

Introduction to Intonation

1. In connected speech the voice pitch is continually rising and falling. These variations produce intonation.

2. Functions of Intonation

English makes more elaborate use of intonation to signal meaning than do most other languages. This is a further reason why it should not be neglected by learners and teachers of English as a foreign language (Well, 2006, p.11).

Several functions can be recognized, among them:

a. Attitudinal: the most obvious function of intonation is to express our emotions and attitudes- to show shock or surprise, pleasure or anger, interest or boredom, seriousness or sarcasm, reproach and many others.

b. Grammatical: It is used to mark the beginning and end of grammatical units. It is also used to distinguish types of sentences.

- Statements ↘ falling
- yes/no questions ↗ rising
- Wh questions ↘ falling

c. Focusing: Intonation helps to show what information in an utterance is new and what is already known.

d. Discursive: Intonation signals how sequences of clauses and sentences go together in spoken discourse. It enables us to signal whether we have come to an end of the point we are making; whether we want to keep talking or are ready to give another speaker a turn

e. Psychological: Intonation helps us organize speech into units that are easy to perceive, memorize and perform.

f. Indexical: Just as other pronunciation feature, intonation may act as a marker of personal or social identity. Each situation and each social group may have a particular characteristic of intonation.

* Speech is divided into **tone units or tone groups**; that is a tone unit starts after a nucleus and ends with a nucleus.

* **A tone unit** consists of parts of speech ending in a nucleus.

3. Types of Intonation Patterns

3.1 Falling Intonation: it is the most perceptible when it is on a syllable containing a long vowel, a diphthong or a voiced continuant sound.

↘ No

It was↘ raining.

The falling Tone can be used for asking and giving information in normal, quiet, unemphatic style. It also conveys certain emotions, such as completion, finality and confidence.

- **Assertions (statements):** I have arrived ↘ early.
- **Wh/ questions:** What have you ↘ done?
- **Interjections and greetings:** Nice to ↘ meet you. Hello ↘ Hi Oh, ↘ good!

- **Listing:** I visited Paris, London, Cairo and \downarrow Madrid.
- **Order:** Do you \downarrow homework. \downarrow Stop it!
- **Exclamatory sentences:** How nice of you! What a wonderful surprise!
- **Alternative questions:** Do you want coffee **or** \downarrow tea?
- \downarrow Thank you

* **Low fall:** It may start from mid pitch to the lowest pitch.

How are \downarrow you ?

* **High fall:** It may start from the highest pitch of the voice to the lowest. It may be used for extra emphasis in informal situations to express lively interest and friendliness in statements, for example, in greetings and exclamations. Oh \downarrow hi! I'm glad to \downarrow see you!

3.2. Rising Intonation

* **Low Rise:** It may extend from low to mid pitch or from mid to high pitch or with other variations. It is used to express politeness, encouragement or suspicion and also in unfinished sentences.

Carry \nearrow on. Will you open the \nearrow door, please?

I have revised my lesson, watched a film \nearrow and...

It's \nearrow kind of you.

Have a \nearrow cup of tea. That's very \nearrow kind of you.

* **High Rise:** it may extend from low pitch to high pitch. It is associated with questions: asking for repetition or clarification. It may express surprise or incredibility.

You said \nearrow what? \nearrow What? (elliptical questions) You \nearrow did?

* Tag questions

You live in \downarrow Biskra, \nearrow don't you? (the speaker thinks you live in Biskra but he isn't sure and asks for confirmation)

You live in \downarrow Biskra, \downarrow don't you? (the speaker is sure and expects the answer 'yes') to get confirmation or agreement

Nice \downarrow weather, \downarrow isn't it? (the speaker is sure the weather is nice and expects the answer 'yes')

4. Falling-Rising Intonation: The pitch of the voice starts relatively high, moves downwards and then upwards again.

It combines the effort of the fall and the emotional or meaningful attitudes associated with the rise. It may be used to express doubt, reproach, threat, disbelief, polite correction, partial statements, negative statements... \wedge

She's coming on \downarrow Wednesday.

On \nearrow Thursday.

There are \downarrow twenty students in the group.

\nearrow Fifty.

I came on \downarrow foot. (He lives in Tolga)

on \nearrow foot.

She wasn't very \nearrow pleased.

She \downarrow refused to pay. I don't think that's \nearrow true.

Negative commands often have a fall-rise intonation

