

TYPES OF INTONATION AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON SENTENCE MEANING

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Annotation: This article explores the supersegmental features of language, a small yet highly significant component within the phonetics branch of linguistics. Throughout the reading, one can gain insight into intonation and its essential elements that contribute to its meaning and function. The article also examines the differences and similarities of intonation across various languages, as well as its interesting types. The provided examples help clarify complex or unclear concepts.

Key words: intonation, falling, rising, stress, tone, language, speech, pitch, supersegmental, segmental

Linguistics studies all processes within language and teaches them to others. The deeper one delves into linguistics, the more one encounters complex, unusual, or surprising aspects of language. These aspects encourage many learners to study languages more thoroughly and find answers to their questions. This research work is written with the same purpose—to create a broader understanding of the invisible yet essential components of speech and communication.

As is known, linguistics is a science that studies languages as a universal human phenomenon, describing the rules of a given language, examining the society that created it, its nature, development, and principles of functioning, and then explaining them on a scientific basis. In short, linguistics is the science of language.

In linguistics, speech is expressed mainly through phonemes and lexical units, but without pitch, rhythm, dynamics, or stress, we cannot convey words appropriately in time and space. For example, when a person is angry, the strong tone and intonation used not only indicate their emotional state but also express their reaction to the situation. Therefore, studying language or speech units by dividing them into two categories is appropriate.

These categories are **segmental** and **supersegmental** features of language.

Segmental features study the real sounds of language—in other words, the system of letters. The term segment means “a part or portion of something,” therefore segments function to study the system of sounds that carry the smallest units of meaning, such as vowels and consonants and their articulatory features.

So what do supersegmental features study?

Supersegmental features are small, invisible units—such as syllable, intonation, stress, rhythm, and dynamics—that must always be used to convey the true meaning of a sentence.

This article focuses on intonation, one of the key components of the supersegmental layer of language.

Intonation is one of the essential levels of language, and it studies the relationship between pitch, loudness, rhythm, and pauses with the meaning of a sentence. Studying intonation and its types in the context of different languages is important not only for improving speech culture but also for developing language-teaching methodology.

Depending on its function and position in speech, intonation demonstrates the following features:

- **Communicative purpose:** intonation expresses whether a sentence is a question, statement, command, or negation.
- **Speaker's emotional state:** intonation makes it possible to understand the speaker's inner feelings. For example, irony is often recognized through a strongly emphasized tone.
- **Logical stress:** this feature indicates which word or phrase in a sentence is emphasized and what the sentence primarily focuses on.
- **Stylistic features:** intonation reveals the degrees of pitch, rhythm, and dynamics in formal and informal speech.

Intonation expresses various values across the world's languages, and the concept of tone helps explain this more clearly.

Tone refers to the pitch level of sounds in a language. Its presence or absence affects whether meaning is attached to individual words or entire sentences. Therefore, languages are divided into tonal and non-tonal. In tonal languages, lexical meaning depends on tone, while in non-tonal languages, meaning is carried by the sentence structure itself. For example, Vietnamese and Chinese have 6 and 4 tone levels respectively. Uzbek, English, and Russian are non-tonal languages.

Thus, intonation conveys important meanings not only across languages but also within words and sentences. These meanings differ from one language to another. For instance, in English, intonation is represented as follows:

- **Falling tone – used in statements and commands.**

The pitch starts high and gradually falls, often used in declarative sentences (e.g., It is a beautiful day.). Wh-questions (What time is it?), commands (Stop talking), polite requests (Please, sit down), and exclamations (What a wonderful day!) also use falling tone.

- **Rising tone – expresses questions, doubt, or incompleteness.**

Used in Yes/No questions (Are you coming?), polite suggestions (I think it might be possible...), and lists (I need apples, bananas, oranges and apricots).

- **Fall-rise tone – expresses limited agreement or uncertainty**

(We might consider it.)

- **Rise-fall tone – expresses amazement or strong confirmation**

(That's amazing.)

In French, intonation functions differently: the pitch rises toward the end of the sentence, even in statements—this feature is known as French intonation.

In Russian, the intonation system is similar to English but has its own distinctions. Logical stress is more prominent, and pitch changes significantly affect sentence meaning.

In Uzbek, intonation is divided into the following types:

- Declarative intonation – falling pitch
- Interrogative intonation – rising pitch at the question word or sentence end
- Imperative intonation – sharp pitch changes
- Exclamatory intonation – sudden rise or fall in pitch

Across the world's languages, intonation is a crucial element of speech, serving communicative, emotional, structural, and pragmatic functions. Although each language has its unique intonation patterns, some universal features are shared by all languages.

The main difference between tonal and non-tonal languages is that in tonal languages, pitch distinguishes word meaning, while in non-tonal languages, it affects sentence meaning. However, in both types of languages, intonation plays an essential role in conveying semantic and emotional aspects of speech.

Studying intonation is important not only for linguistics but also for cultural studies, psycholinguistics, and artificial intelligence. Future research in cross-linguistic intonation may help improve intercultural communication in an increasingly globalized world.

Intonation is the universal language of human speech—it expresses a shared human experience that exists beyond the grammatical and lexical differences of the world's languages.

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