

INTONATION

1/ Definition:

Intonation is **the use of the pitch of the voice to convey linguistic information.**

When speaking, people generally raise and lower the pitch of their voice, forming pitch patterns. They also give some syllables in their utterances a greater degree of loudness and change their speech rhythm. They can use special coloring of their voice (timbre or voice quality) to show their emotions and attitudes. **These phenomena are called intonation.**

Intonation can be said to be the combination of:

-> speech melody is the variation in the pitch of the voice.
Pitch variation or pitch movement is called **tone**.

-> sentence stress.

-> tempo (rhythm and pausation).

-> timbre (voice quality, or special coloring of the voice to show your feelings, attitudes and emotions).

2/ Functions of intonation:

According to Peter Roach, intonation has the following functions:

2.1/ Attitudinal function: enables us to express emotions and attitudes as we speak.

2.2/ Accentual function: helps to produce the effect of prominence on syllables that need to be perceived.

2.3/ Grammatical function: enables the listeners to recognize the grammar and syntactic structure of what being said.

2.4/ Discourse function: can signal to the listener what is to be taken as **“new”** information and what is already **“given”**.

3/ Tone language and intonation language:

=> Languages that use the pitch of individual syllables to contrast meanings (to distinguish word meanings) are called tone language.

e.g: Vietnamese words: ga, gà, gá, gả, gã, ạ

=> Languages in which the changing pitch of a whole sentence is important to the meaning are called intonation languages.

e.g: English

4/ Basic tones:

4.1/ Fall:

-> The Fall could be said to give an impression of **finality**.

-> The Fall is used in simple statements of fact, special questions, commands, offers or suggestions to do something.

4.2/ Rise:

-> The Rise conveys an impression that **something more is to follow**.

-> The Rise is used in general questions, requests, greetings, question tags, incomplete parts of the sentence (when the speaker is going to say something else).

4.3/ The Fall-Rise:

-> The Fall-Rise is used a lot in English. It can be used for **limited agreement** and **response with reservation**.

-> The Fall-Rise expresses politeness, apology, concern, uncertainty, disagreement.

4.4/ The Rise-Fall:

-> The Rise-Fall is used to convey **rather strong feelings of approval, disapproval or surprise.**

-> The Rise-Fall is used to express attitudes both pleasant and unpleasant, ranging from irony to sarcasm, from being pleasantly impressed to admiration.

4.5/ Level:

This tone is used in a rather restricted context in English. It almost always conveys **a feeling of saying something routine, uninteresting or boring.**