

Paper VI, Unit – IV

Stress, Rhythm and Intonation in connected speech in simple sentences, falling and rising tones and their uses in various contexts

What is connected speech?

Connected speech is spoken language in a continuous sequence, as in normal conversation. It is also called connected discourse. There is often a significant difference between the way words are pronounced in isolation and the way they are pronounced in the context of connected speech. In connected speech, words or syllables are clipped, phrases are run together, and words are stressed differently than they would be in writing.

One of the characteristics of connected speech is the deletion or clipping of sounds that occurs when words run together. For example, "want to" can become "wanna", "going to" can become "gonna", "rock and roll" can become "rock 'n' roll", and "them" can become "'em" or "'dem" in connected speech. These are very informal usages of common words that most often occur in casual conversation, so they would probably not be present in formal speech or writing.

Stress:

Stress is the relative emphasis that may be given to certain syllables in a word, or to certain words in a phrase or sentence. English is a stress-timed language, so stressed syllables are louder than non-stressed syllables and also, they are longer and have a higher pitch.

Rhythm:

- In phonetics, **rhythm** is the sense of movement in speech, marked by the stress, timing, and quantity of syllables.
- The rhythm of English words is closely linked with stress patterns in English
- English has a regular rhythm, with the sound of the language organised around the stressed syllables.
- English is also a stress-timed language, which means that there is equal time spent on each stress within a sentence – and an equal time spent on gaps between syllables.

- In this way, the unstressed syllables are constricted in length so that they fit into the timing and rhythm of the sentence.
- The unstressed syllables in English often sound very weak and can sometimes barely be heard at all.
- The syllables can become shorter if there is less time between stresses. This syllable expansion and constriction happens so that the overall rhythm of the sentence remains constant. This constant rhythm in English is essential to the sound and feel of the language.
- The unstressed syllables are always spoken more quickly than the stressed syllable, which also helps the listener to focus on the most important (stressed) words.
- English rhythm is all about the **gaps between the syllables**.
- All the gaps between syllables last for roughly the same length of time because the sentence is stressed-timed. This is how the natural rhythm of English is created.
- However, each language has its own rhythm that must be learned along with the grammar and vocabulary.
- Understanding the rhythm of a language is a vital part of being understood by natives and necessary to achieving fluency.

Intonation:

- Intonation in phonetics is the melodic pattern of an utterance. Intonation is primarily a matter of variation in the pitch level of the voice, but in such languages as English, stress and rhythm are also involved. Intonation conveys differences of expressive meaning (*e.g.*, surprise, anger, wariness).
- In many languages, including English, intonation serves a grammatical function, distinguishing one type of phrase or sentence from another.
- In common words, Intonation refers to the rise and fall of pitch and tone of a speaker to give stress to the relevant words in order to make his speech more effective.
- Without intonation, our voices are flat and monotone. Without intonation, you cannot understand the speaker's feelings and the speaker's attitudes and very little interest generated in the audience.
- So few things that are to be kept in mind during a conversation:

Pitch: While some people naturally have higher voices than others, we do tend to alter our pitch to convey emotions.

Pace: This shows how fast or slow your speech is. While fast speech may indicate that the speaker is nervous or excited, a steady pace shows confidence, or reflects a topic of a more serious nature.

Power: This refers to where the stress is placed in a sentence, which can change the meaning of your speech almost entirely.

Tone: Tone is the easiest way to understand when it comes to emotion.

Ex: being warm, cold, angry etc.

Intonation is about *how* we say things, rather than *what* we say, the way the voice rises and falls when speaking, in other words it is the music of the language.

Falling and rising tones and their uses in various contexts.

Intonation and stress are closely linked. In fact it's impossible to dissociate (separate them) 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, boredom, gratitude, etc.).

Intonation therefore indicates the mood of the speaker and intonation describes the rises and falls in speech.

There are three basic patterns of intonation in English:

- Falling intonation (↘)
- Rising intonation (↗) and
- Fall- Rise Intonation (↘↗)

Falling intonation (↘):

Falling intonation describes how the voice falls on the final stressed syllable of a phrase or a group of words.

A Falling intonation is the most common intonation pattern in English.

It is commonly found in statements, commands, wh-questions (information questions), confirmatory question tags and exclamations.

- **Statements**

- Nice to meet ↘you.
- I'll be back in a ↘minute.
- She doesn't live here ↘anymore.
- Dad wants to change his ↘car.
- Here is the weather ↘forecast.
- Cloudy weather is expected at the end of the ↘week.
- We should work together more ↘often
- I'm going for a walk in the ↘park.

- **Commands**

- Write your name ↘here.
- Show me what you've ↘written.
- Leave it on the ↘desk.
- Take that picture ↘down.
- Throw that ↘out.
- Put your books on the ↘table.
- Take your hands out of your ↘pockets.

- **Wh- questions** (requesting information.)

(questions beginning with 'who', 'what', 'why', 'where', 'when', 'which', and 'how')

- What country do you come ↘from?
- Where do you ↘work?
- Which of them do you ↘prefer?
- When does the shop ↘open?

- How many books have you ↘bought?
- Which coat is ↘yours?
- Whose bag is ↘this?

- **Questions Tags that are statements requesting confirmation rather than questions.**

Not all tag questions are really questions.

Some of them merely ask for confirmation or invite agreement, in which case we use a falling tone at the end.

- He thinks he's so clever, doesn't ↘he?
- She's such a nuisance, isn't ↘she?
- I failed the test because I didn't revise, did ↘I?
- It doesn't seem to bother him much, does ↘it?

- **Exclamations**

- How nice of ↘you!
- That's just what I ↘need!
- You don't ↘say!
- What a beautiful ↘voice!
- That's a ↘surprise!

Rising Intonation (↗)

(The pitch of the voice rises at the end of a sentence.)

Rising intonation invites the speaker to continue talking.

It is normally used with yes/no questions, and question tags that are real questions.

- **Yes/no Questions**

(Questions that can be answered by 'yes' or 'no'.)

- Do you like your new ↗teacher?
- Have you finished ↗already?
- May I borrow your ↗dictionary?
- Do you have any ↗magazines?
- Do you sell ↗stamps?

- **Questions tags that show uncertainty and require an answer** (real questions).
 - We've met already, ↗ haven't we?
 - You like fish, ↗ don't you?
 - You're a new student ↗ aren't you?
 - The view is beautiful, ↗ isn't it?

Fall-Rise Intonation (↘↗)

(The voice falls and rises *usually within one word.*)

The main function of fall-rise intonation is to show that the speaker is not certain of the answer they are giving to a question, or is reluctant to reply. It is also used in polite requests or suggestions.

- **Hesitation/reluctance:**
 - So you'd be willing to confirm that? ...Well ... I ↘sup↗pose so ...
 - You didn't see him on Monday? I don't quite ↘re↗member ...
- **Politeness-Doubt-Uncertainty:** (You are not sure what the answer might be.)
 - Perhaps we could ↘vis↗it the place?
 - Should we ↘cop↗y the list?
 - Do you think it's ↘al↗lowed?