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## INTONATION STRUCTURE OF ENGLISH

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## ABSTRACT

*Intonation is a feature of pronunciation and common to all languages. Other features of pronunciation include stress, rhythm, connected speech and accent. As with these other features, intonation is about how we say something rather than what we say. The best way to improve your intonation is simply to become more aware of it. By listening carefully to a recorded conversation and record your own voice.*

Intonation is an essential element of human speech. Intonation describes how the voice rises and falls in speech. Many linguists have conducted research on intonation. The following definitions of intonation have been given by British linguists: "Intonation may be defined as the variations which take place in the pitch of the voice in connected speech, i.e. the variations in the pitch of the musical note produced by the vibration of the vocal cords"<sup>1</sup>. "By intonation we mean the rise and fall of the pitch of the voice when we speak"<sup>2</sup>.

The American linguist D. L. Bolinger defines intonation as "... the melodic line of speech, the rising and falling of the «fundamental» or singing pitch of the voice..."<sup>3</sup>. P.Ladefoged defines intonation as "the pattern of pitch changes"<sup>4</sup>.

What is the role intonation plays in the language? Intonation is indispensable in communication, because it is instrumental in conveying meaning. No sentence can exist without a particular intonation. No meaning can be expressed without it. Intonation can be described on the acoustic level, on the perception level (in terms of the characteristics perceived by human ear)

<sup>1</sup> D. Jones. An Outline of English Phonetics. Cambridge, 1962, p. 275.

<sup>2</sup> L. Armstrong and I. Ward. A Handbook of English Intonation. Cambridge, 1931, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> D. L. Bolinger. The Melody of Language. Modern Language Forum 40, (June, 1955),

p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> P. Ladefoged. A Course in Phonetics. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1975, p. 93.



and on the linguistic level (in terms of meanings expressed by intonation). We would like to start with the description of intonation on the perception and acoustic levels and then pass over to its linguistic function.

What is intonation? It is quite impossible to describe intonation in a word or two. Sometimes the ups and downs of pitch and loudness are compared to the waves of the ocean.

Intonation may be defined as such a unity of speech melody, sentence-stress (accent), voice quality (timbre) and speech tempo which enables the speaker to adequately communicate in speech his thoughts, will, emotions and attitude towards reality and the contents of the utterance<sup>5</sup>.

Speech melody is one of the most significant components of the intonation if not to say the most important one. It is used as the intonation means of primary importance in many languages. Speech melody is universal and it may be explained by great variety of possibilities, given to this component.

Stress in speech. In phonetics, stress is the degree of emphasis given a sound or syllable in speech, also called lexical stress or word stress. Unlike some other languages, English has variable (or flexible) stress.

The tempo of speech is the speed with which sentences or their parts are pronounced. Closely connected with the tempo of speech is its rhythm: the recurrence of stressed syllables at more or less equal intervals of time.

The communicative centre is associated with the most important word or words of the intonation-group or of the sentence. There are four communicative types of sentences:

#### 1. Intonation of declarative sentences:

A declarative sentence does not convey emotional involvement on the part of the speaker and it remains neutral. Generally, English speakers use the falling intonation in declarative sentences. The model of English declarative sentence is characterized by a single intonational pattern only; falling pitch at the end of the sentence.

He called me.

#### 2. Intonation of the Exclamatory sentences.

An exclamatory sentence conveys a **strong emotion and ends with an exclamation mark (!)**. An exclamatory sentence, or exclamation, is a more forceful version of a declarative sentence. In other words, an exclamatory sentence makes a statement (just like a declarative sentence), but it also conveys excitement or emotion.

What a wonderful music!

#### 3. Intonation of the Imperative sentences.

Imperative sentences are used in speech for different communicative purposes: to express a command or an instruction, to ask for a favour or to give a warning.

Wait for the others.

#### 4. Intonation of the Interrogative sentence

An interrogative sentence asks a question.

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<sup>5</sup> English phonetics. M.T.Iriskulov, A.S.Shatunova, A.A.Muzykina Tashkent-2007



Do you 'often 'go to the , theatre? Yes, I 'do.

Intonation conveys attitude or how someone feels about something - sad, bored, happy, excited, interested, annoyed, sarcastic, disapproving etc., which intrinsically changes the meaning you make of the words. Conversely, if you don't incorporate correct English intonation in your speech, people won't understand you very well.

How can we improve it?

Firstly, begin to attune your ear to English intonation. This means try to listen native speakers. This may be people on TV or a movie. Keep doing this so your ear and mouth get practise in using good English intonation. You can even do this at the same time as they are saying it so you are getting simultaneous feedback. Secondly, listen to English [audio training](#) sentences and passages and mimic them. Record yourself saying what they are saying and try to

correct your mistakes. Pay attention the pause, the stress and the intonation in English speakers. Thirdly, take a sentence someone has said on a video or audio training and exaggerate the intonation so you notice it more in the beginning. Then you can tone it down once you get the idea. Lastly, Take a sentence and practise it using different intonation each time-emphasise different words, stress different syllables, go up or down with your pitch on different words and pause before or after different words etc. This way you begin to get some mastery of these elements, and also you will get more understanding of how it changes the meaning, and how you can modulate the meaning. At last but not least, try to develop intonation. With this, you will be able to speak like native speakers and begin to understand them

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