

## Online Lecture N° 2

**Level:** Master II

**Specialty:** Language Sciences

**Module:** Analysis of Linguistic Levels

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### **I. Phonological Level**

#### **1.4. Intonation**

##### **1.4.1. Labels of Intonation**

1.4.1.1. Intonation 1

1.4.1.2. Intonation 2

1.4.1.3. Intonation 3

##### **1.4.2. Functions of Intonation**

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1.4.2.2. Accentual Function

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1.4.2.4. Discourse Function

*(Practice & Testing)*

## 1.4. Intonation

The section in view looks upon the variations of tones humans use in their habitual production of speech sounds for communication. As known, the pitch used when speaking constantly changes to reveal numerous aspects of communicative properties and playing important roles in displaying messages. The present section is displayed under three labels: 'intonation I' which defines the term 'intonation' and the related elements as pitch, variation, etc. and also tries to illicit some of types and functions of commonly used tones. The second label goes under the title of 'intonation II' which describes the tone unit and its main components as the tonic syllable, the tonic stress; the third label is 'intonation III'. It will consider more complicated cases of tone structures where '*the tail*' (one of the tone units) behaves differently in different situations

So, what is really a pitch?

Pitch: how high or low a sound is, necessarily under a speaker's control (1<sup>st</sup> condition). A pitch difference must be perceptible (2<sup>nd</sup> condition). Any unit of phonology or grammar should be contrasted with another item, as with '*pin*' and '*bin*'. (3<sup>rd</sup> condition)

So, these three conditions must be gathered for any sound unit analysis, otherwise the sound produced is of no linguistic significance.

### 1.4.1. Labels of Intonation

The labels represent a large description of tones and tone uses. They go under three distinguishing features sketched clearly as follows:

#### 1.4.1.1. Intonation I

The first label attempts to unravel some of the complexities related to analysing a tone unit in its form and its possible functions. Relatedly to the above information, we need the answers of two plausible questions about the English language- the language we are supposed to learn and master for different communicative purposes. The questions are as follows:

- What can we observe when we study pitch variations?
- What is the linguistic importance of the phenomena we observe?

Simply put, these two questions provide much of the data in relation to i) form of intonation and ii) function of intonation. The answer to these two questions is exclusively reliant on the shortest piece of speech which is the 'syllable'. In return, a syllable constitutes what we call 'utterance'

e.g., two common one-syllable utterances are: 'yes' and 'no'

The overall behaviour of the pitch in these examples (yes-no) is tone. These answers can have different types of tones:

**1-moving** [ falling tone ] ⇒ descending from higher to lower pitch ↘

**tone** [ rising tone ] ⇒ a movement from lower to higher pitch ↗

**2-level** [ a steady, unnatural sounding ] ⇒ native speakers do not use tone

To represent tones, we use marks before the syllables:

Level	( _yes)	( _no)
Falling	( ↘yes)	( ↘no)
Rising	( ↗yes)	( ↗no)

*N.b: there is no difference between high or low level that is why this 'level' tone is not used by native speakers and for other languages tone change is discriminative*

In here, we deal with what we call 'tone languages' which is the case of many languages where the tone affects meaning, like: "Kono" (West Africa), "Chinese" (Peking District). However, the English language is not a tone language because meaning of utterances does not change by tone change, but it can provide functions to the message as signs of refusal, deny, and complete acceptance or invitation to carry discussion or the reverse yet. Hence, this peculiarity of tone use in English makes it difficult defining intonation

In English, we can distinguish two types of tones in use:

- Simple tones (level, fall, and rise)
- Complex tones [ fall-rise ] & [ rise-fall ]

The 'fall-rise tone is quite frequently used and the 'rise-fall is less used among speakers of the English language. Nonetheless, circumstances where different tones are used within the very limited context of words 'yes' and 'no' said in isolation are not really exhaustive illustrations, but can provide a full branch of data clearing up the different uses and functions of the tones; be it simple or complex. Nonetheless, these (yes-no) examples will suffice in showing the grouping of functions as follows:

Fall ↘yes ↘no

This tone is usually regarded as neutral. Answering with such a tone means that there is nothing to be said and or the fall tone gives an impression of 'finality'

1) - A: do you know Jones Smith?

B: ↘yes

....this kind of answer (tone) gives rather a feeling of finality and makes it difficult for A to continue. In here, B has shown a complete lack of interest to A's questioning and that 'there is no need to carry on speaking about the matter' even though the answer is positive (yes).

2) – A: Do you know that the exams are postponed?

B: ↘no

....this kind of negative answer (no) shows another time that there is no interest in wondering about the reason 'why' or about the next date 'when'. So, the fall tone carries a typical function of disinterest and/ or indifference to such matters and brings the idea of closing the communication

### Rise ↗yes ↗no

Contrastively, this 'rising tone' conveys an impression that something more is to follow. Otherly, there is need to know more about the matter because the tone reveals a big interest to what a says and B's answer invites for continuing communication

– A: Excuse me?

B: ↗yes

....the 'yes' answer with rising tone gives rather an invitation to continue the conversation. It is a kind of readiness to and willingness to adhere to the conversation initiated by A.

– A: do you know that the exams are postponed?

B: ↗no

....oppositely to the above answer for the same question, the interlocutor 'B' responds vividly to A's question giving a serene sign of wonder about the fact raised through A's questioning. So, there is interest in wondering why, when.....

### Fall-rise ∨yes ∨no

The fall-rise tone is used a lot in English with various functions. A fairly simple one is '*response with reservations*' or as described as 'limited agreement'

– A: I have heard that it is a good school?

B: ∨yes

....The answer to the question here provides certainly an agreement with certain reservations. In other terms, B's answer is a kind half-agreement giving an impression that B, though adhering to the view or fact, will go on explaining why he was reluctant to (completely) agree

– A: It is really an expensive record, is it?

B: ∨no

....Almost in this context, at the same time, there is something conceded with reservation or hesitation. Though B is accepting the fact, but he is, in a way, not completely agreeing since he tries to continue his explanation with certain reservations later on.

### Rise- fall ∧yes ∧no

The rise-fall tone expresses strong feelings of approval, disapproval or surprise. In here, it is important to distinguish from other tones because each context reveals a different feeling regardless to 'yes' or 'no' answer either

– A: you would not do an awful thing like that, would you?

B: Λno

....such negative answer with that typical ‘rise-fall’ tone gives a hard disapproval and/ or tough surprise on the fact (rather accusation). So, there is a strong refusal of the claim showing surprise, refusal and complete shock

– A: Isn’t the view charming?

B: Λyes

....this positive ‘rise-fall’ tone confirms the state that the view is lovely. This kind of answer with that tone shows a complete approval of the claim

– A: I think you said it was the best so far

B: Λyes

....Another time the tone used here reveals complete acceptance of the claim or rather the conclusion. So, both interlocutors agree on the pledge

#### Level --yes --no

This type of tone is used in rather restricted context. It is used generally with one-single syllable utterance conveying the idea of something uninteresting or as a routine. In other terms, the speaker, using such a (neutral) tone, does not (is not requested to) express feeling when responding

- calling names on a list on the behalf of a teacher
- pupils responding to the call of names by the teacher
- Insurance questions
- yes/no answers to fill in the form

**1.4.1.2. Intonation II** A vivid example is in the word ‘**ma**’ in the Chinese language where the tone used can decide on the meaning:

ma<sup>↗</sup>..... meaning⇒ “forest”

ma<sup>↘</sup>..... meaning⇒ “split”

However, English is one of the languages that do not use tone in this way but for other purposes. Such languages (English included) are called ‘*intonation languages*’.

#### **a. Tone-unit**

A tone unit is greater in size than a syllable. However, in its smallest unit can/may consist of a/one syllable or more since we look at continuous speech in English utterances. Because if English was spoken in isolated monosyllables, it will be similar to those tone languages

e.g.,1. One-syllable utterance

↗ you (we underline the syllable that carries a tone)

e.g.,2. A three-syllable utterance

Is it ↗ you (the 3<sup>rd</sup> syllable is more prominent: it carries a rising tone)

Other used terms are as follows:

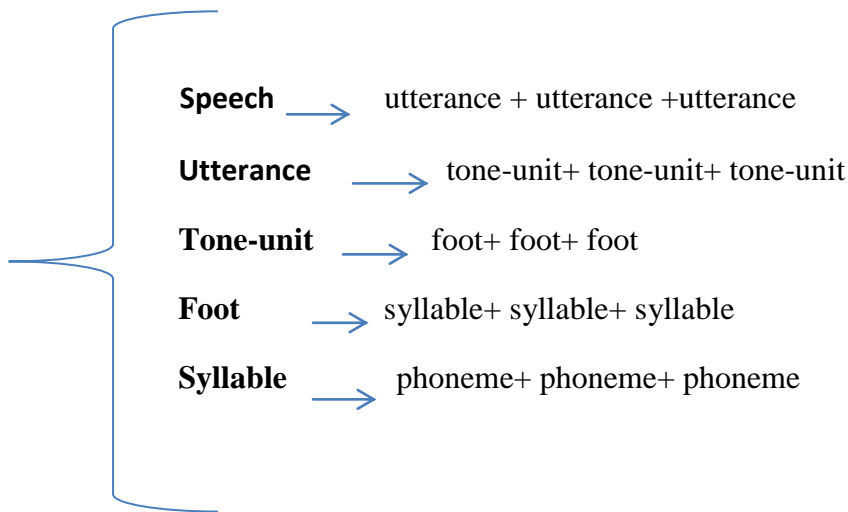
-Tonic syllable ⇒ nucleus

-Tonic stress ⇒ nuclear stress

e.g.,3. √ Jhon is it ↗ you

*A tone-unit has a place in a range of phonological units that are in a hierarchical relationship:*

### The Hierarchy

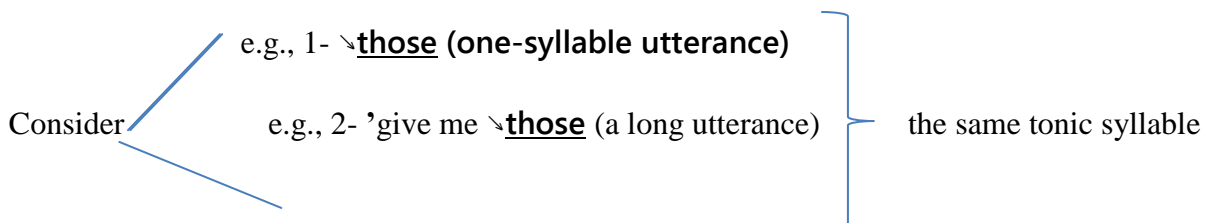


### The Structure of Tone-unit

The role of the tonic syllable is outstandingly important in the tone-unit. Each imple tone-unit has only one and only one tonic syllable. This is to mean that the tonic syllable is an obligatory component of the tone-unit (as the vowel is for the syllable)

The other components are:

#### 1. The Head:

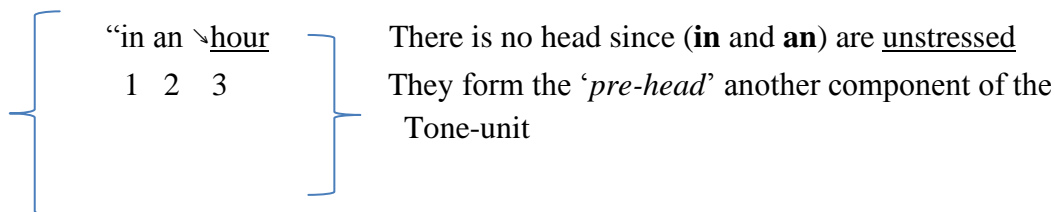
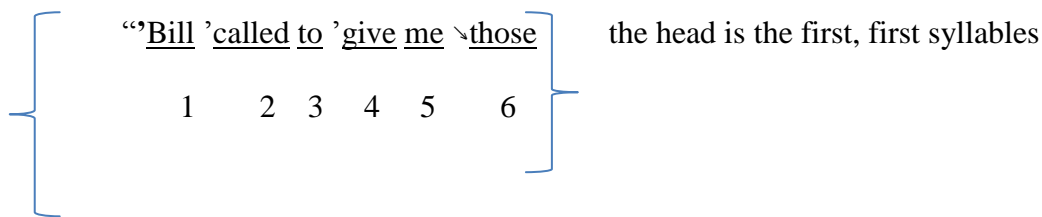


The rest of the tonic syllable (in e.g., 2) is called the 'head' ⇒ the first syllable “'give”

Has a stress mark and this is important to explain and define what is a head.

A head, then, is all that part of a tone-unit that extends from the first stressed syllable up to (but not including) the tonic syllable. i.e., if there is no stressed syllable, there cannot be a head of the tone-unit. So, in e.g., 2 “'give and me” are the head

Look at the following examples:



**2. The Pre-head** In contrast to the 'head', the 'pre-head' is composed of all the unstressed syllables in a tone-unit ad preceding the first stressed syllable. Thus, we find the pre-head in the two following situations:

-When there is no head (no stressed syllable preceding the tonic syllable)

e.g., in an \hour

When there is a head

e.g., in a 'little 'less than an \ hour  
 pre-head head tonic syllable

### 3. The Tail

Another component of the tone-unit is the 'tail'. By definition, a tail is any syllable(s) between the tonic syllable and the end of the tone-unit. Look at the examples below:

\Look at it

\What did you say

\Both of them were here

As a conclusion, we may have globally, a tone-unit structure as follows:

Pre-head head tonic syllable tail  
 PH H TS T

To mark tone-units' boundaries in a spontaneous, longer stretch of speech:

a)- double vertical lines || to mark silent pauses (pause-type)

b)- single vertical line | to mark non-pause boundaries

e.g. ||and then 'nearer to the \front || on the \left | there is a 'bit of \forest |  
'coming \_\_\_ 'down to the \waterside || and then a bit of a ^bay ||

**We can mark their structure as follows:**

	a	nd	then	‡		nearer	to	the	‡		<u>front</u>		on	the	‡
PH						H					TS				PH
^	<u>left</u>		there	is	a	‡		'bit	of	‡		\	<u>fo</u>	‡	rest
	TS				PH					H			TS		T
‡		coming		down	to	the	‡	\	<u>wa</u>	‡			terside		and
			H							TS					T
		then	a	‡		'bit	of	a	‡		^	<u>bay</u>			
			PH							H					TS

**N.b:** *The above passage contains five tone-units.*

*When necessary, to mark stress in a tail, we use a special symbol; a raise dot ( · )*

*Tone is carried by the tonic syllable: intonation is carried by the tone-unit*

The next section will provide a wide range of possibilities of tones or pitches in a simple tone-unit. Let us consider the matter in what follows.

-In a one-syllable utterance, the single syllable must have one of the five tones (falling, rising, fall-rise, rise-fall; level)

-In a tone-unit of more than one syllable, the tonic syllable must have of these tones.

- If the tonic syllable is the final syllable will not sound much different from that of a corresponding one-syllable tone-unit

e.g., ^ here shall we sit ^ here

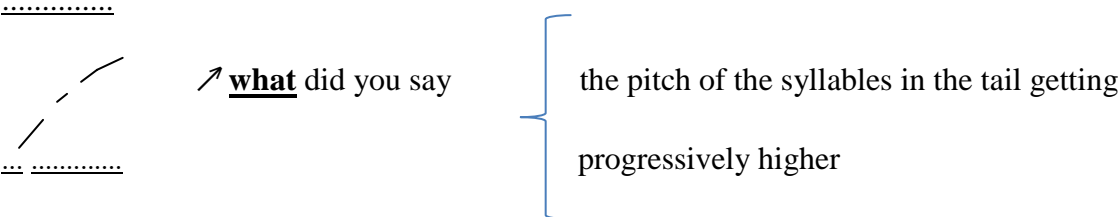
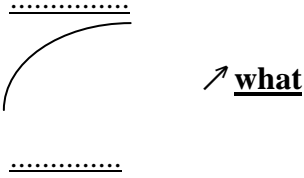
However,

-if there are other syllables following the tonic syllable (i.e., there is a tail), we find that the pitch movement of the tone is not completed on the tonic syllable.

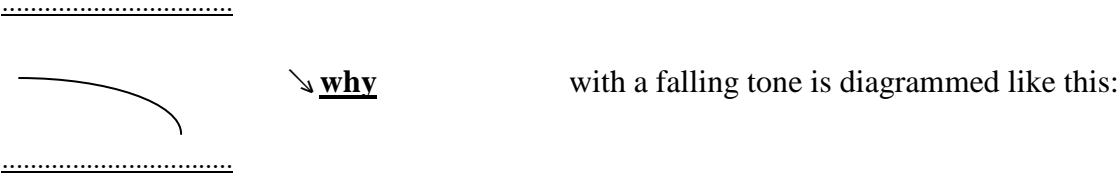
-If, for example, a tail follows a tonic syllable that has a rising tone, it will always be found that the syllable or the syllables of the tail will continue to move upwards from the pitch of the tonic syllable



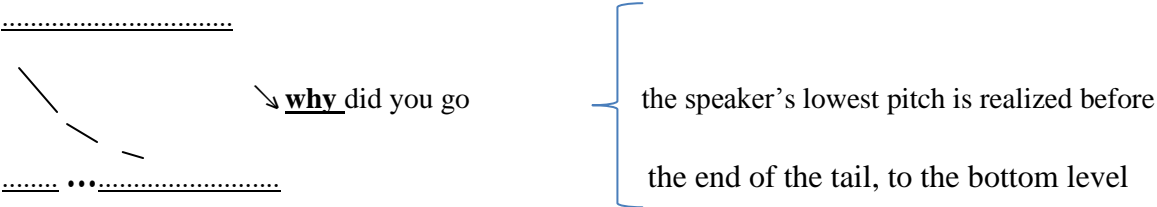
1. e.g., if the word “what” is said on a rising tone ⇒ ↗ **what**, it might have a pitch movement that could be put into a diagram, like this:



2. e.g., if the word “why” is said with a falling tone ↘ **why**, it is diagrammed like this:



with a falling tone is diagrammed like this:



**N.b:** *In case of a level tone, syllables following in tail will continue at the same level*

**1.4.1.3. Intonation III**

Review:

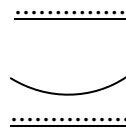
In what preceded (intonation 1 and 2), different types of tones were displayed; then the structure of the tone-unit was explained. For the latter, when the tonic syllable is followed by a tail, that tail continues and completes the tone begun on the tonic syllable with cases of rising and falling tone

Now, we consider more difficult cases of the following possibilities of pitches (tones) in complex tone-units. Let us consider what follows:

-Fall-rise and rise-fall tones followed by a tail

The pitch movements of fall-rise and rise-fall tones are characterized by being often broken or distorted by the structure of the syllables they occur on

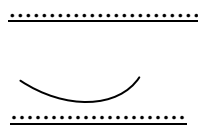
e.g., the pitch movement on some



**However,**

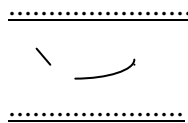
-If we add a syllable, the 'fall' part of the 'fall-rise' is usually carried by the first syllable and the 'rise' part by the second

e.g., the pitch movement on some • men



**But,**

-If the continuity of the voicing is broken; however, the pitch pattern might be like this:



**And,**

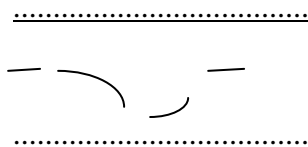
-If there is a tail of two or more syllables, the normal pitch movement is for the pitch to fall on the tonic syllable and to remain low until the last stressed syllable in the tail. The pitch, then, rises from that point up to the end of the tone-unit

**And,**

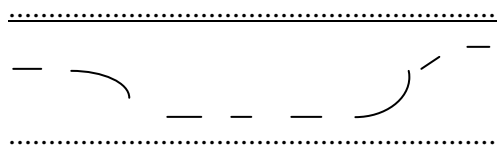
-If there is no stressed syllable in the tail, the rise happens on the final syllable.

Here are some examples

I might • buy it



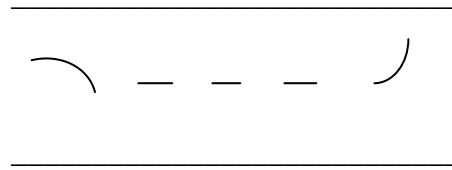
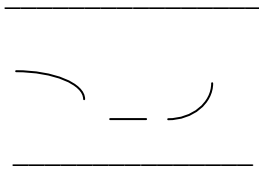
I might have thought of • buying it



**Nb.** Tonal rhyme: the tone pitch of some • chairs is rhyming with some  
The same as: 'balloon' and 'moon'

a. Vmost of them

Vmost of it was for them



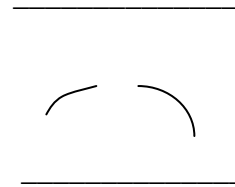
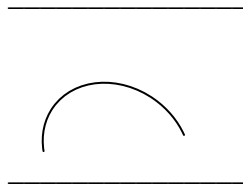
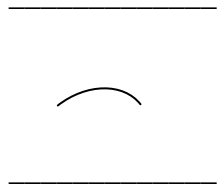
With the rise-fall tone we find a similar situation

b. If the tonic syllable is followed by a single syllable in the tail, the 'rise' part of the tone takes place on the first (tonic) syllable and the 'fall' part is on the second

Λno

Λno one

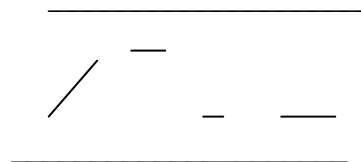
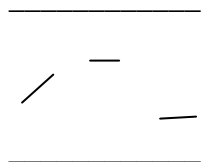
Λno sir



c. When there are two or more syllables in the tail, the syllable immediately following the tonic syllable is always higher and any following syllables are low

e.g., Λ beaut i ful

all of them went



thats a nice way to speak to your mo ther



## 1.4.2. Functions of Intonation

A major question always looms largely among language users about the utility of intonation in speech delivery, hence comprehension or misunderstanding. The dichotomy in reverse is established when we acknowledge the plight of using tones in different languages.

Surely, the tone difference in a given utterance in certain languages is meaning-discriminative (e.g., ma ↗ and ma ↘); however, in other languages, like: English, the variation in tone use does not change meaning but clearly reveals certain functions that can add more information to the message. This is why the subsequent question is raised:

### -What would be lost if we were to speak without intonation?

In other terms: - each syllable said on the same level pitch,

Speech produced with no pauses,

Articulation done with no changes in speed or loudness!

⇒ This is a mechanical speech (a speech which is not human-related because of the absence of feelings, emotions and targeted intentions)

### Answer

Intonation makes it easier for a listener to understand what a speaker is trying to convey. Convergent to the idea of easing the burden of understanding messages, the use of intonation is meant to help listeners to make fewer efforts to work out what speakers mean by what they say. These functions are explained through different ways though complex. They are proposed as follows:

#### 1.4.2.1. Attitudinal Function

It enables us to express emotions and attitudes as we speak, and this adds a special kind of meaning to spoken language. For example, the same sentence can be said in different ways; which may be labeled as: 'angry', 'happy', 'grateful', 'bored', and so on.

Tone types	Attitudinal functions	Examples
. fall	<i>Finality, definiteness</i>	'I'm absolutely <u>certain</u>
. rise	- <i>General question</i> - <i>Listing</i> - <i>Invitation to continue</i> - <i>Encouraging</i>	'Is it <u>over</u> ' ' <u>red</u> , <u>brown</u> , <u>yellow</u> or blue' 'I <u>don</u> 't get the idea' 'you can <u>do</u> it'
. fall-rise	- <i>uncertainty, doubt</i> - <i>requesting</i>	'you <u>may</u> be right' 'would you <u>allow</u> him'
. rise-fall	- <i>surprise</i>	'you were <u>first</u> '

Recapitulative table eliciting the major attitudinal functions of intonation

### **1.4.2.2. Accentual Function**

It helps to produce the effect of prominence on syllables that need to be perceived as stressed. Also, it indicates the placing of tonic stress on a particular syllable which marks out the word to which it belongs as the most important in the tone-unit.

### **1.4.2.3. Grammatical Function**

The listener is better able to recognize the grammar and syntactic structure of what is being said by using the information contained in the intonation.

A very good instance is the following sentence:

**“Those who sold quickly made a profit”** ⇒ this sentence can be said in at least two different ways: ⇒ | **Those who sold quickly** | made a profit |  
⇒ | Those who sold | quickly made profit |

The matter is seen below:

- a. A profit was made by those who sold quickly
- b. A profit was quickly made by those who sold

### **1.4.2.4. Discourse Function**

Through the use of this function of intonation, the listener is able to appreciate the following:

- What is to be taken as ‘new’ and what is ‘already given’
- Suggestion of contrast or link with material in another tone-unit
- What kind of response is expected?

*Practice & Testing*

**Intonation**

**-Activity one**

The following sentences are given with intonation marks. Sketch the pitch within the lines below, leaving a gap between each syllable

• Which was the cheap one did you say

---

---

• only • want to taste it

---

---

She would have thought it was obvious

---

---

There wasn't even a piece of bread in the house

---

---

Now will you be-lieve me

---

---

**Activity two**

This exercise is similar, but here you are given polysyllabic words and a tone; you must draw an appropriate pitch movement between the lines

-(**rise**) opportunity \_\_\_\_\_

---

-(fall-rise) actually \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

-(fall) confidently \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(rise-fall) magnificent \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

-(rise) relationship \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

-(fall-rise) afternoon \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Activity three

In the following pieces of the dialogue you are given an indication in brackets of the feeling or attitude expressed. Put the appropriate intonation mark

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| -It looks nice for a \swim. | Its rather cold (doubtful)                      |
| -Why not get a/car.         | Because I can't afford it (impatient)           |
| -I've lost my \ticket.      | You're silly then (stating the obvious)         |
| -What times are the/buses.  | Seven o' clock seven thirty and eight (listing) |
| -She got eight '\A' levels. | Eight (impressed)                               |
| -Will the \children g o.    | Some of them might (uncertain)                  |

### Activity four

The following sentences are given without punctuation. Underline the appropriate tonic syllable places and mark tone-unit boundaries where you think they are appropriate

(He wrote the letter in a sad way) he wrote the letter sadly

A-(it's regrettable that he wrote the letter) he wrote the letter sadly

B-Four plus six divided by two equals five

C-Four plus six divided by two equals seven

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