

A  
NEW CLASSIFICATION  
OF  
ENGLISH TONES

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KAITAKUSHA

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## INTRODUCTION

In my “English Intonation” and “A Grammar of Spoken English \*” appears a scheme of classification of English tones based on four “nucleus tones”: [↘] or [↪], [↗], [↖] and [↩] and three types of “heads”: inferior [—] or [—], superior [—] and scandent [↗]. In more than one respect this scheme of classification seems unsatisfactory, especially in view of new facts about intonation that have since come to light. It now seems probable that a plan of classification based on a few definite “tone-patterns” will clarify and simplify the

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\* *A Grammar of Spoken English* (H. E. Palmer and F. G. Blandford) Heffer London 1938

chief characteristics of English tones and tone-usage. The replacing of "head+nucleus groups" by "patterns" has the following advantages:

(a) It makes possible the description and explanation of the English tonetic system in a concise and readily intelligible form,

(b) It renders unnecessary (or less necessary) the use of technical terms,

(c) It facilitates the tonetic analysis of texts.

The new arrangement, moreover, affects in no way the scheme of notation used in texts written in accordance with the older scheme.

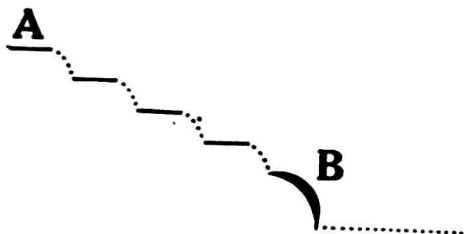
In the following pages is set forth a summary of the scheme of classification based on "tone-patterns." For the sake of conciseness, reference to the phenomena of 'intensification' and the 'broken scandent' has been omitted.

For the purpose of designating the patterns I am using as convenient mnemonics the somewhat fanciful terms "Cascade," "Dive," "Ski-jump," "Wave," "Snake" and "Swan."

## **I. Description, with examples, of the Six Simple Tone-Patterns.**

### **1. THE "CASCADE" PATTERN.**

The tone-pattern that occurs with by far the greatest frequency in ordinary English is the one characterized by an initial high-pitch followed by successive step-by-step drops, and concluding with a fall. As a cascade is a volume of water gradually descending a staircase-like slope and culminating in a final waterfall, so the voice drops successively from the initial high level and eventually falls to the lowest level, thus



To represent this pattern in any text we require two symbols: a high level stroke [—] denoting A, and a low-falling arrow [↘] denoting B. Thus the pattern is symbolized by [—↘], or, occasionally [↘] alone.

The designation of the “Cascade” pattern has hitherto been “Falling nucleus with superior head.”

The *length* of the pattern depends partly on the number of words or syllables to be so intoned (varying between two such extremes as

—*Why* ↘ *not* ?

and



—*Why couldn't he have come here punctually at half past-three?*

and partly on the two words which the speaker feels to be the most prominent (or, alternatively, the section of the succession of words that he wishes to put into prominence).

Thus in the sentence :

*I told him it was absolutely no good troubling you about such trifles*

the initial high-pitch may occur on *I*, *told*, *absolutely*, or *no* ; and the final fall on *good*, *troubling*, *you*, *such*, or *trifles*.

## FUNCTIONS OF THE "CASCADE" PATTERN.

This pattern is used for :

- (a) Statements in the nature of declarations or suggestions,
- (b) Commands,

- (c) Questions beginning with an interrogative word.

### EXAMPLES.

(a)

*I—don't think it's  $\neg$ true.*

*That's—just what I was ex  $\neg$ plaining to him.*

*It was about the—last thing in the  $\neg$ world  
that I should have expected him to do.*

*I—don't  $\neg$ like that sort of thing.*

*—I don't  $\neg$ like that sort of thing.*

*—That wasn't what I  $\neg$ said.*

*That—wasn't what  $\neg$ I said.*

*—Let's go there to  $\neg$ gether. [Transitional  
to (b).]*

*—What about  $\neg$ Monday? [Transitional to  
(c).]*

(b)

*—Come and sit  $\neg$ down.*

—Use  $\neg$ mine.

—Don't be in so much of a  $\neg$ hurry.

—You keep  $\neg$ quiet.

I—want you to come a little more  $\neg$ regularly. [Transitional to (a).]

You should—try to  $\neg$ break yourself of the habit. [Transitional to (a).]

Re—member what I've  $\neg$ told you.

(c)

—What do you want to  $\neg$ do?

—What  $\neg$ do you want to do?

—What do  $\neg$ you want to do?

—When shall I  $\neg$ come?

At—what time did he  $\neg$ come?

—Where did you  $\neg$ put it?

$\neg$ Where did you put it?

—Why don't you use  $\neg$ mine?

—Why  $\neg$ not?

—What a↘bout it?

—What's the ↘matter?

—What's the matter with ↘you?

## 2. THE “DIVE” PATTERN.

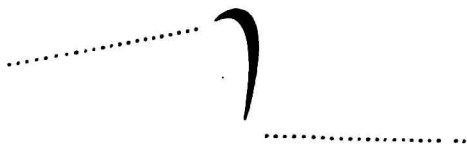
The pattern designated by the above mnemonic term may not come next in order of frequency or importance, but since it may be looked upon as a sort of alternative to the “Cascade” pattern, it is convenient to treat it here.

It takes the form of a fall from a high to the bottom pitch, this fall occurring on the stressable syllable of the word to which the speaker wishes to give the maximum of prominence.

In theory (and this is demonstrated by experimental work with the oscillograph) this fall is preceded by a slight rise. In practice

this rise is hardly felt by the speaker nor perceived by the hearer.

The (necessarily unstressed) syllables preceding the fall start on the mid-pitch and (generally) rise successively until the pattern proper starts. Thus the pattern may be shown pictorially as



To represent this pattern in any text we require one symbol, a high-falling arrow [↘].

The fact that a preliminary rise exists (at least in theory and occasionally in practice) makes the term “Dive” particularly appropriate, for although the essential part of a dive is the fall, the fall is often preceded by a rise (aided by the spring-board).

The designation of the "Dive" pattern has hitherto been "Falling nucleus with inferior head."

## FUNCTIONS OF THE "DIVE" PATTERN.

This pattern is used for :

- (a) Statements in the nature of assertions.

Thus it follows that most answers to questions are intoned on this pattern, and, naturally, anything in the nature of a contradiction or a protest.

- (b) Commands with a one-word prominence (suggesting "in that case," "that being so," etc.)

- (c) Questions beginning with an interrogative word, with a one-word prominence (suggesting "in that case," "that being so," etc.)

## EXAMPLES

- (a)

*It's \mine.*

*It \is mine.*

*\I said so.*

*It's a piece of \chalk.*

*I don't think he \was.*

*I \see.*

*That's just what we don't \know.*

*It isn't \fair.*

*I pro \test.*

*That's the whole \point.*

*\Nobody does.*

(b)

*Don't \do it, then!*

*\Try!*

*See whether it \works!*

*\Ask him!*

*Do it \your way, then!*

*Try a \nother plan!*

(c)

*Why did he \go, then?*

*Well, then, what \is it?*

*Why \trouble?*

*When \will you be ready?*

*How much \is it?*

*Where \was he?*

### **3. THE "SKI-JUMP" PATTERN.**

The pattern designated by the above term certainly does not come next in order of frequency or importance, but since it may be looked upon as an alternative to the "Cascade" and "Dive" patterns, it is convenient to treat it here.

It takes the form of a series of successive rises from the mid-pitch to a high-pitch, followed by a low drop (thus combining the characteristics of "Cascade" and the "Dive"), thus:





The mnemonic term “Ski-jump” is a fanciful one but the only one so far that is suggestive of an upward flight suddenly followed by a downward glide at a low level.

To represent this pattern in any text we require two symbols: a rising high stroke [ $\nearrow$ ] denoting A, and a low-falling arrow [ $\searrow$ ] to denote B, thus [ $\nearrow\searrow$ ].

For the *length* of the pattern, see under the heading “Cascade.”

## FUNCTIONS OF THE “SKI-JUMP” PATTERN.

This pattern appears to be used almost ex-