

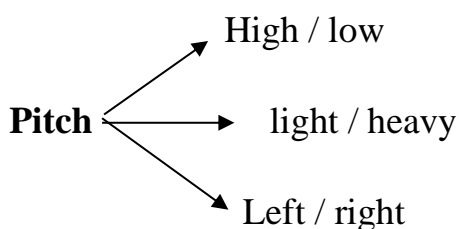
Intonation

Intonation exists in every language, it is about how we say things, rather than what we say. It is the way the voice rises and falls when speaking, in other words the music of the language. Incorrect intonation may result in misunderstandings. To understand the expressions and thoughts that go with words we use intonation. Intonation is variation of spoken pitch that is used for a range of functions such as indicating the attitudes and emotions of the speaker, signaling the difference between statements and questions, and between different types of words or sentences.

Intonation and stress are closely linked. In fact, it's impossible to dissociate them. They go hand in hand. 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, etc.). Intonation therefore indicates the mood of the speaker. Intonation is a part of suprasegmental phonology; it can be defined as the movement of the voice between high and low pitch.

The pitch of voice plays the most important part of intonation.

Pitch is the degree of rise and fall of the voice due to differing rates of vibration of vocal cords. Pitch could be described as high or low or ranging from light to heavy or from left to right.



Not all aspects of speakers' pitch are interesting only those aspects which carry some linguistic information are significant.

For pitch differences to be linguistically significant they should be:-

1. Under speaker control
2. Perceptible
3. In contrast: when we replace high by low we have change in meaning

The scientific study of intonation will lead us to the function of each different aspect of intonation; therefore, the foreign learners could be taught rules to enable them to use intonation in the way that native speakers use it.

Form and function in intonation:

In order to have a full idea about intonation, we will begin with looking at the shortest piece of speech i.e. one-syllable utterance.

Utterance is a continuous piece of speech beginning and ending with a pause (silence) utterance can be said with a level tone or a moving tone.

Tone is related with stressed syllable, and refers to overall behavior of pitch of any stressed syllable.

A **level tone** means producing the utterance with a steadily type of tone e.g (_yes, _no). Usually English people do not speak with level tone rather they use a moving tone in their speech.


Two other types of tone can be identified:

- 1- **Falling tone** (\ yes, \ no)
- 2- **Rising tone** (/ yes, / no)

A **falling tone** is the one which descends from a higher to lower pitch.

A **rising tone** is a movement from a lower pitch to a higher one.

The form of intonation is the way in which pitch is varied. The form of intonation can be various types:

1. Level (_) this is a type of tone in which pitch agreement remain steadily or constant.
2. Falling tone (↘) is a type of tone in which movement descends from a higher to lower pitch.
3. Rise(ing) (↗) a type of tone in which moves from a lower to a higher pitch. These two kinds of intonation resemble the simple forms of tone.
4. Rising – falling tone : a type of tone in which pitch movement rises and then falls down () these forms of tone can be used to achieve function.

Function here means the intended communicative meaning rather than lexical meaning (dictionary meaning), communicative functions include making answer, questions, surprise command, request, invitation, partial agreement... etc

Tone and tone languages:

When the change of tone causes a change of lexical meaning, the language is called a tone language. In kono (an African language) for instance, when the word / ˈ bɛɪ/ is uttered with a high level tone it means (uncle) but when it is pronounced with a low level tone / ˌ bɛɪ/ it means (greedy) similarly in Chinese (pecking dialects), the word / ˈ ma/ it means (mother) when uttered with a high level tone, but it means (hemp) when it's uttered with a rising tone.

/ ˌ ma/, or it means (sold) when it is pronounced with a falling tone.

/ ˌ ma/. When the change of tone influences the type of function achieved rather than the lexical meaning, the language is called intonation language such as English language.

Some function of English tone:

English is an intonation language in which change of tone causes a change in the function of utterance with yes, no and all are one syllable word.

1. **Fall** \searrow yes, \searrow no: uttering (saying) yes or no with a fall tone indicated an answer to a question which the fall tone gives an impression of finality and we have nothing to add.

2. **Rise** \nearrow yes, \nearrow no: when the two words are uttered with a rise tone convey an impression that something more is to follow i.e. an invitation to continue as in the following dialogue :

A- Excuse me,

B- \nearrow Yes (B's replay here is equivalent to question (What do you want)

A- Do you know John Smith?

B- \searrow Yes (I know him) , \nearrow yes (why do you ask?).

If B answers with yes (a rising tone) he'll indicate an invitation to A to continue with (what) he intends to say about John Smith after establishing that B knows him.

3. **Falling – rising** $\searrow \nearrow$ yes, no $\searrow \nearrow$:

The fall-rising tone here is used to signal limited agreement (partial agreement) or response with reservation for example :

A: I've heard that it's a good school.

B: $\searrow \nearrow$ yes (it has some good aspect and bad aspect) that means (I partially agree with you) and not full agreement with A, thus A would expect B to go on to explain why he was reluctant to agree.

A: it's not really an expensive record, is it?

B: $\searrow \nearrow$ No (partial agreement)

The fall-rise in B's replay indicates that you would not agree with A.

4. **Rise-fall** $\nearrow \searrow$ yes, $\nearrow \searrow$ no (strong feeling)

This type is used to convey rather strong feeling of approval, disapproval or surprise.

5. **Level** $_$ Yes, $_$ No:

It's rarely used by English people. This tone is used in a rather restricted context in English to convey a feeling of saying something routine or uninteresting or boring. For example:

A teacher calling the name of the pupils or students from a register form, he/she often does so using a level tone on each name and the students would be likely to respond with _ yes when their names were called.