



IMPORTANCE AND USAGE OF INTONATION IN ENGLISH

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Abstract

Language can perform its function as the most important means of human intercourse only as a language of sounds. Phonetics studies speech sounds and it's a branch of linguistics. This article gives information about one of the main part of suprasegmental feature of intonation. Intonation or the pitch pattern of a voice is important in spoken English because it conveys meaning in many ways. In this episode and the accompanying study notes we will learn about intonation, stress and rhythm patterns and how their correct use is vital for speaking English naturally and fluently.

Keywords: Intonation, pitch, rising tone, falling tone, high and low, analysis, fall-rise tone, rise-fall tone, intonation pattern, voice, stress, sentence, questions, statements.

Introduction

Intonation is a feature of pronunciation, one of the assessment criteria in the IELTS Speaking test. You will need to use appropriate intonation in the test. You also need to understand the intonation used by the interviewer. Sh.Kholkhojaeva mentioned, "Theoretical phonetics of the English language explores the close relationship between oral, internal and written speech." An important part of suprasegmental phonology is Intonation. As Peter Roach mentioned, "One of the most important tasks in analysing intonation is to listen to the speaker's pitch and recognise what it is doing; this is not an easy thing to do, and it seems to be a quite different skill from that acquired in studying segmental phonetics. We describe pitch in terms of high and low, and some people find it difficult to relate what they hear in someone's voice to a scale ranging from low to high. We should remember that "high" and "low" are arbitrary choices for endpoints of the pitch scale. It would be perfectly reasonable to think of pitch as ranging instead from "light" to "heavy", for example, or from "left" to "right", and people who have difficulty in "hearing" intonation patterns are generally only having difficulty in relating what they hear (which is the same as what everyone else hears) to this "pseudo-spatial" representation." Intonation is important in spoken English because it conveys meaning in many ways. Changing the pitch in your





voice – making it higher or lower - allows you to show surprise “Oh, really!” or boredom “Oh, really.”

One of the prominent researcher M.A.Sokolova mentioned: “The term intonation implies variations of pitch, force of utterance and tempo. Variations of pitch are produced by significant moves of the voice up and down. The force component of intonation is measured by the degree of loudness of syllables that determines the prominence of words. The tempo is determined by the rate of speech and the length of pauses.”

The study of intonation is based on its two functions:

➤ The constitutive function.

Intonation forms sentences. Each sentence consists of one or more intonation groups

➤ The distinctive function.

Intonation also serves to distinguish communicative types of sentences, the actual meaning of a sentence, -the speaker's emotions or attitudes to the contents of the sentence, to the listener or to the topic of conversation.

Remember that there are other ways to use your voice and pitch to change the meaning of your words. For example, the rhythm and speed of your voice, or where you place the stress in the sentence can also change the meaning. The situations below should give you a good place to start, but always be listening for other ways you can improve the way you speak English!

✚ **Asking questions.** There are four kinds of questions:

- 1) General questions requiring the answer yes or no and spoken with a rising intonation. They are formed by placing the auxiliary or modal verb before the subject of the sentence.

Do you like art?





With the verb to have (expressing possession) the auxiliary verb do/does is used.

Did you understand that?

If the predicate is expressed by the verbs to be used in a simple tense form, the question is formed by placing the predicate before the subject.

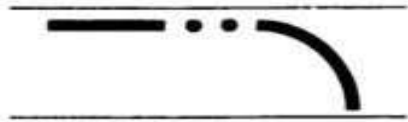
Is he at home?

Sometimes such questions have a negative form and express astonishment or doubt.

Haven't you seen him yet?

- 2) Special questions beginning with an interrogative word and spoken with a falling intonation. The order of words is the same as in general questions, but the interrogative word precedes the auxiliary verb.

Where do you live?



When the interrogative word is the subject of the interrogative sentence or an attribute to the subject, the order of words is that of a statement, i.e. no inversion is used.

Who lives in this room?

Whose pen is on the table?

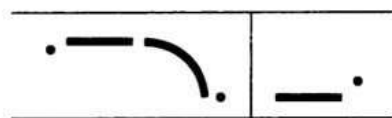
- 3) Alternative questions, indicating choice and spoken with a rising intonation in the first part and a falling intonation in the second part.

Do you live in town or in the country?



- 4) Disjunctive questions requiring the answer yes or no and consisting of an affirmative statement followed by a negative question, or a negative statement followed by an affirmative question. The first part is spoken with a falling intonation and the second part with a rising intonation.

You speak English, don't you?



- ✚ **Making statements.** Most regular statements (those which just state facts or information; not statements which clarify or emphasize anything) use a falling intonation at the end of the sentence.



“I’ve been playing the violin for seven years

✚ **Listing things.** Items on a list use a rising intonation until the final item, which uses a falling intonation.

“I love chocolate, strawberry and pistachio ice cream.”

✚ **Expressing feelings.** High-energy emotions like happiness, excitement, fright and annoyance usually use a rising intonation. The example below, for example, can be joy, excitement or annoyance depending on the situation.

“I can’t believe he gave you a ride home!”

Boredom, sarcasm and disinterest often use a falling intonation. For example, the sentence below would sound very sarcastic if you said it in a low pitch. With the sarcastic tone, it would mean that the speaker actually isn’t excited at all.

“I am so excited, you see!

✚ **Stressing the importance of something.** Use rising intonation on specific words in a sentence to emphasize their importance. The first example below emphasizes the “red” and implies (suggests) there were choices in color. The second emphasizes the “scarf” and implies there were choices in items.

“I hope you got the red scarf.”

“I hope you got the red scarf.”

✚ **Contrasting between things.** Use a rising intonation and place a stress on the two things you want to contrast.

“I thought he liked dogs but he actually likes cats.”

You can also use this intonation to point out things that seem one way, but are another way.

“You should exercise every day, but I know you don’t have the time.”

It seems clear that studying intonation in relation to discourse makes it possible to explain much more comprehensively the uses that speakers make of intonation. Practically all the separate functions traditionally attributed to intonation (attitudinal, accentual and grammatical) could be seen as different aspects of discourse function. The risk, with such a broad approach, is that one might end up making generalisations that were too broad and had little power to predict with any accuracy the intonation that a speaker would use in a particular context. It is still too early to say how useful the discourse approach will be, but even if it achieves nothing else, it can at least be



claimed to have shown the inadequacy of attempting to analyze the function of intonation on the basis of isolated sentences or tone-units, removed from their linguistic and situational context.

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