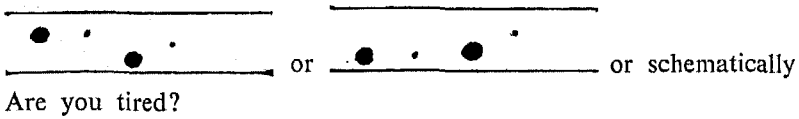


Interrogative Tunes in American English

by

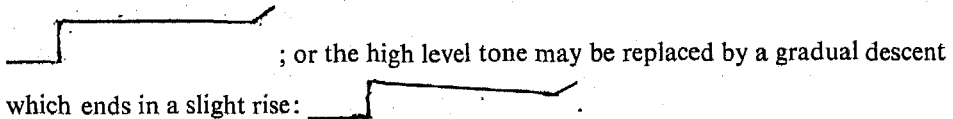
LÁSZLÓ MATZKÓ

It is well-known in the literature of English intonation that Yes—No questions are usually said with a high level + low rise or less formally with a low level + low rise tune. An example could be:



and . It is also known, that in American English, at least in Mid-Western speech, only the second tune, , is usual.

There exists, however, also another tune in American English which is fairly frequent: low level + high level: . This tune, as we will see, has two variants: after the high level tone there may be a slight rise:



Interestingly, this tune is not mentioned as part of the intonation system of American English even in K. Pike's book ("The Intonation of American English") in spite of its frequency. There is, however, one clear example in Pike's book, but without any comment:

"Do you feel all right, Owen?" Joe asked. This is, in our schematic representation,

. Another example in Pike's book:

Have you heard what I' bought to' day?

is not clear because the jump from a lower level to a higher one, I bought, comes rather late, after the middle of the sentence. The pattern of this example in our representation is . This is not much different *in essence* from the generally

recognized pattern _____/ and might therefore be interpreted as *phonemically* the same. After all, raising of the voice somewhere and somehow in the sentence is the essential thing. Yet the fact remains that we have to do here with *phonetically well distinguishable* variations. This is important at least from the point of view of the foreign student who wants to know exact facts and not only basic principles.

The following examples can be heard in the Linguaphone American English Course of the Linguaphone Institute.

Pattern _____



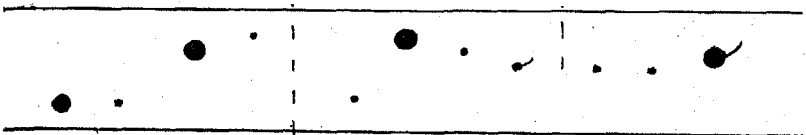
- (1) Do you like our living room? (Lesson 6)
 Pattern, 7. ábra i. e. jump from low to high level, very gentle descent, and a slight rise:



- 2) Is there a bookcase in our living room? (L. 6)



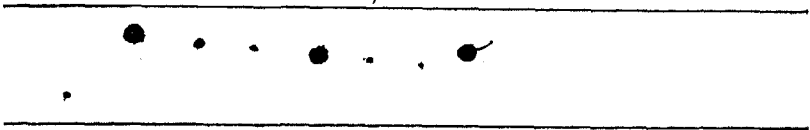
- (3) Are there any armchairs in the room? (L. 6)



- (4) Mister Thompson, will you sit here on my right? (L. 12)



- (5) Are you doing anything special tonight? (L. 14)



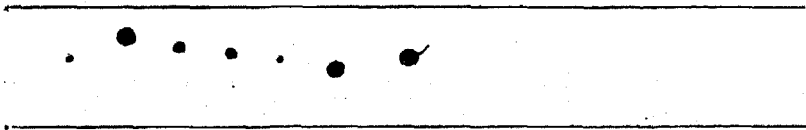
(6) Do you know the days of the week? (L. 20)

As can be seen in the diagrams, the final rise usually starts from a slightly higher, sometimes from a lower position than the height of the preceding syllable. This is, however, noticeable only when the record is played more slowly than the normal speed.

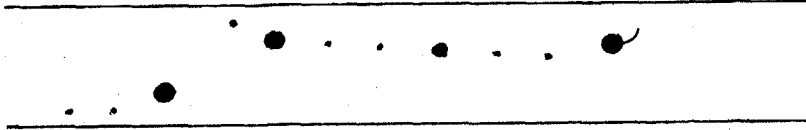


(7) Excuse me, can you tell me the way to Times Square by Fifth Avenue? (L. 30)

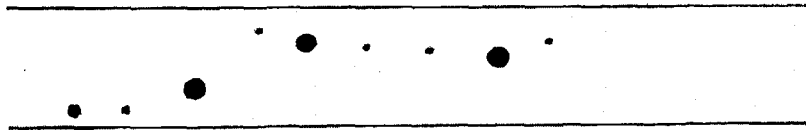
Here the final rise is distributed on the "tail", i. e. the last stressed syllable and the following unstressed ones.



(8) Does this bus go to Times Square? (L. 30)



(9) Is there any golf to be had near New York? (L. 42)



(10) Have you any seats for tomorrow? (L. 49)



(11) Do you serve tea at intermission? (L. 49)

Sometimes there is only a gradual descent with no final rise:

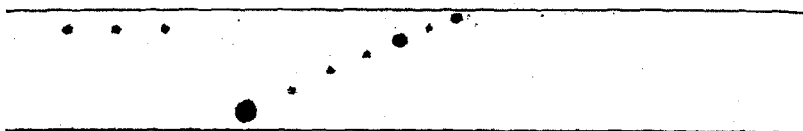


(12) Excuse me, can you tell me the way to the nearest Post Office? (L. 24)

There is one clear example in Pike's book for the pattern with level jump + rise, 6. ábra

"Do you feel all right, Owen?" (Joe asked.) (See p. 43.)

How does the tune treated above fit into the American intonation system? — It is a more emphatic tune and shows greater interest or politeness than. 4. ábra In British English, too, there is an interrogative tune consisting of a high level or a gradual descent followed by a rise, but in British English there is a sudden drop between the rise and the preceding syllable if the sentence is not very long. Furthermore, it is not the same syllables in American and in British English that are said on a high pitch. The British form of example (2) for instance would be:

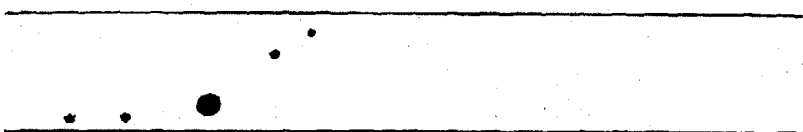


(2) Is there a bookcase in our living room?

Compare also example (3) with the British form:

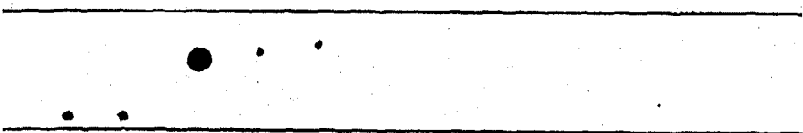


Even the low level + rise tune of American English is different from that of British English in which the rise starts from the low level of the preceding syllables:



Do you like dancing?

whereas in American there is a considerable jump upward after which the rise is, unlike in British English, only slight:



Do you like dancing? (Amer. E. Course, L. 14)

The examples quoted are evidence that the tune is an important and characteristic feature of the American intonation system.

An Introduction to Descriptive Linguistics by H. A.

Gleason, Jr., Published by Holt, Rinehart and Winston. Revised Edition. Copyright 1955, 1961 by Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.

In the Preface we can read the following: "One approach [to the study of language] has, however, received little attention until very recently: descriptive linguistics, the discipline which studies languages in terms of their internal structures. It differs from the other approaches in that it focuses its attention on different facets of human speech." . . . "This textbook . . . is not directed to prospective linguists alone; rather, widely various academic backgrounds and interests are assumed. Many of the students who use it will be particularly interested in understanding the place of descriptive linguistics among related disciplines." . . . "Brief treatments of historical linguistics, dialect studies, communication theory, and acoustic phonetics have been included primarily to show their very close relationship to descriptive linguistics."

"The first edition of this book was developed out of several years of teaching introductory linguistics at the Hartford Seminary Foundation. In a preliminary draft it was tested at a number of other institutions in a variety of courses." . . . "On the whole, . . . , it has stood the test and found favor with a growing number of teachers. The basic plan of the work, therefore, remains unchanged, though a number of small changes have been made. — New theoretical developments have come with increasing frequency. Questions which formerly were considered quite esoteric have come to be familiar subjects of discussion and debate. There is an increasing wealth of material which is available for inclusion in introductory courses . . ." ". . . it has been necessary to provide a somewhat wider selection of topics than in the first edition, and four chapters have been added." Nevertheless "The book remains an Introduction . . ." "The treatment of all subjects is, of course, only introductory; suggestions for further reading can be found in the bibliography." "This textbook may be used in an upperclass or graduate single-semester course by omitting the more marginal chapters. With some supplemental reading assignments, it is adaptable for a full-year course in general linguistics."

The arrangement of the material in chapters is as follows:

- 1 Language
- 2 English Consonants
- 3 The English Vowel System
- 4 English Stress and Intonation
- 5 The Morpheme
- 6 The Identification of Morphemes
- 7 Classing Allomorphs into Morphemes
- 8 Outline of English Morphology
- 9 Some Types of Inflection
- 10 Immediate Constituents
- 11 Syntactic Devices
- 12 Transformations
- 13 Language and Grammars
- 14 Some Inflectional Categories
- 15 Articulatory Phonetics