Word and sentence stress

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What is word stress?

Try saying the following words to yourself: *qualify*, *banana*, *understand*. All of them have three identifiable syllables, and one of the syllables in each word will sound louder than the others: so, we get *QUAlify*, *baNAna* and *underSTAND*. (The syllables indicated in capitals are the stressed syllables.) Each stressed syllable, in a word in isolation, also has a change in the **pitch**, or the level of the speaker's voice, and the vowel sound in that syllable is lengthened.

Stress can fall on the first, middle or last syllables of words, as is shown here:

(45)

Ooo	oOo	ooO
SYLlabus	enGAGEment	usheRETTE
SUBstitute	baNAna	kangaROO
TECHnical	phoNEtic	underSTAND

The words in the first group (Ooo) are all stressed on the first syllable, the words in the second group are stressed on the second syllable, and those in the third group are stressed on the third syllable.

If you have any difficulty initially in recognising where the stress falls, try making the word in question the last word in a short sentence, and saying it over a few times (for example, *It's in the syllabus*; *He had a prior engagement*; *I don't understand*). Listen to the examples on the CD. This should help you to ascertain the pattern for the word you are considering. Another idea is to say the word in question as though you have been completely taken by surprise, or are taken aback by the mere mention of the idea (for example, *SYLLabus? baNAna? kangaROO?*).

Some find it relatively easy to spot stresses, and others will take time to be able to do so consistently. Whichever group you fall into, you need to be aware of stress, and to deal with it specifically in class. If students are first made aware of stress, and then given practice in identifying stressed syllables, they will be better able to work towards using it appropriately when speaking.

What is unstress?

In order for one syllable to be perceived as stressed, the syllables around it need to be unstressed. For stressed syllables, three features were identified: loudness, pitch change and a longer syllable. Unstress may be described as the absence of these.

Have another look at the groups of words in the previous table. In the word *syllabus*, we said that the first syllable was stressed. This logically implies that the final two are unstressed. Also, in the word *banana*, the first and third syllables are unstressed, and the middle one is stressed. The same applies to the other words in the table.

The idea, as we will see later, is a little simplified here, but the basic contrast between stressed and unstressed syllables is a useful concept to hold on to, and for many classroom situations, this level of detail is enough to help students towards more successful pronunciation.

On the subject of unstressed syllables, however, there are various things to notice. In Chapter 3, we considered the phoneme known as 'schwa' (the phonemic transcription is /ə/). This sound can be heard in the first syllable of *about*, in the second syllable of *paper*, and also in the third syllable of *intricate*. The table below shows the incidences of /ə/ with the corresponding written vowels underlined.

Ooo	oOo	ooO
SYLl<u>abus</u>	enGAGEm<u>e</u>nt	ush<u>e</u>RETTE
SUBstitute	b<u>a</u>NAn<u>a</u>	kang<u>a</u>ROO
TECHnic<u>al</u>	ph<u>o</u>NETic	und<u>e</u>rSTAND

As mentioned in Chapter 3, /ə/ is the most commonly occurring vowel sound in English. It never appears within a stressed syllable. Schwa is by nature an unstressed sound. If you try to stress any syllable which naturally contains /ə/, you change its properties, and another phoneme is produced.

Schwa is not unique to the English language, but it is its most frequent sound. Difficulties may arise for students if this sound does not occur in their first language, or from the interference of other pronunciation rules and tendencies that they might bring over into spoken English. Perception is also crucial, in that as /ə/ is such a common feature of English, lack of awareness of its role may add to students' difficulties in understanding native speaker speech.

As can be seen from the words in the table below, /ə/ can be represented through spelling in a variety of ways. Here are some spellings, with the incidences of /ə/ underlined. Remember, though, that these may not always tally with the reader's own accent or variety of English.

(48)

> *a*, as in <u>a</u>rise, syll<u>a</u>ble, b<u>a</u>nan<u>a</u>
> *e*, as in ph<u>e</u>nom<u>e</u>non, exc<u>e</u>llent and vow<u>e</u>l
> *i*, as in pup<u>i</u>l, exper<u>i</u>ment and commun<u>i</u>cate
> *o*, as in t<u>o</u>morrow, butt<u>o</u>n or devel<u>o</u>p
> *u* as in s<u>u</u>pport, bog<u>u</u>s and diffic<u>u</u>lt

Sometimes whole syllables or word endings may be 'reduced' to /ə/, as in *butt<u>er</u>, thor<u>ough</u>, facilitat<u>or</u>* and *pol<u>ar</u>*. This is common among British English accents, though not so common in US English.

(49) At other times /ə/ is a central sound in a syllable, and several written vowels <u>may represent the sound</u>; this <u>is v</u>ery common in words ending in *-ous* (like *consci<u>ous</u>* and *fictiti<u>ous</u>*). It also occurs frequently in *-al* endings (like *spati<u>al</u>, capit<u>al</u>* and *topic<u>al</u>*), in *-ion* words (like *sess<u>ion</u>, pronunciat<u>ion</u>* and *attent<u>ion</u>*) and *-ate* endings (like *accur<u>ate</u>, priv<u>ate</u>* and *delic<u>ate</u>*).

You will notice that there is one word in the table on the previous page in which /ə/ does not occur (*substitute*). It is important to remember that not <u>all</u> unstressed syllables contain /ə/, but it is our most common vowel sound.

Rules of word stress

The list opposite provides a 'rough guide' to stressed syllables. It is more accurate to see these as descriptions of tendencies rather than rules, in that they only tell us what is true most of the time, and it is always possible to find exceptions. It is not suggested that teachers simply pass on this information 'en masse' to their students: it will be of some use, and is certainly worth studying at appropriate times, but it will not always be available for students to recall and use in real-time communication.

It makes sense to use such information to help students to discover patterns which are applicable and relevant to the language they are learning at a particular time, but always bear in mind that they are rules of thumb only.

(50)

> **Core vocabulary:** Many 'everyday' nouns and adjectives of two-syllable length are stressed on the first syllable. Examples are: *SISter, BROther, MOther, WAter, PAper, TAble, COFfee, LOvely* etc.
>
> **Prefixes and suffixes:** These are not usually stressed in English. Consider: *QUIetly, oRIGinally, deFECtive*, and so on. (Note the exceptions, though, among prefixes, like *BIcycle* and *DISlocate*.)
>
> **Compound words:** Words formed from a combination of two words tend to be stressed on the first element. Examples are: *POSTman, NEWSpaper, TEApot* and *CROSSword*.
>
> **Words having a dual role:** In the case of words which can be used as either a noun or a verb, the noun will tend to be stressed on the first syllable (in line with the 'core vocabulary' rule above) and the verb on the last syllable (in line with the 'prefix rule'). Examples are *IMport* (n), *imPORT* (v); *REbel* (n), *reBEL* (v) and *INcrease* (n), *inCREASE* (v).

Levels of stress

So far, we have looked at syllables in terms of being either stressed or unstressed. In fact within longer words syllables can have different degrees of stress. To be more theoretically accurate, we should consider all syllables in terms of their level of stress, rather than its presence or absence, particularly when dealing with words in isolation. Different commentators have outlined up to five different levels of stress in a single word: Daniel Jones, in *An Outline of English Phonetics* cites the word *opportunity*, which has five levels of stress as seen below. '1' indicates the greatest level of stress, and '5' the least.

$$\overset{2\ \ 4\ \ \ 1\ \ 5\ 3}{/\text{ɒpə'tjuːnɪtiː/}}$$

Jones qualified this, however, by saying that he thought that this viewpoint needed 'modification', and that here stress was affected by 'subtle degrees of vowel and consonant length, and by intonation' (1960: 247). While Jones' example seems somewhat excessive for our purposes, the existence of different levels of stress is well documented and evidenced.

Many commentators settle on a three-level distinction between primary stress, secondary stress and unstress, as seen in the following examples.

(51)

ₒ . O ..
opportunity

O . ₒ
telephone

O . ₒ
substitute

However, in practical terms a two-level division (stressed or unstressed) is usually adequate for teaching purposes. Many people (including many teachers) will have difficulty in perceiving more than two levels of stress with any confidence. Two levels of stress are enough to attune learners' ears and attention to how stress acts within words and utterances.

This is not, of course, to discourage teachers from further investigations into the nature of stress at a deeper level. The deeper one's understanding of the subject matter, the better one's teaching of it is likely to be. Teachers need to be as informed as possible in order to be better able to make the decision as to what to include in lessons. If students notice or enquire about more than two levels of stress, then of course this should be acknowledged and discussed in class. The teacher must feel confident in making informed decisions about the method and content of these discussions, backed up by professional knowledge.

Sentences: Stress timing and syllable timing

It has been claimed that certain languages (for example English, Arabic and Russian) are **stress-timed**, or **isochronous** /aɪˈsɒkrənəs/. In such languages stresses occur at regular intervals within connected speech, it is claimed, and the duration of an utterance is more dependent upon the number of stresses than the number of syllables. To achieve the regular stress intervals, unstressed syllables are made shorter, and the vowels often lose their 'pure' quality, with many tending towards /ə/, and others towards /ɪ/ and /ʊ/.

Other languages (such as Japanese, French and Spanish) are said to be **syllable-timed**. In these languages there is no strong pattern of stress; syllables maintain their length, and vowels maintain their quality. Certain syllables are still stressed, of course, but not according to a regular pattern.

Isochronicity might be shown as in the following example. We start with a simple sentence; we add syllables to it on each line, but the time it takes to say the utterance remains the same.

they LIVE	in an	OLD	HOUSE
they LIVE	in a NICE	OLD	HOUSE
they LIVE	in a LOVEly	OLD	HOUSE
they've been LIVing	in a deLIGHTful	OLD	HOUSE
they've been LIVing	in a deLIGHTful	OLD	COTTage
they've been LIVing	in a deLIGHTful	vicTORian	COTTage

The occurrence of stresses remains regular, and unstressed syllables are squashed in between the stressed ones, being shorter and losing some purity of the vowel sound. If you simply tap out the rhythm it is easy to be persuaded of the validity of this idea. One can indeed say this sequence of sentences with a regular rhythm, which seems to be preserved as one adds more syllables. There is also a strong contrast between stressed and unstressed syllables.

However, consider also the speed at which you are talking by the time you get to the last utterance in the group. From slowly and deliberately in the first sentence, one moves by stages to far more rapid speech in the last line. The persuasiveness of the idea makes the evidence fit the theory, rather than the theory being supported by the evidence.

It makes more sense to imagine English described in terms of a continuum which has tendencies towards stress-timing at one end and syllable-timing at the other. A language like English has more of a tendency than some other languages to reduce vowel length and quality in unstressed syllables, and so tends towards the stress-timing end of the continuum.

So-called syllable-timed languages also reduce the length of the vowel in an unstressed syllable, though to a lesser extent, but they tend to preserve the quality of the vowel sound.

Stress timing and regular rhythms are most noticeable in highly stylised and patterned language, such as poetry or nursery rhymes. How far the phenomenon is observable in everyday speech is a matter for debate. Regularity of speech rhythm varies widely according to context, as it may bring in factors such as the relationship between the speakers, their confidence, nervousness, etc. and whether their speech is rehearsed or spontaneous, not to mention personal habits of accent, dialect and so on. As we will see in the next section too, the words and syllables which we choose to stress in connected speech are in fact dictated very much by context, and the meanings we wish to communicate when speaking.

Using language which is rhythmic and clearly patterned can, however, be very useful in the classroom, particularly for making students aware of the importance of stress (and intonation) in English, and also for highlighting weak forms and other features of connected speech.

Sentence stress and tonic syllables

The use of stress in speech helps us both deliver and understand meaning in longer utterances and it is closely linked with **intonation**. Although we will inevitably mention intonation, in this chapter we will concentrate on which syllables are stressed and why. In Chapter 6, we will look further at how intonation contributes to the meaning of what we say.

Consider the following sentence:

he LIVES in the HOUSE on the CORner.

(Capitals have not been used where they would usually occur (i.e. on *he*) in order to preserve the distinction between stressed and unstressed syllables.) The above example sentence conveys three different ideas: he resides in a

particular dwelling; that dwelling is what the people involved in the conversation would consider to be a house, as opposed to a flat or a bungalow; the precise location of the house is at the junction of two or more streets, this junction being either familiar or obvious to the hearer. This gives us three **content words** (*lives*, *house* and *corner*), which convey the most important ideas in the sentence. The rest of the utterance consists of **function words**, which we need in order to make our language hold together.

The example is rather stylised, however, and glosses over what actually happens when the sentence is said in context. In order to arrive at an understanding of this, we need initially to go back to word stress.

The word *corner* has two syllables, the first one being stressed, and the second one unstressed, as follows: *CORner*.

(52)

If I ask you *Where is John's house?*, and it happens to be at a junction of two or more streets, that junction being either known to us both or obvious to us both, you might answer like this: *It's on the CORner*.

(53)

The first syllable of *corner* in this sentence is the **tonic syllable**. It is indicated by underlining. *Corner* is the most important word in the sentence as it effectively answers the question *Where?* The tonic syllable is the most stressed syllable in an utterance – it is generally longer, louder, and carries the main pitch movement in an utterance (in this example, the pitch of the voice falls on it).

If, on the other hand, one friend asks another to confirm where John's house is, the question might be *Where did you say John lives?* In this case, a possible answer is as follows:

(54)

> he LIVES in the house on the CORner.

Here, *lives* is given some stress, and so it is written in capitals. *Lives* in this sentence is the **onset syllable**, in that it establishes a pitch that stays more or less level right through to *cor-* (which is still our tonic syllable), on which it drops. That the word *house* is not stressed here tells us that this is shared knowledge between the speakers, and it is not necessary to point this out. It is possible to detect a small degree of stress on *house*, but relative to *lives* and *cor-*, it is noticeably less prominent.

The new information that is being shared between speakers determines what is the tonic syllable. Look at this example:

(55)

> John lives in the block of flats on the corner, doesn't he?
> NO, he LIVES in the HOUSE on the corner.

Here, *lives* is again an onset syllable, but the tonic syllable is now *house*, reflecting the importance of this word within the utterance. *No* is also a tonic syllable, and is followed by a pause. While the first syllable of *corner* is stressed when the word is said on its own, here it is not given any stress, as it is knowledge already shared between the speakers.

The following example shows a similar effect:

(56)

> John's buying the house on the corner, isn't he?
> he ALready LIVES in the house on the corner.

Within utterances, therefore, we emphasise tonic syllables in order to highlight the most significant new information. We use onset syllables to initiate a pitch which continues up to the tonic syllable. We will develop these important ideas further in Chapter 6, which takes a closer look at intonation.

With regard to sentence stress we can outline a three-stage process which enables us to say the same thing in different ways:

1 When we say words of more than one syllable in isolation we will stress one of the syllables.

2 When words are arranged together in a sentence or utterance, certain syllables will be stressed in order to convey the most important new information. This may cancel out normal word stress.

3 Intonation is used to give further subtleties of meaning to the syllables we have chosen to stress.

Speakers make certain assumptions with regard to what is old and new information, and express these by means of stress (and intonation) patterns. Hearers confirm or deny these assumptions through their reactions.

Remember also that our spoken language is not tied to sentences. When conversing, we often use incomplete sentences, phrases which would be considered ungrammatical if written down, interrupt each other, backtrack and so on. However, a study of stress within complete sentences provides a 'user-friendly' way of drawing attention to the main aspects of how we use stress in speech.

Sentence stress and weak forms

(57)

There are a large number of words in English which can have a 'full' form and a 'weak' form. For example, compare the use of the word *can* and *from* in the following sentences:

She can /kən/ swim faster than I can /kæn/. (The first *can* is the weak form, and the second *can* is the full form.)
She's from /frəm/ Scotland. Where are you from /frɒm/? (The first *from* is the weak form, and the second *from* is the full form.)

As these words can be pronounced differently, it is important that learners are taught the possible forms of these words when they are introduced. These words are most often the function words, filling in between content words, and making sentences 'work', grammatically.

Receptive exercises can be used to attune students' minds to the idea, and to work towards recognition of the different forms. Productive exercises can also be used to help students towards their target of pronunciation. The most frequently cited examples of these words are as outlined in the following table:

Grammatical category	Word	Full form	Weak form	Example of weak form
Verbs	am	æm	m	That's what I'm trying to say.
	are	ɑː	ə	Where are you from?
	is	ɪz	əz/z/s	Where's he from?/Where is he from?
	was	wɒz	wəz	That's where he was born.
	were	wɜː	wə	That's where my children were born.
	do	duː	də	Where do you live?
	does	dʌz	dəz	Where does he live?
	have	hæv	əv/v	He will have left by now./They've gone.
	has	hæz	həz/əz/z/s	The baby has swallowed a stone./He's gone.
	had	hæd	həd/əd/d	He had already gone./He'd already gone.
	can	kæn	kən	I'm not sure if I can lend it to you.
	could	kʊd	kəd	Well, what could I say?
	would	wʊd	wəd/əd	Well, what would you have done?
	should	ʃʊd	ʃəd/ʃd	Well, what should I have said?
Personal pronouns	you	juː	jə	How do you do?
	your	jɔː	jə	What does your boss think?
	he	hiː	hɪ/ɪ	Where does he work?
	him	hɪm	ɪm	I'll give it to him later.
	she	ʃiː	ʃɪ	She's leaving tomorrow.
	her	hɜː	hə/ə	I'll give it to her later.
	us	ʌs	əs	They'll give it to us later.
	them	ðem	ðəm	I'll give it to them later.
Prepositions	to	tuː	tə	He's already gone to work.
	at	æt	ət	He's at work, I think.
	of	ɒv	əv	That's the last of the wine!
	for	fɔː	fə	He's away for two weeks.
	from	frɒm	frəm	She comes from Scotland.
Conjunctions	and	ænd	ən/ənd	She's tall and fair.
	but	bʌt	bət	She's here, but Juan isn't.
	than	ðæn	ðən	She's older than you.
Articles	a	eɪ	ə	He's a doctor.
	an	æn	ən	She's an architect.
	the	ðiː	ðə	She's the person I told you about.
Indefinite adjectives	any	eniː	əniː/niː	Have we got any biscuits?
	some	sʌm	səm	There's some tea in the pot.
	such	sʌtʃ	sətʃ	It's not such a big deal, really.

Keep in mind when teaching weak forms that in certain positions, the full form is necessary. Also, at times, speakers may wish to emphasise function words for particular reasons:

(59) no, I was coming FROM the station, not going TO it.

Weak forms are an important feature of ordinary, everyday speech, and students should have the opportunity of becoming attuned to them. Students should be given the opportunity to practise both strong and weak forms and receive feedback on their production from a teacher in order to be able to produce the mix of strong and weak forms correctly, if they should wish.

Raising awareness of word and sentence stress

Each time the teacher plans to introduce a new vocabulary item, it is important that he considers what the students actually need to know about the word: meaning, collocation (i.e. which other words commonly go with it), 'currency' (i.e. whether or not the word is restricted to certain situations or can be used widely), spelling and pronunciation.

With regard to pronunciation, stressed and unstressed syllables are important features. There are various ways in which the teacher can encourage a continuing awareness of stress. Receptive awareness is important, as it is through this that successful production tends to come. Choral and individual drilling of new words usefully combines receptive awareness and productive skill. While it is important for teachers to appreciate that successful repetition during drilling will not necessarily lead to continued accurate production during other practice activities, or outside the classroom, it is vital to give students this opportunity to practise.

Teachers should try drilling words in a natural manner, first. If the students are having difficulty, it is a good idea to try exaggerating the stressed syllable (though as this inevitably changes the characteristics of the phonemes involved you should always come back to the unexaggerated word once your students have got the point). Other techniques commonly employed are beating out the pattern of stress with your hand or finger, or tapping with a pen on the table, speaking or singing the stress pattern (DA da da), and so on.

Listening activities are particularly useful for helping to raise awareness of word stress. Some suggestions for these are outlined in the sample lessons.

As has been suggested throughout the book so far, pronunciation work should be seen as an integral part of what goes on in the classroom, and it is important that teachers treat it as such. With this in mind, it is important to get into the habit of indicating the stress pattern on any new words you have presented, particularly those words which you would like students to note down, remember and use.

There are several ways of indicating stress when it comes to writing a word on the board or in a handout for your students:

Circles can be written above or below the word: *syllabus* O o o

Some teachers like to use boxes: *engagement* ▫ ☐ ▫

You can put a mark before the stressed syllable: *ushe'rette*

Note that this is also a convention used in dictionaries, when a phonemic transcription is given alongside the particular entry: /ʌʃəˈret/

You can simply underline the stressed syllable: *technical*

Or write it in capitals: *comPUter*

Inevitably teachers tend to develop particular habits, and find themselves using one convention more than the others. It's a good idea to aim to stick with the one which comes most naturally to you, and, as with many things in teaching, aim to be both clear and consistent, so that students become familiar with your teaching habits. After a certain amount of repeated exposure to your stress-marking habits, students will know what the symbols mean, without having to ask, and students familiar with the habit can pass on their knowledge to new students, and so on.

When dealing with longer utterances and sentences, drilling is again important, and can be very useful for highlighting both stress and weak forms. With longer utterances, front or back chaining can be tried (see page 16), and 'beating' stress can also help. A little caution is advisable, however, as it is important not to 'overdo' sentence stress, in the sense of giving stress to too many elements within an utterance. By way of example, let us look again at the sentence we used earlier: *He lives in the house on the corner.* We should remember that though *lives* and *house* and *corner* may be 'content' words when the sentence is considered out of context, in reality within a conversation the sentence would have a tonic syllable, carrying a change in pitch, and being an important indicator of meaning. Drilling the sentence with an equal emphasis on all three content words, might lead to rather unnatural sounding production. Keep in mind the context in which the sentence appears, and the meaning which the sentence is trying to convey, think about where the pitch movement occurs (i.e. on the tonic syllable) and drill accordingly.

Weak forms can be isolated and drilled on their own, before being put back into the sentence or utterance. For example, in the sentence *If I'd known the answer, I would've told you*, the words *would've* can be isolated and drilled separately, if students are having difficulty with them. The whole sentence might then be drilled once more, to show again how the other language fits around it.

In raising awareness of issues relating to word and sentence stress, teachers should treat these issues as part of the language being studied. They should, for example, show students how to record stresses in their notebooks for later study which will aid students in both comprehension and language production. It is useful to use (and teach your students) questions like 'Which word is stressed?', 'Which syllable is stressed?', or 'Where does the

voice go up/down?', so that you can elicit facts about the stresses in the language item you are teaching, and so that students can ask you about it, if they are not sure.

Sample lessons   In this section are some classroom activities which will help to focus attention on word and sentence stress. Some of these might be used from time to time for general awareness of the issue, and most can be adapted for use with a variety of grammatical and lexical topics.

Lesson 1: Find a partner: Stress patterns (All levels)

Lesson type: Practice
Materials: Sentence and word cards

The teacher gives half of the students a card each with a word on, and the other half a card with a sentence on. Each word card has a sentence card match, the word and sentence both having the same stress pattern. Students mingle, saying their words or sentences out loud, and, through listening, trying to find their partner. When they think they have found a partner, they check with the teacher, and if they are indeed a pair, they can sit down. Once all of the students are paired up, the pairs read out their word and sentence to the other students, who write down the stress pattern, using a small circle to represent unstressed syllables, and a large one to represent a stressed syllable, as in the following example:

> Politician ooOo
> It's important ooOo

No meaning relationship is implied through the pairs having the same pattern; it is simply an exercise to help students to notice the difference between stressed and unstressed syllables. Sample cards (using some job-related words) might be as follows:

> Politician / It's important
> Policeman / He's English
> Electrician / Can I help you?
> Photographer / You idiot!
> Interior designer / I want to go to London

Lesson 2: Three little words: Contrastive stress (All levels)

Lesson type: Practice

This short activity provides a simple way of demonstrating the effect that a shifting tonic syllable can have on the meaning of an utterance. The teacher writes *I love you* on the board, and asks the students which syllable is stressed, eliciting that it is the word *love*. He draws a stress box over the word to show this or rewrites it in capitals. He then writes the same sentence up twice more. The students then work in pairs to see if they can work out any other possible meanings, through stressing the other words in the sentence. Suggested answers are as follows:

Sentence (meaning)
I <u>love</u> you (...and I want you to know this).
I love <u>you</u>. (I don't love her.)
<u>I</u> love you. (He doesn't!)

Those 'three little words' which carry such weight, can also carry different, and very much context-related, meanings. Of course you can use other sentences too, to get the same effect, but this provides a quick, easy and (for most) amusing way of introducing the subject of tonic stress.

Lesson 3: Misunderstanding dialogues: Contrastive stress (All levels)

Lesson type: Practice
Materials: Scripted dialogues

In this activity, a dialogue is used which involves a series of misunderstandings. The dialogue itself may seem rather artificial, but the exercise helps underline the idea of contrastive stress, and how moving a tonic syllable can change the emphasis of what the speaker is saying.

The teacher gives student B some lines to say, and student A is given a line which they will need to say in various ways, depending on what the misunderstood point is. The activity works better if there is no preparation, and students are put on the spot; they may not always get the point straight away, but it's worth persevering.

Student A	Student B
I'd like a big, red cotton shirt.	Here you are. A big, red cotton skirt.
No, I said a big, red cotton shirt.	Here you are. A big, red nylon shirt.
No, I said a big, red cotton shirt.	Here you are. A big, blue cotton shirt.
No, I said a big, red cotton shirt.	Sorry, I haven't got one.

To make the task slightly easier, the relevant stresses can be indicated on the students' role cards. A similar exercise is seen below:

Student A	Student B
It's a pity you weren't at the party.	I <u>WAS</u> at the party.
Did you say you were at the barbecue?	I was at the <u>PAR</u>ty.
Did you say Enrico was at the party?	<u>I</u> was at the party.

This kind of exercise can also be used to highlight strong and weak forms of function words, as we can see with *was*, in the example above.

Lesson 4: Listening and transcribing: Stress placement in a short monologue (All levels)

Lesson type: Practice
Materials: A tape recorded monologue (the recording is optional). Transcript of the monologue.

Listening exercises provide a useful opportunity for sentence stress recognition practice. The teacher plays or reads out the monologue. It is useful for students to hear the whole passage first, to get a feel for the content. The students are then given a transcript of the monologue, and mark stresses on their transcript when it is played or read again. The advantage of using a tape is that this ensures consistency when the monologue is played for a second time. The teacher makes sure that the second reading or playing includes suitable pauses to give students time to mark the stresses. Students then compare their transcripts and discuss them, before the teacher lets them hear the whole passage again. The class then goes through the transcript, with the teacher inviting students to mark the stresses on a 'master' version on the board or overhead projector, discussing where they go and why, and comparing sentences discussed with the version on the tape (if used). A final hearing of the passage gives a chance for students to confirm the results of their discussions.

An interesting variation of the activity is for students to record themselves talking; this can be either natural, unrehearsed and unscripted speech, or a more prepared piece, depending what you and your students have decided to focus on. Students can then mark stresses for each other on transcripts of the tape. Students can do this in pairs or groups (depending on the resources you have available), or the whole class can work on one transcript. It is important, however, not to single one student out as an example of a speaker using inappropriate or inaccurate stress; the activity is best done in the spirit of comparing and contrasting, particularly if the unusual stresses used, while different from those of a native speaker, do not seriously affect intelligibility. A student's tape can also be contrasted with a version recorded by the teacher. Recording does not necessarily need lots of 'out of class' preparation time; it can very usefully be incorporated into a lesson, either as a 'one-off', or as a regular activity.

This idea can of course be used for other aspects of pronunciation (such as spotting weak forms, and incidences of /ə/). Taping can also be particularly useful for working on tonic syllables and aspects of intonation. A transcript could have gaps where all the tonic syllables should be, for students to complete while they listen to the text. Or students (using an agreed and easy to use method of transcription) can mark where the tonic syllables occur on a complete transcript.

This type of activity can be graded according to the students' level of proficiency, and it is possible to successfully use variations of it with students ranging from elementary to advanced levels.

Lesson 5: Categorisation: Word stress (Elementary to Intermediate)

Lesson type: Practice
Materials: Task sheet

This type of activity requires students to categorise words according to their stress pattern. The words in this example exercise are all names of jobs and professions, and the activity might be used in a lesson working on language connected with this area. Teachers should, of course, try to tailor the activity to suit the needs of their students and the language or subject focus of particular lessons.

The teacher starts by eliciting one or two of the words which appear on the task sheet before handing it out. She also asks students to work with a neighbour to decide which syllables in the two words are stressed, and then elicits the answers. The aim here is just to make sure that students understand the subsequent task. Students, singly or in pairs, are then given a task sheet like the following:

Put these words into the correct columns, according to the stress pattern.				
Oo	Ooo	oOo	Oooo	ooOo
Plumber Electrician Doctor Journalist Musician Shop assistant Teacher Soldier Novelist Architect Carpenter Actor Policeman Fireman Lecturer Florist Businessman Artist Farmer Scientist Researcher Gardener Designer				

Activities like this can also be used for focusing on particular sounds. For example, to work on /ə/ with a class, the above activity might be followed up by asking students to look at the words again, to then try saying them (or listening to them on a tape), and underlining or otherwise marking all the incidences of the sound /ə/.

Categorisation can also help to highlight language tendencies, which students can apply to new words they come across. For example, students can be asked to categorise words which can have two grammatical forms (e.g. noun and verb), which we looked at on page 69. The teacher might simply read out these words, or they can be recorded on a tape. If you wish to use grammatical clues to help students categorise, then the words can be used in sentences, or better still in a continuous passage, as long as it doesn't sound too contrived. An example activity might look like this:

Listen to the tape. You will hear each of these words once. Put it into the correct column, according to the stress pattern you hear.	
import rebel increase export decrease insult content	
Oo	oO

One can, of course, vary categorisation activities in order to provide a different classroom dynamic; students might be given a word on a card, and asked to organise themselves into groups according to the stress patterns of the words they have, or to attach their cards to the board in columns.

Further ideas for activities

Reading aloud

This certainly has its place when it comes to working on any aspect of pronunciation, and is particularly useful for working on stress (and intonation). It can be used in combination with taping, as explained above, and can obviously be used to deal with pronunciation alongside the study of particular lexis and areas of grammar.

Whatever is being read out, students should be encouraged to pay attention to the ways in which stress (and intonation) affect the message overall, and how variations in stress can change, or indeed confuse, the meaning of utterances.

There are two main difficulties with reading aloud, however. Firstly, reading aloud can be stilted and unnatural, particularly if a learner is having problems recognising words within the text. This will have obvious effects upon stresses within the utterances. The second difficulty is slightly more theoretical, but relevant nonetheless: there are important differences between spoken and written language, and this may be a problem in that the teacher might be asking students to speak sentences which were not designed to be read out. Written sentences are often longer than spoken ones and more grammatically complex, giving students unnecessary problems with identifying stress and tonic syllable placement. Conversely, the teacher might mistakenly try to gloss over the differences, leaving students with a false impression of the spoken language.

Clearly the teacher needs to choose the text very carefully, and, if the above factors are allowed for, reading aloud can still be a very useful classroom activity. A text needs to be long enough to make the 'public' reading of it worthwhile, but not so long or complex that the task becomes daunting. Teachers also need to provide enough opportunity for rehearsal, focusing on the relevant pronunciation features. It is important to keep in mind that the task should be achievable, and that the aim is to give students a chance to perform the reading successfully and meaningfully; they should be able to benefit from and enjoy the reading.

If possible, texts should be chosen which can be divided up so that all the students can have a go at reading. One text divided up among (for example) sixteen students might not give each participant a big enough section to read out. Instead, a small selection of similar texts might be used, so that groups of students can rehearse them before the reading. It is clearly useful if students can read texts that they have written themselves and humour is always helpful, though it is important to be aware of the risk of using culturally bound or obscure jokes which students simply won't 'get'.

Examples of the types of text which might be used include:

- short biographies of well-known people
- texts about students' own countries or home towns
- accounts of places that students have visited
- short 'sketches' or dramatic pieces (see below for more ideas on using these)
- poetry

The latter can be particularly useful for dealing with stressed syllables and weak forms; most poetry is written to be read, and writers often have in mind how the piece will sound when read out loud. Well-known poems can be used (bear in mind cultural differences here – things that teachers are familiar with may not be so well-known to their students), and students can of course write their own.

Limericks are often used in class for working on rhyming words, and their comparatively strict structure also lends itself well to the study of stress placement. Inappropriate stress placement will generally be very obvious. Many limericks are designed to be bawdy, or to have double meanings, and teachers clearly need to choose carefully, with a view to what is suitable for their classes. With preparation, and examples to demonstrate how limericks work, students can successfully produce their own. The following was written by a group of Upper Intermediate students:

> There was a young man from Spain
> Who travelled abroad on a plane
> He studied some grammar
> And how to say 'hammer'
> And then he went home on a train.

My own personal favourites are ones which play with language, or which deliberately 'break the rules' of limerick rhymes and patterns, but can be used to good effect nonetheless:

> There was a young teacher called Wood
> Whose students just wouldn't use 'could'
> But a teacher called Woodward
> Discovered they could could
> And did so whenever they should.

> A mathematician called Hyde
> Proclaiming his knowledge with pride
> Said 'The answer, my friend,

As you'll find in the end
Is that the square on the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is equal to
the sum of the squares on the other two sides.'

Haiku also provide opportunities for working on stress placement, with their rigid structure of three lines, the first and last having five syllables, and the middle one seven. In response to this haiku, prepared for a class to introduce the idea:

Words briskly flowing
Down the rivers of the mind
Gathering in pools.

an Intermediate group produced the following:

Students are talking
At the entrance of the school
Gathering in groups.

The examples produced are unlikely to win any literary prizes (though creative tasks can often reveal a wealth of hidden talent). But they usefully focus students' attention on the structure of a genre (a type of text), and how stress placement can affect the overall success of a piece. Useful work on weak forms can also be done, focusing on how successfully they fit around the stressed syllables, and how they contribute to the overall 'feel' of the text.

Drama, and acting out rehearsed scenes
Drama provides a perfect opportunity for working on language generally, and pronunciation in particular. Careful study of the script (if one is used) is necessary before performance of it, and in particular, the ways in which stress placement contributes to the meaning of the lines. Clearly it makes sense to combine this with the study of particular grammatical structures and lexical areas. Short scenes can be devised to work on recent areas of study. I have used 'waiter' jokes to good effect in this way, with Elementary level students taking on the roles of waiter, customers and restaurant chefs. An example script was as follows:

Customer: Waiter, what's this fly doing in my soup?
Waiter: It's doing the breaststroke, madam.

This was used to provide a reminder of a particular use of the present continuous, as well as the pronunciation of *doing*, and the placing of tonic syllables. The next example was used to practise the pronunciation of *Would you like ...?* (Both of these scenes were used in the same lesson, along with a few others at the end of a short course, as a way of revising some of the language points covered.)

Customer: Waiter, I'd like to see the manager.
Waiter: Certainly, sir. Would you like to borrow my glasses?

Scenes from well-known plays or films, scenes written by your students, scenes provided by yourself: all of these can be used to great effect, with

enough time for practice and confidence-building before public 'performance'. I know one enterprising teacher who successfully coached a group of willing students through a pantomime performance of *Cinderella* as a pre-Christmas entertainment for the other students in the school.

Improvisation can be equally rewarding as a classroom activity, though obviously the lack of rehearsal is likely to show in the quality of the language during performance. If you have access to facilities for videotaping, or at least recording sound, reviewing improvisations can be an entertaining and revealing way of providing correction and discovering areas of language to work on in class.

Some teachers resist using drama in the classroom, and the best advice would be to use it if you feel confident in doing so. If the answer is affirmative, also bear in mind that many students balk at the idea of performing publicly (whether for personal or for cultural reasons) and the teacher should consider these factors carefully. You should also not expect your students to do anything in class that you yourself would not be prepared to do, so be ready to set an example and participate enthusiastically.

Putting sentence stress into perspective

Sentence stress is an integral feature of language which provides listeners with vital clues as to the salient points of the speaker's message. Other features are the grammar of the utterance, the lexical content, the particular phonemes which make up the utterance, and the intonation contour used to deliver the message. Although identifying stressed syllables is not something that is uppermost in our minds when speaking or listening, it is something which we are extremely sensitive to at an unconscious level. We are aware of how variations in stress affect the message being put across, but we seldom need to declare what we mean, or elucidate and elaborate on how our stresses have contributed to communication.

When it comes to deciding how to deal with particular utterances or particular types of utterance in the classroom, then planning is essential. If you have fully planned your lesson, then you will have accounted for all the different elements. If you have 'delivered' your lesson fully, then students will have been, in some way, exposed to all of the elements of the particular language item you are dealing with. Or, if you are concentrating on the phenomenon of stress itself, then you should ensure that you have chosen appropriate examples of the aspect of stress which you are hoping to practise with your students, and that your examples are suitably contextualised.

Whether you are dealing with stress as an aspect of particular language structures, or dealing with stress for its own sake, you should aim to ensure that your students have the opportunity to both distinguish it through receptive exercises, and to practise it productively.

Conclusions

In this chapter we have:
- considered the nature of stress and unstress, and thought about different levels of stress.
- considered both word stress and sentence stress, and thought about rules or descriptions of these aspects of language.

- considered the role that stress plays in highlighting significant information within sentences and utterances.
- discussed stress timing and syllable timing. It was concluded that English is neither exclusively stress-timed nor syllable-timed, but has a tendency towards the former.
- introduced tonic syllables and onset syllables.
- thought about how to integrate stress into teaching, and how to raise students' awareness of the role it plays.
- looked at some activities for focusing on both word and sentence stress.

Looking ahead
- In Chapters 6 and 7 we will look more closely at intonation and other features of connected speech, and see how we can integrate stress with these aspects.
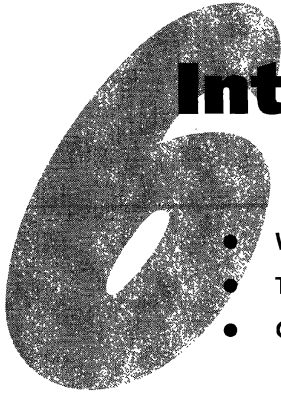
Intonation

- **What is intonation, and why teach it?**
- **Tones, tonic syllables and tone units**
- **Grammar and intonation**
    - **Lesson 1: Question tags**
    - **Lesson 2: Asking permission**
    - **Lesson 3: Instructions and questions**
- **Attitude and intonation**
    - **Lesson 4: Expressing views**
    - **Lesson 5: Expressing attitudes**
- **Discourse and intonation**
    - **Lesson 6: Making deductions**
    - **Lesson 7: Indirect questions**
    - **Lesson 8: Tone units**
- **How teachable is intonation?**

What is intonation, and why teach it?

The term intonation refers to the way the voice goes up and down in pitch when we are speaking. It is a fundamental part of the way we express our own thoughts and it enables us to understand those of others. It is an aspect of language that we are very sensitive to, but mostly at an unconscious level. We perceive intonation, understand it and use it without having to examine the intricacies of everything we say or hear.

In dealing with intonation in the language classroom, we need to examine the nature of these unconscious processes, bring them to the surface and show how we believe they work. To be of use to students, work on intonation in the classroom needs to focus on practice rather than theory. We need to show learners how the choices they make with regard to intonation serve to determine the meaning of utterances. Traditionally, theorists have attempted to show links between grammatical constructions and certain patterns of intonation. Although these theories are not 100 per cent watertight, they give us some useful and teachable rules of thumb for helping students to use intonation successfully.

As well as helping to determine meaning, intonation gives us clues about the attitude of the speaker, or how he feels about what he is saying. When listening to people speaking, we get clear messages about their attitude from the ways things are said. We can get a good idea, for example, as to whether someone is interested, bored, being kind, being honest or lying, and so on.

Such ideas can be used in the classroom to help underline the function of particular phrases and utterances.

Although certain aspects of intonation may be common to many languages, some of the ways in which intonation is used may be specific to particular ones. Scandinavian languages, for example, tend to pronounce unstressed syllables on a higher pitch than stressed ones, whereas we usually do the reverse in English. Italian tends to change the order of words in a sentence to stress a particular word where we would do this through intonation. Spanish intonation tends to have a noticeably narrower range than English. Speakers of these languages will almost inevitably carry their habits of intonation over into spoken English. There are languages in which intonation has quite a specific meaning function, such as the various Chinese languages. These are called **tone languages** and they use the voice in quite a different way. The pitch and movement of the voice on a syllable determines the meaning. An often quoted example from Cantonese is *ma*, which can mean *mother*, *hemp* or *scold*, depending on whether the voice goes up or down or stays level.

Students' difficulties with intonation are not helped by the fact that concentration on grammar and vocabulary often takes their attention away from this feature. Struggling to find the right words will mean that the smooth movement of intonation will be interrupted.

In short, intonation needs to be a feature of classroom language analysis and practice. This will help students towards greater expressiveness and articulacy in English, and also help them to a better understanding of some of the subtleties of native-speaker speech.

The main difficulty for teachers and students with regard to intonation is that its links with specific grammatical constructions or attitudes can only be loosely defined. The reason for analysing these links is that the same words and structures can be given different meanings, or convey a different attitude by altering the intonation. Grammatical and attitudinal analyses of intonation can offer no hard and fast rules, but they can help steer students towards appropriate choices of intonation.

More recent theories, particularly those developed by David Brazil, analyse how intonation relates to the surrounding discourse, rather than specifically to grammar or attitude. The term **discourse** defines any meaningful stretch of language. Analysing intonation within discourse means that the wider context of a conversation, or monologue, is taken into account, and enables us to see how intonation conveys ideas and information. Intonation helps us to indicate what is shared knowledge between the speaker and the listener and what is new information. In this approach, intonation patterns are no longer isolated and tied to particular grammar constructions or attitudes, but are related to the context in which they occur. The advantage of this approach is that it is possible to give clear rules with regard to the appropriate choice of intonation patterns in a given context.

In this chapter, we will look at approaches based on grammar, attitude and discourse, and consider examples of lessons which might be appropriate for each. Before we do that, however, we need to look in a little more depth at the workings of intonation.
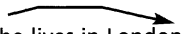
Tones, tonic syllables and tone units

Utterances are made up of syllables and the syllables where the main pitch movement in the utterance occurs are called **tonic syllables**. The syllables that establish a pitch that stays constant up to the tonic syllable are called **onset syllables**. Thus, in the following example *lives* is the onset syllable, which is conventionally shown in capitals. *Lon* is the tonic syllable, which is conventionally shown in capitals and underlined.

> she LIVES in LONdon

As we have done in this book up to now, we can also represent the intonation patterns in this utterance with an arrow:

> She lives in London.
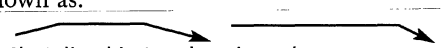
Notice that in this particular example the voice starts at a certain pitch, then goes up very slightly on the onset syllable and then stays level until the tonic syllable where the pitch falls noticeably. The pitch at which a speaker begins an utterance will depend on their own pronunciation habits, but will generally be higher than their normal habit if they are nervous or excited and lower if they are bored or very relaxed. The pitch that is held from the onset syllable to the tonic syllable is known as the **key**.

In the above example there is only one tonic syllable and we can say that the utterance is therefore composed of one **tone unit**. Tone units are conventionally noted by being enclosed within two pairs of slanted lines. So an utterance consisting of one tone unit is shown like this:

> //she LIVES in LONdon//

An utterance with two tonic syllables and therefore two tone units can be shown as:

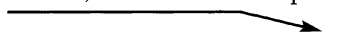> She's lived in London since she was twenty.

or, as:

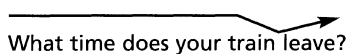> //she's LIVED in LONdon// SINCE she was TWENty//

Note that the tonic syllable is the last stressed syllable in a tone unit.

As we indicated earlier in this chapter, a key feature of intonation is that we, as speakers, can use it to indicate to our listeners what we think is new information in a conversation and what is old, or already shared, information. Consider the following sentences where the intonation pattern is marked, as we have done up to now, with an arrow:

> What time does your train leave?

> What time does your train leave?

The first example shows a question asking for new information. The second version shows a question asking for confirmation of something the speaker thinks he has already been told. The words are the same, yet the intonation patterns used show a contrast between the two versions. As we can see the main movement of pitch is on the tonic syllable (in these examples, the

syllable *train*). The main movements of pitch, within a tone unit, are called **tones**. In the first of the two questions above, the tone is described as a **fall**, and in the second as a **fall-rise**. These are shown in a commonly used notation system as ↘ and ↗. In this system the arrows are placed at the beginning of the tone unit, but refer to the movement of pitch on or around the tonic syllable (the underlined syllable). It has to be said, however, that the movements of pitch (the tones) are not always tied precisely to the tonic syllable, they can start before and can finish after the tonic syllable.

Employing this system of notation the various utterances used in this section can be expressed as follows:

(60)   // ↘ she LIVES in LONdon//
         // ↘ she's LIVED in LONdon// ↘ SINCE she was TWENty//
         // ↘ WHAT time does your TRAIN leave//
         // ↗ WHAT time does your TRAIN leave//

In the classroom, for example when writing on the board explaining an intonation pattern of an utterance to students, teachers might find it more straightforward to use continuous arrows, such as those on page 88, drawn above conventionally written sentences. This approach enables teachers and students to concentrate their attention on the main pitch movements (the tones) within an utterance. The more complex notation system above can be a useful tool for teachers analysing intonation patterns particularly when they are planning lessons.

Grammar and intonation

Many attempts have been made to show connections between intonation patterns and particular types of grammatical structure, and the following list shows some of these. The reader will find it easy to say these examples in other ways; it should be remembered that these are generalisations rather than rules. They can, however, help in giving students guidance in making appropriate choices with regard to intonation:

(61) • **Information questions** with *Who, what , where*, etc: Falling intonation (if being asked for the first time), e.g. *What's your name? What's the time? Where do you live?*

(62) • **Questions** expecting a '*yes/no*' answer: Rising (*Is it the blue one? Have you got a pen?*)

(63) • **Statements**: Falling (*He lives in the house on the corner. It's over there.*)

(64) • **Imperatives**: Falling (*Sit down. Put it on the table.*)

(65) • **Question tags** expecting confirmation: Falling (*You're French, aren't you? He's very tall, isn't he?*)

(66) • **Question tags** showing less certainty: Rising (*You're French, aren't you? Your train leaves at six, doesn't it?*)

(67) • **Lists** of items: Rising, rising and finally falling (*You need a pen, a pencil and some paper. The stall sells ribbon, beads, elastic and buttons.*)

As we have already seen with the example in the previous section, the same thing can be said in different ways. The question *What time does your train leave?* was used with both a fall, and a fall-rise, for different purposes. There is also more flexibility when it comes to '*yes/no*' questions. We can and do sometimes use a falling intonation, for example when eliminating possibilities:

(68)   Is it the blue one? ... No? Is it the red one, then? ... OK, is it the green one?

It is clear that the list above doesn't adequately cover the range of possible intonation choices available to speakers. However, it is also true that the teacher who applies these rules to their treatment of intonation in the classroom is unlikely to lead students astray; that is to say that in using these patterns, students will not go drastically wrong. The rules may not cover the full range of possibilities, but neither do they create problems. To make an analogy, a driving instructor cannot hope to teach all driving manoeuvres that exist to a student, yet those they do teach will enable the student to cope on the road and give them the confidence to discover more as they gain experience. Likewise, in teaching grammar we do not teach students everything there is to know about the present perfect the first time it is introduced. We give some basic rules with the aim of showing students how it can be used in certain situations. If they apply these rules students will not go wrong, but neither will they have covered the full range of possibilities.

The following sample lessons show some different ways in which the links between intonation and grammar can be practically used in the classroom. In line with the classification of lesson types described on page 14, the examples show intonation issues being Integrated with the teaching of a language point, being dealt with Remedially and being Practised in their own right. They also cover a range of different levels.

Lesson 1: Question tags (Elementary)

Lesson type: Integrated
Materials: Taped listening exercise, questionnaire, role cards

The teacher introduces the theme of nationalities, and checks that students can relate the names of countries to their adjectives (*England – English, China – Chinese*, etc). These can be drilled briefly to give students confidence in saying them. In a multilingual class, the students' own nationalities can be used; in a monolingual class, the teacher can 'assign' nationalities to students for the purposes of the lesson. The teacher elicits the idea of question tags by asking a Japanese student *You're Japanese, aren't you?*, with a falling intonation on the question tag. The same question can then be asked to students of other nationalities to reinforce the intonation pattern. Students, prompted by the teacher, can then ask and answer the question appropriately to each other across the class, and then ask their neighbours. The teacher can correct as necessary.

At this point the teacher can clarify the grammar of question tags by writing on the board:

You're Japanese, aren't you?

and pointing out that a positive statement is usually accompanied by a negative tag. A negative statement would normally be accompanied by a positive tag. The verb *to be* in the statement is repeated in the tag.

Next, in order to focus on intonation, the teacher can ask the question again, and ask the students whether his voice goes up or down on the tag. The downward movement can be practised with a further quick choral drill, and drawn on the board over the original example sentence.

The teacher then checks that the students have grasped the concept by asking them whether he is sure what the answer will be when he asks the question. It should be apparent that he is, from the practice that the students have done so far.

The teacher then asks the question with a rising intonation, saying it a couple of times in order to let the students hear the difference. He then asks the students if they can hear any difference, eliciting from them the fact that his intonation rises. The sentence can be drilled chorally and individually with the new pattern. The teacher then asks the question 'Am I sure?', eliciting from the students the idea that this rising pattern indicates less certainty on the part of the speaker. This can then be noted on the board next to or underneath the previous example.

By way of a further check, a listening exercise might then be used in order to give the students practice in discriminating between the two patterns. After setting the context (in this case a conversation in a student coffee bar) the following dialogue might be played:

(69)

A: Hello, my name's Koyomi.
B: Hi there, I'm Sara.
A: Hello Sara, nice to meet you!
B: Excuse me, Koyomi, you're Japanese, ↘aren't you.
A: Yes, that's right. I'm from Saitama.
B: I thought so. Your name sounds Japanese.
A: And Sara, you're Italian, ↗aren't you?
B: Yes, that's right, I'm from Torino, in the north-west.
A: I see. I thought you were either Italian or Spanish.
    Would you like a coffee ... (fade)

While listening to the tape, the students answer the following questionnaire:

> 1 Koyomi is from Japan: true/false
> 2 Sara is from Spain: true/false
> 3 Sara is sure that Koyomi is from Japan: true/false
> 4 Koyomi is sure that Sara is from Italy: true/false

Students can compare their answers when they have finished, and the tape can be played again if necessary, before the teacher gets feedback from the whole class. In this example, the correct answers are: 1 true, 2 false, 3 true, 4 false.

After the listening exercise, it is important that the students get some practice in using the new patterns. If the class do not know each other very

well, they can find out each other's nationalities using the rising or falling question tags as necessary. They can use what they have learnt to engage in genuine communication. If the class <u>do</u> know each other they could do the following activity.

In this activity, students are assigned various nationalities. Each student in the class will need a role card. Here are two example cards:

You are Spanish.
You are sure that:
Two students are Japanese, one student is Brazilian and one is English.
You think that:
One student is Polish, two students are French and one is Chinese.

You are Chinese.
You are sure that:
Two students are French, one student is Polish and one is English.
You think that:
One student is Japanese, two students are Brazilian and one is Spanish.

While doing the activity, the students make a note of the nationalities they discover through doing the activity. Their task is to find all the nationalities present in the classroom. The activity leads them into using rising and falling question tags according to how sure they are. In either case, they may have their beliefs confirmed or contradicted.

The same lesson might also be done with the focus on another area, such as jobs, names or positions within a company. Subsequent lessons could investigate further the grammar of question tags, in that auxiliary and modal verbs used in the original statement will be repeated in the tag, and other verbs will be replaced by the appropriate form of *do* in the tag.

Lesson 2: Asking permission (Intermediate)

Lesson type: Remedial

In this lesson the teacher is dealing with some functional language for asking permission, such as:

Do you mind if I	*open the window?*
Is it alright if I	*turn the heating on?*
Could I possibly	*borrow your newspaper?*

In the lesson so far the language has been contextualised, elicited, drilled and concept-checked. The class is engaged in a role-play situation in which there is a need for the language to be used (for example, a student staying in homestay accommodation talking to the host family, or another context similarly relevant to their needs outside the classroom). While monitoring the activity, the teacher becomes aware that some of the students are using an intonation pattern that does not sound very natural. Some, for example, are treating the verb in each sentence as the tonic syllable, for example:

(70)   // ↘do you MIND if i <u>TURN</u> the heating on//

Other possible variations which might sound inappropriate are:

// ↘do you <u>MIND</u>// ↘if i turn the heating <u>ON</u>//
// ↘could i <u>POSS</u>ibly// ↘<u>BORR</u>ow// ↘your news<u>PA</u>per//

The teacher decides that problems the students have with their intonation need some attention in order to help them complete their task effectively. Dealing with intonation at this point reinforces its role as a part of successful communication.

To do this, once the activity is completed, the teacher elicits the sentences again, one by one, and drills them chorally and individually. She then writes the sentences on the board and asks the students to tell her, for each sentence, where the voice goes down and up. If the students are not sure, the teacher can say the sentences aloud herself, to make things clearer. Once the answer has been elicited, the teacher draws arrows on the board to show the appropriate patterns:

Do you mind if I turn the heating on?

Is it alright if I turn the heating on?

Could I possibly borrow your newspaper?

Students can then copy the sentences with the appropriate intonation pattern into their notebooks for reference when studying. The previous activity might then be tried again, with the intonation patterns fresh in the students' minds, or the teacher can move on to any subsequent activities she had planned.

Lesson 3: Instructions and questions (All levels)

Lesson type: Practice
Materials: Tape of two native speakers, typed transcript, worksheets

This activity involves listening closely to native-speaker communication in order to concentrate on intonation patterns, and then imitating them. The patterns are then related to grammatical areas. The lesson involves some preparation, but the resources may be used again with different classes.

The teacher needs to have a tape of two native speakers talking in an unrehearsed and unscripted way. The easiest way is to record yourself and a friend having a chat. (It is always important to get the permission of anyone whose voice you wish to record before using it in the classroom.) The recording needs to be very clear, and ideally the speakers should not talk over each other too much. If possible, the tape should include a variety of statements, questions, question tags, etc. A useful situation to record would be that in which one person is instructing another, who might be engaged in something like cooking, where statements, questions and instructions are likely to be used. The tape should be about 2–4 minutes long. This should

provide enough language for useful study. The teacher will also need to type out the transcript of the tape and worksheets as necessary. The following activities are just suggestions; bear in mind that the activities will ultimately depend on the content of the tape, and the particular needs of the classes you use it with. The same tape might also be used with different level classes, using different tasks.

In class, the teacher can pre-teach any necessary vocabulary for the tape, and also do some work in order to set the context. This is important, as the context could be seen to have an influence on the language and intonation patterns used. The best way to establish the context is to let students listen to the tape for the first time while doing a written task with questions like *Where are they?* and *What are they doing?*, which will help them get a general idea of what the tape is about. Other possibilities depend obviously on the content of the tape, but questions like *Do they agree?* or *Which person is better at cooking?*, for example, can link in nicely with the intonation study that follows. This type of activity can help prevent misunderstanding and disagreement, and help focus the students directly on the important information.

If the teacher feels that these open-ended questions might not work with a particular class, he can focus on the same ideas by setting a multiple-choice task, or an exercise requiring a 'true/false' type answer, such as the following:

1 Bill and Jane are	in the kitchen
	at an office
	in the garden
2 They are	cooking a meal
	trying to get a machine to work
3 Who is better at it?	Bill
	Jane
4 Bill makes some mistakes	true/false

After letting students compare their answers and getting feedback from the whole class, the tape can be played again to ensure all the students understand the key points of the listening passage. This time, the students will have a transcript of the conversation, but with the words which contain the tonic syllables blanked out. Depending on the class, the teacher will either pre-teach the relevant words, or assume that the class will not have too much difficulty with them. While listening, students fill these words in the blanks. The teacher can pause the tape from time to time in order to give the students time to write the words down.

After checking the answers, the teacher tells the students to mark intonation patterns on the tonic syllables. The instruction can be general (i.e. to mark all rises and falls), or selective (e.g. just falls, or just fall-rises), depending on the students' knowledge of intonation, and the aspects that the teacher wishes to focus on. Even if the students have spent a lot of time working on intonation, it is always worthwhile demonstrating the activity

by doing the first one or two examples with the whole class, to ensure that all of the students know exactly what their task is.

At this point, students can have their first attempt at imitating the voices on the tape. Having divided the text into manageable units the teacher plays the tape, section by section, with students repeating after each section. Students can imitate one or both speakers (depending on what the teacher wants to focus on, the quality of the tape, and how much or how little the people speak over each other). Students can repeat chorally, and the teacher can randomly nominate individuals for each line, eliciting any corrections as necessary. The advantage of imitation at this stage is that students' minds are focused only on the intonation patterns.

Once the intonation patterns have been practised, the teacher can ask students to mark on the transcript which of the utterances are statements, which are questions, which are question tags and so on, according to the focus of the lesson. These can then be compared with the intonation patterns already highlighted and practised. Students (depending on their abilities) might simply be asked to describe the intonation patterns, if the teacher feels this is an achievable task. If not, a worksheet might be given in order to narrow down the range of possible answers. Such a worksheet might look something like this:

Match these intonation patterns to the sentence types		
Sentence type	Examples	Intonation pattern
Question Statements Lists	A: How much do I put <u>IN</u>? B: You put it in the <u>BOWL</u>. C: You need <u>FLOUR</u>, <u>MILK</u> and <u>BUtter</u>.	1: ↗ ↗ ↘ 2: ↘↗ 3: ↘
Question tags	D: It shouldn't look like <u>THAT</u>, should it?	4: ↗↘

(The correct answers to this exercise are: A 2/4, B 3, C 1, D 2/4.)

The class can then go back to the tape and do more practice based around this, or they could apply their new knowledge to a different situation, such as being asked to demonstrate or discuss particular skills with a partner. It is very useful if the students can do real demonstrations at this point. Things like making paper aeroplanes, or doing origami, or drawing cartoons can easily be set up in the classroom, and offer a good opportunity to practise giving instructions and asking questions. If these demonstrations can be taped, the teacher then has further material to use for the analysis of intonation (and perhaps for comparison with the original tape).

Attitude and intonation

Another way of looking at intonation is to consider how it varies according to the speaker's attitude towards a situation. For example, the simple sentence *That would be nice* (in response to an invitation, let's say) might show enormous enthusiasm, mild pleasure, surprise, relief, sarcasm and boredom, amongst other possibilities. In real face-to-face communication

many things contribute to how the message is delivered and understood including, for example, our observation of the speaker's body language, and our knowledge of his personality and likes and dislikes. Intonation gives important indications, but it is also important to appreciate that our choice of grammar and vocabulary can also be a very obvious indicator of our attitude towards a situation!

The main difficulty in trying to make a link between intonation and attitude in the classroom is that the same intonation pattern can be used to express wildly differing attitudes. When we are speaking in a matter-of-fact way we usually use a succession of falling tones (for example, // ↘ *its over* *THERE* // ↘ *on the TAble* // ↘ *next to the NEWSpaper* //). However we could describe the intonation of someone who is expressing a sense of relief in the same way. There are other differences here, such as the starting and finishing pitch of the speaker's voice and the length of the vowel sounds, but the basic intonation pattern is the same.

However, teachers can do some useful work with relating intonation to attitude in the classroom in the same way as we did with grammar and intonation. In dealing with the links between intonation and attitude, the classroom setting allows us the opportunity to work on the confident use of intonation. We can tie intonation work in with teaching and practising particular set phrases, and also work on the range of intonation (how high or low the voice goes) which students feel comfortable using when speaking English; classroom work on intonation sometimes requires students to use patterns which feel alien to them, and they can feel embarrassed about repeating patterns, or be reluctant to use the range the teacher models for them. Also, concentration on grammar and lexis can mean that the range students use is narrower than it might otherwise be.

The following sample lessons show some different ways in which the links between intonation and attitude can be practically used in the classroom.

The first of these deals with the intonation we use with **lexical phrases**. Lexical phrases are phrases which we use in ordinary, everyday communication, but which have the characteristic that they lose their meaning if broken down and analysed. They may be seen to occupy the middle ground between vocabulary and grammar. Some examples are as follows:

> How do you do?
> How are you?
> See you later.
> See you soon.
> At last!
> Look on the bright side.
> Don't get me wrong...
> As for me...

Such expressions are a major feature of our language. The degree to which they are idiomatic varies; that is to say, some may be seen as wholly idiomatic, like *It's all water under the bridge*, whereas others can be more literally analysed for meaning, like *See you later*. Other phrases may be

considered as 'sentence builders', in that they are not complete in themselves; an example of this is *As for me... .*

An interesting feature of lexical phrases from the point of view of intonation is that many such expressions are delivered as tone units, having one main tone movement. For example, on being introduced to someone for the first time, in a relatively formal setting, the following would be an appropriate utterance:

(73)   // ＼HOW do you <u>DO</u>//

This is a complete expression, and the falling intonation is itself a part of the message.

The expression *Don't get me wrong...*, which might be used when giving a personal opinion, can often have the following pattern:

(74)   // ＼／DONT get me <u>WRONG</u>//

The expression will clearly be followed by other information, but is characteristically delivered with a predictable pattern, as shown.

Other expressions may not constitute a complete tone unit (remember that this is an utterance or part of an utterance with one main tone movement) but may be used to introduce one. For example, *I'm not sure whether to...* is often used to introduce a couple of possible choices for a particular action. The phrase is not a tone unit in itself, but can have a relatively level intonation, before the main choices, carrying the tone movements, are introduced:

(75)   // ＼／im NOT sure whether to go to <u>SPAIN</u>// ＼or <u>POR</u>tugal//

A similar introductory expression is *What do you make of...?* which can be used to elicit a viewpoint from the listener. It is often used with a relatively level intonation pattern, prior to the main information in the utterance:

(76)   // ＼WHAT do you make of that new <u>TEA</u>cher//

In the following activity, the fixed expressions used are practised with appropriate intonation patterns, as ways of presenting one's views in a discussion.

Lesson 4: Expressing views (Intermediate+)

Lesson type: Practice
Materials: Video/audio tape of television/radio discussion (optional), two worksheets

The teacher chooses, or asks her students to choose, a topic for discussion, perhaps an issue such as the importance of recycling waste, something in the news, or something relevant to the students' current situation, like the food available in a school's coffee bar or the provision of self-study materials. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher canvasses the range of opinions in the classroom, not worrying too much at this stage about the language students use to express themselves. The views can be summarised on the board, using columns to represent opposing views.

The teacher then asks the students to brainstorm different ways of arguing a point, using the opportunity to elicit or give appropriate phrases. Alternatively, a video or audio recording of a discussion from a television or radio current-affairs programme might be used, if available. The following are some suggestions of phrases you might like to use. Onset syllables, tonic syllables and intonation are indicated:

// ∨ DONT get me <u>WRONG</u>//
// ↘ i COULDnt agree <u>MORE</u>//
// ∨ AS for <u>ME</u>//
//WHAT do you make of...
// ↘ i DONT think you can <u>SAY</u> that//
// ↘ THATS not the <u>POINT</u>//

As these are elicited the teacher takes the opportunity to drill them chorally and individually; this is important, as the way the expressions sound will give important clues as to the attitude of the speaker to the discussion. Then students are given the task of listening out for stressed syllables and for intonation patterns. The expressions can be given on a worksheet, and the teacher can say the expressions out loud. The teacher and students should agree on a method of marking intonation. It is important to use the same methods regularly, so that students become familiar with them. The students are then asked to match the utterances with the appropriate attitude, as shown in the following worksheet. If the teacher has been working from a video or audio tape, this can be used again at this point to help the students. If not, the teacher can model them again.

Underline the stressed syllables and mark the intonation patterns:	Match the phrases on the left with these ideas:
As for me...	I'm going to say something you might not like.
I couldn't agree more.	I'm showing strong disagreement.
Don't get me wrong, but...	I'm about to give my point of view.
What do you make of...	I disagree.
I don't think you can say that.	I'm showing strong agreement.
That's not the point.	I'm looking for your opinion.

The students have now had the phrases introduced to them, have practised saying them with appropriate intonation patterns, and have done an exercise to show how the words and intonation combine in terms of the speaker's attitude to the subject matter and to the discussion in general. They are now ready to have a go at using them productively themselves. The teacher can now return the students' attention to the subject introduced at the start of the lesson, and set up a discussion based around the topic. The students now have the opportunity to try using the phrases and accompanying intonation patterns in an appropriate setting. If possible the students' debate should be recorded for later analysis, as this provides a valuable opportunity for further study.

Lesson 5: Expressing attitudes (Elementary+)

Type: Practice and Remedial
Materials: Cards with imaginary presents written on, prompt cards with adjectives written on, role cards

Close attention to grammar and vocabulary when practising language can mean that intonation suffers. Students' speech may well sound less natural, and the flow may be interrupted, as students search for the right word or construction. This activity gets students working with easy sentences, relieving them of the need to concentrate on grammar or vocabulary and enabling them to concentrate on intonation. A further purpose of this activity is to help students explore the ways in which they use their voice range (how high or low their voice goes) when speaking English, and to introduce various ideas which may subsequently be used remedially, as reminders. Activities like this can help give students greater confidence in their intonation use.

The teacher writes *mmm* on the board, and asks students to think about the different ways they can say it. He elicits a couple of examples (e.g. //↘*mmm*// and //↗*mmm*//) and then gives students a short time to brainstorm other examples. He then elicits these from the students and writes them onto the board, suggesting if necessary, until the following variations are there:

//↘mmm//
//∨mmm//
//↗ mmm//
//∧mmm//
//→mmm//

The teacher then asks students to think about what these mean. The first one //↘*mmm*// could indicate *I agree.* //∨*mmm*// indicates *I agree, but...* //↗*mmm*// tells us that the speaker wants the listener to say more. //∧*mmm*// might indicate strong agreement, and //→*mmm*// could reflect boredom or lack of interest. The teacher then asks the students to substitute the word *yes* for *mmm*, and drills the patterns before letting the students experiment with them. The implied meanings are the same.

Each pattern is then drilled again, but exaggerated somewhat; a falling pattern starts higher and ends lower, and a rising pattern starts lower and ends higher. The teacher then asks the students if exaggerating the range affects the meaning; the idea here is to establish that the bigger range indicates a greater degree of emotion.

The teacher writes *thank you* on the board. He gives out present cards to the students. Some of these are quite exciting gifts, like a new Ferrari, or £10,000. Others are quite the opposite, like a tin of peas, or a toilet brush. The students then give presents to their neighbour, saying *Thank you* to each other in accordance with how they feel about their present. The range used should reflect how excited (or not) students are by their presents.

This can be followed up by working on other simple sentences. It is important to choose sentences appropriate to the students' level. These could be sentences which use a structure which the students have recently studied, and which are ambiguous enough to be used in a variety of situations, or flexible enough to be said in a variety of ways, reflecting different attitudes. Examples might be sentences like *I'm meeting her at nine*, *I saw him yesterday*, or *I think that's mine*. It makes sense to avoid sentences in which the words used are themselves direct indicators of attitude (e.g. *I don't like this food*), as different ranges of intonation wouldn't be so appropriate. The example used is *Good morning, Mr Johnson*.

With the whole class, the teacher elicits which syllables within the sentence are stressed. It is important that these remain constant, otherwise the activity will become an exercise in how changing stress affects meaning, which is not the aim here. The teacher asks students to work in pairs or small groups in order to brainstorm, and to practise saying the sentence in a variety of ways. These are then tried out and discussed with the whole class. The teacher uses this opportunity to introduce a set of prompts, which can be written on cards and held up as necessary. Examples might be: *neutral, happy, bored, sympathetic, excited, surprised, friendly, unfriendly, businesslike*, and so on. The teacher drills the sentence according to each prompt card, and students repeat in chorus, and individually. The class can then discuss the range of voice used, which will be wider the more 'extreme' the attitude held, or emotion felt. It is important to bear in mind throughout that the teacher is not teaching the students anything they do not do in their own language, though English does, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, use a wider range of intonation than many other languages. This activity aims to allow students to forget about grammar and vocabulary, and concentrate on different ranges of intonation, gaining confidence in using them.

Students are subsequently given a selection of role cards, outlining their previous relations with Mr Johnson. For example:

1 You've never met Mr Johnson before. You want to do business with him.
2 Mr Johnson owes you a lot of money.
3 You think Mr Johnson is a pleasant man.
4 You're secretly in love with Mr Johnson. (optional)
5 Mr Johnson is wearing women's shoes.
6 You really don't like Mr Johnson.

Students then work in groups, with one playing Mr Johnson, and the others greeting him appropriately. 'Mr Johnson' has to try to work out (roughly, not exactly) the attitudes towards him, from the various ways in which he is greeted. There will clearly be other clues here, such as facial expression and body language, but Mr Johnson can usually get a fair idea from the intonation used.

The prompts introduced earlier in the activity can be kept and used as reminders in subsequent lessons, or, if practical, put up on the wall of the classroom.

Discourse and intonation

A discourse approach to intonation examines how the stresses we make, and the tone we employ when speaking, relate our utterances to the surrounding language. The term 'discourse', as mentioned at the start of the chapter (page 87), refers to a stretch of meaningful language. Intonation can be used to present ideas and information within utterances, conversations or monologues. A simple example is seen in the idea of listing. If we say *You need a pen, a pencil, and some paper* the voice tends to rise on *pen* and *pencil*, indicating that there is something more to come. The voice may then fall on *paper*, to indicate that that is the end of the list.

(67)

The wider context of conversations is important, and we can see how the speaker's intonation indicates his interpretation of what is shared knowledge and what isn't. In the sentence:

(77) When you get to the office, you'll see a tall man named Sean.

the name *Sean* is a new piece of information, and the voice falls on this word. A following sentence shows a different effect:

(78) When you see Sean, give him this letter.

This time, there is a fall-rise on *Sean*, indicating that the name is now shared knowledge. It also helps indicate that the rest of the instruction is to follow. The choices we make, while being for the most part unconscious, help us to guide and control our conversations. The advantage of this approach over the grammatical/attitudinal indicator approaches is that clear rules can be given with regard to appropriate choices of patterns.

The most basic intonation choice is between what are known as **referring tones (r)** and **proclaiming tones (p)**. The two most frequently used tones in English are the **fall** and the **fall-rise**. A falling tone is called a **proclaiming tone (p)**, and the fall-rise is a **referring tone (r)**. (These terms and ideas were originally developed by David Brazil.)

We can think of the choice between these tones as indicating two alternatives. One alternative is that the speaker is expressing information that is presumed to be new, or is adding something to the discussion. In this case a proclaiming tone is used. We also use the proclaiming tone to give facts, express opinions we believe to be true, or to ask for new information. The other alternative is that the speaker is referring to information that he presumes to be shared between the speakers. In this case a referring tone is used. In questions, we use a referring tone to make sure what we are saying is correct, or to check information. Consider the examples on the next page:

(79)

Example	Explanation
// ↘WHAT time does your TRAIN leave//	I'm asking you for a piece of new information. A **p** tone indicates this.
// ↗WHAT time does your TRAIN leave//	You've told me the train time earlier, but I have forgotten. I use the **r** tone to indicate that there has been shared information, and to make sure.
// ↘she's LIVED in LONdon// // ↘since she was TWENty//	I'm telling you some facts about her that you don't know. The **p** tone indicates that this is new information.
// ↘he LIVES in the house on the CORner//	I'm telling you a fact about him that you don't know. The **p** tone indicates that this is new information.

Taking the last two examples from the previous table, let's see how a change in tone might reflect the utterances being used in different situations, where there is some shared knowledge:

(80)

Example	Explanation
// ↗she's LIVED in LONdon// // ↘since she was TWENty//	We both know that she lives in London; the shared information is shown by the **r** tone in the first tone unit. You have asked me how long she's lived there. This new information is reflected by the **p** tone in the second tone unit.
// ↘he LIVES in the house on the corner//	We both know that we're talking about the house on the corner. You have just said *John's buying the house on the corner, isn't he?*. I'm telling you something you appear not to know, and this is shown by the **p** tone on 'lives'.

As we saw on page 88, the onset syllable usually sets a pitch which carries on until the tonic syllable is reached. This constant pitch is called the **key**. Using a high key usually means that the speaker is contrasting something with what has been said before. Starting a conversation with a high key is usually a good way of engaging the interest of the listener. A mid-key usually adds something to what has been said, and a low key indicates that the information is a natural follow-on from before. The key is of course relative, in two ways: it is relative to what has been said before, and also relative to the speaker's voice qualities and typical speaking habits.

The following sample lessons show some different ways in which the relationships between discourse and intonation can be highlighted and practised in the classroom. The examples show intonation teaching being Integrated with the teaching of a language point, being dealt with Remedially, and being Practised in its own right. They also cover a range of different levels.

Lesson 6: Making deductions (Intermediate to Advanced)

Type: Integrated

In this lesson, students are given a puzzle to solve, and the language they need in order to discuss the possible answers to the puzzle is taught and practised. To start, the teacher sets the context and pre-teaches any vocabulary she feels might be necessary. Any activities which require the students to discuss an issue, put forward suggestions and draw conclusions might be used (for example, trying to interpret ambiguous photographs or drawings). In this example the students have to decide how events have led up to a given outcome.

The teacher sets up the first situation:

A man with a pack on his back entered a field, and died.

The students are given some time in small groups to discuss possible answers, but the teacher does not give one at this point. After students have had the chance to discuss, the teacher asks them to note down the language they used while deciding on their answers. The teacher writes any suitable suggestions on the board, and takes the opportunity to elicit or to give the following language.

He might have been attacked by an animal.
He could have been attacked by an animal.
Perhaps he was attacked by an animal.
If he was attacked by an animal, he could have run away...
He can't have been attacked by an animal. That's too easy.

The students will be clear about the concepts involved in this kind of language as they will have produced it themselves, prompted by the situation itself and with the teacher's assistance. To make sure, however, the teacher asks questions like 'Do we know if this happened?' and 'How sure are we?' First, just one suggestion is worked with, so that the students see the intonation patterns emerging.

The sentences are then drilled, and the students are asked to write the utterances down, and mark the stressed syllables and tone movements. Students can underline stressed syllables, and draw arrows to show tone movements; remember it is important to use notation systems consistently with your students, so that they become familiar with them. The following uses the notation introduced in this chapter:

(81) // ⌄⌐he <u>MIGHT</u> have been// ↘aTTACKED by an <u>AN</u>imal//
// ⌄⌐he <u>COULD</u> have been// ↘aTTACKED by an <u>AN</u>imal//

// ⟋perHAPS he was// ⟍aTTACKED by an ANimal//
// ⟋if he WAS attacked by an animal// ⟍he COULD have run aWAY//
// ⟍he CANT have been attacked by an animal// ⟍THATS too EAsy//

Consistencies in the intonation patterns can be shown by applying them to another example:

(82)

// ⟋he MIGHT have been// ⟍PArachuting//
// ⟋he COULD have been// ⟍PArachuting//
// ⟋perHAPS he was// ⟍PArachuting//
// ⟋if he WAS parachuting// ⟍he COULD have used a resERVE//
// ⟍he CANT have been parachuting// ⟍THATS too EAsy//

These too can be drilled chorally and individually, and the consistencies highlighted on the board. Students can do further practice by supplying their own mysteries to be solved.

Lesson 7: Indirect questions (Pre-Intermediate to Intermediate)

Type: Remedial

A lesson is in progress, and the students are working on an activity involving indirect questions. They are doing a speaking activity where the language being practised is as follows, within the context of seeking information from a stranger:

| Do you know where Could you tell me where | the bank the post office the chemist's the doctor's the bus station the police station | is please? |

While monitoring, the teacher notices that some students are using a falling tone on the verbs, and using two tone units, as in:

// ⟍do you KNOW// ⟍where the BANK is please//
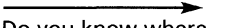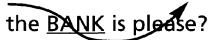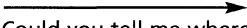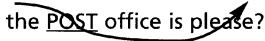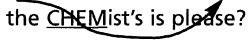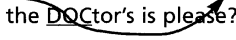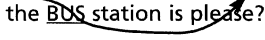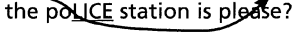// ⟍could you TELL me// ⟍where the BANK is please//

A more appropriate way of asking these questions, given the context, would be:

(83)

// ⟋do you KNOW where the BANK is please//
// ⟋could you TELL me where the BANK is please//

Here there is one tone unit, with the main tone movement (a fall-rise) being on the noun. The verbs are stressed, and set the key. The teacher writes the nouns on the board (if they are not already written there), and re-eliciting the question forms (*Do you know where...* and *Could you tell me where...*), he drills them chorally, using a high, but level key. He then drills the end of the sentences, using the fall-rise appropriately, on and after the nouns. He then points to each alternative noun in turn, and either repeats a choral drill, or

asks individuals to say the sentences. He then completes the question forms on the board, and draws arrows, as shown below. Tonic syllables are underlined, and in capitals.

Do you know where   the BANK is please?

Could you tell me where   the POST office is please?

the CHEMist's is please?

the DOCtor's is please?

the BUS station is please?

the poLICE station is please?

The pattern here is quite clear. While this is not to say that the sentences must be or will always be said in this way, the suggested intonation is at least appropriate. By pointing out such consistencies the teacher will help students both to recognise them and be more likely to remember and use them. The teacher can then either ask students to repeat the activity, or move on to other practice activities, as he feels is necessary.

Lesson 8: Tone units (Advanced)

Type: Practice
Materials/Resources: Tape recorder, video camera and player, transcript of student's presentation

A teacher is working one-to-one with a student who needs to give a presentation at a conference. In rehearsing the presentation, the teacher notices that the intonation and tone units used by the student affect the quality of the presentation.

In this kind of situation, if the resources are available, the teacher could either tape-record, or better still video the student giving a trial run of the talk. Using a transcript of the talk, the teacher takes the student through some examples of tone units used, helping her to listen out for the falls and rises made. On a fresh transcript, the teacher helps the student to re-group the tone units, drilling and practising as necessary. Another recording can be made when the student feels confident enough to try the whole thing again; this recording can be listened to and compared with the original.

How teachable is intonation? The fact that the same thing may be said in different ways, at different times and for different reasons, leads to a potentially bewildering range of choices for students. A part of the art of successful teaching is in helping students to narrow down the number of available options, and to make appropriate choices with the language they use. This should also be the teacher's aim when teaching intonation. We saw in Chapters 3 and 4 how phonemes

contrast with each other, so that in particular circumstances a sound constitutes an appropriate choice (as seen in minimal pairs, like *hit* and *heat*). Likewise, as we saw in Chapter 5, we can label syllables within utterances as stressed or unstressed, and depending on the circumstances, stressing or not stressing a syllable will be appropriate. If we treat classroom intonation in the same way, we have a system that is workable for students; we can demonstrate which intonation patterns are appropriate for a given situation. Investigating the links between intonation and certain types of sentence, and intonation and attitude, can be helpful to a degree. However, the analysis of intonation in spoken discourse gives a relatively straight-forward way of describing and narrowing down a whole range of intonation possibilities. By concentrating on tonic syllables, and by showing an initial choice between referring and proclaiming tones, we divide those possibilities into two groups which can then be analysed further. Most students will not want or need a full analysis of proclaiming and referring tones; teachers can, however, help their students listen out for tonic syllables, and for whether the voice goes down or up, and so help them narrow down the choices. The significance of intonation is best dealt with in clear contexts, and through the analysis of examples, with ample opportunity for both receptive and productive work.

It has been claimed, by some, that intonation is unteachable and that it operates at such a deep level of consciousness that it can only be acquired through long-term exposure to a second language. Language teaching and learning are in part a process of bringing subconscious mechanisms to the surface, studying them, and pointing out patterns. A lot of our language may be considered automatic and the processes of production and interpretation operate at a subconscious level, particularly in ordinary, everyday speech. If we can analyse and show patterns in the grammatical and lexical properties of our language in the classroom, then why can't we do the same for intonation as well?

Many teachers would admit to finding it difficult to hear whether or not their own voice is going up or down. However, it is much easier to spot when a student is using the wrong kind of intonation in practice activities in the classroom. Many teachers already do remedial work on intonation in the classroom without necessarily realising it, through re-drilling sentences, getting students to say things again, and so on. It is really a question of taking time to listen out for intonation yourself, and of gaining an understanding of how it works. Work on intonation can, and should be, built into lessons from beginner level to advanced level.

Conclusions

In this chapter we have:
- described intonation as the changes of pitch our voices make when we are speaking.
- looked at intonation as being an aspect of language that we are usually only aware of at a subconscious level. We have also seen how intonation is used in different ways in different languages, and that it is therefore an important area of study for language

learners. Working on intonation in the classroom can help students towards a better understanding of English, as well as greater expressiveness and articulacy.

- considered three ways of approaching the study of intonation:
  - connecting intonation with grammar
  - connecting intonation with attitude
  - connecting intonation with the surrounding discourse
- looked at the link between intonation and sentence stress, and shown how spoken language can be divided into tone units, each tone unit having one major tone movement. In discourse analysis falling tones are known as proclaiming tones, and rising ones as referring tones. Analysis of intonation with reference to the surrounding discourse can help to illustrate how speakers indicate what is shared, and what is new information.
- seen that while intonation patterns can be linked to certain grammatical constructions, these are not invariable rules. However, we can still use them for valuable practice in the classroom. We have also drawn similar conclusions with regard to the connection between intonation and attitude. Intonation can, at times, help listeners to understand the attitude of speakers to what they are saying. Again, while this may only provide us with a rough guide, useful work can be done with students in this area.
- shown how consistency is important in teaching intonation. We do not need to show students the full range of choices available in a particular situation, but, in applying consistent patterns we can help them to narrow down their options, and use the patterns they have learnt appropriately.
- argued, finally, that intonation is both learnable and teachable.

Looking ahead
- Chapters 5 and 6 have shown how stress and intonation help us to vary the message conveyed through connecting strings of phonemes. Chapter 7 looks at other aspects of connected speech, and in particular, at what happens when phonemes meet.