

## RESEARCH ARTICLE



## INTONATION PATTERNS IN THE ENGLISH SPOKEN BY ENGLISH MENTORS AT APIIITS

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**ABSTRACT**

The aim of this research paper is to study the intonation patterns in the English spoken by Mentors of English at APIIITS on the basis of which an attempt is made to find out the deviations from the intonation patterns of RP (Received Pronunciation). Certain features that affect the patterns of intonation, such as, the occurrence of unusual pauses, and unusual divisions of tone groups have been noted.

Generally, it is observed that in schools and colleges, students are neither trained nor encouraged to use the right patterns of intonation. Through this study, we hope to show the need for incorporating intonation into the syllabus, and also the need for training both the teachers and the students in this area.

**@ Copyright KY Publications****The place of English in India Today**

India is a multi-lingual country and hence the question of a unifying language has been a perennial problem in our country. After the attainment of independence, the states have been reorganized primarily on the linguistic basis. So, in a state the regional language attains the primary place. However, the national language and English as an important foreign language cannot be ignored for they have got their own importance and utility. So in accordance with the language policy of the Government in Andhra Pradesh, the regional language, Telugu, occupies the first place whereas Hindi, the so-called National Language and English as an important foreign language occupy the second and third places respectively.

Though Hindi has been designated as the National Language for it is being spoken by a majority people of the country, it does not serve as a Link Language among the various states of the country. The Southern States did not accept Hindi in place of English as a Link Language. Hence English still occupies a unique position in our country.

**Importance of English**

From the time the English set their feet on the Indian soil the English Language has been holding a unique position in India. Its richness, flexibility, elegance and dignity made it universally popular. From every angle the importance of English is obvious.

Stressing the importance of English to India Pandit Nehru said,

“One hundred and fifty years of intimate contact has made English an integral part of our educational system and this cannot be changed without injury to the cause of education in India. In addition, English has today become one of the major languages of the world and Indians can neglect its study only at the risk of loss to themselves. I am convinced that in the future as well, the standard of teaching English should be maintained at as high a level as possible (M.E.S.Elizabeth & Digumarti Bhaskara Rao-2004, P: 26).”

#### Importance of a good conversation

A conversation is not just putting words together in a sequence according to the rules of conversational grammar. It takes place in an active, dynamic context, and this context largely determines the language of any unit of conversation. Typically conversation is characterized by tentativeness, repetition, hesitation, backtracking, see-sawing, emphasis, pauses, inflections of the voice, gestures and other body language. What is left unsaid or incomplete often assumes significance in conversations (Ifor Evans, 1953).

A conversation approximates to a real life situation in which people communicate their ideas, opinions, feelings etc. V.V.Yardi (1970) in his book, defines conversation as informal talk in which people exchange news, views, thoughts and feelings. In a conversation, there is a free exchange of thoughts and feelings. Conversations normally take place between persons who share the same social setting or context, for example students in classroom, neighbours or passengers in a train, etc. Good conversation requires resourcefulness, patience, tact, the ability to listen, a certain manner of expression and an awareness of social conventions.

#### Aim

The aim of this research paper is to study the intonation patterns in English spoken by Mentors of English at APIITs on the basis of which an attempt is made to find out the deviations from the intonation patterns of RP (Received Pronunciation).

#### The scope of the study

The Informants have been selected from APIITs. This study has been restricted to the analysis of 30 informants out of which 19 are male and 11 are female. All the conclusions of the study are strictly based on and limited to the data recorded and

collected from the selected thirty informants. The intonation patterns of the specimens are done purely based on the auditory impressions of the recorded data.

#### Procedure

In describing intonation patterns of the Informants, Received Pronunciation has been taken as the standard for purposes of comparison because of the following reasons.

- British English is considered to be intelligible all over the world.
- Books and audio materials are based on this variety are available worldwide.

#### Choice of the Speakers

The informants were selected from speakers of both English and Telugu medium backgrounds. They all belong to different places in Andhra Pradesh and they are all working at APIITs, from each APIIT, 10 informants were selected. These places are as follows:

- a. **APIIT-I:** Idupulapaya or Rajiv Gandhi Valley, Y.S.R.District ( Kadapa).
- b. **APIIT-II:** Basara (Adilabad District).
- c. **APIIT-III:** Nuzvid (Krishna District).

#### Data

For this study, a contextually rich dialogue has been selected, this dialogue has been taken from “Clear Speech: Pronunciation and Listening Comprehension in North American English” by Judy B. Gilbert (CUP 1984, 1993).” Though we have taken a dialogue from North American English text, the intonation marks which we used for original text are based on British English (RP).

#### Meaning of Intonation

The vocal cords are capable of vibrating at varying rates. Now, the number of cycles per second (cps) at which they vibrate is called the frequency of vibration, which determines the pitch of the voice. The higher the frequency, the higher the pitch and vice versa.

#### J.C.Wells (2006)

J.C.Wells (2006, p.1), intonation is the melody of speech. In studying intonation we study how the pitch of the voice rises and falls, and how speakers use this pitch variation to convey linguistic and pragmatic meaning. It also involves the study of how the interplay of accented, stressed and unstressed

syllables functions as a framework onto which the intonation patterns are attached.

#### Daniel Jones (1960)

Daniel Jones (1960), intonation may be defined as the variations which take place in the pitch of the musical note produced by the vibration of the vocal cords.

#### M.A.K.Halliday's Intonation (1967)

M.A.K. Halliday (1970), defines intonation as 'the melody of speech' or 'Intonation is the musical speech pattern'

Halliday describes intonation in terms of tonality, tonicity and tone. He made a distinction between the normal and special cases of intonation patterns by using the terms 'neutral' and 'marked' while discussing actual occurrences of tonality, tonicity and tone. He is of the view that any description of a language is concerned with meaning and "all contrast in meaning can be stated either in grammar or in lexis (1967, p.10). His framework of tonality, tone and tonicity has been found to be very useful in the analysis of intonation.

#### Tonality

Tonality means 'division of sentence into the tone groups'. Tone group is a meaningful unit in its own right. The tone group is one 'unit of information'.

**Examples:** i. // My brother, / who lives in London / has come home. //

ii. // My brother who lives in London, / has come home. //

In the above sentences, the first one has three tone groups. Which means he has only one brother and he lives in London. Whereas in the sentence with two tone groups the speaker has more than one brothers. One of them who lives in London has come home.

The above two examples showed how tone group boundaries determine meaning.

#### Tone

The tone refers to the kinetic tone carried by the tonic syllable, or the nucleus, in a tone group. Unlike static or level tones, it is a major change in pitch direction. An accented syllable in a tone group is said on a level pitch, high or low, but the most prominent syllable in it (i.e. the nucleus) is said with a changing pitch. This changing pitch, or tone, is several different kinds, the most important of which are called *fall*, *rise*, *fall-rise*, *rise-fall* and *level tone*.

The *fall*, *rise* and *level tone* can be subdivided into *high fall* and *low fall*, *high rise* and *low rise* and *high level* and *low level* respectively.

#### Tonicity

Tonicity means 'location of the tonic action' or 'major change in the pitch direction'.

**Examples:** i. // I am going to **Delhi** tomorrow. //

ii. // I am going to Delhi to **tomorrow**. /

In the above examples, the first one has focus on **Delhi**. Which means he is going to **Delhi** not anywhere else? Whereas in the second example, the tonic accent is on '**tomorrow**'. The major pitch change is on the second syllable of '**tomorrow**', that means he is going tomorrow not 'day after' or not 'today'. Thus the selection of the tonic syllable helps in conveying different meanings.

#### The findings of this research are as follows

- All the informants had unusual tone group boundaries within the phrase. The number of deviations regarding tonality varied from speaker to speaker.
- In short utterances majority of the informants have selected right tone groups.
- Total **thirty one (31)** sentences are in conformity with RP in the renderings of all the thirty informants in regard to **Tonality**.

#### Tone

- Most of the informants have made mistakes when it comes to tone.
- Use of a rising tone for falling tone was the majority pattern of intonation deviation.
- All the informants faced difficulties in choosing right tones in complex sentences. Some of the tone groups which did not make any sense not taken into consideration. Most of them tend to use rising tone for Wh-Questions, without taking contextual meaning into consideration.
- Total, **seventeen (17)** sentences are in conformity with RP in regard to **Tone**.

#### Tonicity

- In general, the tonic accent was not located on the last content word of the tone group in the case of unmarked tonicity.
- Most of the informants have selected right tonic syllables when it comes to short utterances.

Whereas in complex sentences, they failed to locate right tonic syllables.

- Total, **nineteen (19)** sentences are in conformity with RP in regard **Tonicity**.

**The Average Percentage of Conformity with RP**

The average percentage of conformity with RP patterns of tonality, tone & tonicity were calculated. Later an average of these percentages was calculated to arrive at the average percentage of overall performance.

The figures thus obtained are tabulated in the table given below.

| Average Percentage of Conformity with the Standard Norm(RP) | APIIIT-I (Idupulapaya) | APIIIT-II (Basara) | APIIIT-III (Nuzividu) | Overall Performance of Tonality, Tone & Tonicity |
|---|------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Tonality</b>   | 55%                    | 62.5%              | 56.25%                | <b>57.91%</b>                                    |
| <b>Tone</b>   | 14.8%                  | 18.7%              | 13%                   | <b>15.5%</b>                                     |
| <b>Tonicity</b>   | 14.8%                  | 18.7%              | 17.41%                | <b>16.97%</b>                                    |

**Average Percentage of conformity with RP in the overall performance**

The figures that showed maximum conformity to the standard norm (RP) are typed in 'bold'. From the above table we can make the following observations

- All the thirty informants showed a decent degree of conformity to RP with respect to **tonality** which is evident from the above table.
- The percentage of conformity to the standard pattern with respect to the use of '**Tonality**' revealed that (**57.91%**) was close to the standard pattern (RP).
- The percentage of conformity to the standard pattern with respect to the use of '**Tone**' revealed that (**15.5%**) was not close to the standard pattern.
- The percentage of conformity to the standard pattern with respect to the use of '**Tonicity**' revealed that (**16.97%**) was not close to the standard pattern.

**Some other interesting findings which we came to know in this present study are as follows:**

Some of the informants repeated a few words, for example **oh, ok, by, mmm, joking**. One of them had left word in the given passage (**apple pie**). Some of them added new words like **just, for, aah, by** etc. which are not there in original text.

**Some suggestions**

It must be admitted that the learning of intonation patterns of a second language is complex. It needs a constant practice for second language learner to use the total system with the same facility as that of

mother tongue. But as that of a particular language, learning the patterns of that particular language would enable the learner to avoid wrong intonation patterns.

The teachers thus, can help students master the complexities of the intonation patterns of English, which are crucial intelligibility. A systematic study and constant practice only can enable the teachers of English and students internalize the rules of the language so that their speech is not only effective but also intelligible and clear, avoiding all possibilities of being misunderstood due to certain absolutely unintended expressions.

Some of the areas, where the Mentors/teachers could devote more time and attention while learning and teaching the intonation are listed below;

- Use of the pauses at the appropriate places in a sentence.
- Use of appropriate tone for expression of an afterthought, concern, sarcasm or polite request.
- Placing the nucleus on the most appropriate syllable.
- Use of the right tones for Wh-questions.
- Division of tone groups, selection of tones and tonic syllables in complex sentences should be in appropriate places.

This research paper has been done with the hope that the findings of this study will be helpful to the Mentors of English at APIIITs as well as teachers of English in Andhra Pradesh. The teachers can make

the students aware of their mistakes, which in turn helps in the correction and improvement of their speech.

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