English Pronunciation

A student's guide to intonation
Intonation

- Intonation concerns the way something is said
- A speaker can lower or raise his voice
- Intonation adds meaning to an utterance (i.e. a phrase or sentence)
Intonation: words

Say the word on the next slide aloud.

Try to change the way you say it to show different meanings!
Intonation: words

Yes
(meaning 'Yes I'd be happy to')

Yes
(meaning 'Yes but I don't really want to')

Yes
(meaning 'Yes what do you want')
Intonation: words

Yes
(meaning 'Yes I'd be happy to')

Yes
(meaning 'Yes but I don't really want to')

Yee•es
(meaning 'Yes what do you want')
Intonation: phrases

Say the phrase on the next slide aloud.

Try to change the way you say it to show different meanings!
Intonation: phrases

It's eight o'clock!
(meaning 'Hurry up')

It's eight o'clock!
(meaning 'I've overslept')

It's eight o'clock!
(meaning 'Yippee')
Intonation: phrases

It's eight o'clock!
(meaning 'Hurry up')

It's eight o'clock!
(meaning 'I've overslept')

It's eight o'clock!
(meaning 'Yippee')
Intonation: tone units

- A sentence or phrase can be divided into parts called 'tone units'
- Each tone unit has an intonation pattern
- The most important part is called a 'tonic syllable'
Intonation: tonic syllable

- Most of the pitch change in a tone unit is carried by the 'tonic syllable'
- The tonic syllable also carries prominence (i.e. sentence stress)
- Note that the speaker can choose which word to stress
Simple tone units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tonic syllable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Simple tone units**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tonic syllable</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>please</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>THANK</td>
<td>you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>thanks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LOV</td>
<td>ely</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Intonation: Sentence Types

- It is very difficult for a student to know which syllable to stress and when to raise or lower his voice.
- However, there are some general patterns.
- For example, in Wh-questions people tend to lower the pitch of the voice towards the end.
- More patterns are listed on the next slide.
# Intonation: Sentence Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of sentence</th>
<th>Intonation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Declarative</td>
<td>Falling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wh-questions</td>
<td>Falling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes/no questions</td>
<td>Rising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>Falling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question tags:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expecting confirmation</td>
<td>Falling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less certain expectation</td>
<td>Rising</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Intonation: - Sentences

Hurry **UP**!

It's **eight o'CLOCK**

Let's **GO**!

We'll **miss the BUS**!!!
References

Further practice

Practice activities and more examples can be found in;

Cambridge University Press.