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WHEN AND HOW TO TEACH INTONATION?

Intonation and rhythm are the elements of pronunciation which require most attention and they should not be neglected or left to chance in the process of teaching a foreign language. Yet phoneticians do not give them too much attention. The situation of teaching English intonation in Poland is not good because, generally speaking, there is no tradition of teaching intonation in our schools. Sometimes, in secondary schools, at the beginning of the course teachers pay attention to the proper imitating of the model sentences by the pupils but they soon give it up. Even if they continue such lessons of intonation they very often do not find enough time to correct possible mistakes and then it seems to be beside the purpose. The emphasis in teaching English in Polish secondary schools is put first of all on teaching vocabulary and grammar; there is no time for other things, like intonation, for example. The reason of such situation is that teaching intonation does not appear in the curriculum because the authors realize the teachers will not have time for this; on the other hand teachers are afraid to introduce the teaching of any additional things, such as intonation, for then there might be too little time left to complete the curriculum on time. Another reason is that there is a limited number of teachers with good ears and proper training for teaching phonetics. Instead it is very easy to find teachers of English who are experts in English novel, poetry, or drama, and have a limited idea of how to teach English in schools at all. Only the students of the English philology departments have a special course in intonation (Practical English classes).

No doubt the methods of teaching English intonation are determined by many factors that should be taken into consideration before selecting a suitable method. People who need only the passive knowledge of English in order to read books or learners at the English courses organized by the Club of International Press and Book (KMPiK) will be taught intonation in a different manner from people who are going to stay abroad for a longer time or the students of the English philology departments. The teacher of English intonation will have to use different methods for teaching adults and children. Obviously the process of teaching intonation will also depend on the textbook that will be used during the course. It is, however, doubtless that intonation should be taught at every level of teaching English.

Generally speaking there are two main methods of teaching intonation - they may be called "the conscious method" and "the unconscious method"¹. The latter is based only on imitation - learners are to imitate the model utterance precisely, the teacher has to correct possible mistakes very carefully, there are no explanations following the model utterance & the learners need not know why a particular utterance has this or that intonation: correct imitating is their only task. This method may be employed especially while teaching children. The conscious method is also based on imitation but not to such an extent. The model utterances are followed by the teacher's explanations - he may even dictate the learners which utterances usually have rising intonation, which - falling, etc. and in what circumstances - then the learners are able to imitate the model utterances consciously. At the more advanced level the learners may be asked to produce different utterances with proper intonation by themselves. This method may be employed while teaching students of the English philology departments for example.

All phoneticians agree that intonation should be taught from the very beginning of the course of English. Hence the unconscious method seems to be the best one here. The process of

¹ These are the author's names for teaching intonation with detailed explanations and without any explanations respectively. Both methods are explained below.

teaching intonation should begin with the simplest tunes based on familiar vocabulary and then gradually pass on to the more difficult problems. First we should begin with only two basic tunes - rise and fall: they are so simple that they can be imitated by most learners without any difficulties. Since not all teachers have good ear and proper training for teaching phonetics it would be much better for the learners to imitate models recorded by native speakers of English than to imitate the teacher.

Intonation should be taught above all by the imitative method. Simple drawings plainly showing the melodic course may be of great help while the instructions of physiological (anatomical) character are practically completely useless. Observation of the vibrations of the vocal cords on which frequency the height of tone depends is possible only in special laboratories. A person who does not realize whether a given tone is higher or lower than another one or whether it rises or falls, will never learn a foreign language intonation even with the help of the most accurate descriptions of the larynx and of the way in which all the laryngeal muscles and gristles function.

When a learner overcomes the difficulties in expressing the correct melody in texts with marked intonation he should be given definite situations and verbal text to respond to the situation. His attention should be then fixed on selecting the adequate intonational type and introducing it to the given text. The most advanced learner should carry on simple, and gradually more and more difficult, conversation (not prepared earlier) using the correct pronunciation and intonation².

It is not out of place here to emphasize the role of the teacher in the process of teaching pronunciation and intonation. His role is very important - he must watch the learners to imitate the model utterances properly and always correct possible mistakes. He should also utter all the sentences very carefully - with proper intonation, stresses and pauses - even if intonation is not the point in question. He should always use proper intonation while explaining grammar or vocabulary and

² Cf. W. J a s s e m, *Podręcznik wymowy angielskiej*, Warszawa 1973, p. 59.

must see his pupils imitate the model utterances all the time, not only during intonation drill lessons. It follows, therefore, that a teacher who wants to be successful in teaching English intonation must be above all persistent in his work.

It often happens that musical persons learn the intonation of a foreign language much easier than those who are not musical. It is not, however, a rule. There is no justification for the statement that the lack of a good ear for music may be a considerable obstacle in learning intonation. The use of music seems however to be of little help in the process of teaching intonation, though no doubt people with a good ear for music are in a more privileged situation than people tone-deaf. If a teacher decided to use the intonation textbook by O'Connor and Arnold³ as the fundamental book for the course he could do the following experiment: each tone group from the book could be preceded by a short melody played on a stringed instrument preferably (the reasons are explained below), that would resemble the rises and falls of the pitch, characteristic of a given tone group.

Here are some examples based on this principle:

Tone Group 1 (Low Fall).

'Isn't it \wonderful



Tone Group 2 (High Fall)

!What did you \think of it?



³ J. D. O'Connor, G. F. Arnold, *Intonation of Colloquial English*, London 1973.

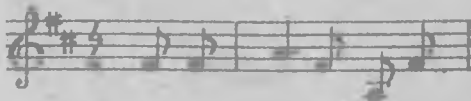
Tone Group 7 (High Rise)

You've 'heard from her?



Tone Group 9 (High Fall + Low Rise)

I am 'glad you ,like it



The examples for waving (rising-falling and falling-rising) intonation are not included here - the waving usually takes place on one syllable and such melody is impossible to be played on the piano⁴; therefore a stringed instrument on which a glissando may be made is advisable. The tempo of the examples should be adapted to the average tempo of the speech, their key depending on the range of voices of the speakers providing the model utterances. It is difficult to say whether this method will prove successful for it has not been tested yet.

The stretch between the lowest and the highest tones in the above examples is not large, reaching one octave at the utmost. This small difference may be inaudible for people hard of hearing and so if there is a piano in the classroom it may be used in the following way: if the learners cannot properly imitate the model utterance, the teacher can strike some groups of keys of the piano in the extreme positions on the keyboard in order to help the learners hear the difference between a high and a low pitch; and so, for an utterance

I am'glad you,like it

the teacher can strike a group of keys at the top of the keyboard (for 'glad), then at its bottom (for ,like) and then somewhere in the middle of the keyboard (for it, though not stressed


⁴ These examples were prepared on the piano, according to the author's tempo of speech and the range of voice.

but slightly rising, being a rising Tail). While repeating this procedure several times the teacher can simultaneously produce the utterance; later, still striking the keys he may ask the learners to utter the sentence; finally, they should be able to utter this sentence without the help of the piano.

At a more advanced stage the process of teaching intonation should become more conscious. The learners should be able not only to distinguish different types of intonation but they should also realize which utterances usually have falling intonation, which - rising, etc. Also they ought to know what additional meanings are carried by different types of intonation and in which utterances as well as be familiar with the English usage of falling and rising tunes which manifest the mood of the speaker or his attitude towards the listener.

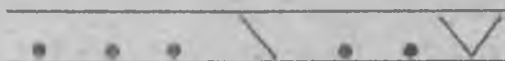
An intonational dictation⁵ may be a very good exercise for the advanced learners developing their ability to distinguish different patterns of intonation as well as to realize what additional meanings are conveyed by intonation. What does such a dictation look like? The learners are introduced several times to an utterance - delivered preferably by a native speaker - and they are to write it in two ways: "normally", using only stresses to indicate sentence stresses, falls, rises, and wavings, and graphically - between two parallel lines representing the approximate upper and lower limits of the voice. Dashes are used to show stressed syllables and dots to show unstressed ones. Secondary stresses are omitted, at least at the beginning so that the learners' task should not be made more difficult. Here are some examples of such dictation:

The Model Utterance (MU): He was right, nevertheless
 Learners' Notations (LNs): 'He was 'right | neverthe ,less



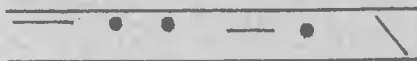
(MU): That question's too hard for me
 (LNs): That question's 'too hard for 'me

⁵ I owe the idea of such dictations to Mrs. Anna Korlińska, M. A., who has already been practising them during her classes on intonation with the second year students of the Institute of English, University of Łódź.



(MU): Where do you want to sit?

(LNs): 'Where do you 'want to 'sit?



If a pattern conveys an additional meaning the learners are to write it together with the notation either in a form of a conveyed implication or a complement to the sentence. And so the sentence "That question's too hard for me" may be completed in two ways:

- That question's too hard for me (but no doubt someone else can manage it).

- That question's too hard for me but I'm sure John will answer it.

Introducing this form of exercise to the learners the teacher should begin with simple tunes in short sentences with a few stresses and then pass to more and more difficult tunes (compound tunes and special stresses included) in longer sentences.

The results of these dictations are quite effective. The learners distinguish different intonational patterns much easier and have better understanding of additional implications conveyed by intonation. Intonational dictations have proved to be of great help in the process of teaching intonation.

English belongs to the languages whose intonational systems were examined in the closest manner. There have been many books on English intonation. Each of them contains a good analysis of intonation as well as a lot of exercises for the learners; some of the books (especially the latest ones) are accompanied by tapes. All those books have however one thing in common - they can very quickly bore both the teacher and the learners. In order to avoid boredom during intonation drill lessons teachers should always bear in mind that it is not enough to follow the curriculum according to the handbook: very often they ought to

rely on their own inventiveness in bringing variety to these lessons by contriving new kinds of exercises or by differentiating the exercises which are familiar to the learners.

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KIEDY I JAK UCZYĆ INTONACJI?

Artykuł przedstawia szereg sposobów zwiększenia efektywizacji nauczania intonacji na różnych poziomach nauczania języka angielskiego. Przede wszystkim postulowane jest rozpoczynanie nauki intonacji już od samego początku nauki języka, najpierw metodą "nieświadomą" (tylko powtarzania, bez żadnych wyjaśnień teoretycznych), a następnie metodą "świadomą" (ćwiczenia plus teoria).

Podstawową metodą stosowaną podczas nauczania fonetyki i intonacji jest metoda naśladowcza. Artykuł postuluje także wprowadzenie kilku nowych metod, na przykład:

- poprzedzanie wypowiedzi modelowych krótkimi nagraniami muzycznymi naśladującymi przebieg melodyczny ćwiczonych zdań
- wprowadzenie dyktand intonacyjnych (dla zaawansowanych słuchaczy).

Podkreślona jest również trudna i ważna rola nauczyciela, który podczas nauczania fonetyki i intonacji powinien polegać nie tylko na sobie, ale szeroko stosować techniczne środki dydaktyczne oraz nagrania dokonane przez native speakers. Powinien on także zwracać szczególną uwagę na popełniane błędy, aby nie dopuścić do ich utrwalania, oraz starać się różnicować ćwiczenia w celu uniknięcia sztywnego znużenia słuchaczy.