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# COMPONENTS OF INTONATION AND THE STRUCTURE OF ENGLISH INTONATION GROUP

Let us consider the components of intonation.

In the pitch component we may consider the distinct variations in the direction of pitch, pitch level and pitch range.

According to R. Kingdon the most important nuclear tones in English are: Low Fall, High Fall, Low Rise, High Rise, and Fall-Rise. (see Appendix 1)

The meanings of the nuclear tones are difficult to specify in general terms. Roughly speaking the falling tone of any level and range expresses certainty, completeness, and independence. A rising tone on the contrary expresses uncertainty, incompleteness or dependence. A falling-rising tone may combine the falling tone's meaning of assertion, certainty with the rising tone's meaning of dependence, incompleteness. At the end of a phrase it often conveys a feeling of reservation; that is, it asserts something and at the same time suggests that there is something else to be said. At the beginning or in the middle of a phrase it is a more forceful alternative to the rising tone, expressing the assertion of one point, together with the implication that another point is to follow. The falling-rising tone, as its name suggests, consists of a fall in pitch followed by a rise. If the nucleus is the last syllable of the intonation group the fall and rise both take place on one syllable. In English there is often clear evidence of an intonation-group boundary, but no audible nuclear tone movement preceding. In such a circumstance two courses are open: either one may classify the phenomenon as a further kind of head or one may consider it to be the level nuclear tone. Low Level tone is very characteristic of reading poetry. Mid-Level tone is particularly common in spontaneous speech functionally replacing the rising tone. There are two more nuclear tones in English: Rise-Fall and Rise-Fall-Rise. But adding refinement to speech they are not absolutely essential tones for the foreign learner to acquire. Rise-Fall can always be replaced by High Fall and Rise-Fall-Rise by Fall-Rise without making nonsense of the utterance.

According to D. Crystal, there are nine ways of saying Yes as an answer to the question Will you marry me?

1. Low fall. The most neutral tone; a detached, unemotional statement of fact.

2. Full fall. Emotionally involved; the higher the onset of the tone, the more involved the speaker; choice of emotion (surprise, excitement, irritation) depends on the speaker's facial expression.

3. Mid fall. Routine, uncommitted comment; detached and unexcited.

4. Low rise. Facial expression important; with a 'happy' face, the tone is sympathetic and friendly; with a 'grim' face, it is guarded and ominous.

5. Full rise. Emotionally involved, often "disbelief or shock, the extent of the emotion depending on the width of the tone.

6. High rise.mild query or puzzlement; often used in echoing what has just been said.

7. Level. Bored, sarcastic, ironic.

8. Fall-rise. A strongly emotional tone; a straight or 'negative' face conveys uncertainty, doubt, or tentativeness; a positive face conveys encouragement or urgency.

9. Rise-fall. Strong emotional involvement; depending on the face, the attitude might be delighted, challenging, or complacent.

Two more pitch parameters are pitch ranges and pitch levels. Three pitch ranges are generally distinguished: normal, wide, and narrow. Pitch levels may be high, medium, and low.

Loudness is used in a variety of ways. Gross differences of meaning (such as anger, menace, and excitement) can be conveyed by using an overall loudness level.

The tempo of speech is the third component of intonation. The term tempo implies the rate of the utterance and pausation. The rate of speech can be normal, slow and fast. The parts of the utterance which are particularly important sound slower. Unimportant parts are commonly pronounced at a greater speed than normal.

Any stretch of speech can be split into smaller portions, i. e. phonetic wholes, phrases, intonation groups by means of pauses. By 'pause' here we mean a complete stop of phonation. We may distinguish the following three kinds of pauses:

1. Short pauses which may be used to separate intonation groups within a phrase.

2. Longer pauses which normally manifest the end of the phrase.

3. Very long pauses, which are approximately twice as long as the first type, are used to separate phonetic wholes.

Functionally, there may be distinguished syntactic, emphatic and hesitation pauses.

Syntactic pauses separate phonopassages, phrases, and intonation groups. Emphatic pauses serve to make especially prominent certain parts of the utterance. Hesitation pauses are mainly used in spontaneous speech to gain some time to think over what to say next. They may be silent or filled.

Each syllable of the speech chain has a special pitch colouring. Some of the syllables have significant moves of tone up and down. Each syllable bears a definite amount of loudness. Pitch movements are inseparably connected with loudness. Together with the tempo of speech they form an intonation pattern which is the basic unit of intonation. An intonation pattern contains one nucleus and may contain other stressed or unstressed syllables normally preceding or following the nucleus. The boundaries of an intonation pattern may be marked by stops of phonation that is temporal pauses.

Intonation patterns serve to actualize syntagms in oral speech. It may be well to remind you here that the syntagm is a group of words which is semantically and syntactically complete. In phonetics actualized syntagms are called intonation groups (sense-groups, tone-groups). Each intonation group may consist of one or more potential syntagms, e. g. the sentence / think he is coming soon has two potential syntagms: / think and he is coming soon. In oral speech it is normally actualized as one intonation group.

The intonation group is a stretch of speech which may have the length of the whole phrase. But the phrase often contains more than one intonation group. The number of intonation groups depends on the length of the phrase and the degree of semantic importance or emphasis given to various parts of it:

This bed was not' slept, in-,This be was not' slept in

An additional terminal tone on this bed expresses an emphasis on this bed incontrast to other beds.

Not all stressed syllables are of equal importance. One of the syllables has the greater prominence than the others and forms the nucleus, or focal point of an intonation pattern. Formally the nucleus may be described as a strongly stressed syllable which is generally the last strongly accented syllable of an intonation pattern and which marks a significant change of pitch direction, that is where the pitch goes distinctly up or down. The nuclear tone is the most important part of the intonation pattern without which the latter cannot exist at all. On the other hand an intonation pattern may consist of one syllable which is its nucleus. The tone of a nucleus determines the pitch of the rest of the intonation pattern following it which is called the tail. Thus after a falling tone, the rest of the intonation pattern is at a low pitch. After a rising tone the rest of the intonation pattern moves in an upward pitch direction:

No, Mary - Well, Mary.

The nucleus and the tail form what is called terminal tone. The two other sections of the intonation pattern are the head and the pre-head which form the pre-nuclear part of the intonation pattern and, like the tail, they may be looked upon as optional elements:

🡪Lake District is one of the loveliest 'parts of, Britain.

The pre-nuclear part can take a variety of pitch patterns. Variation within the prе-nucleus does not usually affect the grammatical meaning of the utterance, though it often conveys meanings associated with attitude or phonetic styles. There are three common types of prе-nucleus: a descending type in which the pitch gradually descends (often in "steps") to the nucleus; an ascending type in which the syllables form an ascending sequence and a level type when all the syllables stay more or less on the same level. The meaning of the intonation group is the combination of the "meaning" of the terminal tone and the pre-nuclear part combined with the "meaning" of pitch range and pitch level. The parts of the intonation pattern can be combined in various ways manifesting changes in meaning, cf.: the High Head combined with Low Fall, High Fall, Low Rise, High Rise, Fall-Rise in the phrase Not at all.

>Not at all (reserved, calm).

>Not at all) (surprised, concerned).

>Not at all (encouraging, friendly).

> Not at all (questioning).

> Not at all (intensely encouraging, protesting).

The more the height of the pitch contrasts within the intonation pattern the more emphatic the intonation group sounds, cf.:

He's won. Fan tastic.

Fan tastic.

The changes of pitch, loudness and tempo are not haphazard variations. The rules of change are highly organized. No matter how variable the individual variations of these prosodic components are they tend to become formalized or standardized, so that all speakers of the language use them in similar ways under similar circumstances. These abstracted characteristics of intonation structures may be called intonation patterns which form the prosodic system of English. Some intonation patterns may be completely colourless in meaning: they give to the listener no implication of the speaker's attitude or feeling. They serve a mechanical function - they provide a mold into which all sentences may be poured so that they achieve utterance. Such intonation patterns represent the intonational minimum of speech. The number of possible combinations is more than a hundred but not all of them ate equally important. Some of them do not differ much in meaning, others are very rarely used. That is why in teaching it is necessary to deal only with a very limited number of intonation patterns, which are the result of a careful choice.

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