

## CHAPTER 8

### INTONATION

In connected speech, we talked about stressing in words and sentences, linking sounds to sounds, dividing words into thought group, and giving rhythm as we speak. All above can help Thai learners or students to understand what a native speaker is saying. In this chapter, we will discuss the *intonation*, which refers to the changing pitch of the voice when we speak. In normal speech, the pitch of our voice keeps on changing: now going up, now going down, and sometimes staying in steady or normal level. It is said that no language in the world is spoken on a monotone or on the same pitch of the voice all the time. Speaking without using pitch variations sounds like very unnatural or robotic. If Thai learners or students lose the ability to use intonation, it can be very difficult for them to sound like natural, and sometimes difficult for them to be understood. For now, we are going to concentrate on the intonation, as shown here.

#### **What is intonation?**

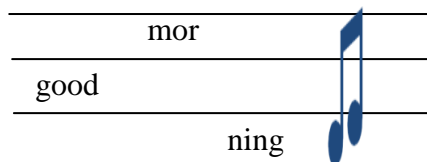
“Intonation is the melody of language, which refers to the patterning of high and low notes over sentences or phrases. The terms “intonation” and “pitch” sometimes mean the same thing; more often, “intonation” refers to the melody of sentences and phrases, while “pitch” refers to the note on a particular syllable.” (Lane, 2005: 216)

“Intonation is about how we say things, rather than what we say. Without intonation, it's impossible to understand the expressions and thoughts that go with words.” (Sabbadini, 2006)

“Intonation refers to the changing pitch of the voice, and that the pitch can be changed by changing the frequency of vibration of the vocal folds.” (Anne Knight, 2012: 229)

According to Prator and Roginett (1972), intonation is the rising and falling of the pitch of your voice as you speak. It is the tune of what you say. More especially, it is the combination of musical tones on which we pronounce the syllables that make

up our speech. Therefore, we could mark the intonation of sentences by writing them on something which resembles a musical staff as shown: *good morning*



From all above, it can be assumed that intonation is the musical pitch of the voice which refers to the high (rising) and the low (falling) voice when we speak over phrases or sentences. To understand the expressions or thoughts through words, it is possible to use the changing pitch of the voice while speaking.

### **Tone language vs. Intonation in English**

Many Asian languages, as well as Cantonese and Thai, are tone languages. When we speak in these languages, the pitch on which word a word is produced can change its meaning. Here are some two examples from Chinese and Thai, taken from tone pitch of the voice, in the IPA symbols.

Tone pitch in change	Cantonese	Thai
	/si/	/k <sup>h</sup> a/
High tone	silk	to engage in trade
Mid tone	to try	to get struck
Low tone	matter	galangal (a ginger-like root)

Figure 8 Showing tone pitch in change of Cantonese and Thai languages

(Anne Khigh, 2012: 228)

In English, intonation related to the changing pitch of the voice does not change the meaning of individual words while speaking with a rise, fall or fall-rise, regardless of the pitch on which it is produced. In tone languages as in Cantonese and Thai, the pitch of the voice can change the meaning of individual words. We will now investigate what effects pitch *does* have in English. Here we find that intonation influence meaning on longer stretches of speech.

## Types of intonational meaning in English

In English, there are four different ways in which intonation might give the meaning of utterance. These concern 1) how the speaker break their speech into intonation phrases, 2) the choice of accent position, 3) the choice of nuclear tone, and 4) the choice of key or register, referring to the pitch range of a particular intonation phrase. Summarily, the meanings we will consider have four main types as follows:

1. **Focus**—here we can change meanings by altering what is emphasized in a sentence.
2. **Attitude**—here we can signal our attitude to the utterance or to the listener, or we can signal our emotional state.
3. **Grammar**—here we can use intonation to mark out particular structures, and to indicate different types of utterance, such as statements and questions.
4. **Discourse**—here we use intonation to show where we are in our talk, such as whether we are planning to carry on speaking or are ready to let someone else speak. (Anne Khigh, 2012: 246)

## Pitch levels in English


Basically, there are three pitch levels in English: *Normal* pitch or level 2 is where the voice usually is, *High* pitch or level 3 is where the voice rises to indicate information focus, and *Low* pitch or level 1 is where the voice falls, usually at the end of sentences. There is also a *very high* pitch or level 4, used to express strong emotions such as surprise, anger, or fear. (The very high pitch will not be discussed in this text).

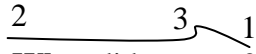
In most conversations the pitch of voice for statement, command, and WH question is basically the same- the voice starts at a normal (mid) pitch, rises to a high pitch, and then falls to a low pitch at the end of the sentence. With yes/no questions and requests, the pitch starts at normal and rises at the end of the sentence.

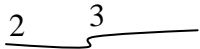
Look at these of some common intonation patterns below.

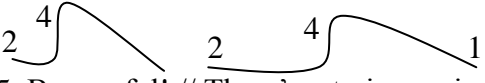
2     3     1

1. He's **sleeping**. (statement)

  
2. **Give** me the **key**. (command)

  
3. **What** did you **eat**? (Wh questions)

  
4. Is he **sleeping**? (yes/no question)

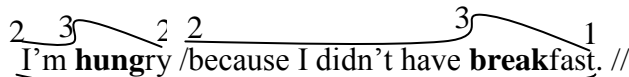
  
5. Be careful! // There's a train coming.//

(Speakers also use a fourth level of pitch, a very high note, for emphasis)

## Tone groups

**Tone groups** (sometimes called *intonation groups*), which correspond to *thought groups*, refers to the intonation or pitch pattern (contour) over a group of words. A tone group usually consists of a stressed word with higher pitch than other words in the thought group. A short utterance quite often forms a single tone group, while a longer one is made up of two or more. While speaking, we divide long utterances into small groups of words, between which we pause.

Look at the following sentence:

  
I'm **hungry** /because I didn't have **breakfast**. //

In this sentence, there are two tone groups, corresponding to the two thought groups. In the first thought group pitch rises at high level or level 3 on the first stressed syllable of the word *hungry* and falls back to normal level or level 2 on the second unstressed syllable, and again at high level or level 3 on the first stressed syllable of the word *breakfast*, then falls to low level or level 1 on the second unstressed syllable.

Some examples given below should make the concept of the tone group clear. The tone group boundary is indicated by a single slant line [/] for non-final intonation pattern and double slant line [//] for final intonation pattern.

1. 1. **Yes.**//

2. 2. **Of course!**//

3. 3. I'll come **tomorrow.**/

4. 4. Why don't you **help me?**//

5. 5. Would you like to drink coffee? or tea?//

6. 6. Give me a banana, a pear and an apple./

7. 7. I want to finish this work/ before he returns./

8. 8. Please do it now/ if you have time.//

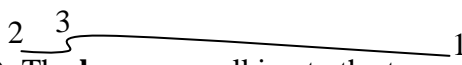
9. 9. They have plenty of time, but we haven't in spite of the holidays.//

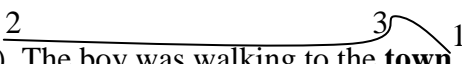
### Tonic syllable


Within a tone group including more than one syllable, there is one syllable standing out or carrying a high pitch from amongst the rest of the syllables, usually owing to a major change in pitch. This kind of syllable is called the *nucleus* of the tone group, or the *tonic syllable*.

Most words in a tone group can carry the tonic syllable, depending on the meaning intended, although the usual position for this is at the end of utterance.

Compare the different emphases in the following sentence:

a1)  a1) The **boy** was walking to the town. (*The boy not the girl was walking.....*)

a2)  a2) The boy was walking to the **town**. (statement ....to *the town* not to somewhere )

a3)  a3) The boy was **walking** to the town. (*....walking* not running or not driving to.....)

### Basic intonation patterns

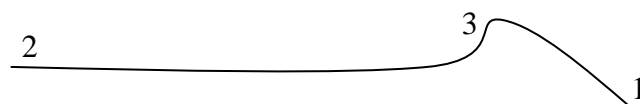
There are two common intonation patterns: (1) *final intonation pattern* and (2) *non-final intonation pattern*.

#### 1. Final intonation pattern

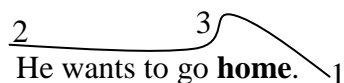
There are two final intonation patterns: 1) *final (rising-) falling intonation pattern* and 2) *final rising intonation pattern*.

##### 1.1 Final (rising-) falling intonation pattern

This final falling intonation pattern is used with a statement, a command, and a wh-question, an exclamation and single item utterance. The final falling intonation pattern is also called the 2-3-1 final falling intonation pattern. The numbers (as you see in section 10.3) refer to pitch levels two, three and one respectively. Pitch level 2 refers to a normal pitch, pitch level 3 a high pitch, and pitch level 1 a low pitch. The 2-3-1 final falling intonation pattern looks like this:



When you speak you start with the normal pitch level or pitch level 2, then your voice rises to a high pitch level or pitch level 3, and either steps or glides down to a low pitch level or pitch level 1. Look at the example below:


  
 He wants to go **home**.

Consider the following types of sentences:

*Final falling intonation* is common with:

1. Statements / Negative statements

1.1 The weather is hot.

1.2 My sister has a headache.

1.3 John is waiting in the office.

1.4 I don't have a car.

1.5 Mary didn't tell me the truth.

1.6 This answer is not correct.

2. Wh-questions

2.1 What time is it?

2.2 When did you get to the airport?

2.3 How long does it take to get

to their house?

2.4 Why are you laughing?

2.5 Who told you the news?

2.6 Where are you going?

3. Commands

3.1 Be quiet.

3.2 Stop shouting.

3.3 Turn on the fan.

3.4 Don't interrupt me.

3.5 Take off your coat.

3.6 Don't be late.

4. Exclamations

4.1 How beautiful!

4.2 How nice!

4.3 How wonderful!

4.4 What a lovely girl she is!

4.5 What a good idea!

4.6 What an idiot!

5. Single item utterances

5.1 tomorrow

5.2 airport

5.3 postman

5.4 yesterday

5.5 morning

5.6 Shirt

## 1.2 Final rising intonation pattern

This final rising intonation pattern is normally used with yes-no questions, statement intended to be a question, non-terminal tone group, requests, commands intended to sound like a request, wh-questions showing politeness, friendliness, warmth, personal interest, requests for repetition and addressing,. The final rising intonation pattern is also called *the 2-3 final rising intonation pattern*. The numbers (as you see in section 10.3) refer to pitch levels two and three, respectively. Pitch level 2 refers to a normal pitch and pitch level 3 a high pitch. The 2-3 final rising intonation pattern looks like this:



When you speak you start with the normal pitch level or pitch level 2, then your voice rises to a high pitch level or pitch level 3, and the syllable(s) which follow(s) the high pitch level or pitch level 3 must be pronounced on the high not too. Look at the example below:

2      3  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Are you hungry?

Consider the following types of sentences:

*Final rising intonation* is common with:

### 1. Yes/No questions:

#### 1.1 Questions beginning with the auxiliary *do*

- Does she bring the book to class?
- Do you have a ticket?
- Did she give him five dollars?

#### 1.2 Questions beginning with the auxiliary *have*

- Have you seen him?
- Has he finished the test yet?
- Have you read the paper?



1.3 Questions beginning with the auxiliary *be*

- Are you singing a song?
- Is she working in the office?
- Was John studying English last semester?
- Were they taken to the hospital?

## 1.4 Questions beginning with the modal auxiliaries

- Can I help you?
- Could you tell me the time?
- Will you bring the flowers?
- May I borrow your pen?
- Shall we go for a walk?

1.5 Questions beginning with the verb *to be*

- Are you ready?
- Is the lecturer from London?
- Was he at home?
- Are you interested in English?

## 1.6 Statement intended to be a question

- You won't come?
- He isn't going?
- You don't want to lend me the book?

## 2. Non-terminal tone group - You haven't finished speaking.

2.1 If you don't come in time.....(I'll leave).

2.2 Whenever she calls on us.....(she creates problems).

2.3 Unless you decide to succeed.....(you can't succeed).

2.4 I'll inform you.....(if he comes)

## 3. Requests

3.1 Pass me the salt please.

3.2 Listen to me for a minute.

## 4. Commands intended to sound like a request

4.1 Close the door.

4.2 Don't disturb me at odd hours.

4.3 Don't be late.

## 5. Wh-questions showing politeness, friendliness, warmth, personal interest

5.1 How is your son?

5.2 What is your name child?

## 6. Request for repetition

6.1 What did you say?

6.2 Who did you say you went with?

6.3 Where did you say you found it?

## 7. Addressing

7.1 Miss Samson

7.4 Mr. John

7.2 Senator Jackson

7.5 Mr. Baker

7.3 General Johnson

7.6 Diana

**2. Non-final intonation pattern**

If a sentence is divided into two or more thought groups, each thought group has its own separate intonation pattern. There are three types of non-final intonation patterns: *(rising-) falling* or *2-3-1 non-final intonation pattern*, *(rising-) falling* or *2-3-2 non-final intonation pattern*, and *continuation rising* or *2-3 non-final intonation pattern*.

## 2.1 (Rising-) Falling or 2-3-1 non-final intonation pattern

2.1.1 This type of (rising-) falling or 2-3-1 non-final intonation pattern normally occurs when a long sentence (complex sentence) is separated by a colon (:), or a semicolon (;), the first thought group spoken with 2-3-1 non-final intonation pattern; whereas the second thought group has the 2-3-1 final intonation pattern:

1. I'll tell you the truth:/ it can't be done.// (2-3-1/2-3-1)

2. She must be angry; /she won't speak to them.// (2-3-1/2-3-1)

2.1.2 This type of 2-3-1 non-final intonation pattern also occurs in a tag question which is a statement followed by a short yes/no-question (called a tag). Tag questions can display either *final (rising-) falling* or *final rising* intonation patterns. Their meaning has difference depending on which of those patterns is used. The first thought group spoken with 2-3-1 non-final intonation pattern; whereas the second thought group with the tag question may be the 2-3 or 3-1 final intonation pattern:

1. You are hungry, /aren't you?// (2-3-1/2-3 patterns: speaker is unsure)
2. You are hungry, /aren't you?// (2-3-1/3-1 patterns: speaker expects agreement)

## 2.2 (Rising-) Falling or 2-3-2 non-final intonation pattern

2.2.1 This type of (rising-) falling or 2-3-2 non-final intonation pattern is used in a long sentence (complex sentence) separated by a colon (:), or a long sentence whose second part is closely related to the first one. The first thought group is spoken with 2-3-2 non-final intonation pattern; whereas the second thought group has the 2-3-1 final intonation pattern if it is a statement, but if it is a yes/no-question, the 2-3 final intonation pattern is used:

1. When the teacher reads your name, / you should answer.//
2. During your trip in Europe, /did you visit Germany?//
3. While their parents are away, / will they be in town?//

2.2.2 This type of (rising-) falling or 2-3-2 non-final intonation pattern is used in a long sentence (compound sentence) joined by connecting word such as *and*, *but*, *or*, *so*. The first thought group is spoken with 2-3-2 non-final intonation pattern; whereas the second thought group has the 2-3-1 final intonation pattern:

1. He went to the opera, /and saw a fine performance.//
2. The food wasn't good, /but I ate it.//
3. You must follow this diet strictly, / or you won't lose weight.//
4. My brother was sick, /so he didn't go to school.//

2.2.3 This type of (rising-) falling or 2-3-2 non-final intonation pattern is used in a long sentence (complex sentence) joined by subordinator such as *when*, *after*, *before*, *because*, *since*, *while*, *if*, *etc.* The first thought group is spoken with 2-3-2 non-final intonation pattern; whereas the second thought group has the 2-3-1 final intonation pattern:

1. The sky still looked dark / although the rain had ended.//
2. When you go skiing, / you should wear gloves.//
3. They came in the house /after finished playing.//

2.2.4 This type of (rising-) falling or 2-3-2 non-final intonation pattern is used for greetings. When the sentence is spoken in two thought groups, the first one is

spoken with 2-3-2 non-final intonation pattern; whereas the second one directed to someone by name usually has the 2-3 final intonation pattern:

1. Good morning, /Mrs Nelson.//
2. Good bye,/ Dr Smith.//
3. How do you do, /Mr Jones?//

2.2.5 This type of (rising-) falling or 2-3-2 non-final intonation pattern is used when the wh-questions are directed to someone by name; the question is pronounced with 2-3-2 non-final intonation pattern; whereas the name is spoken with the 2-3 final intonation pattern:

1. When are you leaving,/ Miss Samson?//
2. Why did you do it,/ Jane?//
3. How have you been,/ James?//

### 2.3 Rising or 2-3 non-final intonation pattern

2.3.1 This type of rising or 2-3 non-final intonation pattern is used when a sentence consists of two or more alternative s with *or*; the first all alternatives are pronounced with 2-3 non-final intonation pattern; whereas the final alternative is spoken with the 2-3-1 final intonation pattern:

1. Would you like coffee/ or tea?//
2. Do you want to go by train /or by bus?//
3. Does he like swimming,/ or boating,/ or skiing.//

2.3.2 This type of rising or 2-3 non-final intonation pattern is used for several items in affirmative or negative statement. The first words in a list are pronounced with 2-3 non-final intonation pattern; whereas the final ones are spoken with the 2-3-1 final intonation pattern. The final fall tells the listener the list is finished. This is common with phrases joined by a comma (,) and *and* .

1. I bought oranges,/ apples/ and bananas.//
2. She gave me a pen,/ a ruler,/ and a pencil.//
3. Give me a loaf of bread,/ two bottles of milk,/ and some raspberry jam.//

## Summary

In English, the *intonation* refers to the changing pitch of the voice as we speak, which normally goes on changing: now going up, now going down, and sometimes remaining in steady or normal level. No language in the world is spoken on a monotone all the time. Without intonation, Speaking English sounds like very unnatural or robotic. Basically, there are three pitch levels: *normal* pitch or level 2 is where the voice usually is; *high* pitch or level 3 is where the voice rises to indicate information focus; and *low* pitch or level 1 is where the voice falls, usually at the end of sentences. There are two common intonation patterns: 1) *final intonation pattern* and 2) *non-final intonation pattern*.

## Questions reviews

1. What is intonation?
2. What is the difference between tone language and intonation in English?
3. How many ways does the intonation concern the meaning of utterance?
4. Identify the main types of intonational meanings in English.
5. How many pitch levels of intonation are there in English? What are they?
6. What does tone group refer to? Give two examples of sentences concerning the tone group.
7. What is tonic syllable?
8. How many types of intonation patterns in English? What are they?
9. Identify the 2-31 pitch or 2-3 pitch (the 1= low pitch, the 2= normal pitch and the 3= high pitch) in the following phrases or sentences.
 

9.1 Well done.	9.4 Can I help you?
9.2 Mr. Jackson	9.5 How nice!
9.3 Where do you live?	9.6 Are you hungry?
10. Draw the intonation pattern lines, depending on each of thought groups. Then write the number of intonation patterns.
 

10.1 I'll come as soon as I can.
10.2 Would you like coffee or tea?
10.3 Give me a banana, a pear, and an apple