the “ensemble of pitch variations in the course of an utterance”. (Johan ’t ,eta, 1990)

The crucial role of pitch variations for the interpretation of utterances , in which the pitch contour is represented as a line above the words spoken.

1.2 What is Intonation

Intonation is the way the voice rises or falls when communicating. In short, it is the music of speech.

It focuses more on how you say it rather than what is being said. This is important in English communication because sentences may vary in meaning depending on the intonation. It also yields dynamics on your speech and makes it more compelling to hear.(Cruttenden 1997, p 8–10.)

1.3 System of Intonation

Intonation is integral to languages, and therefore to language study and to language learning and teaching. Neglect of intonation in the past is now no excuse for neglect in the present. Traditionally, pronunciation manuals concentrated on consonants, vowels and word stress, and lexical tone in tone languages: this area of interest is often labelled word phonology. Word phonology is readily accessible to anyone with an interest in language, because words and their pronunciation are easily identifiable; their representation, through spelling, is also easily recognized in the written form of languages. (It does not matter if the language uses an alphabetic script, a syllabary, or pictographs; it is nevertheless words - as basic terms of any message that get represented).(Tench, 2015,p7)

Rhythm and intonation are less easy to talk about because they accompany whole messages. Rhythm is readily identifiable in poetry, but the role of intonation in the recitation of poetry is less widely acknowledged. This does not mean that no one had ever investigated the role of intonation until recently, but simply that it did not receive equivalent coverage and attention. Indeed, some eminent names in acting have drawn attention to intonation and rhythm, namely David Garrick and Joshua Steele in the eighteenth century; and some eminent linguists in the first half of this century have published interesting studies, for instance, Armstrong and Ward, Jones, H.E. Palmer and Pike. However, it was not

until the availability of tape recordings that linguists were able to investigate intonation more thoroughly. The acquisition of tape recorders produced a new dimension to into national research in the 1950s and 1960s. Although Jassem, Kingdon and O'Connor and Arnold bridge the gap between the older studies and the newer, it was Halliday and Crystal who set the pace by analysing long stretches of tape- recorded spoken discourse. Not only were long stretches of spoken discourse available for listening and re-listening, but recordings could be subjected to a wide range of acoustic experimentation.

1.4 Describing Intonation

According to Ladd (Ladd, 1980, p14), “our first task in analyzing intonation must be to identify the inventory of meaningful elements”. However, there are significant disagreements in applied linguistics about the linguistic categories of intonation and how they can be mapped onto the phonetic reality of continuous pitch movement. The inventories of meaningful elements vary according to language, with various ways to describe these elements even for the same language.(Hirst & DeCristo, 1998)

Until the 1970s, intonation was largely described impressionistically. Today, all serious claims about intonation are subject to instrumental measurement. However, this shift in approach has not settled the debate over whether intonation is best described as static (that is, made up of level tones) or dynamic (made up of moving tones).Straddling these two dominant approaches with a unique approach to description was Dwight Bollinger, who wrote from the 1950s to around 1990. Bollinger highlighted the importance of pitch accents, which continue to be central in all descriptions of intonation.

He defined these in terms of the pitch movement used to accent syllables. Thus, “the pitch does two things at once. First, it signals an accent on that syllable. Second, its direction up, down, or level— contributes to the melody”(Bolinger,1989,p4.). Bollinger’s influence on intonation has been substantial, but

his into national description is rarely referred to in applied linguistics. Historically (when looking at descriptions of English), a major disagreement in applied linguistics descriptions has been whether intonation's atomic components should be represented as static or dynamic, that is, whether pitch contours are comprised of pitch levels or are better seen as holistic configurations. In descriptions of English intonation, the pitch level approach has been favored by Americans, while the configurations approach has been favored by British applied linguists. The two approaches have long used different notation schemes, whose descriptions largely address many of the same issues. The traditional American levels approach has always built into meaningful configurations, while the British configurations approach has always included more basic elements that make up the configurations. Nonetheless, it is useful to understand the historical evolution of the two approaches, if only because their formalism remains a powerful mask to underlying similarities.

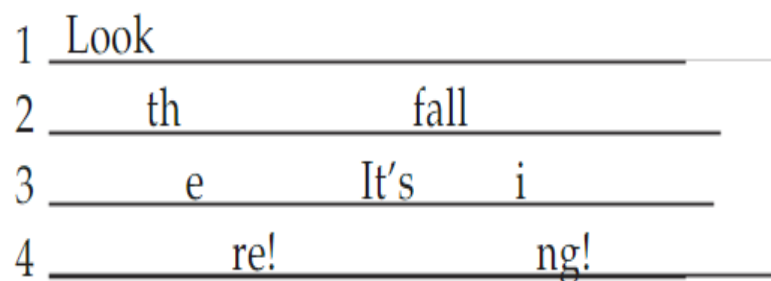


Figure 1:- Pike's four-level system of intonation

1.5 Why is Intonation important?

Intonation is a layer of meaning beyond words and helps speakers communicate meaning through the rise and fall of the voice. The patterns of rise and fall are described as 'tones'. The different types of meaning intonation communicates include:(Bolinger,1985,p5.)

- Grammatical meaning e.g. different tones for types of questions

- Status of information e.g. main or subordinate, finished or unfinished
- Attitude e.g. whether we're certain or not, have doubts or reservations
- Feelings e.g. whether we're confident, happy, enthusiastic, sad, bored etc
- Relational e.g. how 'open', friendly or 'closed' we are towards a listener, or to communicate empathy or shared feeling.

1.6 Structure

The intonation of English not only displays system, it also displays structure. Indeed, structures of some kind will be found in all intonation systems in the world's languages, Think again of the question in (Tench,2015,p13-14)

(1.1)What are you going to do tonight?

or the statement in

(1.2)I'm going into town this morning

Each being said in one 'go'. Each is considered as a unit of intonation, each handling one piece of information (whether asking about it or stating it). Then, think again of the statement in

(1.3) I'm going into town I this morning

Being said in two 'goes'. In this case, each part is a unit of intonation: one piece of information is given in the first unit, a second piece in the second. In the same way, the part of the utterance given in (1.4) is a single unit of intonation, whereas the same wording in (1.5) is a sequence of two units: the first unit of (1.5) simply gives the topic (My brother) and the second provides an extra piece of information about the topic. (Tench,2015,p13-14)

Each intonation unit has a structure; we will illustrate the intonation unit structure first of all with a very familiar saying:

(1.6) A dog is a man's best friend

Imagine, perhaps, that someone says this just as the conversation turns to the topic of dogs. It is most likely to be said as a single unit of intonation, with the word friend being most prominent, and the pitch of the voice falling to a low level on that word. (Notice we have then specified all three systems: tonality (segmentation of the discourse into units of intonation) = one unit; tonicity (identification of the most prominent word within the unit) - friend; tone (specification of the contrastive pitch movement falling.) In (1.6), the word friend is said to be the 'nucleus' or the 'tonic syllable'. These two terms represent two traditions in the description of intonation; in this context they mean the same thing, as shown in Table 1.1. The part of the utterance up to best is called the 'pre-tonic segment', which in turn can be divided into the 'pre-head' and the 'head'. The head is the part which begins with the first stressed syllable, known as the 'onset' syllable, in this case the word dog; the word a before dog is unstressed and precedes the head, hence its label 'pre-head'. The structure is thus: (Tench,2015,p13-14)

pre-tonic segment		tonic/nucleus
pre-head	head	
A	'dog is a 'man's 'best	'friend

TABLE 1.1

The stressed syllables are traditionally marked by ' ; the tonic or nucleus is marked either in bold, or in capitals or, as we shall do, by underlining.

The tonic (or nucleus) is obligatory, because it is that part of the intonation unit that bears the contrastive pitch movement, the tone; it is also always stressed

not only because it bears the tone but also because of its essential prominence. The other parts of the unit are optional, in the sense that they may or may not happen to be present.

The sentiment of (1.6) could easily be rendered as

(1.7) 'Dogs are 'men's 'best 'friends

In which case there is no pre-head, because there happens to be no unstressed syllable before the onset syllable of the head (Dogs).

Now suppose the topic of the conversation had been different, say, horses, and somebody claimed that in fact horses were men's best friends. Another could retort:

(1.8) 'Dogs are 'men's 'best 'friends

With contrastive emphasis on Dogs right at the beginning of the intonation unit. In (1.8), Dogs is the most prominent; it is, therefore, the tonic (nucleus) and is not preceded by anything; therefore, in the case of (1.8), there is no pre-tonic segment, no head, and no pre-head.

What about the words that follow Dogs in (1.8)? The tonic (nucleus) and all following words in the same unit are collectively known as the 'tonic segment' (obviously, in contrast to the pre-tonic segment). The tonic segment can then be subdivided into the tonic and the tail. The tail thus refers to all the words subsequent to the tonic syllable. (The use of the term 'tail' and the choice of topics in (1.6), (1.7) and (1.8) are purely co incidental!) (Tench,2015,p13-14)

You might ask why it is necessary to identify so many points in the structure of the intonation unit. The answer is that different pitch movements can contrast with each other at each point of structure, and thus produce changes of meaning. The pitch of the pre-head may be either higher or lower than normal, and these variations have a significance; the pitch movement in the head is capable of many variations and these, too, have their significance; the pitch movement at the tonic provides the basis of the tone system, and the tone has an effect on the pitch of the tail. The sole purpose of this elaborate dissection of the

intonation unit is to indicate the points or areas where intonation can vary and produce differences of meaning. It is the explication of the choices in meaning that determines the essence of linguistic structures.

In response to (1.8) - the contrastive assertion that it is dogs who are men's best friends - someone might agree by saying

(1.9) yes they are aren't they

There are three units here (three 'goes').

(1.9a) yes

Stands all by itself; it consists of a tonic, but no head, pre-head, or tail.

(1.9b) they are

Consists of a tonic and a pre-head. It may be thought strange to have a structure that contains a pre-head, but no head, but it is perfectly possible. In (1.9b), there is no onset syllable preceding the tone; they is unstressed and therefore does not constitute an onset syllable. Without an onset syllable, there is no head. What this means is that the variations of meaning associated with the head are simply not available to (1.9b). (They were not available to (1.13a) either.) (1.13b) also lacks a tail. has the obligatory tonic, has also a tail, but no head, and no pre-head. It will be seen how the tonic is obligatory and the head, pre-head and tail (Tench,2015,p13-14).

(1.9c) aren't they

Has the obligatory tonic, has also a tail, but no head, and no pre-head. It will be seen how the tonic is obligatory and the head, pre-head and tail are optional. If the latter happen to be present in an intonation unit, they constitute points or areas where choices of intonation (and, therefore, choices of meaning) are potential. The choice of tone (and meaning) at the tonic is always realized.

The formal structure of the intonation unit is displayed in Table 1.2.

	pre-tonic segment		tonic segment	
	pre-head	head	tonic/nucleus	Tail
1.6	A	'dog is a 'man's 'best	'friend	
1.7		'Dogs are 'men's 'best	Friends	
1.8			Dogs	are 'men's 'best friends.
1.9a			Yes	
1.9b	they		Are	
1.9c			aren't	They

TABLE 1.2

One final, small theoretical point. The structure of the intonation unit has been presented mainly in terms of words so far; the tonic is the most prominent word, the tail consists of the words following the tonic, and the pre-tonic segment refers to the words preceding the tonic. We have also had recourse to refer to syllables, stressed and unstressed. Which should we use: words or syllables? It seems inevitable that when we think of the content of the message contained in an intonation unit, we shall refer to words. However, strictly speaking, an intonation unit is a structure of sound and belongs to phonology. (Tench,2015,p13-14)

1.7 The Function of Intonation

Intonation does not play a mere decorative role, but performs a linguistic function. The function or role of intonation can further divided into three functions they are; grammatical function, attitudinal function and accentual

function. Let us discuss one by one in order understand clearly (Halliday, 1970,p10.)

1.7.1 Grammatical Function:

Intonation distinguishes different types of sentences.

Examples:

- i. Virat is arriving \ late. // (Statement)
- ii. Virat is arriving \ late? // (Question)

In the example one, the use of a falling tone makes it a statement. Whereas, in the example two, the rising tone turn it into a question. Similarly the examples below also change their meaning because of their intonation.

Examples:

- i. // Close the \ window. // (Command)
- ii. // Close the \ window. // (Request)

Just because, the shift of intonation marks in these two examples the whole meaning is changed. In the first example speaker said with falling tone which means command. In other words, second example said with rising tone which means polite. The above examples explain clearly the role and importance of intonation in spoken English. (O'Connor, 1980,p15.)

1.7.2 Attitudinal Function:

Attitude plays prominent role in intonation. Particularly while we are speaking to native speakers of English, one should be very careful about one's intonation. Let us see the following examples demonstrate the importance of attitudinal function.

1)

a. // When can you \ come? // (Falling tone)

b. // When can you \ come? // (Rising tone)

2)

a. // Dhoni is very \ good. // (Falling tone)

b. // Dhoni is very \ good. // (Fall-Rise)

Example 1(a) when speaker said with a falling tone, it is a normal question; it is neither polite nor impolite. When it is said with a rising tone, on the other hand, as in 1 (b), it expresses politeness, even deference. In the second set of examples, 2(a), which is said with a falling tone, is a plain statement, where as in 2(b), which is said with a falling – rising tone, expresses reservation on the part of the speaker. It means something like ‘but you don’t know the other side of the picture’. (O’Connor, 1980,p15.)

1.7.3 Accentual Function:

It will focus mainly on the location of the tonic syllable. The speaker can change the meaning of a sentence by shifting the focus. The role of accentual function of intonation can be shown by shifting the focus in the following sentence.

Examples: Sunaina goes shopping to town every Sunday.

1. // Sunaina goes shopping to town \ every Sunday.//

In the above statement, the tonic syllable is on the first syllable of ‘every’. This can be the answer to a question like, which Sunday does Sunaina go shopping to town? The above statement with focus on ‘ev’ of ‘every’ indicates that Sunaina goes shopping each and every Sunday.

2. // Sunaina goes shopping to \ town every Sunday.//

In the second example, tonic syllable is shifted to town. It can be the answer to a question like which means where does Sunaina go shopping every Sunday? Sunaina goes shopping to town not market, not school and not anywhere else.

3. // Sunaina goes \ shopping to town every Sunday. //

In third example the tonic syllable is on the first syllable of shopping this statement can be the answer to a question like what does Sunaina do in town every Sunday? Sunaina goes to town just to 'shop' but not to 'visit' or sightseeing or just time pass.

4. // \ Sunaina goes shopping to town every Sunday. //

In example four, the tonic syllable is on Sunaina. This statement can be the answer to a question like, who goes to the town every Sunday. It is 'Sunaina' who goes to town not someone else. (Sethi & Dhamija, 1999,p25)

As we have seen in the above examples location of the tonic accent will change the meaning. The same sentence can acquire a different meanings based upon which syllable gets the focus. This shows how a speaker can exploit a sentence by shifting the focus.

1.7.4 The identification of speech styles:-

The final major function of intonation that we need to consider is its role in the way in which we can identify different speech styles, or 'genres'. People engage in a very wide range of differing language events; informal conversation is one type of language event and is very different from other types of dialogue like interviews, debates, interrogations, air-to-ground communication by pilots,

and so on. Monologues vary considerably too; compare, for example, news reading and prayer, or story-telling and poetry reading, or a comedian's monologue and a lecture. (Tench,2015,p26-28)

If you switch the radio on (or the television - before the screen clarifies), you can usually tell within seconds what kind of language event is taking place. This is because news reading, for example, somehow sounds different from all other styles. We probably differentiate dozens of different styles simply on the basis of the general sound of even just a few seconds of spoken discourse. And we can usually manage this even if the actual words are muffled, as they might be, say, in an adjoining room. There is something about the general sound of particular language events that identifies them. (Tench,2015,p26-28)

This general sound of a particular language event is known as its prosodic composition. Differences in prosodic composition depend on a number of composition. Differences in prosodic composition depend on a number of features: degree of formality, number of participants, degree of privacy, degree of semantic preparation, and whether the spoken discourse was scripted or not. These features register in intonation, loudness, tempo, rhythmicity, paralinguistic features and hesitation pauses. Rhythmicity refers to degrees of rhythmic regularity, ranging from very regular, as in poetry reading and prayer in unison (e.g. the Lord's Prayer, said in public), to irregular, as in informal, unfluent, conversation. (Tench,2015,p26-28)

As far as intonation in particular is concerned, styles vary in the proportions of falls and rises, relative length of intonation units and degree of textual structure (phonological paragraphing). Prayer, noticeably, manages without tone variation as a rule; tonic syllables are held level and it is usually only the Amen that has a fallin tone.

The fullest study to date on the prosodic composition of speech styles¹⁰ compared the following genres:

- (i) informal conversations (private, unscripted)
- (ii) informal narration of an anecdote (private, unscripted)
- (iii) a news bulletin (public, scripted)
- (iv) Bible reading in church (public, scripted)
- (v) individual prayer (public, unscripted)
- (vi) prayer in unison (public, scripted, but uttered by a body of people simultaneously)

The prosodic composition of these six genres is displayed in Table 1.3:

	Informal conversation	Anecdote	News reading	Bible reading	Individual prayer	Prayer In unison
paragramming		Yes	Yes	Yes		
punctuation group	n/a	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes
short units	Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes
tone variation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
high proportion of falls	Yes					
high proportion of pre-tonic variation			Yes	Yes		
Forte				Yes	Yes	
Lento				Yes	Yes	Yes
rhythmic				Yes	Yes	Yes
paralinguistic features	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	
hesitation	Yes	Yes			Yes	

TABLE 1.3:- The prosodic composition of different genres

A few points emerge. The recognition of phonological paragraphs is most apparent in semantically-prepared discourse. It is not that it is impossible to find paragraphs in other styles, but in semantically-prepared discourse it is at its clearest. Secondly, intonation unit boundaries correspond to punctuation in scripted discourse. Thirdly, the intonation units themselves tend to be longer in semantically-prepared discourse, except where the delivery style is fairly slow (*lento*) and loud (*forte*); units are generally shorter in informal conversation when the message is being composed and relayed almost simultaneously. Fourthly, there is a high proportion of falls in informal conversation; this means that there are more individual, major, pieces of information in that genre than, for instance, in narrating an anecdote or in news reading; in the latter styles, the speaker has a much stronger sense of linking incomplete pieces of information with complete. Fifthly, and possibly surprisingly, public, scripted, spoken discourse is characterized by greater pitch variation in the pre-tonic segment; this variation, no doubt, is intended to relieve any impression of dull, routine repetition that could bore the hearers. Sixthly, news reading eschews paralinguistic features altogether: the newsreaders' feelings are not allowed, in the main, to intrude into the news. Prayer in unison shares this lack of paralanguage, for the simple reason that a body of people simultaneously engaged in speech do not have the opportunity to introduce their own feelings. Finally, and expectedly, hesitation features in those genres that are unscripted, even if a degree of semantic preparation has taken place. (Tench,2015,p26-28)

Thus, it can be seen that intonation is a major identifying factor in the prosodic composition of different genres of spoken discourse. This particular function operates on a much larger body of discourse than the other functions, but it is nevertheless recognizable.

Conclusion

It must be admitted that the learning of intonation patterns of a second language is difficult. It needs a constant practice to use the total system with the same facility as that of mother tongue. But as that of a particular language, learning the patterns of that particular language would enable the learner to avoid wrong intonation patterns. Therefore, the teachers of English can help their students master the difficulties of the intonation patterns of English, which are crucial in intelligibility. A systematic study and constant practice only can enable the teachers of English and learners internalize the rules of the language so that their speech is not only effective but also intelligible and clear, avoiding all possibilities of being misunderstood due to certain absolutely unintended expressions.

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