

Degree iii, (English Honours)

Paper – VIII

Section – 2

Subject- **Linguistics**

Suprasegmental Features

INTONATION

Intonation is a significant variation in pitch from one part of an utterance to another. The meaning of an English utterance, for example, derives not only from its changing sound pattern and the contrastive, accentual prominences already referred to, but also from associated patterns of intonation. Nevertheless, an intonation contour does not, in itself, make any difference in the dictionary meaning of an utterance. It tells the hearer something concerning the emotional attitude of the speaker, as such the intonation patterns of a language are among the very first patterns which a child learns to respond and to imitate. According to some theories, when animals (e.g. Dogs) respond to human speech, they are reacting not to segmental phonemes, but to intonation contours alone.

Stress and intonation are linked phenomena; they work together to give the effect of prominence or accent. Accented syllables can be said level pitch

high or low, or with a change in pitch. An accented syllable said on level pitch is described as having a static tone, whilst an accented syllable on which a pitch change takes place has a kinetic tone. The syllable which initiates a kinetic tone is called the nucleus and said to have the primary unclear or tonic accent. Thus, the sentence the thieves came at night, would normally be spoken in British English with a high-level static tone on came and a falling nucleus, or falling kinetic tone, on night,

Emotional degree of the speakers affects his intonation. The more a speaker is involved with what he is saying, by way of anger, grief, excitement, self-importance and so on, the greater will be the range of pitch and the amount of pitch change he uses. The system of intonation patterns in every language is difficult and is naturally learnt by the native speakers of that language. A foreign learner of the language would need years of study and practice to learn the intonation patterns of the languages.

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