

THE ROLE OF CORRECT INTONATION IN ENGLISH

Nafisa Raimovna Kobilova

Department of English language, Faculty of Turizm, Chirchik State Pedagogical University

kobilova.n@cspi.uz

ABSTRACT

People have often been misunderstood in their everyday lives without the proper use of intonation, let alone when speaking in formal settings or rendering a public speech. Decoding the speech of someone who wholly avoids the correct use of tones makes it difficult to communicate effectively.

Therefore, it is of the utmost importance for second language learners to study and practise correct intonation. It would take some time for new users or learners of a language to adjust to the language's intonations, but listening to native speakers and practising imitating similar speech delivery can help.

Keywords: intonation, information structure, sentence stress, or accent, pitch, or melody, speech timbre, tonality, tempo

INTRODUCTION

As a part of phonology, intonation is the kind of pitch modulation found in whole utterances (Carr, 2008). The term "intonation" refers to a means for conveying information in speech that is independent of the words and their sounds. Intonation is also a complex unity of speech melody, sentence stress, tempo, rhythm, and voice timbre that enables the speaker to express his thoughts, emotions, and attitudes towards the contents of the utterance and the hearer.

Pauses are moments of silence in the flow of speech. Pauses are normally made to take breath at points where they are necessary or allowable from the point of view of the meaning of the sentence. They are used in the end of the sentence to delimit it from other sentences, and within the sentence, to separate sense groups.

In writing pauses are denoted by punctuation marks: the comma, the colon, the semicolon (within the sentence) and the full stop, the exclamation point and the question mark in the end of the sentence. However, pauses within the sentence may remain unmarked in writing.

The length of the pause depends on:

- Degree of independence
- Semantic importance



- Connection of the adjacent parts in the flow of speech
- The rate of speech

Sentence stress, or accent, is the greater prominence of one or more words among other words in the same sentence.

Pitch, or melody, is the change in the pitch of the voice in connected speech.

Tempo is the relative speed with which sentences and intonation groups are pronounced in connected speech. The rate at which syllables are pronounced and the number and length of pauses determine the tempo of speech. Tempo is not constant; it changes and shows the relative semantic importance of a sense group and the speaker's emotions. Stressed elements are said to be slower than unstressed ones.

Speech timbre is a special coloring of the voice that shows the speaker's emotions. Timbre is the special tone coloring of the speaker's voice. It serves to express joy, sadness, anger, indignation, etc. A speaker's voice may be characterized as flat, resonant, creaky, husky, bright, dark, soft, flurrying, etc. The physical nature of timber has not yet been physically established.

The functions of intonation:

- to form sentences and intonation groups.
- to define their communicative type.
- to express the speaker's thoughts.
- to convey the attitudinal meaning.

The most common types of intonation we have in English are the following:

- Falling intonation
- Rising intonation
- Falling–rising intonation
- Rising–falling intonation
- Falling Intonation

One of the most common intonation patterns in the English language is the rule of falling intonation.

This is when the pitch of the voice falls at the end of a sentence. We commonly use them in statements, commands, WH-questions, confirmatory question tags, and exclamations.

Below are some examples where we use the falling intonation:

In statements, we say:

I'm pleased to see you.

In commands, we say:

Leave me alone.

In WH questions, we say:

When do you want to tell me the truth?

In question tags, we use the rules of falling intonation only when we seek confirmation or invite agreement.

For example, we say:

She thinks she's so beautiful, doesn't she?

In exclamations, we say:

What a beautiful scene!

Rising Intonation

Another intonation marking used in the English language is the rule of rising intonation. This is when the pitch of the voice rises at the end of the sentence. It is commonly used in yes-or-no questions and question tags that show uncertainty. In question tags showing uncertainty, we say:

He prefers playing volleyball, doesn't he?

Rising-Falling Intonation

We can use both rising and falling intonation, as well as a combination of the two. Consider the rising-falling intonation rules. This is typically employed when presenting a list, a set of options, or partial or conditional statements. The first series of items in a list are stated with ascending intonation. Use a falling intonation on the final item to signify that the list has reached its conclusion. For example: *My brother enjoys outdoor activities such as mountain climbing, trekking, and camping.*

When used in choices, we say:

Are you coming today or tomorrow?

We also use the rising-falling intonation in partial statements. This is when the speaker is hesitant to fully express his ideas and is unable to finish his statement. For example:

What was the place like? Well, it seemed nice... (But it's too small.)

Do you like him? - Hmm, yes I do... (But he is not sure.)

In conditional statements, we use the rising intonation in the first clause, then gradually shift to the falling intonation in the second clause.

So we say:

If you have any time, let me know.

Falling-rising intonation

One of the most common principles of intonation is the use of falling-rising intonation within a single word. This phrase is frequently used when the speaker is uncertain or hesitant to answer a question.

For example:

Would he support the team?

Tench (2005) summarised the major contributions of the triple systems, which express information structure as tonality, tonicity, and tone. The pattern by which tone groups are distributed throughout speech, called tonality, is crucial to the sense of an utterance.

Tone group is one of the features of intonation that has three primary systems: unit of information, focus of information, and status of information. It is related to the number of tone groups in an utterance, and each such tone group is seen as one 'move' in a speech act.

Each tone group has a tonic syllable, a place of prominence that the speaker seeks to mark as most important and that carries the most pronounced pitch change. It often carries the burden of "new information" in the clause, and, as such, the normative place of a tonic syllable is on the last word in a clause. Placement of the tonic syllable in places other than this is understood to be contrastive. The placement of tonic prominence is referred to as tonicity. The tonic segment is the most prominent stress (= tonic syllable) and carries the most significant pitch movement of the whole unit. The location of the tonic syllable relates to another sub-system, known as tonicity.

Tonality, the segmentation of discourse into individual units of intonation in sequence, represents the speaker's perception of the number of units of information.

In the segmentation of tonality, there are some divisions of the intonational contour. Roach (1991, p. 145) was the first to divide the structure of a tone unit into four main segments:

- Head is all that part of a tone unit that extends from the first stressed syllable up to the tonic syllable.
- Pre-head is composed of all the unstressed syllables in a tone unit preceding the first stressed syllable.
- The nucleus, or tonic syllable, is the most prominent syllable in the utterance or major pitch movement.
- The tail is any syllable between the tonic syllable and the end of the tone unit.

Nucleus also has another name called the tonic syllable. Roach (1991, p. 145) states that:

A syllable that carries a tone will be called a tonic syllable. It has been mentioned several times that tonic syllables have a high degree of prominence; prominence is, of course, a property of stressed syllables.

CONCLUSION

Unlike other languages, the English language follows several rules of intonation. In English, we use a different intonation in every situation. And while other people don't give so much importance to the rules, having the right intonation helps us sound clearer and more natural.

Below are the five benefits of having a very good intonation:

- Incorrect intonation can lead to misunderstandings, unmotivated speakers, and even offence!
- Intonation lets perform in tune. Consequently, the better the tune, the better you can sound as a speaker and be perceived.
- The tone is generally superior and more consistent because you have more control over influencing your air movement to play in tune. When your intonation has confident and typical, you become more confident and naturally. When the intonation is correct, it will be more enjoyable to speak English.

REFERENCES

1. Halliday, M. A. K. (1970). *A course in spoken English: Intonation*. London: OUP
2. Harmer, J. (2002). *The practice of English language teaching*. 3rd Edition. Cambridge: Pearson Education Ltd.
3. Roach, P. (1991). *English phonetics and phonology: A practical course*. 2nd Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
4. Tench, P. (2005) Talking intonation in *Speak Out!* 34: 3-15 ISSN: 1026-4345
5. Nursyamsu, R. & Munif, L. A. (2013). A study of English intonation in Indonesian EFL learners. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 1 (2),223-230
6. Kobilova, N. R. (2022). Importance of pronunciation in english language communication. *Academic research in educational sciences*, 3(6), 592-597.

