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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INTONATION IN CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH: A CRITICAL  
ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Intonation plays a vital role in the spoken and conversational English. It gives an eminent space to the contemporary English. It has been observed that when the vocal cords are kept loosely together, they vibrate and that the vibration of the vocal cords produces a musical note called *voice*. During normal speech, in the case of an adult male, the vocal cords vibrate between 80 to 120 times a second and between 150 to 200 times a second in the case of an adult female. The rate at which the vocal cords vibrate is called the *frequency of vibration* and this determines the *pitch* of the voice. The more rapidly the vocal cords vibrate, the higher will be the pitch and vice versa. The patterns of variation of the pitch of the voice constitute the *intonation* of a language. The pitch at which stressed syllables are uttered in natural speech can be high, low or it can change from high to low or low to high. Any change in the pitch of accented syllables in spoken sentences is known as *intonation* or *tone*. Intonation indicates the sentence type (e.g., statement or question) as well as the attitude of the speaker.

**Keywords:** Tone, Attitude, Nucleus, Tone Group, Tonic Syllable

There is no language in the world is spoken on a monotone (i.e., on the same musical note) all the time. It is very rarely that we speak with an unvarying pitch. In normal speech, the pitch of our voice goes on changing constantly; now going up, now going down, and sometimes remaining level or steady. Different pitches of the voice combine to form patterns of speech variation or tones which together constitute the intonation of a language. The intonation of a language, thus, refers to the patterns of pitch variation or the tones, it uses in its utterances. When we speak to each other, our voices tend to '*rise*' or '*fall*' in pitch over a part of an utterance. This rise or fall in pitch is known as *intonation*. Falling intonation is shown by a sloping arrow which comes down from left to right, while rising intonation is shown by an arrow which rises from left to right. The arrow is just placed before the last stressed syllable (nucleus). Intonation plays an important in communication. Intonation is used mainly to indicate the speaker's attitude towards the listener or towards the topic on which he/she is speaking. In linguistics, intonation is variation of spoken pitch that is not used to distinguish words; instead, it is used for a range of functions such as indicating the attitudes and emotions of the speaker, signalling the difference between statements and questions, and between different types of questions, focusing attention on important elements of the spoken message and also helping to regulate conversational interaction. It contrasts

with tone, in which pitch variation in some languages distinguishes words, either lexically or grammatically (The term *tone* is used by some British writers in their descriptions of intonation but to refer to the pitch movement found on the nucleus or tonic syllable in an intonation unit). Although intonation is primarily a matter of pitch variation, it is important to be aware that functions attributed to intonation such as the expression of attitudes and emotions, or highlighting aspects of grammatical structure, almost always involve concomitant variation in other prosodic features. **David Crystal** says that "*intonation is not a single system of contours and levels, but the product of the interaction of features from different prosodic systems – tone, pitch-range, loudness, rhythmicity and tempo in particular.*"

**J. C. Wells** describes '*intonation is the melody of speech*'. In studying intonation, we study how the pitch of the voice rises and falls, and how speakers use this pitch variation to convey linguistic and pragmatic meaning. Further, it also involves the study of how the interplay of accented, stressed and unstressed syllables functions as a framework onto which the intonation patterns are attached. Intonation is about *how* we say things, rather than *what* we say, the way the voice rises and falls when speaking, in other words the music of the language. Just as words have stressed syllables, sentences have regular patterns of stressed words. In addition, the voice tends to rise, fall or remain flat depending on the meaning or feeling we want to convey (surprise, anger, interest, boredom, gratitude, etc.). Intonation therefore indicates the mood of the speaker. There are two basic patterns of intonation in English: falling intonation and rising intonation.

The main intonation pattern in English is: the *falling tone*, the *rising tone*, the *falling-rising tone* and *rise-fall tone*. Rising Intonation means the pitch of the voice rises over time [↗]; Falling Intonation means that the pitch falls with time [↘]; Fall-rise Intonation falls and then rises [↘↗]; and Rise-fall Intonation rises and then falls [↗↘]. *Stress and intonation* are linked phenomena; they work together to give the effect of '*prominence*' or '*accent*'. Accented syllables can be said with level pitch, high or low or with a change in pitch. An accented syllable said on level pitch is described as having a *static tone*, whilst an accented syllable on which a pitch change takes place has a *kinetic tone*. The syllable which initiates a kinetic tone is called the *nucleus* and said to have the *primary, nuclear, or tonic accent*. A syllable which is said on a level tone, high or low, is said to have a *static tone* and one on which there is a pitch change is said to have a kinetic tone (moving tone).

**Halliday** (1970: 30) categorizes three primary systems of intonation: 1) Tonality is the division of the continuous speech signal into meaningful chunks known as tone units. 2) Tonicity is the division of a tone unit into new and optional given elements through the placement of the tonic syllable. 3) Tone is the major pitch movement within the tone unit. The tonic syllable is the locus or the point of departure for the tone movement, which may be falling, rising or a compound of falling and rising movement.

Halliday divides intonation into three T's: Tonality (the chunking of speech into intonational phrases, or tone units; Tonicity – nucleus placement and Tone, mainly but not only, fall, rise and fall-rise. Tonality marks the beginning and the end of a tone group. Tone is the third unit in Halliday's system. Tone can be primary and secondary. They convey the attitude of the speaker. Halliday's theory is based on the syntactical function of intonation.

The study of the form and function of intonation in English is quite essential. Under the form of intonation, we shall study the details of the nature of pitch variations. The nature of pitch variations will be studied under *Tone Group*, *Tonic Syllable* and *Nuclear Tone*.

### Tone Group

The structure of an utterance can be divided into several tone groups depending how long it is and how many pauses there are in the utterance. In other words, an utterance may have one tone group (i.e. spoken in a single breath without a pause) or divided into two or more tone groups (also called breath groups/ sense groups). *For example*, sentences like the following will be said as a single group without any pause in between.

1. That's a wonderful idea.
2. How can I ever forget?

3. Pass the salt, please.

The sentences below, however, contain two or more tone groups, and the pause or end of each group is marked with an oblique bar (/):

4. When you go out, / shut the door.  
 5. Hello, / what are you doing?  
 6. Bhubaneswar, / the capital of Odisha, / is a temple city.  
 7. They have plenty of times, / but we haven't / in spite of the holidays.  
 8. You'll have to abide by all the rules of this college, / which, I may hasten to add, / may be changed time to time, / without any prior notice.

Sentences 1-3 listed above have **one group** each, while sentences 4 & 5 have **two groups** each. Sentences 6 & 7 have **three groups** each and the last sentence 8 has **four groups**. Each of these groups must be considered as a distinct unit of an utterance and said with a particular intonation.

### Tonic Syllable

The most prominent syllable in a tone group on which a pitch movement takes place is called the *nucleus* or the *tonic syllable*. Having divided an utterance into tone-groups, the speaker will have to choose one of the syllables in a tone-group on which to initiate a pitch movement during speech. In connected speech, normally, content words receive the accent and form/structure words do not. Let us look at the following sentences:

9. The 'postman didn't 'come \yesterday.  
 10. They 'came at \night.  
 11. Have you 'met my 'wife be 'fore?

In sentence 9, the syllable 'yes' is more prominent than 'post' and 'come', in sentence 10, the syllable 'night' stands out from 'came' and in sentence 11, the syllable 'fore' stands out from 'met', and 'wife', because they (i.e., yes, night, and fore) initiate on themselves a major change in the direction of the already varying pitch. These syllables are said with moving or *kinetic tones*. The other accented syllables in these three sentences are said with level (unmoving) or *static tones*. In other words, a tonic syllable is one that carries the kinetic tone in the tone group. Incidentally, the kinetic tone is also sometimes called the nuclear *tone*, as its placement determines the location of the nucleus of the tone group. Let us look at the following utterances (nucleus italicized):

- 12 It may 'rain to'morrow.  
 13 I don't under'stand it at 'all.

*If the context does not demand that a particular syllable be made especially prominent, the last prominent syllable in a tone group will be the nucleus.* Let us look at a few examples:

- 14 This is a 'good 'idea.  
 15 Di'vide it be'tween the 'two of us.  
 16 You are 'always making mis'takes.

Usually, the choice of nucleus will depend upon the meaning that the speaker wants to convey. Let us look at a few examples:

- 17 a. I 'want you to 'take the 'dog for a 'walk in the \park. ('Park' the tonic syllable. What the speaker wants to convey is that the dog should not be taken anywhere else.)  
 b. I 'want you to 'take the 'dog for a '\walk in the park. ('Walk' is the nucleus. The

speaker wants to give special emphasis to *walk* because he does not want the other person to make the dog run.)

c. I want you to take the *dog* for a walk in the park. (*Dog* is the nucleus. The speaker wants the other person to take the *dog* and not any other animal, for a *walk*.)

In all the three utterances of the sentences given above, the speaker gave prominence to all the content words and made one of the content words stand out from the rest by initiating a pitch movement. *If the context demands it, a form word can receive the accent.* In fact it can receive the tonic accent. Look at the same sentence again:

d. I want *you* to take the dog for a walk in the park. (the word '*you*' is the nucleus. The speaker wants the addressee, and not anyone else, to take the dog for a walk.)

e. *I* want you to take the dog for a walk in the park. (The word *I* is the nucleus. The speaker wants to emphasise that *he* and no one else, is giving the order to the hearer.)

We know now that each tone group has at least one tonic syllable, or nucleus, on which a major pitch movement is initiated. It is not arbitrarily, however, that a particular syllable in a tone group is made its nucleus. Generally, in spoken English the choice of the nucleus is determined by the meaning that the speaker wants to convey. Only that syllable is made the nucleus, or carries the nuclear tone, which the speaker may wish to make most prominent. In the below one tone-group utterance, the speaker can make any part of it prominent, depending upon what he intends to say. In each case nucleus is being italicised:

18 a. Shaswat generally leaves at seven in the morning. (*Morn-* is the nucleus here. The speaker possibly wants to emphasise that Shaswat leaves at seven in the morning, and not, in the evening.)

b. Shaswat generally leaves at seven in the morning. (*Seven-* is the nucleus here. The speaker wants to say that Shaswat leaves at seven o'clock, and not earlier or later than seven.)

c. Shaswat generally leaves at seven in the morning. (By placing the nuclear tone, one leaves, the speaker wants to say that he is talking about Shaswat's leaving, and not getting up, etc.)

d. Shaswat generally leaves at seven in the morning. (*Here* generally- is the nucleus. What the speaker wants to convey is that there may be occasions when Shaswat fails to leave at seven.)

e. Shaswat generally leaves at seven in the morning. (*Shaswat* is made the nucleus here because the speaker wants to say this about Shaswat, and not Swayam or Swagat.)

The tonic syllable in each case is the focus of the information which is being conveyed. It is however not always the case that a particular syllable in a tone group has to be made especially prominent. Sometimes there is no contrast involved, such as we find in sentence 18, and therefore no particular part of the tone group carries 'new' information (Or focus of information): the entire tone group carries new information. In such cases, the last important word (or the last accented syllable in the last important word) in the tone group is made the nucleus.

### Nuclear tone

The nuclear tone refers to the kinetic tone carried by the tonic syllable, or the nucleus, in a tone group. Unlike static or level tones, it is a major change in pitch direction. An accented syllable in a tone group is said on a level pitch, high or low, but the most prominent syllable in it (i.e. the nucleus) is said with a changing pitch. This changing pitch or tone is of several different kinds, the most important of which are called *fall*, *rise*, *fall-rise*, and *rise-fall*. The fall and rise can be subdivided into high fall and low fall, and high rise and low rise, respectively.

### The function (or role) of intonation

Intonation is not a mere melody (i.e. pattern or contour) of pitch variations, superadded to an utterance already complete in all respects and ready to submit its full meaning without this addition; it is complementary to it. It does not play a decorative role, but performs a *linguistic function*. It is part of English grammar in very much the same way as tense, or mood, or different types of subordinate clause, which we are accustomed to regarding as parts of grammar, and conveys distinctions of 'meaning' in the same way.

### Grammatical Function:

Intonation identifies different types of sentences. For examples:

1. He is ar'iving \late. (statement) [falling tone]
2. He is ar'iving /late? (question) [rising tone]

Similarly, the difference between a command and a request is that the former is said with a falling tone and the latter with a rising one as in the following pair of sentences:

3. 'Shut the \door. (command) [falling tone]
4. 'Shut the /door. (request) [rising tone]

It is intonation which helps the speaker divide longer utterances into smaller. For example:

5. Foreigners, / though settled in this country permanently, / are not eligible to vote.

The listener is better able to recognise the grammar and syntax structure of what is being said by using the information contained in the intonation. For examples, i. the placement of boundaries between phrases, clauses, and sentences. ii. The difference between questions and statements.

**Grammatical functions performed by tone boundaries:** Grammatical intonation is used in those sentences which when written are ambiguous and whose ambiguities can only be removed by using differences of intonation. In the following example, the difference caused by the placement of tone unit boundaries causes two different interpretations of sentence.

| Those who sold **quickly** | made a profit. |

(a profit was made by those who sold quickly)

| Those who **sold** | quickly made a **profit**. |

(a profit was quickly made by those who sold)

**Choice of tone:** Another grammatical function of intonation is the choice of tone on the tonic syllable. For example, rising tone is used with questions simple by changing the tone from falling to rising. For example, the price is going up. (Falling) The price is going up? (Rising)

### Question Tags

They are coming tomorrow, ↘aren't they? (Falling tone-the speaker is certain that the information is correct and simply expects the listener to provide confirmation). They are coming tomorrow, ↗aren't they? (Rising tone – a lesser degree of certainty and it functions more like a request for information)

**Attitudinal function:** Intonation is used mainly to indicate the speaker's attitude towards the listener or towards the topic on which he/she is speaking. An intonation pattern not only has a grammatical function, but also expresses attitudes like pleasure/anger, like/dislike, love/hate, belief/doubt, jealousy/surprise, and annoyance/sarcasm. Although intonation is primarily a matter of pitch variation, it is important to be aware that functions attributed to intonation such as the expression of attitudes and emotions, or highlighting aspects of grammatical structure, almost always involve concomitant variation in other prosodic features. Intonation is perhaps the chief means by which the speaker conveys his attitudes and emotions. The grammar of an utterance does not reveal in any noticeable way whether the speaker's attitude is surprise, request, suggestion, politeness, gratitude etc.

**For examples:**

1. The 'boss is ar'riving to↗night? (surprise)
2. 'Get me a 'glass of ↗'water. (request)
3. Do you 'know the ↘'answer? (Indifferent attitude of the speaker)
4. Let's 'take a 'taxi to the ↗'station. (suggestion)
5. ↘Thank you. (Genuine gratitude)
6. ↗Thank you. (casual)
7. 'When can you ↘'come? (normal question neither polite nor impolite)
8. 'When can you ↗'come? (politeness)
9. 'Did ↘↗ you? (show enthusiasm)
10. That man is Lily's ↗father?( sarcasm)

With the help of intonation, the hearer can make out whether a particular utterance is a statement or question, a command or a request. Here are some examples: 'Looking for ↘ something. (Falling tone – statement); 'Looking for ↗something. (Rising tone - a question); 'Shut the ↘door. (Falling tone- a command); 'Shut the ↗door. (Rising tone – a request).

Statements are normally made with a falling intonation (tone). This is true of the most of Indian languages as well as English. The falling intonation shows a matter-of-fact attitude on the part of the speaker. But when a statement is made with a rising tone (which is unusual), there is a suggestion of some excitement, disbelief, surprise etc. on the part of the speaker. This is true also of wh-questions, which are normally asked with a falling tone. The use of a rising tone suggests greater involvement and friendliness on the speaker's part. The fall-rise tone suggests doubt, hesitation etc. on the speaker's part. The factors that chiefly determine the choice of one pattern as against another are objective and subjective, objective in that the type of utterance (statement vs. question, command vs. request, even simple vs. complex sentence) is important and subjective in that the speaker's mood and his attitude to what he is saying are also significant.

**Accentual Functions**

The term accentual refers to accent. When it is said that intonation has accentual function, it implies that the placement of stress is somewhat determined by intonation.

**Functions of Accentual Intonation**

- The most common position for the placement of tonic syllable is the last lexical word (nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs) and not the functional words. For contrastive purpose, however any word can be the bearer of tonic syllable. For examples,
  - |She was wearing a red green **dress**.| (Normal placement)
  - | She was not wearing a **green** dress| she was wearing a red dress. (Contrastive purpose placement)
- Similarly for the purpose of emphasis the tonic stress can be placed in other positions. for examples:
  - | The movie was very **boring**.|
  - | The movie was **very**boring. |
  - |You shouldn't talk so **loudly**.|
  - |You **shouldn't** talk so loudly.|
- Used to clear out the ambiguities. For examples:
  - I have plans to **leave**. (I am planning to leave.)
  - I have **plans** to leave. (I have some plans to leave)

**Discourse function:** if we consider how intonation may be studied in relation to discourse, we can identify two main areas: one of them is the use of intonation to focus the listeners attention on aspects of the message that are most important, and the other is concerned with the regulation of conversational behaviour. Discourse function (to show how clauses and sentences go together in spoken discourse) example: subordinate clauses often have lower pitch, faster tempo and narrower pitch range than their main clause, as in the case of the material in parentheses in "The Red Planet (as it's known) is fourth from the sun".

### The uses of the tones

It is significant to note that every utterance has one or more than one tone group and every tone group has its own pattern, or contour, of pitch variation. It is also studied that this pattern will depend upon the number of accented syllables in a particular tone group, the location of the tonic syllable in it, and the nature of the change of pitch direction on the tonic syllable. Let us establish a kind of correlation between the various types of sentences or tone group and the tones with which they are generally spoken. While categorising the types of sentences, which would be said with the falling tone, the rising tone, etc, we shall not take into account the variants of these tones, e.g., high fall, low fall, etc. We shall also ignore for the time being the variations of pitch levels that take place up to the tonic syllable of the tone group. Thus, every accented syllable said on a level pitch, high or low, will be marked with ['] and the fall, rise, fall-rise and rise-fall with [\] or [\]; [/] or [']; [\] or [^]; and [^]; and [^] respectively.

### Falling Tone

The falling tone is used in the situations given below:

1. In '**ordinary statements**' made without emotional implications:

I have a 'lot of \ 'students.

The 'house is \ 'empty.

2. In '**wh-questions**' which are said in a neutral and sometimes unfriendly way.

'When are they '\coming?

'What is the 'meaning of this '\word?

3. In '**commands**'

'Shut the \ 'door.

'Do as I \ 'say

Don't 'shout '\here.

4. In '**exclamations**'

How \nice of you!

'Good \heavens!

Oh, 'this is 'too 'much!

5. In '**question tags**' seeking confirmation of an opinion expressed by the speaker.

He has just been 'promoted, \hasn't he?

You are not 'coming to'day, \are you?

6. In '**invitation**'

Come over for a cup of tea.

Why don't you 'visit to my\ 'home?

7. In '**yes/no questions suggesting a 'cold' or 'indifferent attitude'**' on the part of the speaker.

Do you 'know the \answer?

Are you 'coming \station with me?

8. In **dual questions**

Would you 'like 'tea or \coffee?

Shall we 'go by 'train or by \bus?

9. In **Instructions / Demands etc.:**

1: \Help! – \Stop! – \Go! – \Wait! – \No! – \Yes!

2: \Stop it – Let \go – Go a\way – Come \here – Turn a\round – \Show me –

10. In **Quick questions** (used when the context is clear):

\What? – \Where? – \When? – \How? – \Who? – \Why? – Why \not?

11. For **short questions used as responses to statements**

Statements	Response
The teacher is on leave today.	Is he?
They went to Puri last night.	Did they?

12. In **statement that indicate finality**

I 'feel this 'matter should be \closed.

There is 'nothing 'more to be \said.

**Rising Tone**

The rising tone is used in the situations given below:

13. In **yes/no questions**

Do you 'mind if I /sit?

Do you like your new ↗teacher?

14. In **request**

'Listen to me for a ↗minute.

'Please sit ↗down.

15. Command intended to sound like a request

'Close the /door.

Don't 'disturb me at 'odd /hours.

Don't be/ late.

16. Statements expressing *surprise, disbelief, sarcasm* etc.

That 'man is ↗'dead?

The 'boss is ar'riving to↗night?

17. In **incomplete utterance**, very often as the first clause of a sentence:

When I was in ↗Cuttack...

Since I don't know ↗Bengali...



18. In questions which demand an answer yes or no:

Will you ↗do it?

Have you 'seen my ↗dog?

19. Statements intended to be a question

You don't 'want to 'lend me the /book?

She isn't /coming?

You won't /attend?

The results are /out?

Our presentation is to/day?

20. In suggestions

Shall we 'go for a/ 'movie?

21. *Wh- question* showing politeness, friendliness, warmth, personal interest.

'How is your /'wife?

'Who is your 'favourite 'cricket /'player?

22. *Wh- questions* where the speaker is asking for the repetition of something that was said earlier.

'Where did you 'say the 'last 'meeting was /'held?

23. *Wh- question* indicating a feeling of surprise

'How did he 'dare to 'tell you?

'Why didn't you 'tell me she was your 'girl /'friend?

24. In question tags seeking information

The 'match 'started at 'ten o'clock, /didn't it?

You have 'attended the 'function, /haven't you?

You like fish, ↗don't you?

The view is beautiful, ↗isn't it?

25. Repetition-question which repeats someone else's question, or wants him to repeat some information

'What did I /'say?

It will take me three days, how /long?

26. Terminal tone group said as an afterthought

'Sasmita is 'going to 'marry/ I sup/pose.

I'll not 'oppose him / if you /like.

27. Non-terminal tone group

Whenever he /calls on us ... (he creates problems).

I'll inform you ... (if she comes).

28. In greetings

/Hello.

/Goodbye.

Good/ morning.

29. A sense of incompleteness.

Having 'thought 'carefully 'over this /'matter ...

With 'reference to your appli/'cation...

### **Falling – Rising Tone (Fall-Rise) Tone**

The following tone groups are said with falling-rising tone:

1. In polite request

Could I 'borrow your √ 'bike?

'Please 'carry my √ bag.

'Buy me some √ flowers.

'Bring some √ lunch for me.

'Give me some √ water.

2. Incomplete statement leading to a following tone group

If you don't be √ have, / (I'll 'punish you severely).

3. In expressing disbelief on the speaker's part.

He 'says he has 'seen √ 'God!

You've 'won the 'gold 'medal for √ 'debating!

4. Statement intended to be a 'correction' of the information received

He teaches Hindi. √ English

He has three daughters. He has √ four.

You com'pleted the re'port on 'Thursday?

'No, not 'Thursday, √ 'Friday.

5. In short questions to show enthusiasm

'Did √ you?

6. Statements intended to be a warning/reproach, or to express concern

You must not 'drive 'like √ this. (Warning)

I'm 'going to 'jump over the 'wall. √ Careful. (Concern)

I 'want all 'this 'money. You might 'give some to your √ brother. (reproach)

7. In imperative meant to be a pleading request.

\Don't get on my /nerves.

\Come as soon as you /can.

8. In incomplete utterance

√ 'Well...

9. Statement which shows a kind of reservation on the part of the speaker

He's <sup>∨</sup> good. (But I can't trust him)

I can 'do it 'to <sup>∨</sup> morrow.

10. Hesitation/reluctance:

So, you'd be willing to confirm that? ...Well ... I <sup>∨</sup>sup<sup>∧</sup>pose so...

You didn't see him on Monday? I don't quite <sup>∨</sup>re<sup>∧</sup>member ...

11. Politeness-Doubt-Uncertainty: (You are not sure what the answer might be.)

Perhaps we could <sup>∨</sup>vis<sup>∧</sup>it the place?

Should we <sup>∨</sup>cop<sup>∧</sup>y the list?

Do you think it's <sup>∨</sup>al<sup>∧</sup>lowed?

**12 Incomplete Utterances having two tone-groups**

All the examples cited below have two tone-groups each. The end of the first tone-group is marked /. See how the first of the two tone-groups in each sentence is said with a rising tone.

- If you 'go to <sup>∨</sup>Delhi/ 'please 'meet my<sup>∧</sup> 'aunt.
- I 'went to the 'market this <sup>∨</sup>morning / and 'bought a 'lot of <sup>∨</sup>vegetables.
- As 'soon as you 'reach <sup>∨</sup>London/ 'give this 'letter to the 'High <sup>∧</sup>Co'mmissioner.
- When my 'father <sup>∨</sup>died, / I was 'only 'five years <sup>∨</sup>old.
- 'If I <sup>∨</sup>see him/ I shall 'give him a 'piece of my <sup>∨</sup>mind.
- The 'moment you are <sup>∨</sup>ready,/ 'please <sup>∨</sup>phone <sup>∨</sup>me.
- I 'don't mind 'eating any<sup>∨</sup>where,/pro'vided the 'place is <sup>∨</sup>clean.
- If you get 'drenched in the<sup>∨</sup> rain, / you're 'likely to 'fall <sup>∨</sup>ill.
- I was 'terribly hurt/ when my 'father 'called me a <sup>∨</sup>fool.
- If at 'all it's <sup>∨</sup>possible, / I shall 'meet you at the <sup>∨</sup>station.

**Rising- Falling Tone (Rise-Fall):** The following tone groups are said with rising-falling tone:

1. Statement showing enthusiastic agreement

It was <sup>∧</sup>horrid.

<sup>∧</sup>Yes

Of <sup>∧</sup>course

2. Question showing suspicion, indignation, incredulity or mockery

What has he been <sup>∧</sup>doing? (suspicion)

Will you be able to <sup>∧</sup>do it? (mocking, suspicion)

Can you finish it by <sup>∧</sup>

tomorrow? (knowing, suspicious)

3. Exclamation expressing sarcasm, irony

'How ^'good for you! (sarcasm)

'Good ^ evening. (ironical)

Oh, ^ really. (sarcasm)

4. In a complex sentence where there is a subordinate clause before the main clause, a rising tone is used for the subordinate clause and a falling tone for the main clause.

'After he had ↗eaten, he 'went to ↘ 'bed.

When the 'bus 'finally a' ↗rived, we 'found there were 'no ↘ 'seats.

If you 'ask your 'question po↗'litley, you may 'get an ↘ 'answer.

5. Rising intonation to suggest incompleteness, followed by falling intonation to suggest closure.

The 'following 'players have been se'lected for the ' ↗team: ↗Subham, S↗wayam, ↗Swaraj, and ↘ Swagat.

The rising intonation before the first three names shows that the end of the list has not been reached, and the falling intonation before the fourth name shows that this is the end of the list.

When the po'lice 'searched the 'thief's ↗bag, they 'found a ↗ 'knife, a ↗'gun ana a 'five 'hundred 'rupee ↘'note.

6. **Choices** (alternative questions.)

- a. Are you having ↗soup or ↘salad?
- b. Is John leaving on ↗Thursday or ↘Friday?
- c. Does he speak ↗German or ↘French?
- d. Is your name ↗Ava or ↘Eva?

7. **Lists** (rising, rising, rising, falling)

Intonation falls on the last item to show that the list is finished.

- a. We've got ↗apples, ↗pears, ↗bananas and ↘oranges
- b. The sweater comes in ↗blue, ↗white ↗pink and ↘black
- c. I like ↗football, ↗tennis, ↗basketball and ↘volleyball.
- d. I bought ↗a tee-shirt, ↗a skirt and a ↘handbag.

8. **Unfinished thoughts (partial statements)**

In the responses to the following questions, the rise-fall intonation indicates reservation. The speaker hesitates to fully express his/her thoughts.

- a. Do you like my new handbag? Well the ↗leather is ↘nice... ( but I don't like it.)
- b. What was the meal like? Hmm, the ↗fish was ↘good... (but the rest wasn't great).
- c. So you both live in Los Angeles? Well ↗Alex ↘does ... (but I don't).

9. **Conditional sentences**

(The tone rises in the first clause and falls gradually in the second clause.)

- a. If he ↗calls, ask him to leave a ↘message.
- b. Unless he ↗insists, I'm not going to ↘go.

c. If you have any ↗problems, just ↘contact us.

### Some Common Phrases

#### When Meeting Somebody:

Good morning. (Falling)

Good evening. (Falling)

Good afternoon. (Falling)

#### When taking leave:

Goodbye. (Rising)

Goodnight. (Rising)

Good afternoon. (Rising)

#### Other phrases:

Yes, please. (Rising)

No, thank you. (Rising)

Thank you. (Rising)

Sorry. (Rising)

Excuse me. (Rising)

I beg your pardon. (Rising)

Miscellaneous Practice

Exercises

#### Statements: Falling intonation

#### Statements with one stress

I \know.

I \see.

It \stopped.

I \like it.

He'll \buy it.

She \knows him.

She \did it.

We \found it.

She has \done it.

I can \drive.

It may \change.

You should \call her.

Statements with two stresses

'People \work.

'Birds \fly.

'Time \flies.

#### Statements with three stresses

'Betty 'lives in \London.

'Victor 'works at a \bank.

I 'haven't 'read this \book.

Statements with four stresses

She 'wants to 'buy a 'new \car.

He 'wrote the 'letters 'very

\quickly.

The 'teacher 'told her 'students a \story.

#### Statements with five stresses

'Alex 'wrote the 'letters 'very \quickly.

'Victor is 'going to 'London 'next \month.

'Tanya is 'reading the 'book you 'brought \yesterday.

#### Friendly interest, politeness:

#### Rising intonation

'What is your /name?

'Where do you /live?

'What did she /say?

'Where have you /been?

#### General questions: Rising

#### intonation

Do you 'visit them /often?

Have you 'seen my /keys?

Are you 'ready to /start?

Requests: Rising intonation

Could you 'give me a /pen, please?

Could you 'open the /window, please?

Would you 'mind /helping me?

Alternative questions: Rising and falling intonation

Do you 'want /coffee or \tea?

Does he 'speak /English or \German?

#### Tag questions: Falling or rising

#### intonation

It's a 'beautiful \town, \isn't it?

She \knows him, /doesn't she?

Commands: Falling intonation

\Stop it! 'Sit \down.

'Close your \books.

Requests: Rising intonation

'Come \in, /please.

'Come \here, /please.

'Sit \down, /please.

#### Exclamatory sentences: Falling

#### intonation

'What a 'wonderful \present!

'How 'beautiful her \voice is!

'What a \pity!

#### Direct address: Rising intonation

/Peter, can you /help me?

'Mrs. /Smith, 'this is 'Mary \Brown.

'Good-\bye, /Tom.

'Good \morning, /Jane.

#### Enumerating: Rising intonation

/One, /two, /three, /four, \five.

She 'bought /bread, /cheese,

/oranges, and \apples.

#### Responses

\Yes.

\No.

\Certainly.

\Sure.

\Thank you.

\Sorry.

Of \course.

'All \right.

'Very \well.

'No \problem.

'That's \true.

I \think so.

You are \welcome.

You are \right.

I'd be \glad to.

I'm \sorry.

'Thank you 'very \much.

\Yes, I \am.

\Yes, I \do.

\Yes, he \has.

\Yes, they \will.

\Yes, you \can.

\No, I \don't.

\No, I \haven't.

\No, he \won't.

\No, you \shouldn't.

\Yes, \certainly.

\Yes, of \course.

\Yes, \please.

\No, \thank you.

I \can.

She \is.

He \will.

You \should.

I \can't.

Oh, /really?

I'm /sorry?

He \didn't.

Ex/cuse me?

## CONCLUSION

Intonation refers to a combination of acoustic parameters, including duration, intensity, and pitch used to communicate discourse meaning. It is well known fact that, knowing and using the right intonation patterns in day-to-day communicative English is a challenging and one of the most important tasks to non-native speakers and learners of English, especially Indian speakers of English because we have stayed in polyglot civilisation. Learning segmental features like consonants, vowel sounds and consonant clusters are comparatively easier than the master of supra-segmental features like word stress, intonation and rhythm. To be proficient in communication it needs to be practised regularly and effectively. English is spreading to every nook and the cranny in the world. Moreover, it becomes an international language or global language, further; it can be considered or called as language of job opportunities, library language and link language. It is high time to speak with intelligibility just not only in segmental features but also supra-segmental features. English language's richness, flexibility, elegance and dignity made it universally popular. From every spear of our life the role of English has become noticeable. Like our mother tongue we should constantly take care of intonation of English.

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