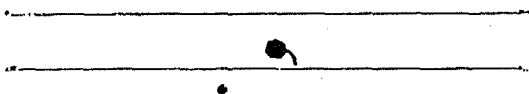


# Fall, Fall—Rise, or Fall—Level?

by

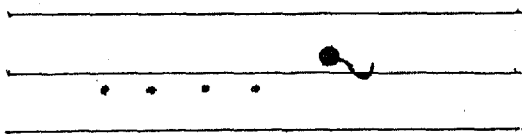
LÁSZLÓ MATZKÓ

Existence of the fall-rise tone in American English is attested in Roger Kingdon's *The Groundwork of English Intonation* and in Daniel Jones' *An Outline of English Phonetics*. Their examples, however, are doubtful. In *The Intonation of American English* Kenneth Pike gives the examples *Good bye!* *Good night!*, and *Hello!* (Light, airy greeting) as having the tune 3—<sup>o</sup>1—2, that is, in his system, mid—extra high—high. This seems to indicate a relatively short high fall on the last two syllables. However, as Pike's book is a *phonemic* work, the reader cannot be quite certain how it is to be translated into exact phonetical terms. Jones represents it as a simple short high fall:

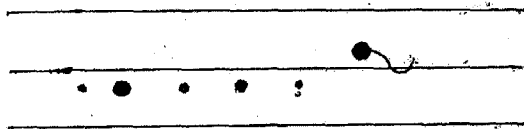


in *Good bye!* and *Hello!*

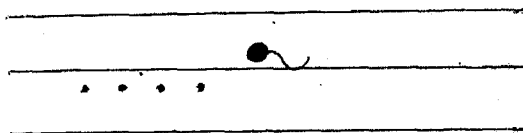
He goes on to say: „A common variant of this intonation is a tune of the type



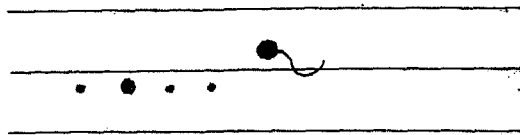
This fall-rise differs from the Southern British one in two respects: (1) the fall is much slighter, (2) the entire fall-rise is at a higher pitch-level than that of the preceding syllables.” Then he quotes as examples:



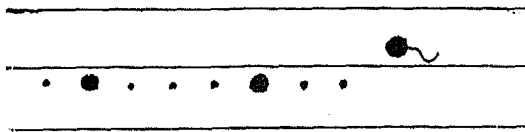
It wasn't much to ask.



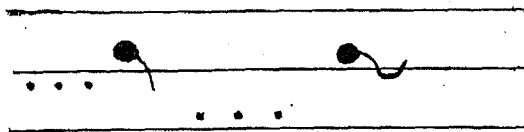
You could have been firm.



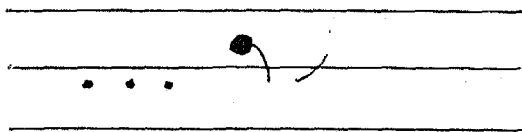
We certainly can. (Said in reply to the question 'Can you come here?')



We happened to be passing along.



We were convinced that we were right.



I wasn't ready.

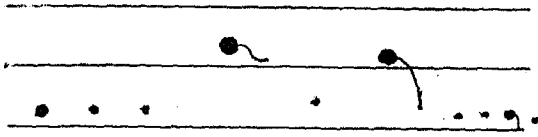
Kingdon, who in his book refers to American intonation only occasionally, says: *Cordial and American Farewells*. This type of farewell is considered to be a special or cordial one in Britain, but it is so commonly used in the United States that it must be considered as the normal one there — in other words, its widespread use has led to the attenuation and practical disappearance of its feeling of cordiality." He illustrates this intonation pattern with the examples *Good-bye*, *Good-night*, *See you later*, *So long*. That is, he records here fall-rises.

It seems that Pike's notation  $^{\circ}1-2$  cannot be interpreted as a fall-rise, because that would be  $1-2-1$  in his system, but it can be interpreted as a simple fall.

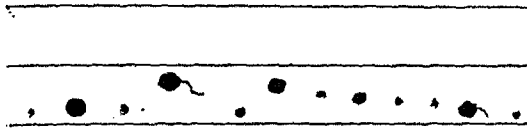
However, if we examine this "simple fall" tone more closely, we find that it is in reality not a simple fall, but what has not yet been stated in the books, a *fall-level* tone. Its acoustic effect is, under normal conditions, the same as that of a "simple fall" and it is usually hard to distinguish even from the slight fall-rise mentioned by Jones. Slow-speed playback of recordings decides the question. Jones is probably right in saying that a fall-rise may appear as a variant in similar cases. In the Linguaphone American English Course the following examples of fall-level can be found:

I. *Fall-Level:*

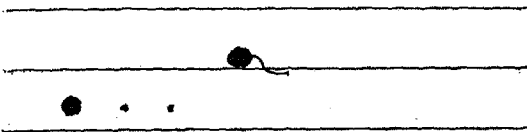
(When I talk slowly, you understand me.)



(1) When I talk fast, you don't understand me. (L. 1)



(2) The dog and cat are lying under the table. (L. 1)



(3) Have a good trip. (L. 26)



(4) Here you are. (L. 38)

II. *Fall-Rise:*



(5) Well, I've still got a few minutes to spare. (L. 26)



(6) Don't miss the train. (L. 26)

The rise in the fall-rise is so slight in these cases as to be noticeable only at slower-than-normal speed of play-back.

This up-to-date one-volume Random House dictionary (RHD) containing more than 260,000 entries and more than 2,000 pictures and spot maps is the best and most modern explaining dictionary of the English language in its size. It contains also a 64-page atlas of the world, more than 10,000 synonym lists and studies, more than 50,000 example phrases and sentences, a gazetteer of more than 27,000 place names, usage labels, and many other useful things.

Biographical and geographical names are listed not in special sections, but in the body of the dictionary proper. The different sections are: a preface by Jess Stein, the Editor in Chief, a list of editorial and consultant staff, a table of common English spellings, a historical sketch of the English language by Kemp Malone, a chapter on usage, dialects and functional varieties by Raven I. McDavid, Jr., a chapter on the pronunciation of English by Arthur J. Bronstein, a guide to the dictionary, i. e. an explanation of the symbols, abbreviations, etc., used in this book. Then follows the English explaining dictionary. This is followed by a section of signs and symbols used in different sciences and arts, a directory of colleges and universities, a list of major foreign universities, concise bilingual dictionaries: French-English, English-French, Spanish-English, English-Spanish, Italian-English, English-Italian, German-English, English-German, a basic manual of style (dealing mainly with punctuation), a list of major reference works (!), a list of major dates in world history, a list of presidents and vice presidents of the United States, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, geographical data, an atlas of the world, a gazetteer of geographical names, tables for weights and measures, and foreign alphabets.

As the Editor points out in his preface, an attempt was made to find the middle course between prescription and pure description, i. e. the principle was that a dictionary should have some normative function besides recording facts. This a very healthy principle for a truly oceanic language like English, which, with many millions of native speakers disseminated on four continents, tends to be more anarchic than the languages the speakers of which are concentrated in much smaller areas. Again, English has never been regulated by an academy as French has been. This is why English-speaking people, more than other peoples, look to a reliable, authoritative standard dictionary of the language for guidance. The modern view that language must not be trammelled by grammarians and dictionary compilers has led to the Third Edition of Webster's International Dictionary which is essentially descriptive and not normative. Too much permissivism is, however, a dangerous thing. A dictionary fails to describe the state of the language perfectly if it does not classify the words satisfactorily from the stylistic point of view. The RHD is generally a reliable guide in this respect.

A guarantee for the high quality of the RHD is the fact that its editorial and consulting staff consists of a galaxy of the best contemporary authorities on the English language.

The pronunciation of the words is shown with the help of a system of traditional phonemic symbols. These symbols are capable of a broad interpretation so that they may represent many allophones and often widely different diaphones. Thus native speakers of different types of American English can read their own sounds into them. In this respect the RHD is not strictly prescriptive. For instance the symbol  $\text{ô}$  may represent vowels ranging between higher low-back and lower low-back. This

is in agreement with the practice of most American dictionaries. The student of American English, however, might profit from a more nearly phonetic representation, especially in the case of the low-back vowels. Also, non-phonemic, but distinctly recognizable length variants would be appreciated by the foreigner. Consonant digraphs such as *ch*, *th*, *sh* are connected by ligatures.

Of the variant pronunciations of a word the first is generally the one considered to be in most frequent use. Only the most generally heard variants are recorded. However, it is no easy problem for dictionary compilers to decide which variant to put first since there is no such thing as a nationwide standard in America, only various regional standards, although a type of speech called North Central has good chances of becoming one day the basis of a future General American standard. Even the regional dissemination of the variants is more difficult to define than in the case of British dialects. For this reason the term "General American" pronunciation is at present absurd. One of the most puzzling points is the treatment of low-back vowels in words like **talk**, **law**, **horse**, **dog**, **sorry**, **wash**. In all these words vowels ranging from higher low-back-round to lower low-back and low-central-unround can be heard.

The low-back-round vowels are represented in the RHD by the symbols *ô* and *o*, the low-central to low-back vowels by *o* and *ä*. This system is quite satisfactory for practical purposes. One is left wondering, however, why **lawn** is given with two variants, (*ô*) and (*ä*), when **talk** is given with only one: (*ô*) [i. e. higher low-back-round to lower low-back-round]. The word **talk** is also often pronounced with the (*ä*) sound [i. e. a low-central to low-back unround vowel], — in agreement with the most general Canadian usage —, in parts of the East and North-East, and in the Rocky Mountains. The same is true of several other words of this type, e. g. **law**.

Words beginning with unstressed *es-* are mostly given with (*es-*), e. g. **es-cape**, **es-carpment**, **es-pouse**, **es-tablish** **es-tate**, **es-thetic**, **es-trange**, but **es-sential** with schwa in the first syllable. Unstressed *en-* is given with (*en-*), e. g. **en-camp**, **en-close**, **en-deavor**, **en-dow**, **en-gage**, **en-joy**, **en-large**, **en-list**, but with (*in-*) when the *e-* belongs to another syllable than the following *n*, e. g. **e-normous**, **e-nough**. Similar is the treatment of the word-initial group *em-*; thus **e-maciate** is given with (*i-*), but **em-balm** with (*e-*).

This is elegant and consequent, but perhaps a little pedantic usage. Less formally, these syllables usually contain (*i*).

The schwa sound is indicated in fewer cases in the RHD than in Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary (Merriam — Webster). A good example of this is the word **analysis**, WNWD gives schwa for the vowel of the syllable **-ly-** and (*i*) for the vowel of the syllable **-sis**; Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary (WSNCD) gives schwa for both. The RHD gives (*i*) for both syllables. **Planet** is given with (*-it*) in Webster's New World Dictionary (WNWD) and the RHD, but with schwa in WSNCD; its derivative **planetarium** is given with (*-ni*) in WNWD, but with schwa in WSNCD and in the RHD. These differences are partly due to the variability of American speech and perhaps partly to different interpretations of the symbols. A high-central-unround vowel, generally referred to as the "barred *i*", is often responsible for the disagreement.

The etymologies in the RHD are the latest results of etymological research and are precise as well as concise. In spite of their conciseness, the etymologies of the RHD often contain more details than the etymologies of similar works. An example of this is the etymology of the word **bright** [ME; OE *briht*, *beorht*; c. Goth. *bairht(s)*, OS, OHG *beraht*, Icel. *bjartr*, akin to L *flagrâre* to blaze (see

FLAGRANT). Nevertheless, the etymologies of the RHD do not generally go back to Indo-European bases as is the case in H. C. Wyld's Dictionary or in WNWD. E. g. the etymology of *ear*<sup>1</sup> is given in the RHD thus: [ME *ere*, OE *ĕare*; c. Icel *eyra*, G *Ohr*, Goth *auso*, L *auris*, Lith *ausis*, Gk *oûs*]. WNWD says: [ME. *ere*; AS. *eare*; akin to Goth. *ausō*, G. *ohr*; IE. base \**au-*, to perceive, hear, as also in L. *auris* cf. AURICULAR & *aus-cultare*, to listen (cf. AUSCULTATE)]. The RHD generally avoids mentioning hypothetical Indo-European bases, but its etymologies are very satisfactory and contain many particulars not mentioned in WNWD, WSNCD, the Concise Oxford Dictionary (COD), or Cassel's New English Dictionary (CNED). For instance, in the etymology of *chaparajos*, the RHD goes so far as to give also the Mexican Spanish variant and its composition: [*<* MexSp. var. of *chaparejos*, equiv. to *chapa*(rral) CHAPARRAL + *aparejos*, pl. of *aparejo* gear; akin to APPAREL].

It is interesting to compare the etymology of a word in several dictionaries. Let us take for example the word *schooner*. WSNCD simply says: "origin unknown;" WNWD says: "New England word *scoon*, to skim or skip upon the water;" the COD says: "perh. f. an alleged Sc. and New-England *scun*, *scoon*, skim or skip; orig. (c. 1713) *scooner*, name given by first designer, now *sch-* by assim. to its derivative Du. *schooner*;" Cassel's New English Dictionary (CNED) says: „Clydesdale *scoon*, *scon*, to skim along, to glide swiftly relat. to SHUNT, *-ER* assim. to Dut. derivative *schooner*“; the RHD says: „*scoon*, var. of dial. *scun* SCUD<sup>1</sup> (cf. dial Sw *skunna*, OE *scyndan*) + ER<sup>1</sup>.“ It might be of interest in this connection to mention not only the dialectical Swedish word *skunna*, but also the standard Swedish *skynda*, *v. i.* The Icelandic *skunda*, *v. i.* „to hurry' and *skynda*, *v. t.*, „to hasten, hurry,' with a meaningful difference in the root vowel, might be even more illuminating. Comparing the data of these dictionaries we see that the RHD alone gives the dialectical Swedish form *skunna*. That the word is possibly related to *shunt* is only mentioned in CNED.

In the etymology of the word *coach* the spelling *Kocsi czeke*r should be corrected to *kocsi szekér*.

As stated in the Guide to the Dictionary, "Definitions within an entry are individually numbered in a single sequence, regardless of any division according to part of speech. The most common part of speech is listed first, and the most frequently encountered meaning appears as the first definition for each part of speech. Specialized senses follow, and rare, archaic, and obsolete senses are usually listed at the end of their part of speech group. This order is changed in those cases where it is desirable to group related meanings together." This is a reasonable principle and a practical arrangement.

The definitions of the RHD are generally concise without being too brief and remind one of the style of scientific journals. With the names of plants and animals their scientific Latin names are also given. The names of chemical substances are usually explained and their composition shown by chemical formulae. These features make the RHD an invaluable aid for the translator of scientific texts and the scientific worker, although a general dictionary of the language as the RHD cannot be, and is not intended to be, a substitute for special scientific (technical, chemical, medical, etc.) dictionaries. The author of these lines has amply tested the usefulness of the RHD in preparing translations of natural science and medical texts.

Now let us examine a few words from the point of view of meaning.

**Adjourn** "5. to go to another place". The RHD does not mention that this

meaning is colloquial or informal. (This meaning is not included in the College Edition of the RHD [RHDC]).

**Approach** "12. The method used or steps taken in setting about a task, problem, etc." This is a very welcome new definition.

**Bark** It is from the RHD that we learn that a bark may have even more than three masts. It is interesting to note that only three masts are mentioned in WNWD, WSNCD, the COD, and CNED.

**Challenge** "8. difficulty in a job or undertaking that is stimulating to one engaged in it." This definition is again a welcome item because this meaning is pretty common in present-day English and is synonymous with *problem*. This meaning is not found in WNWD, WSNCD, or the COD.

On the other hand, the RHD does not give a technical meaning of the word which can be found in WSNCD, namely definition No. 3: "a test of immunity by exposure to virulent infective material after specific immunization."

**Piddle** is not given in the meaning 'to urinate, micturate', which meaning belongs to children's language according to WNWD or to colloquial speech according to the COD. A worse term for the same is, however, included. [The missing meaning has been included in the College Edition of the RHD.]

**Possessive** "3. jealously opposed to the personal independence of, or to any influence other than one's own upon, a child, spouse, etc." This definition is also new, the like of it cannot be found in other dictionaries.

**Rare**. The difference between American and British use of *rare* and *underdone* is well brought out in the RHD.

**Stampede** in the meaning of 'rodeo' and with the label "in the North-West" is again a new definition, not found in the other dictionaries mentioned above.

**Transpire** "1. 'to occur, happen take, place.' Why is there no indication that the word used in this meaning is a colloquialism and unsupported by etymology? The COD designates it as vulgar. This word should never be used in this etymologically incorrect meaning, especially as there is no need for it when *occur*, *happen*, *take place* are available. This meaning of the word should at least bear the label „incorr. colloq." even though its frequency is shown by its first place among the other meanings.

This raises the question whether prescriptive dictionaries should not include common abuses of words, meanings, and constructions with the proper labels.

**Triton** 'newt, eft'. This meaning is missing from the RHD. It is recorded in WSNCD and the COD.

A few remarks on the pronunciation of some words: (rōdā'ō), i. e. (ro'deiou), as second pronunciation variant for **rodeo** might be labeled "in SW U. S."

Though (lipid) may be more common, the second variant (lipid) deserves to be recommended in scientific language, and only the spelling **lipid**. Only the short first syllable (lip-) is in keeping with the length and stress rules of Greek- or Latin-based words.

The governments of verbs, less consistently of adjectives, and only rarely of nouns, are given in the RHD. A fuller record of governments would be appreciated by the foreign student. The governments could not only be shown in examples, but also immediately after the definition numbers if different meanings require different governments, and before the definition numbers if all the meanings require the same government. For instance the following governments might be indicated:

**admit** in the meaning of 'confess' may take *to* although this is etymologically incorrect;

**approximate** (v. i.) *to* 'come near to' occurs in scientific texts although it is probably incorrect;

**attack**, *n. on sg, against sy/sg;*

**basic** *to;*

**belong** *with;*

**comment** (v. i.) *on/upon;*

**decide** *on. for, against, between, in favor of, to + inf.*

**different** *from* (incorr. colloq. Brit. *to*);

**essential** (adj.) *to, for;*

**important** *to, for;*

**judge** (v. i.) *of;*

**natural** (adj.) *to;*

**penetrate** (v. i.) *into, through;*

**report** (v. i.) *on;*

**suitable** *for, to;*

**testify** (v. i.) *to;*

**useful** *to, for;*

**vital** *for, to;*

From the point of view of governments and prepositional combinations no existing English dictionary is perfect; the RHD is better in this respect than most dictionaries. It gives plenty of usage examples in phrases and whole sentences. It is in these examples that the governments are mostly shown.

In conclusion it can be said that, in spite of the few points criticized, the RHD is one of the best modern dictionaries of the English language.