• Intonation
  • Intonation group division
  • Functions of intonation in English

• Tone

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LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the lesson, students are able to:

- describe the difference between tone and intonation
- explain different functions of intonation in English
- **Pitch**: in terms of human perception, one perceives sounds as ‘high’ or ‘low’

- The difference between *tone* & *intonation* is associated with **differences in pitch**, which is a functional difference
Intonation

- A property of utterances; intonation is universal (utterances are not said on a monotone).
- Intonation of a sentence: the pattern of pitch changes that occur in a sentence
- Intonational phrase: the part of a sentence over which a particular pattern extends
Intonation (cont’d)

- In English & vast majority of European languages, pitch variation is confined to **intonation**; pitch is not used to indicate dictionary meaning.

- Intonation works differently in different languages.

- Intonation operates over an extent greater than a single word, usually over complete clauses or sentences, adding meaning additional to what is supplied by the words themselves.
Intonation group division

- **Intonation group**: the basic unit of speech melody
- Intonation group boundaries (pauses) are indicated by single bars |; a double bar || used to indicate the end of a sentence.
- To analyze intonation, we need to look at the *tone unit*.
- Within an intonational phrase, there is a single syllable that stands out because it carries the major pitch change. Such syllable is called *tonic syllable*. 
• A tone-unit may consist of, in its smallest form, only one syllable; it is difficult to define a tone-unit. To illustrate:

  Is this *Ahmad*  -- one tone unit

• In the above example, the 3rd. syllable is more prominent than the other two & it carries a rising tone (an utterance of three syllables, comprising one tone-unit)

  /  
  / 
  *Ahmad is it you*  -- 2 tone-units
General Pattern of Intonation in English

- A tonic syllable cannot be entirely predicted.; some general statements can be made.
- New information is likely to receive more emphasis than one that has been mentioned before.
- Topic of a sentence: likely to receive the tonic accent.
- Example:
  
  A sheep is a mammal.
- Various pitch changes are possible within a tonic accent.
(Refer to pgs.117-124)
Functions of intonation in English

4 important linguistic functions of intonation in English are:

1. **Focusing/accentsual function:** the speaker focuses on the most important information by means of the location of the **tonic syllable** (or **nucleus**), i.e. the most prominent of the stressed syllables), e.g.

   Siti likes her new velvet dress. (Neutral)
   Siti likes her new velvet dress. (Not the old velvet dress)
   Siti **likes** her new velvet dress. (Not ‘dislikes’)
   Siti like her new **velvet** dress. (Not the cotton dress)
   Siti likes her new velvet **dress**. (Not a blouse)
2. Attitudinal function

- It enables us to express emotions & attitudes on top of the ‘surface meaning’ of what is said (e.g. sincere vs. sarcastic)

“Did you know that Shanti failed her exam?”

Answer:

- **Yes** - falling tone, conveys certainty & finality

- **Yes** - rising tone, no impression of finality
Rise-fall ( ↗ ↘ ) tone: a strong sense of agreement/disagreement

Fall-rise ( ↘ ↗ ) tone: a sense of agreement up to a point / hesitant
3. Grammatical function:

- It can determine the illocutionary force of the utterance and permits speakers to distinguish syntactic relationships (e.g. statement, question, order)
4. Discourse function:

- It structures information content, e.g. placement of boundaries between phrases, clauses, or sentences, etc.; covers aspects such as:

a) organization of conversation between 2 or more speakers, (e.g. signals for turn-taking)

b) indication of speaker/listener relationship, (e.g. in relation to power & authority)

c) indication of new & old information
Exercise

Read the following dialogue out loud. Mark any tone group boundaries. Mark pitch contours in front of the appropriate syllable. If you can imagine more than one pitch contour in a given tone group, transcribe the alternative pitch contours and note the difference in conveyed meaning/speaker attitude:

A: Tell me, have you seen that film?
B: Yes! It was wonderful!
A: Did you go with John?
B: Yes, I did.
A: Was he interesting?
B: Yes, I suppose so.
A: Fascinating bloke.
B: Well, that’s a matter of opinion.
Tone

- A pitch element or register added to a syllable to convey lexical or grammatical information.

- One major function: to distinguish lexical units; there are many languages in which the tone (pitch differences) is used to determine the meaning of a word referred to as tone languages.
Tone Languages

• Tone languages: many dialects of Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese, many African languages (to the South & West) and some Amerindian languages.

• In tone languages: the main suprasegmental contrastive unit is the tone (usually linked to the phonological unit known as syllable)

• Tone languages may make use of different numbers of pitch levels: 2 levels (high & low) or 3 (high, mid & low) are common
Tone systems

Often divided into:

contour & register
## Contour tone

- Essential feature: a *change of pitch*; more common in the Far East; chiefly employ falling & rising pitches, e.g. 4 tones of Mandarin Chinese:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone no.</th>
<th>description</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>high level</td>
<td>ma [ — ] (mother)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>high rising</td>
<td>ma [ ‚ ] (numb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>low fall rise</td>
<td>ma [ ∨ ] (horse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>high falling</td>
<td>ma [ \ ] (scold)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Register tone

• Distinguishing feature: relative difference of 2 or 3 significant pitch levels, such as high, mid, or low.

• The function of the tone is not always lexical, but can also be grammatical or morphological; e.g. in Igbo language: high tone expresses the genitive relation (= of, ‘s)
Time to review!