

AN  
ENGLISH  
INTONATION  
READER



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ENGLISH INTONATION  
READER

*by*

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FOREWORD

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## FOREWORD

**ALL** teachers of English as a second or later language know that intonation is unduly neglected. The chief reason is that the facts about its operations in English have not been fully discovered. Some intonations are obviously un-English; but among native speakers there are great variations, and it is still not clear what features are functional and what optional. Consequently there has been a lack of textbooks treating systematically the essential patterns a learner must acquire in order to recognize and make distinctions in meaning and attitude. Recently more attention has been given to the problem; yet much remains to be done.

Dr Lee has studied English intonation deeply with the equipment of a good phonetician and a keen amateur student of music. In Chapter III of the present book, though he judiciously refrains from pursuing his own interests and concentrates on giving just such guidance as the learner of English most needs, he has included some original observations of his own that contribute greatly to the understanding of the subject. His experience as a teacher and his interest in the learner's difficulties are as valuable as his mastery of the subject. The selection and arrangement of the material in this book make it a valuable aid to all learners who have gone far enough in English to use it themselves and to all teachers of English. It satisfies a long-felt need, and it is to be hoped that it will be widely used, for it gives expert help in a compact and practical form.

**BRUCE PATTISON.**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

'If students realized that correct speech melody is as important as correct speech sounds,' said L. E. Armstrong and I. C. Ward some thirty years ago, 'they would devote more time and energy to this essential characteristic of our language.' Another language-teacher and linguist, H. E. Palmer, was convinced that 'sounds' and intonation are so closely linked that 'it is futile to teach or to learn one without the other.' Long experience of teaching English to foreign learners has brought this home to me, and in any event no competent teacher would seriously challenge Palmer's assertion today. Recent experiments in the production of artificial speech have, indeed, tended to show that pitch-patterns contribute more even than stress-patterns to the comprehension of English utterances.

Nevertheless, intonation has still to be given its rightful place in the teaching of English as a second language. It certainly cannot be looked upon as a luxury or 'extra', to be withheld until the bread-and-butter substance of the language has been taken in. In every phrase and sentence there is a movement of pitches, whether teacher and taught are conscious of this or not, and from the very beginning of our efforts it is not merely sounds, syllables, words, and sentence structures that we acquire, but phrase and sentence melody. Intonation belongs with the living language that we learn to speak, and we must try to master its usage. For whatever we do, it cannot be by-passed.

On the whole English intonation is learnt inadequately and is rarely taught. Graded textbook courses, of which

there are few, base their grading in the main, inevitably, on words and structures, but there is no reason why intonation should not, in some degree, be controlled too. Simple and obvious patterns would then be used at the beginning of the course,<sup>1</sup> while those which are less simple and obvious, and also variants on some patterns, would be introduced later. Features of intonation, as well as of sounds in the narrower sense, need to be regularly drilled, and from time to time review work is necessary. Further, a change of intonation can often bring a marked change of meaning, and this aspect needs careful attention too.

AN ENGLISH INTONATION READER is not in itself a course; that is to say, it does not have to be worked through from beginning to end. It calls for intensive study, however, although it deals with only an aspect of language. It is meant for intermediate and advanced learners, who are beginning to have a fairly good command of English.

'Reading the Tone-Marks' (II) should be thoroughly gone into first of all—but those already expert in the interpretation of similar marks may find it enough to practise the material in this chapter once or twice before tackling one of the other main sections.

'Intonation at Work' (III) goes with 'Practice Conversations' (IV): it is a matter of individual preference which is taken first. It may be a good thing to jump from II to IV and then to browse over III and work at IV again. Many phrases and sentences occurring in IV are used as examples in II and III, and thus the chapters are the more closely linked.<sup>2</sup>

Nobody, it is hoped, will expect to find in III either a comprehensive or a fully scientific study. That is entirely

<sup>1</sup>See A. S. Hornby's *Oxford Progressive English for Adult Students*.

<sup>2</sup>If the gramophone records are used (see p. 4), it would doubtless be an advantage to run through IV first, returning to it again after concentration on II and III.

beyond the scope of a short practical handbook, nor indeed is present-day language-analysis, even of English, in a state advanced enough to provide it. The chapter incorporates much accepted theory and there is also much theory which is new, but this does not amount to an exhaustive description of all the pitch-features likely to occur in a prolonged passage of speech. It would be a pity, however, to give no guidance merely because the guidance must be incomplete and to some extent imprecise. These sketched-out rules will at least show what sort of work is done by intonation, even though they must needs fall far short of describing all the circumstances in which the various patterns occur.

'Practice Conversations' (IV) consists of texts in friendly informal style, transcribed both in normal spelling and in phonetic script (using the system of Daniel Jones's *An Outline of English Phonetics* and *An English Pronouncing Dictionary*). The vocabulary and syntax are fairly simple, and instances of nearly all the utterance-types and intonation-patterns referred to in III have been included. There is continuity of incident ('A Weekend in the Country') and the characters are numerous enough for several learners to take parts at the same time. (See also pp. 72-4.)

Finally, the Bibliography (V) is an encouragement to further exploration, practice, and thought on the part of those who have gained initial competence.

Speech cannot, of course, be learnt from the printed page: we must first of all listen to it. But print can help. Once the signs—for instance, the phonetic symbols and intonation marks—have been mastered, the learner has a certain independence and the ability to make progress alone; and this is of special importance to the legion of self-taught learners, who have rare or no access to an English-speaking teacher. It must also be admitted that relatively



few teachers have had any training in language analysis and that 'the extreme familiarity existing between a man and his native language makes him lose all sense of its features' (Joshua Steele).<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless the pages are best brought to life by a competent teacher, who can cultivate in the habit-bound pupil a sense of the features both of his home language and of the language being acquired. Listening to English conversation and to some kinds of radio programme may help too, and gramophone records or tape recordings are especially useful, since any part of the material can be recaptured at will.

(*Note.* Six double-sided records have been issued by the Linguaphone Institute, 207-9 Regent Street, London, W.1, to go with this book. Five sides are taken up by a recording of the whole of the Practice Conversations, Chapter IV, 'A Weekend in the Country', the speakers being Miss Eleanor Hallam; Miss Olive Tooley (Phonetics Department, University College, London); Miss Judith Joslin and Miss Vivien Price (from the Central School of Speech and Drama, London); Professor Randolph Quirk (English Department, University of Durham); and Mr Geoffrey Barnard, Dr J. A. Noonan, and myself (Division of Language Teaching, Institute of Education, London). There is also an exercises record, spoken by myself, in which various patterns are isolated and said in slow motion: text on pp. 25-8. For further information see Chapter IV, pp. 72-4.)

*Acknowledgements.* Valuable suggestions on one point or another have been made by Mr G. Barnard and Dr J. A. Noonan (Institute of Education, London University); Mr A. C. Gimson (University College, London University); Mr P. H. Hoy (Ministry of Education); Mr P.

<sup>1</sup>An eighteenth-century writer on English speech.

Stevens (University of Edinburgh); and Miss C. E. Earl and Mrs L. Hillman (Linguaphone Institute). I am grateful for the criticisms made by Professor Daniel Jones (Emeritus Professor of Phonetics, London) and I have benefited from a number of conversations with Professor R. Quirk (English Department, University of Durham), one of the few who regard present-day English as worthy of study at university level and language-learning itself as a liberal education. Randolph Quirk was also kind enough to read through my manuscript and the proofs of the whole book. Thanks are also due to Mr J. A. L. Trim (University College, London, and Cambridge University) and to Mr R. A. Close, Mr H. A. Cartledge, and Mr D. Y. Morgan (all of the British Council) for reading the proofs and making many helpful comments. Much is owing, lastly, to Professor Bruce Pattison (Head of the Division of Language Teaching, Institute of Education, London) for the interest he has always shown and the encouragement he has given.

One's debt in other ways is hard to define. It was Professor Daniel Jones and members of his staff who introduced me to phonetics, years ago; and 'D.J.' who wrote: 'In contrast with workers in some other scientific fields, (phoneticians) can keep in view throughout their investigations a definite humanistic object . . . the improvement of the means of oral and written communication between man and man.' It was Professor Trnka on whose English Department staff at the Caroline University, Prague, I served as lecturer in the post-war years; and Trnka who stressed that language teaching is based on language analysis. I must acknowledge also the stimulus of lectures by Professor J. R. Firth and others at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London; and it was Firth who declared: 'Without phonetics there can be

no morphology of a spoken language, without intonation no syntax', and also: 'No study of meaning apart from a complete context can be taken seriously'.

Lastly, my numerous foreign students and pupils of all ages over the past fourteen years—in Prague, at the Institute of Education and elsewhere, and also on British Council and London University summer courses—shall not be forgotten, since it is perhaps from them that I have learned most of all.

## II. READING THE TONE-MARKS

ALTHOUGH the importance of fine shades of meaning or 'colour' is not denied, we are concerned in this book rather with broad and obvious effects. Intonation marks have thus been reduced to a minimum and are of a simple kind. The nature of the chief movements of intonation is shown, but not the extent of the movements; that is to say, there is no discrimination between big falls or rises and small ones. Nor is detailed guidance given as to the behaviour of unstressed syllables. A certain liberty of interpretation is therefore to be enjoyed—the marks show only the general shape of the pitch-movements.

There is, of course, not merely scope for variation within the pitch-patterns marked but sometimes the possibility of using other patterns. Many phrases and sentences in the practice conversations (Chapter IV) could be spoken differently, even in their contexts: the intonation shown is not the only possible one. The meaning of a passage or conversation as a whole, and the meaning of its parts seen in relation to that whole, govern the choice of intonation, and, vice versa, the intonation brings out or creates the meanings of that whole and of those parts: yet the use of an alternative pattern does not necessarily result in a change of meaning.

We shall not make a study of these alternatives. The reader should bear in mind that our texts are marked with what at some points is only one of the intonations which could be used. An effort has been made, however, to include plenty of common utterance-types and common

intonation-patterns, and also to stick to everyday usage; and it is beyond doubt, in spite of what we have said, that a learner's main task, to begin with, lies in imitation. The marks, if correctly read, are enough to keep the intonation within reasonable bounds.

The intonation marks are also to some extent stress marks: they appear before every strongly stressed syllable and also before some which are not so strongly stressed, if at these latter there is an intonation 'turn', that is, a change in the direction of movement of the intonation 'line'. However, a 'turn' is not made at every stressed syllable.

Several of the intonation marks are associated with each other. Their use is demonstrated in the following extract (660-90).<sup>1</sup> Between the double lines, representing the upper and lower limits of the speaking voice, the relative pitch-levels of the more strongly stressed syllables and of any syllables at which a 'turn' occurs are shown by strokes, and those of the other syllables by dots. Underneath is the text, marked as elsewhere in the Reader. These interlinear signs are a crude graphic representation of one rendering of the passage as it is marked in Chapter IV.

Mr A. \ Now, Frank, | are you + coming on the / train  
or \ cycling back?  
Frank. + I'll \ cycle back, I / think. But + will it keep  
\ fine, I wonder.

<sup>1</sup>Bracketed numerals refer to the line numbering of the conversations in Chapter IV, in the orthographic text. Bracketed ER indicates that the example occurs on the exercises record: see p. 25.

*Mr A.* It \ looks like keeping / fine. *Mr P.* + What are  
 \ you going to do, / Malcolm? + Ride with / Frank  
 for a few / miles? *Malcolm.* \ Yes, I could go as far as  
 \ Cow / Mill again. *Peggy.* + Don't for \ get anything  
 / this time. *Malcolm.* + Haven't / you ever for 'gotten  
 anything? *Mr P.* And you'd + better lend - Frank your  
 re \ pair outfit, | in + case he gets a - nother \ puncture.  
*Mr A.* Which is + more than \ likely. *Frank.* + Thanks  
 very \ much. *Mrs A.* + Did I pack - George's / shaving  
 things? *Mrs P.* / What did you say, 'Mary? *Mrs A.* I was  
 + just trying to re / member + what I've / packed | and  
 + what I \ haven't packed. *Peggy.* I'll + have a good  
 look \ round, Aunt Mary, | to + see if you've \ missed  
 anything. *Mrs A.* \ Oh, \ thank you, Peggy. *Mrs P.*  
 Are you + sure there's - plenty of / time, Jim? *Mr P.*

\ Quite sure, \ quite sure. / Nearly half an \ hour.  
 Mrs P. I \ shouldn't like them to \ miss it. Mr P. / Miss  
 it? + How \ can they miss it? Malcolm. You + know  
 the clock's -half an hour \ slow, \ don't you, Dad?

(1) The mark \ shows that a fall in pitch occurs on the following syllable, as on \ *now*, \ *cy-*, and \ *looks* in the above passage. Unmarked (weakly stressed) syllables following have about the same pitch as the bottom of the fall, until a full stop, a break-mark ( : ), or another intonation mark (except -) is reached, as in \ *Now Frank, are you*, \ *cycling back*, \ *fine, I -wonder* (above), and so on. If there are several such weakly stressed syllables, they tend to rise somewhat in approaching the next intonation movement, as in \ *looks like keeping* / *fine*: but acquisition of this usage is not essential.

The mark ^ is an occasional variant of \ and indicates a fall with a slight preliminary rise. This rise-fall lends an effect of liveliness or surprise, as at ^ *There* (18).

(2) If the next mark after \ or ^ is -, the low-level intonation should be continued (to a full stop, break-mark, or another intonation mark), as in \ *Yes, I could -go as -far as -Cow* (above), but the marked syllable has relatively strong stress. This low-level mark may also occur at or near the beginning of a sentence, preceding other marks. See for instance: -*George has -always been + so . . .* (12). It then indicates a low but not necessarily a very low intonation line from the first of such marks.

(3) The mark / shows that a rise in pitch occurs or

begins on the next syllable, as on /*train*, /*think*, /*Malcolm*, /*shaving things*, etc. Unmarked syllables following the rise-mark continue to rise as far as the next indicator (full stop, break-mark, intonation mark other than ').

(4) The mark  $\vee$  shows that a fall and then a rise in pitch occur on the next syllable, as on  $\vee$ *slow* (above),  $\vee$ *well* (76),  $\vee$ *George* (342), and  $\vee$ *come* (597). Unmarked syllables continue to rise, as in  $\vee$ *miss it* (above),  $\vee$ *Mary is* (27),  $\vee$ *weather at least* (119), and  $\vee$ *I'd have another cup of* (139).

(5) Associated with / and  $\vee$  is ', which serves only to mark a noticeably stressed syllable in a rising intonation movement. It is subsidiary to / and  $\vee$ , which indicate where the rising movement begins, as in /*Frank for a few 'miles* and /*What did you say, 'Mary* (above), or *The*  $\vee$ *weather forecast was quite 'promising* (148). Succeeding unmarked syllables, of course, continue the rise to the next indicator.

(6) The mark + shows that a jump in pitch is made from a preceding relatively low pitch-level, as at *you* + *com-*, *you'd* + *bet-*, *is* + *more*, *was* + *just*, etc. (above), or that the sentence begins at a relatively high pitch-level, as at + *I'll*, + *What*, + *Ride* (above), and so on. The jump need not be a big one, and is indeed sometimes small, especially when a rising intonation movement precedes, as at *re* / *member* (above). Unmarked syllables after +, as in + *coming on the* / *train* (above) may be taken as at the same pitch-level:  $\text{---} \cdot \cdot \cdot \text{---}$  or as descending somewhat:  $\text{---} \cdot \cdot \cdot \text{---}$  or even as rising:  $\text{---} \cdot \cdot \cdot \text{---}$ . Such variants are not shown in the tonetic transcription used in this book.

If + occurs in succession to another +, as in *And* + *Peggy jumps at* + *every \ chance* (282), a pitch-descent between the two marks is implied, such that an



upward jump in pitch is made at the second one also.

(7) Associated with + is the high-level mark -, which shows that a relatively high pitch-level is to be sustained, or more or less sustained. This mark is not to be confused with +, for there is no upward jump from the preceding syllable. The pitch of a syllable marked - is often somewhat lower than that of an earlier one marked + or -, but can be at the same level. Thus in the passage quoted above, + *Did I pack* - *George's* / *shaving things* may be spoken as shown, i.e. with a gradually descending intonation, or with a level intonation for the first four words, thus: — · · — · — · ·. The difference is not important, and the marks used with the text allow of either interpretation.

Where two or more high-level marks occur in succession, as in *It* + *won't take* - *long to boil the* - *kettle for* / *tea* (34) or *I* + *wonder if they* - *got* - *out at the* - *wrong* \ *station* (25), the gradually descending intonation should be preferred, although a level intonation line is sometimes heard even in long phrases like this.

(8) The break-mark ∷ suggests that the preceding intonation line should be discontinued. Thus in the first sentence of the above extract *or* does not continue the rise on *train*, and the same is true of *and* after *packed*. Break-marks do not absolutely preclude continuance of the line.<sup>1</sup>

Where another intonation mark immediately follows, there is, of course, no need for a break-mark to indicate the change. Similarly the break-mark is not used at a full stop or question-mark.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Those which occur in the texts of Chapter IV, however, do mark discontinuance of the intonation line by speakers making the gramophone records (see p. 4).

<sup>2</sup>Question marks are used in the orthographic texts only.