



Unit 15

Intonation (3):

the secondary tones of English and their meaning

Print version of the
Phonetics with Listening Practice (British)
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15.1

English Phonetics: Unit 15:

[ˈɪŋ.gəlɪf fə. nɛt.ɪks ˈjuː.n.ɪt fɪf. ˈtʰiːn]

Intonation (3)

[.m.tə.ˈneɪf.ŋ ˈθriː]

the secondary tones of English and their meaning

[ðə ˈsɛk.ən.dɪ.i ˈtʰəʊnz əv ˈɪŋ.gəlɪf əŋ ðeə ˈmiːn.ɪŋ]

Robert Spence

[ˈrɒb.ət ˈspɛns]

based on material by M. A. K. Halliday

[ˈbeɪst ən mə. ˈtʰɪɹə.i.əl baɪ ˈɛm ə kʰeɪ ˈhæl.ɪd.eɪ]

15.2

1 Tone 1

1.1 tonic

Secondary tones of Tone 1 (tonic)

Tone 1 medium

tonic fall starts at same height as last syllable of pretonic

(KEY: neutral)

//_{.1} John's de- / cided to be- / come a */ doctor //

Tone 1 wide

tonic fall starts higher than last syllable of pretonic

(KEY: strong / unexpected)

//_{.1+} ^ it's the / only / place I've / ever */ lived in //

Tone 1 narrow

tonic fall starts lower than last syllable of pretonic

(KEY: mild / expected)

//₁₋ how can an / ashtray be */ vegetable //('20 Fragen')

15.3

1.2 pretonic

Secondary tones of Tone 1 (pretonic)

Tone 1 level

each pretonic foot has level tone; pretonic feet at same height (before medium fall), stepping up (before wide fall), stepping down (before narrow fall)

(KEY (FORCE): neutral) (examples: previous slide)

Tone 1 bouncing

each pretonic foot 'bounces' (down and up)

often with 'wide' tonic

(KEY (FORCE): forceful)

//₁₊ why don't you / ask him to / give you your */ money back //

Tone 1 listing

pretonic resembles sequence of tone 3 + tone 3 (...)

//₁ a / pound of / apples / a / grapefruit / and / half a dozen */ oranges //

15.4

2 Tone 2

2.1 tonic

Secondary tones of Tone 2 (tonic)

Tone 2 rising

unmarked: 'normal question'

//₂ have you / seen their / new */ house //

Tone 2 falling-rising

tonic falls (focus) then rises (speech function), sharp change of direction

marked: 'specifying the point of the query'

//₂ have you / seen their / new */ house //

*//₂ couldn't we go / out / just for an / hour / Daphne //

*//₂ honestly // *//₂ why //

15.5

2.2 pretonic

Secondary tones of Tone 2 (pretonic)

Tone 2 high

pretonic feet are high and level

KEY: neutral

_____ _____ _____ **∨**
//_{.2} have you / seen their / new */ house //

Tone 2 low

pretonic feet are low and level

KEY: intense (surprise / disapproval / concern)

(in U.S. English: neutral)

//_{.2} don't you / think you */ **/** ought to / tell them //

15.6

3 Tone 3

3.1 pretonic

Secondary tones of Tone 3 (pretonic)

Tone 3 mid

pretonic feet are mid and level

(KEY: confirmatory / reassuring)

//_{.3} [^] I / don't sup- / pose it / really */ matters //

Tone 3 low

pretonic feet are low and level

(KEY: unconcerned / uncertain)

//_{.3} [^] I / don't sup- / pose it / really */ matters //

Neither of these choices of pretonic is available before the 'tone 3' tonic segment of compound tones 13 and 53.

15.7

4 Tone 4

4.1 tonic

Secondary tones of Tone 4 (tonic)

Tone 4 high (preselects down-stepping pretonic)

each pretonic foot level, last syllable of pretonic falls slightly
(neutral: logical complication of some kind)

//₄ ^ if hē / had any / common */ sense //

Tone 4 low (preselects swinging pretonic)

each pretonic foot falls and rises, with main force of fall
(marked: exclusive / contrastive / expressing strong reservation)

//₄ ^ but it / certainly / couldn't be */ animal //

(context: '20 Fragen')

15.8

5 Tone 5

5.1 tonic

Secondary tones of Tone 5 (tonic)

Tone 5 high (preselects up-stepping pretonic)

each pretonic foot level; last syllable of pretonic rises slightly
(neutral, expressing strong assertion / override / surprise)

//₅ . it's / simply / not */ true //

Tone 5 low (preselects swinging pretonic)

each pretonic foot rises and falls, with main force on rise
(intense, showing awe or disappointment)

//₅ look at that / lovely old */ steam engine //

Tone 5 low with breathy voice quality: awe

Tone 5 low with normal voice quality: sarcasm

15.9