

Intonation

Intonation refers to the patterns of pitch on word groups which give information about the speaker's feeling. Generally, every language has melody in it; no language is spoken on the same musical note all the time. That is, the voice goes up and down and the different notes of the voice combine to make tunes.

In English the tune is related to the word group. Therefore, a word group could be spoken definitely, hesitantly, angrily or kindly. It could be said with or without interest. These differences are largely made by the tunes used. The original words of in the word group do not change their meanings, but the tunes used could add something to the words. The tunes used could add the speaker's feelings at the moment of speaking. This is the function of intonation which is adding feelings to the speaker's speech. English language has a characteristic intonation which is different from the intonations of the other languages. Therefore, the shapes and meanings of English tunes must be learned because they are important. For example, 'thank you' may be said in two ways: in the first the voice starts high and ends low; this shows real gratitude; in the second the voice starts low and ends high and this shows a rather casual acknowledgment of something not very important.

Tune Shapes

The shape of the tune is decided partly by the number of important words in the group and partly by the exact attitude you wish to express. The important words are the words which carry most of the meaning (words which carry stress) in a word group. For example, 'He was in an appallingly bad temper' || hi: wəz ɪn ən ə'pælɪŋli 'bæd 'tempə ||. Thus, important words always have stressed syllables and usually has a change of pitch connected to them. The basic tunes that English learners need to learn are as follows:

1. The falling tune - the glide-down tune: It consists of a fall in the voice from a fairly high pitch to a very low one. It is used for short word group in which just one important word is used. The fall is on/from the stressed syllables to a following one (e.g., no /'nəʊ/).

2. The first rising tune - glide-up-tune: It starts with a fall in the voice and ends with a rise in the voice (e.g., But is it true that you're changing your job? /bʌt 'ɪz ɪt 'tru: ðæt jə ɑ: tʃeɪndʒɪŋ jɔ: dʒɒb/).
3. The second rising tune - the take-off: It ends with a rise in the voice and the words/syllables before the rise are low (e.g., I was only trying to help /aɪ wəz 'ɒnli 'traɪɪŋ tə 'help/).
4. The falling-rising tune - the dive: It consists of a fall from rather high to low and then a rise to about the middle of voice (e.g., Why? /'waɪ/).

Note: See the examples in your textbook. ☺