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Intonation: Meaning and its implication on teaching

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Abstract

Several evidences of research into segmental phonology abound, but not much has been done on intonation. Jowitt opined that “... intonation has been hampered by insufficient investigation at the scholarly level...” (Jowitt, 2000). From researches, up to 70% of the problems associated with the lack of intelligibility in spoken communication are caused by inadequate knowledge of patterns of English intonation among non-native speakers. The aim of this paper is to investigate reasons responsible for relegation to the background the teaching of intonation patterns and investigate the connections between intonation and meaning. The model used for this research is that of Cruttenden (1986). In conclusion it was realized that intonation has great influence on meaning derivation and should be taught correctly by teachers of English who knows what it takes to teach phonology and its types. They are to introduce methods of teaching that will help learners develop interest and make deliberate efforts to acquire and use them correctly. The government and appropriate school authorities should ensure a conducive learning environment; provide training and retraining opportunities for teachers and world class language laboratories with state-of-the-art equipment. This will bring both learners and teachers of English to the attainment of Educated English.

Public Interest Statement

This research is intended to investigate the possible reasons affecting the teaching of intonation patterns and find out the correlation between intonation and meaning. The research brought to bear the fact that intonation has great influence on meaning derivation and should be taught correctly by teachers of English. The government and appropriate school authorities should ensure conducive learning environment; provide necessary opportunities for teachers’ training and world class language laboratories to facilitate effective teaching. This will bring both learners and teachers of English to the attainment of Educated English.

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Introduction

Language is the universal characteristics of all human beings. Man is a social being and one whose uniqueness lies in his ability to communicate with others and his social environment. According to Iwe, “the evident testimony of man’s bodily faculty convincingly indicates that he is created and destined to live and interact in a community of life with his fellow human beings” (Iwe,2000, p. 21). This interaction is greatly enhanced by speech, and speech is powered by language. This language is a structured system guided by rules which can be descriptive or prescriptive. Language serves as the most useful means of communication in human societies. English as a language is one of the common means for communication, mass media, administration, commerce, religion and education in Nigeria. Characteristics of the study of language are the following skills: writing, speaking, listening and reading. Most closely linked of the above are writing and speaking. The written aspect of English (the language of focus in this paper) includes composition, comprehension, summary and grammar; while spoken English consists of segmental (phonemes: vowels and consonants) and supra segmental (stress, syllables, rhyme and intonation) phonology. According to Roach “When we speak, we produce a continuous stream of sounds” (Roach,2010, p.38). Of interest to this study is the spoken English with a focus on intonation as it relates to meaning derivation and its implication on teaching.

Phonology is the branch of linguistics concerned with the scientific study of human speech sounds as they are organized systematically in connected utterance; this branch of linguistics studies the segmental and supra-segmental. Segmental phonology relates to speech sounds with particular reference to the phonemes (vowels and consonants); and supra segmental phonology is concerned with stress pattern, syllables, rhythm and intonation. Many researches have been done on segmental phonology and other aspects of English language but the study of intonation has received much less attention from linguistic and language teachers with particular reference to English language. This imbalance could be due to a lack of an agreed theoretical base, in ability to easily transcribe when analysis of a data is necessary and the lack of uniformity of the appropriate use of English stress and intonation in teaching (Roach 1983). Some of the studies carried out (Jibril,Eka, Jowitt, Adetugbo)on intonation an aspect of supra segmental phonology is sparing or often time undertaken as an aspect of a wide investigation as noted by Jowitt (2000). This research therefore looks at what intonation (with reference to English language), how it affects meaning and suggests ways teachers of phonology can consciously teach intonation and make it a part of the instructions taught in oral English to bring about a balance in students ‘acquisition of the English Language.

The study of phonology is broadly divided into two namely: Segmental and supra segmental. There are overwhelming evidences of research into segmental phonology (the study of phonemes). While not much has been done on the area of intonation- an aspect of the supra segmental phonology. From researches it is noted that the study of intonation seems to be in the least. The neglect on the study of intonations noted by Jowitt, “is striking in studies of non-native Englishes” (Jowitt, 2000). Intonation is very crucial in spoken English. He also noted that “ ...intonation has been hampered by insufficient investigation at the scholarly level. Such investigation has been developing rapidly for some decades, and a diversity of theoretical positions and descriptive methods is now apparent.” (Jowitt, 2000) From research findings up to

70% of the problems associated with the lack of intelligibility in spoken communication are caused by inadequate knowledge and awareness of the patterns of English intonation among non-native speakers. Intonation, of all the prosodic aspects of English, can be seen as a fertile area of research for effective language usage because not much attention has been paid to the significance of the study of intonation by scholars as parts of the skills to be acquired in the mastery of English. At the expense of intonation much emphasis had been placed on segmental phonology. Since intonation affects meaning, it is important to look into the correlation as against the views of some scholars that meaning is best approached through the study of semantics and pragmatics which may be true for written texts but not so much for speech in conversation. This research therefore wants to look into what intonation is, its functions and if possible, the interpretation of English patterns of intonation as it relates to meaning and to also establish the fact that intonation is teachable if adequate attention is devoted to it. This present paper looks at why the teaching of intonation patterns has received less attention from scholars; importance of intonation to meaning derivation; suggests ways intonation can be taught, stressing that intonation patterns of English can be learnt by non-native speakers to attain proficiency. The approach to this discussion is descriptive.

The model preferred for this research is that of Cruttenden (1986). He thinks that intonation primarily means co-occurrence of fluctuating pitch patterns with longer or shorter sequences of words. These patterns contain pitch patterns with longer or shorter sequences of words. He emphasized that a word or an utterance may be subdivided into pre-head, head, nucleus and a post nucleus called “tail”. The choice of his approach is based on the fact that his work encompasses both the British and American traditions

Structures and functions of intonation

The study of English intonation has its root in phonology, which comprises segmental and supra segmental phonology. Segmental phonology studies sound in isolation while supra segmental extends over the study of isolated sounds to words, phrases and sentences of importance to this investigation is intonation. In speech, intonation is the use of changing (rising and falling) vocal pitch to convey grammatical information or personal attitude. Intonation is particularly important in expressing questions in spoken English. Crystal notes intonation to refer to the way one’s voice rises and falls as you speak. Wells sees it as “... the melody of speech, if we had no intonation our speech would be in the literal sense of the word-monotonous” (Crystal, 2010, p.1). Intonation also shows how the pitch of the voice rises and falls and how speakers use this pitch variation to convey linguistic and pragmatic meaning. It involves the rhythm of speech and the interplay of accented stress and unstressed syllables functions as a frame work into which the intonation patterns are attached. Zulfugarova, (2018), sees intonation as the melody of sentence which is created by changes in the pitch of the voice by sentence stress and by rhythm



Jowitt (2012) defines intonation as “... fluctuation in pitch over passages of connected speech and how it combines with accents to determine the meaning of English utterances” (9). Onwuchekwa, (2010) posits that “intonation could be described as the rise and fall (modulation) of the pitch of the voice or the change in voice pitch while speaking”. Roach, (2009) says “no definition of intonation is completely satisfactory, but an attempt at a definition must recognize

that the pitch of the voice plays important part”. It is obvious therefore that the pitch of the voice is not fixed in the process of conversation. When an utterance is made the pitch of the voice is constantly changing, when this occurs melody in pitch is established.

Broadly, pitch is segmented into high and low or rise and fall. Cruttenden, (1997) in agreement with O’Connell and Arnold, (1974) listed seven types of tone namely:

- High-fall – (High Drop)
- Low-fall – (Low Drop)
- High-rise – (High Bounce)
- Low-Rise – (High Bounce)
- Low-rise – (Take off, low bounce)
- Fall-rise – (Switchback, High Dive)
- Rise-fall – (Long Jump, Jackknife)
- Mid-Level – (Terrace)

Pitch therefore, can be described in terms of high and low or how a voice rises and falls during conversation. This rising and falling of the voice accounts for the variation in linguistic and pragmatic meanings. The pitch patterns

- (a) Falling \ yes 
- (b) Rising /Yes 

Falling: The pitch of the voice descends from a higher to a lower level; this is sometimes used to convey finality \yes, \no.

Rising: The pitch of the voice glides from a low note to a high note – it often introduces measure of hesitation – indicating that more information is to follow.

Ladefoged (2011, p.254) noted that discourse information is conveyed by the use of intonation in English he says that “pitch variation that affect the meaning of a word are called tones” (255). Tone is a prosodic characteristic, often realized by differences in the pitch of the voice which may be at high level, mid-level, low level, rising or falling. Just as poor pronunciation can make a foreign language learner difficult to be understood, poor prosodic and intonational skills can have an equally devastating effect on communication between learners and their listeners. There is no doubt to the importance of intonation in communication. It conveys linguistic information, plays a key role in regulating discourses and indicates a speaker’s identity. Intonation is crucial intelligibility; as inappropriate intonation pattern gives rise to misunderstanding. Such misunderstanding can be major or minor depending on the context.

The structure of the tone – unit

Just as the syntactician focuses on the sentence as the key unit of grammatical analysis, the phonologist focuses on the Tone unit (also called the phonological phrase) as the most significant domain in terms of which intonation contours reflecting the pitch of utterances are assigned.

The intonation unit consists of stressed and unstressed syllables. Stressed syllables are marked by loudness, vowel length and sometimes a fall or rise in tone. Roach, (2010) opined that “the tone unit has a fairly clearly defined internal structure”¹³⁰. The intonation unit for analysis

purposes has the following internal structure/organization (pre-head), (head), tonic or nucleus or tonic syllable and (tail). The bracketed elements are optional in the structure however, the nucleus is mandatory. The nucleus is the central element in a tone unit. It consists of the syllable in an utterance which undergoes insignificant pitch movement and is therefore more prominent than the others around it. The nucleus is usually the last stressed syllable in an utterance. Cruttenden, explains intonation nucleus as “that which is used to describe the pitch accent which stands out as the most prominent in an intonation group” (151). It is the nucleus that often guides the listeners to the linguistically significant aspects of speech. This as noted by Jowitt “may be grammatical, attitudinal or discursal” (12).

Internal structure of the tone unit

As mentioned above the structure consists of pre-head (PH), head (H), nucleus or tonic syllable TS and tail (T). The tonic syllable is obligatory while all other parts are optional.

(PH)	(H)	TS	(T)
(pre-head)	(head)	tonic syllable	(tail)

Pre-head

The pre-head is composed of all the unstressed syllables in a tonic unit preceding the first stressed syllable - the head. It also does not contain accented syllables. This pre-head can be found in two main environments namely:

- (i) When there is no stressed syllable preceding the tonic syllable for example “in an hour”
 - The pre-head is “in an”
- (ii) Where there is a head, for example “in a little less than an hour”
 - Pre-head – “in a”
 - Head – “little less than an”
 - Tonic syllable – “hour”
 - Nucleus

Other Examples

- (a) “it was remarkably good”
 - Prehead** – “it was re”
 - Head** – markably
 - Nucleus** – good

The above statement can be represented thus

It was re /'markably/good

The Head

This is all the part of the tone that extends from the first stressed syllable to the syllable immediately preceding the tonic syllable. The head is not a mandatory element in an utterance.

Example

With head

(i) $\frac{\text{Give me those /}}{\text{head}}$ books Nucleus (Ts)

Without head

(ii) $\frac{\text{"Inanhour}}{\text{Prehead}}$ nucleus (Ts)

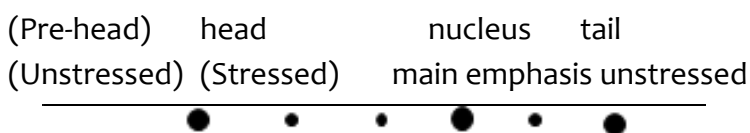
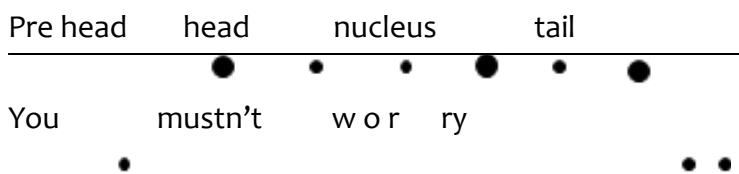
Other Examples

(iii) $\frac{\text{It was}}{\text{prehead}} \frac{\text{Re/remarkably}}{\text{head}} / \frac{\text{good}}{\text{nucleus}}$

(iv) $\frac{\text{We' er}}{\text{prehead}} \frac{\text{travelling}}{\text{head}}$ by air to Germany

The head in an utterance may shift from one word/syllable to another depending on where the emphasis is, when this occurs, meaning is often affected". Example four (iv) above can be rendered in any of the following ways depending on where the emphasis lies.

- (a) We're travelling by air to Germany
- (b) We've travelling by air to German
- (c) We're travelling by air to Germany
- (i) We're travelling by air to Germany
- (ii) Other examples



Tell her no more than is necessary.



In the examples above, the head is preceded by a pre-head, the nucleus and the tail.

In example (a) the emphasis is on 'air' the mode of transportation. In (b) the emphasis is on travelling that is moving from one geographical location to another and (c) emphasizes 'we' i.e. the persons travelling not mode of travelling on travelling itself. Nothing this difference can sometimes be difficult for non-native learners and users of English language thereby making comprehension and intelligibility a difficult task.

Tonic Syllable (Nucleus)

This is the most important and obligatory element in the intonation structure. It is the syllable on which the nucleus tone rest and it is often more prominent than other syllables in the tone unit.

For example

I think it was ri dic ulous

In "I think it was ridiculous" the nucleus emphasis is on the syllable-dic-the tone movement begins at this point (the syllable -dic-). Therefore, the syllable -dic- is accented thereby making the word "ridiculous" accented. Nucleus is also referred to as tonic by some scholars; others refer to it as intonation centre. The nucleus guides the listeners to the linguistically significant aspects of speech empowers thus making intonation a relevant and significant aspect of phonological studies. Nucleus determines the meaning of an intonation pattern. In this regard Jowitt says "the nuclei which are their indispensable elements undoubtedly have different meanings, which may be grammatical, or attitudinal, or discursal"¹². Citing Cruttenden (1997) at this point becomes inevitable: he, in agreement with O'Connell and Arnold (1974) listed seven types of tone namely:

- High-fall – (High Drop)
- Low-fall – (Low Drop)
- High-rise – (High Bounce)
- Low-Rise – (High Bounce)
- Low-rise – (Take off, low bounce)
- Fall-rise – (Switchback, High Dive)
- Rise-fall – (Long Jump, Jackknife)
- Mid-Level – (Terrace)

The Tail

The tail in an utterance comes after the nucleus; and contains no accented syllable. It is important to note that if the nucleus is on the last syllable of a word then there will be no tail.

For instance $\frac{\backslash \text{look}}{\text{nucleus}} \quad \frac{\text{at it}}{\text{tail}}$

The tail in an utterance may be the unaccented part of a word as in

$\frac{'\text{Ger many, 'Ita ly}}{\text{nucleus tail nucleustail}}$

Or may be separate words following the nucleus as in $\frac{\text{look at it}}{\text{nucleus tail}}$

The tone-unit components can be thus represented

$\frac{(\text{Pre - head}) \text{ head } \text{tonic syllable} \text{ tail}}{(\text{PH}) \quad (\text{H}) \quad \text{TS} \quad (\text{T})}$

Tell her no more than is ne_ ce ssa ry

Of the four components of the tone unit the tonic syllable or the nucleus is obligatory while the other three elements are optional as indicated by the brackets.

Functions of english intonation

The intonation group is a stretch of speech which may have the length of the whole phrase, though the phrase often contains more than one intonation group. The functions of intonation depend on the types of meaning conveyed by various intonation patterns. Intonation makes it easier for a listener to understand what a speaker is trying to say. Speech would be boring, mechanical and uninteresting if every syllable in an utterance is said on the same pitch level with no variation in speed or loudness, it will also be difficult to arrive at an implied meaning According to Wells, intonation enhances the understanding of a speaker (much) easier for a listener) “English language makes more elaborate use of intonation to signal meaning than do most other languages (ii) since this is the case it is important therefore to pay particular attention to the functions of intonation, which include the following: Attitudinal, Accentuation, Grammatical, Discourse. According Zulfugarova, English make more elaborate use of intonation to signal meaning than most other languages. He is of the opinion that for the above reason, intonation should not be neglected by learners and teachers of English as a foreign language. He listed the functions of intonation as: attitudinal, grammatical, the focusing/accental, discourse and psychological (21).

Attitudinal function

The most obvious role of intonation is to express our attitudes and emotions in speech. Though this attitudinal function helps to convey meanings such as surprise or shock, doubt, pleasure or anger, interest or boredom, indifference, warmth and seriousness or sarcasm and many others. This is one of the most complex to understand and study because it deals with human psychology that is usually unpredictable.

Attitudinal use of intonation adds a special kind of “meaning” to spoken language.

For instance, ‘come here’ from the tone may be a command, polite invitation or a threat. It may also be associated with formality, command strictness and authority. The tone may be fall; rise, fall-rise and rise fall. When it is a fall it depicts finality and definiteness for example

‘Sit down’ with a fall \ connote strictness and finality. ‘Sit down’ with a rise / connote politeness and gentility

Fall-rise v connote uncertainty and doubt. You may be right

Rise-fall ^ shows surprise

Don’t be afraid, it won’t hurt you – is friendly and reassuring

From the aforementioned a good knowledge of Intonation for maximum intelligibility and comprehensibility becomes inevitably vital.

Accentual / focussing function

Accentual function of intonation implies the placement of stress. This invariably affects meaning as tonic stress indicates the focus of information. This is one of the most important functions of English intonation and perhaps one of the most readily taught in the English for Foreign Learners classroom. The accentual nature of intonation as an indicator shows what is new or what is already known in an utterance. The choice of tone is often combined with accentuation to present some longer stretches of the message as constituting the foreground of the pictures we paint, while leaving other sketches as background. It emphasizes order and aspects of a discourse, for instance.

i. It was very / boring

ii. It was / very boring

In the sentences above (i) has no word emphasis while (ii) has its emphasis on ‘very’ –this is achieved by the use of tone which invariably affects meaning.

iii. I have plans to\leave (plans= noun but abstract)

iv. I have \plans to leave (plans = noun – object/document)

Sentence

iii. means I am planning to leave or go away

iv. I have some plans / diagrams/drawing I have to leave behind.

Grammatical function

As noted by Roach (2009), the essence of grammatical functions is to assist the listener to be better able to recognize the grammatical and syntactic structure of what is being said by using the information contained in the intonation. The intonation helps identify grammatical structure in

speech, just as punctuation does in writing. The grammatical function of intonation is sometimes referred to as demarcative function – it is used to mark the beginning and end of grammatical units such as clause and sentence. The use of tone helps to distinguish clause types like question vs. statement and to disambiguate various grammatically ambiguous structures. For instance, the sentence.

- i. “Those who sold quickly made profit” can be rendered in at least two ways with two different meanings resulting from the choice made.
 - a. Those who sold quickly/ made /profit.
 - b. Those who sold/ quickly, made /profit.

The following are likely interpretations of the above sentences.

- a. Profit was made by those who sold quickly
- b. Profit was quickly made by those who sold.

The meaning in (a) is different from (b) though the structure of the utterance is basically the same.

The difference in meaning results from the placement of the tone unit boundaries.

- i. Linguists have been aware that the syntactic bracketing of potentially ambiguous construction like “old cars and buses” can be clarified by intonation. The phrase “old cars and buses” is said as one unit if both the cars and buses and old. But it is said with an intonation break after “cars” if it is only the cars that are old not inclusive of the buses. It will be indicated as

“Old cars and buses”

“Old cars /and buses”

Ability to indicate meaning from phrases as the ones used above requires a good knowledge of the intonational patterns and their functions. This has implication on meaning derivation and a teacher’s ability.

Another example

- ii. a) The con’servatives who like the proposal/ are \ pleased
b) The con’servatives / who like the proposal / are \ pleased.

The intonation marks clear the difference between (a) that implies that only some conservative like the proposal, and (b) that implies all the conservatives like the proposal.

The proper teaching, learning and use of intonation cannot be overemphasized since it is crucial to interpretation and understanding of words and utterances.

Discourse function

Discoursal function of intonation is much concerned about sentence types such as commands, questions, and statements and so on.

Intonation signals how sequences of clauses and sentences go together in spoken discourse to contrast or to cohere. Discourse function is also referred to as cohesive function. It looks at the larger contexts in which sentences occur. Intonation is important in discourse analysis and pragmatic especially for expressing attitudes. The discourse function of intonation differentiates between ‘old’ (given) and new information to the listener. By this a listener can be guided on the kind of response expected. It can be said that the discourse functions of intonation:

- (a) focuses the listener's attention on aspects of the passage that are most important and new
- (b) Is used to regulate conversation behavior.

Point (a) here is supported by scholars who proposed that the falling tone \ indicates a new idea while those who proposed (b) believe that the rising tone / as well as the fall-rise v tone indicates 'shared' or given information.

For instance

'Since the last time / when we 'had that huge dinner' / I 've, been on a \diet.

The first two tone-units presents an information which is relevant to what the speaker is saying (the dinner they both attended) which is not something new and unknown to the listener, while the final tone unit, (I've been on a diet) however present new information. The use of discursal intonation above reveals information carried by intonation which would not have been recognized if intonation was analyzed only at the level of individual tone-units, removed from their linguistic and situational context.

For instance, in the following sentences

- (a) I hear your sisters are both \teachers.
- (b) Mary is a / teacher, but Agnes works in a\ bank.

In (a) the word "teachers" is 'new' information so a fall in tone is noticed but teacher in (b) is not new any longer but old information so the tone is a rise. However, the introduction of the word bank is new, therefore the tone is a fall.

The psychological function

Intonation helps us organize speech into units that are easy to perceive, memorize and perform. We can all repeat an arbitrary string of three, four or five members but not a string of ten – unless we split them into two units of five. This aided by tonality.

Pedagogical implication

Learning and using the stress patterns and melody of English is one of the most difficult tasks for nonnative speakers of English. Speaking may be the hardest part, but correct usage of stress and intonation is more elusive. When stress on words and sentences are wrongly applied, the word or utterance becomes inaccurate and sometimes unintelligible. Teaching this correctly therefore, is key and important. The following are some of the steps that can aid or make the teaching of intonation easier than it has been and make learning fun. One major step is helping students practice their application of word stress is to help them participate in a dictation exercise, led first by the teacher, then with each other (peer dictation). Also, have the students dictate some other words to each other (preferably ones they have studied recently, to recycle them and aid retention. Here, the dictation becomes a productive and receptive activity, as the speaker must pronounce the word accurately, and the listener hear it correctly. If the listener builds the stress of the word incorrectly, or not as expected by the speaker, there will be some negotiation of pronunciation which continues until either the speaker pronounces the word correctly, or the listener identifies the stress correctly. A lot of peer learning happens during this type of task, as

students drill each other and help each other to meet at the correct spoken / heard forms for each word.

Teaching intonation can be done using a simple sentence to illustrate and show how the placement of stress on a particular syllable or word within the sentence can change the meaning or class of the word or utterance. Also encouraging students to put emotion behind the delivery of their expressions, rather than just saying one word louder than the rest, will help the learners relax and enable them deliver their lines with emphasis. One other thing that makes teaching stress and intonation easy and interesting is for the teacher to have copies of the worksheet with sentences to be taught given to the students while the teacher underlines the key words in his copy to be emphasized. The teacher should repeatedly read through the sentences with the appropriate stress emphasis on the underlined words before asking the students to underline in their own worksheet the words that are emphasized or stressed or fill them in to the spaces provided if the words in question were deleted. This exercise can be done repeatedly until the students are conversant with the process.

Students are to be taught to realize the importance of using the suitable tone while reading because most or many of the learners read wh-questions, yes/no questions, commands, and exclamations as complete statements (using the glide-down). Of course, this changes the intended meaning as well as create confusion to the listener. This problem could be traced back to many reasons. Many English language instructors treat the assigned reading passages as a task for learning new vocabulary, finding pronouns references, and looking for specific information. Even in examinations, most instructors focus on those aspects ignoring the importance of pronunciation, stress and intonation. As a result of that, our students think that pronunciation, stress and intonation are not important, and they do not listen carefully and accurately while teaching or to the prerecorded information while playing. As a result, students should have special pronunciation classes for listening and imitating only (not to look for new vocabularies or to answer questions). Since most of the available educational environment is not suitable for learning pronunciation, stress and intonation efforts should be made. Also, state-of-the-art teaching facilities and language laboratories to facilitate teaching are to be made available.

Conclusion

From the discussions above, there is no doubt to the importance of intonation in communication. Intonation not only convey linguistic information; it also plays a major role in regulating discourse and is an important indicator of a speaker's identity. Poor prosodic and intonation skills have an equally devastating effect on communication and can make conversation frustrating and unpleasant for both speakers and listeners. Intonation plays an important role in turn-taking in a dialogue. A fall usually indicates a completed turn, without the expectation of one's interlocutor replying. But a rise gives a strong indication that the speaker intends or that a response from one's interlocutor is expected. As a result of the importance of intonation to meaning derivation, and the roles teachers of English, especially spoken English play, the appropriate authorities concerned should ensure that the issue raised by Bowers, (1995) when he observed that "... there are those teaching who should not be teaching" (90) is addressed. Language teaching with particular reference to oral English is technical and therefore requires professionals who themselves have been trained

and who constantly align themselves with current issues on its teaching. Otagburuagu, (2007) notes that the teaching of the English language in Nigeria is enormously complex because of the second language status. This complexity can be addressed if practical steps are articulated and adopted in teaching the various language skills. Prominent for this revolution is the language teacher himself or herself who must be “a worthy model of the linguistic skills he seeks to impart”. The teacher should have a clear understanding and a good grasp of what he/ she intends to teach and be in possession of the best methods and approaches that would enable him/her discharge the teaching duties. Teachers at all levels (primary, secondary, tertiary) should introduce methods of teaching that will help learners develop interest and make deliberate effort not only to acquire the oral skills, but also to apply the skills in their interaction. Learners of English should be made to see themselves as pacesetters, role models, custodians of the rules of pronunciation particularly with the use of intonation in determining meaning, comprehensibility and intelligibility, since English is used both for intra and international purposes. Learners and teachers should make efforts to maximize the use of language laboratories and emulate native speakers and non-native speakers with impeccable pronunciation.

The government and appropriate school authorities should ensure conducive learning environments; provide necessary training and retraining opportunities, workshops, seminars, world-class language laboratories, with state-of-the-art language teaching equipment.

As a result of the importance of intonation to discourse and conversation, it is crucial for language teachers to focus on supra segmental phonology alongside segmental phonology with particular reference to intonation with a view to improving general comprehensibility and intelligibility. This then means that the teachers themselves must become proficient in their knowledge of intonation and its implication on meaning. Adejumobi (2007) calls the teacher factor “error inducement by incompetent teachers” (58) this is because when they are not proficient, their shortcomings are directly transferred to their students. The teaching of English language in Nigeria as noted by Otagburuagu, (2007) is complex due to its second language status. When the above suggestions are put in place it will bring both learners and teachers of English to the attainment of “Educated English” (Ogbuehi, 2003, p. 34).

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Studies in Aesthetics and Arts Criticism

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Jos, since 2011 and a Senior lecturer currently holding a Doctorate degree in English Language. My thesis is on Intelligibility of native and non-native English speech: A Comparative Analysis of selected Nigerian and British English speech sounds. My research interests are phonology based. I teach and supervise undergraduate and post graduate levels.

Authorship and level of contribution: It is sole Authorship. All the research and write up were carried out by the author.

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