

Figuring Out the Intended Meaning of Intonation in Some English Conversational Utterances

By

Mahmood Atiya Farhan & Huda Abed Ali Hattab

Instructor/ University of Baghdad - College of Education

Department of English

Email: engmsahuda1978@yahoo.com

Email :mahmoodaf70@yahoo.com

ABSTARCT :

The study aims at figuring out the intended meaning of intonation in some English conversational utterances together with identifying pitch variations that are determined by various syntactic constructions that impart the same illocutionary force of utterances. However, intonation is needed to delimit the communicative forces of utterances by virtue of its structure which the speakers intend to convey .This paper consists of four sections .Section one deals with phonology and its types .Section two discusses intonation in relation to style , forms and functions. Section three sheds some light on pragmatics. Section four deals in details with the intended meaning of intonation in some English conversational utterances.

This paper comes up with meanings that are changed by virtue of ranges of intonation and pragmatics changes emotions from one person to another by rising or falling the voice of the speakers. In addition, the intended meaning function of intonation plays a role in determining the emotions of the speaker by ranges of intonation.

Keywords: intonation, phonology, segmental phonology, supra segmental phonology, functions of intonation, pragmatics, the intended meaning of intonation.

Introduction:

To start with, it is probably impossible to write a satisfactory research paper about an evolving and contentious subject like pragmatic function of intonation.

This study is concerned with phonology (segmental and supra segmental), intonation (style, forms, and functions), pragmatics, and pragmatic function of intonation peculiarly.

There are three purposes behind choosing this subject, firstly it is to support the more academically introduction about phonology, intonation, and pragmatics.

Secondly, one must know what is meant by intonation and its forms, style, and functions.

Thirdly, one should be more far and more concerned with the deep meaning of pragmatics function of intonation.

Moreover, this topic is so important for grammarians who need some knowledge of English grammar; this is because the features of intonation are important for signaling grammatical distinctions, such as that between statements and questions.

Secondly, phonologists who use the intonation to know how the change in sounds of connected speech with regard to individual words can help identify and teach word stress.

Thirdly, this study is so important for pragmaticists because they are concerned with the meaning since stress and intonation are often linked to the communication of meaning.

Fourthly, intonation for the foreign learners could be related to entertaining rules to enable them to use it in the way that native speakers use it.

Finally, this subject is important for ESL learners, for who will be taking the next turn, for how the act is to be understood (explanation, challenge) to mention only a few of the things that affect our roles as speakers and listeners.

2 - Phonology

Phonology is a branch of linguistics which studies the sound system of languages; out of the very wide range of sounds the human vocal can produce as a language.

The aim of phonology is to demonstrate the patterns of distinctive sound found in a language¹ and to make as general statement as possible about the nature of sound systems in the language (Crystal, 2003, pp. 350 - 351).

Similarly, Yule (2010, p.42) states that "phonology is essentially description of the systems and patterns of speech sound in a language".

Moreover, it is based on a theory of what every speaker of a language knows about the sound patterns of that language, as well as phonology is concerned with the abstract of mental aspect of the sound in language rather than with the actual physical articulation of speech sounds.

Phonology, in the same way, is concerned with the function, behavior, and organization of items, as opposed to phonetics which is a rather more neutral study of the sounds themselves as phenomena in the

physical world, and psychological properties of the human beings that make them. (Lass, 1984, p.1).

In fact, the study of the phonology of English looks at two main branches, the first branch is the "segmental which deals with vowels, and consonants", and the second branch is "supra segmental which is divided into six subdivisions begins with stress, syllable, intonation, rhythm, tone and ends with pitch. (Kelly, 2000, p.9).

2-1 Segmental Phonology

In phonology a major division is made into segmental analyses of the speech into distinctive units, or phonemes which are containing segments; they are identified as **consonants and vowels**.

Consonants are indeed specified for three descriptive parameters: voicing state, place of articulation, and manner of articulation.

Vowels are made by voiced air passing through different mouth shapes. Accordingly; vowels are caused by different positions of the tongue and the lips. (Aitchison, 1999, p.41)

2-2 Supra segmental Phonology

It is a term used in phonetics and phonology to refer to vocal effect which extends over more than one sound segment in an utterance, such as a stress, syllable, intonation, rhythm, tone, and pitch in its contrast with segmental. (Crystal, 2003, p.446).

Actually, these features above are so important in this topic where they help the researcher to understand how the intonation works, and consequently, to reach the aim of this research. These are features by which a syllable is heard as more prominent than others, for example in below the

second syllable is stressed. Also in sentence stress and prominence within larger units generally, thus in **he did** stress might fall on either word: **he** **did** it was him who did (stress on he), or **he did** (stress on did). (Matthews, 2007, p.383).

Secondly, syllable is a very important unit consisting of a center which has little or no abstraction to airflow and which sounds will loud, before or after this centre, syllable depended on type of segmental either was consonant or vowel to determined the correct meaning, consequentially, it illustrates the syllable's importance in the intonation, rhythm tone and pitch. (Roach, 2000, 70 - 71).

Thirdly, intonation is used indeed to describe the tunes of speech, and the changes of pitch up and down in a sentence. All sentences contain a tune, the pitch rises or falls at the same points, these up and down of pitch are closely from stressed syllables and the falls of pitch with unstressed syllables.

Changes in pitch levels of a whole sentence are called the intonation contour of the sentence (Al-Hamash and Al-Jubouri, 1977, p.35).

Fourthly, rhythm in the same way of intonation is concerned with stressed syllables and unstressed syllables, but rhythm involves some event happening at regular intervals of time.

There are two kinds of rhythm one of two **stress - timed rhythm** implies that stressed syllables will tend to occur whether they are separated by unstressed syllable or not, not, on the other hand, syllable - timer - rhythm all syllable, whether stressed or not, tend to occur at regular time - intervals and the time between stressed syllable will be shorter or longer in

proportion to the number of unstressed syllables. (Roach, 2000, pp.134 - 135)

Fifthly : tone , is a term used in phonology to refer to the distinctive pitch level of a syllable, in the study of intonation , a sequence of tones constitutes a contour or tone unit the most important tone in a tone unit may be referred to as a nuclear tone .(Crystal , 2003, p. 465).

As well as, the nuclear, depending on the length of the utterance, by other units, the head (syllables between the first stressed syllable and the nuclear tone), pre - head (unstressed syllables beginning of the tone), and tail (syllables following the nuclear¹ tone). (Ibid, p.466).

Finally, pitch, defined intonation as a pitch variations that occur over a sentence, a tone unit is the part of a sentence over which an intonation contour extends. Within a tone unit each stressed syllable has a minor pitch increase, but there is one syllable in which this pitch increase is more significant. (Ibid, 467).

There are five distinctive pitch levels of a syllable, which can be either moving or level - tone. Moving tone can be divided into falling tone, rising tone, falling - rising tone, rising-falling tone, and level tone.

3 - Intonation

A term used in the study of supra segmental phonology , referring to use of patterns of pitch or melody , thus intonation patterns can be seen as a sequence of pitch levels , or tones ,but this use of tone has to be distinguished from that encountered in the phrase tone language , where it refers to the use of pitch to make different of meaning .(Crystal , 2003, pp. 241 - 242).

Again, intonation refers to how the sound goes up and down in pitch, an important part of this way is how to express someone's own thoughts, and it enables to understand those of others.

As well as helping to determine meaning and gives information about attitude of the seekers , and gets clear message about their attitude from the way thing are said .(Kelly, 2000, p. 86) .

In fact , a description of intonation is concerned with an overall tune or contour (rising, falling, falling-rising , rising- falling , and level) (Matthews, 2007, p. 201).

In this research there must be concentrate on three significant things, which build the final structure of intonation; those things are style, form and functions of intonation: -


3-1 Styles of Intonation:

- 1- Stress is symbolized by a stress mark (1) e. g o'ver , an'alysis.
- 2- Tone units with their boundaries are marked by a vertical bar (/) e.g. /
The task seemed difficult /.
- 3- Nuclear is symbolized by underlining the syllable carrying the nuclear, e. g / the task seemed difficult.
- 4- Tunes: are falling Rising, falling, rising, rising, falling and level. (Leech, 1994, p. 19).


3-2 Forms of Intonation

They can be divided into five levels:-

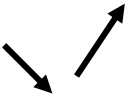

1- Falling intonation the voice falls on the last stressed suitable of a group of words e . g .

I'm tired 

2- Rising intonation: the voice rises at the end of a group of words, beginning on the last stressed syllable .e.g.

Are you tired? 

3- Falling rising, e.g.

I'm tired 


4- Rising - falling e.g.: yes, no.

(Swan, 2005, p.20)  5- Level .e.g.: yes, no

3-3 Functions of Intonation

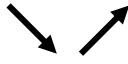
1- Attitudinal function: it enables speakers to express emotion and attitude, and this adds a special kind of meaning (Roach, 2000, 183).

Also, it is used to convey feelings, for example the same sentence with different pitch can be said in different ways , which might be express " angry "," happy "," grateful", bored ", and so on .(Ibid , 184).

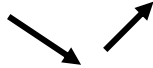
2- Accentual function: it helps to place tonic stress on a syllable to mark out the word to which it belongs as the most important in the tone - unit (Ibid, 183).

For example / she was 'wearing a 'red dress /

3- The grammatical function by inventing sentences which when written are ambiguous, and whose ambiguity can be removed by using differences of intonation for example:



1- / 'those who 'sold quickly /, made a profit.



2- / 'those who 'sold quickly /, made a profit.

1- It means (a profit was made by those who sold quickly).

2- It means (a profit was quickly made by those who sold).

4- The discourse function: the study discourse attempts to look at the longer context in which sentence occur. (Ibid, p.198).

For example, if someone says to another person [I need pen and pencil and some paper] the voice tends to rise on pen

and pencil , this means that there is something more , while the voice falls on paper, means that is the end of the list.(Kelly, 2007, p.101).

5- Pragmatic function: intonation and pragmatic are two fields related to the domain of utterances consequently, there are many studies which examine and explain the role of intonation and some pragmatic phenomena. Speech acts (conversation) is one of the most recent fields that are studied in the relation with intonation. (Delin and Zacharski ,1995, pp.1 - 7).

In brief, this paper concerning with four attitudes of pragmatics function of intonation which applied on some lines of conversation to explain how meaning change from attitude to another, these attitudes are "angry ", " happy " "" grateful ", and "bored " .

4 - Pragmatics:

The meaning of linguistic expressions when uttered within particular types of situation, and it is, concerned with the communicative force of linguistic utterances. (Quirk et al, 1985, p. 12).

In addition, pragmatics, deals with how speaker use language in ways which cannot be predicted from linguistic knowledge alone. (Aitchison, 1999, p. 9).

On the other hand, it means the study of what speakers mean. (Yule, 2010, p.127)

In many ways, pragmatics is the study of invisible meaning, or how-recognizes what is meant even when, it isn't said, speakers must to able to depend on a lot of shared assumptions and expectation when they try to communicate. (Ibid , 128).

Thus, pragmatics is appealing because it's about how people make sense of each other linguistically, but it can be a frustrating area of study because it requires to make sense of people and what they have in mind. (Yule, 1996, p. 4).

In summary, the advantage of studying language via pragmatics is that one can talk about people's intended meanings, their purposes or goals, and the kind of actions (angry, happy, grateful, bored) that they are performing when the speaker tow friends having a conversation may imply some things and infer some others, and can be recognize that the meanings are change according to change the levels of the pitch of intonation.

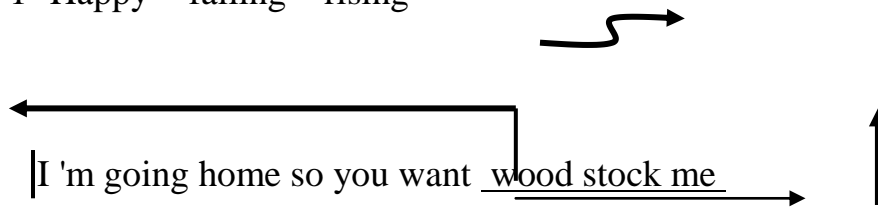
5- The Intended Meaning of Intention

On the whole , the pitch patterns are described as tone units or tone , group , the five variable of pitch range , falling , rising , falling - rising , rising- falling , and level are generally distinguished, some approaches, within pragmatics .

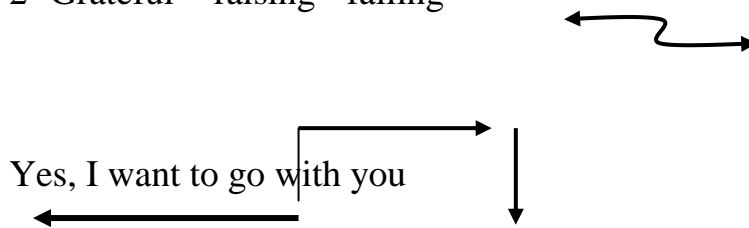
Accordingly, the relationship between intonation and pragmatics describes how tone rises and falls serve particular pragmatic functions, and how pragmatic serve emotions such as , happy, board , grateful, and angry .

So, this paper clarifies how changes in pitch of intonation are change, pragmatically, from emotion or attitude to another, through using some lines of dialogue A and B.

1- Happy = falling – rising



2- Grateful = raising - falling



3- Bored = level _____

What did you say she did?

4- Angry = rising

Did you say your teacher held the dog?

5-bored = falling

Yes, did.

But, falling tone, it is used some times to convey an impression of neutral, or sometimes an impression of being bored.

Through conversation below between A and B, the readers will understand how the meanings and emotion are changed with the speaker.

A: Are you going to play football this afternoon?

B: No, I'm not going to play football this afternoon.

A: What are you going to do this afternoon?

B: I'm going to go to the library.

A: are you going to go to the youth center now?

B: yes, I'm going to go to the youth center now.

What do you want to eat? A:

butter. Please bring me some bread and B:

A: well, there are some bread and butter.


oh, good, thanks. B:

afternoon this 1-A: are you going to play football

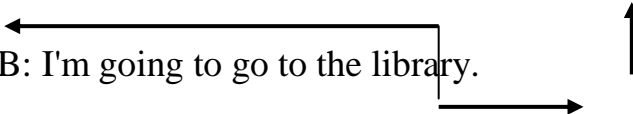
In this utterance, the speaker seems happy due to the range of intonation is falling and then rising.

2- B : No . I'm not going to play football this afternoon. 

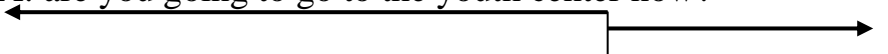
The voice in this line is rising which means that the speaker is angry.

3- A: what are you going to do this afternoon? 

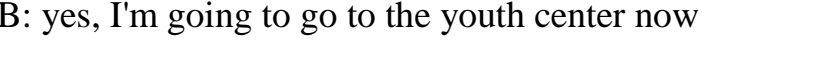
Here, the state is different as the pitch of the voice is falling so the person maybe bored.

4- B: I'm going to go to the library. 

In this line the speaker looks glad because of the falling and rising voice.

5- A: are you going to go to the youth center now? » 

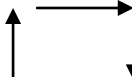
This line is similar to the previous line in the expressing happy because of the same reason falling and rising voice.

6- B: yes, I'm going to go to the youth center now 

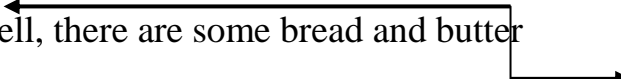
Then, the speaker changes the range of his voice toward high to express another emotion that is fury.

7- A: what do you want to eat?

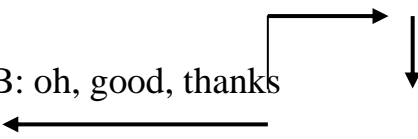
In this line the speaker is board because the range of the pitch is still stable on one line which is called 'level'.

8 - B: please bring me some bread and butter 

The voice speaker in this utterance changes from rising to falling because of emotion of speaker is grateful.

9- A: well, there are some bread and butter 

The level of voice begins high and then gradually becomes low, because of the speaker feeling bored.

10 -B: oh, good, thanks 

In the last line, seems the range of intonation rising and then return to be falling, on account of the emotion of the speakers is grateful. (Al-Hamash and Al-Jubouri ,1977, p.85).

In the end, this dialogue demonstrates how the range of intonation makes the meanings or feelings change from one situation into another.

Conclusions

On the light of what has been discussed earlier /the paper ends with the following conclusions:

- 1- The present study is an attempt to investigate the relationship between the intended meaning function and how the meanings are changing by ranges of intonation .
- 2- Pragmatics deals with emotions, and how to change these emotions from one into another by rising or falling the voice of the speaker.
- 3- The findings show that intonation is responsible for turning an utterance whose structure could have certain interpretation into another one of the speaker actually intends to convey.
- 4- The finding also show intended meaning function of intonation plays a role in determining the emotions of the speaker by the range of intonation when the speaker wants to expressing certain emotion must uses certain range of intonation

5- Each range of pitch means different emotions below:

- Falling-rising expresses 'happy'.
- Rising - falling expresses 'grateful'.
- Falling expresses 'bored'.
- Rising expresses 'angry'.
- Level expresses 'bored'.

References

- Aitchison , J .,(1999) , Linguistics , Fifth Edition , Teach Your Self, U . S. A
- Al - Hamash , K, And Al - Jubouri , A .,(1977), The New English Course For Iraq . Book 3, 4 And 5, Al Rissafi, Baghdad.
- Carr, P., (1993), Phonology, First Published, London: Macmillan Press.
- Crystal , D, (2003). A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics, Fifth Edition, Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Delin, J. And Zacharski, (1995)." Pragmatics Determinants of Intonation Contours For Dialogue System", United Kingdom: Long Man.
- Kelly, G, (2000). How To Teach Pronunciation, First Published, England: Longman.
- Lass, R., (1984). Phonology, First Edition, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Leech , G, And Svartrik , J.(1994) . A Communicative Grammar of English, Second Edition, London: Longman.
- Matthews. P. H. (2007). Concise Dictionary Of Linguistics, Second Edition, U.S.A.: New York.
- Quick, R., Greenbaum, Sidney and Leech, Geoffrey, (1985). A Comparative Grammar Of The English Language, United Kingdom: Longman.
- Roach, P., (2006). English Phonetics and Phonology, Third Edition, United Kingdom: Cambridge.
- Yule, G., (1996). Pragmatics, First Edition, Oxford: Hong Kong.
- Yule, G, (2010). The Study of Language, Fourth Edition, United Kingdom: Cambridge.

استخراج المعنى الضمني للتنغيم في بعض الألفاظ الحوارية في اللغة الانكليزية

م.م محمود عطية فرحان م. هدى عبد علي خطاب
ماجستير لغة/جامعة بغداد - كلية التربية (ابن رشد)
قسم اللغة الانكليزية

الملخص

إن الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو فهم واستخراج المعنى الضمني للتنغيم في بعض الألفاظ الحوارية في اللغة الانكليزية مع التعرف على تنوع الطبقة الصوتية المتعددة التي يتم تحديدها من قبل التراكيب النحوية التي توصل لنفس القوة الانجازية للوحدات التواصلية او المعنى الضمني عن طريق التراكيب النحوية التي ينوي المتكلمين توصيلها.

ينكون هذا البحث من أربعة أجزاء فالجزء الاول يتعلق بعلم الاصوات أما الجزء الثاني فيناقش التنغيم وعلاقته بالأسلوب والاشكال والوظائف أما الجزء الثالث فيسلط الضوء على التداولية ويتعلق الجزء الاخير وبالتفصيل بالمعنى الضمني للتنغيم. ويختم البحث ببعض الاستنتاجات ذات العلاقة ومن بينها ان المعنى يتغير طبقا لتغير التنغيم حيث تكون التداولية مسئولة عن تغيير العواطف من شخص الى اخر عن طريق رفع وخفض صوت المتكلم وقد أظهرت النتائج أيضا بان المعنى الضمني للتنغيم يلعب دورا أساسيا في تحديد مديات التنغيم حيث إن كل طبقة صوتية لها وظيفة مختلفة بالاعتماد على خفض ورفع صوت المتكلم بحيث يتغير المعنى طبقا لتغير طبقة الصوت والتي بدورها تغيير من وظيفة التنغيم .