

## PROTOTYPICAL INTONATION PATTERNS IN ENGLISH DISCOURSE: COGNITIVE APPROACH

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The article surveys function that intonation units play in the discourse, systemizing scientific approaches to that issue. The function of intonation units is analyzed in the framework of structural, pragmatic, functional and cognitive perspective. The paper rests on the overview of each functional capacity of intonation, viewed within the singled out scientific approaches. The article highlights constitutive, segmentative, distinctive, stylistic and cognitive functions of intonation elements in the discourse. The focus of the article is on the role of intonation units in the realm of cognitive mechanisms that allow speakers to code and decode linguistic information during the process of communication. Intonation units are approached as cognitive clues that trigger procession of acoustic information in the consciousness of the listener. The cognitive function of intonation is viewed in the prism of prototypical intonation patterns that lay foundation of speech generation and procession. The paper analyzes and systemizes the typology and architecture of melodic patterns that are defined as universal intonation models, built by the interplay of basic intonation parameters. Besides, the concept of intonation pattern is defined in the paradigm of cognitive approach to the study of intonation. The typology and architecture of intonation models is highlighted within the scope of music moods, symbolic and cognitive perspectives. The assays of comparative phonetic experimental research into intonation peculiarities of emotional and neutral English discourse are presented in the paper. The intonation units are analyzed in correlation to prototypical meanings that they realize in the discourse. The article describes the typology and architecture of prototypical intonation patterns that ensure unambiguous decoding of universal meanings. The typology of the prototypical intonation patterns is presented within the dichotomy of universal meanings which are defined as: incentive/statement; background/foreground; major/minor; approval/disapproval. The suggested typology of prototypical intonation patterns reflects functional capacity of intonation in reliance with the cognitive mechanism of decoding linguistic information and embraces such prototypical intonation patterns as: incentive, intensification, identification and estimation.

## ПРОТОТИПОВІ ІНТОНАЦІЙНІ МОДЕЛІ АНГЛОМОВНОГО ДИСКУРСУ: КОГНІТИВНИЙ ПІДХІД

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**Ключові слова:** інтонація, функція, когнітивний підхід, прототипова інтонаційна модель, дихотомія, тональний рівень, термінальний тон, інтервал.

У статті розглядаються функції інтонації у дискурсі та систематизуються наукові підходи до розв'язання цього питання. Функціональний потенціал інтонаційних одиниць аналізується у площині структурного, функціонального, прагматичного та когнітивного підходів до вивчення інтонації та її ролі у спілкуванні. У статті описуються різні функціональні властивості інтонаційних одиниць крізь призму визначених наукових підходів. Зокрема, дається визначення таких функцій інтонації, як: структуруюча, розділова, сигнальна, стилістична та когнітивна. Основна увага зосереджена на тому, яку роль інтонаційні одиниці відіграють у когнітивних процесах, що забезпечують кодування та декодування лінгвістичної інформації у процесі комунікації. Інтонаційні одиниці визначаються як когнітивні ключі, що запускають процес аналізу акустичної інформації у свідомості мовця. При цьому когнітивна функція інтонації розглядається крізь призму прототипових інтонаційних моделей, які формують фундамент породження та сприйняття мовлення. У статті проаналізовано та систематизовано типологію та структуру мелодійних моделей, які визначаються як універсальні інтонаційні моделі, що складаються завдяки взаємодії базових інтонаційних параметрів. Поняття інтонаційної моделі розглядається під кутом зору когнітивного підходу до вивчення інтонації. У статті наведено різні типології та структурні особливості універсальних інтонаційних моделей, які визначені у межах емоційно-музикального, символічного та когнітивного підходів. Робота містить результати порівняльного експериментально-фонетичного дослідження емоційного та нейтрального англомовного дискурсу. Інтонаційні одиниці аналізуються з урахуванням того, який зміст вони передають у мовленні. Отже, у статті описана типологія і структура прототипових інтонаційних моделей, які безпомилково декодуються слухачем як такі, що реалізують певні універсальні значення, що систематизовані у межах дихотомій: спонукання / твердження; фон / фігура; мажор / мінор; схвалення / несхвалення. Наведена у роботі типологія прототипових інтонаційних моделей побудована з урахуванням функціонального навантаження у площині когнітивного механізму декодування лінгвістичної інформації і охоплює такі різновиди інтонаційних моделей: спонукальні, ідентифікуючі, інтенсифікуючі та визначаючі.

**Introduction.** Contemporary research into intonation shows that it plays a crucial role in the process of communication, ensuring an adequate output and processing of linguistic and paralinguistic information. Intonation elements are intuitively perceived

by speakers as meaningful units that contribute to an overall semantic structure of an utterance [Laver, 1994; O'Connor, 1984]. Speakers can detect some emotional meaning by the quality of the voice and attribute what they hear to a particular emotional-

ly-marked category. For example, speakers can decode irritation, anger or tenderness by a particular timbre of tone pitch. Scientists approach functional capacities of intonation from different angles, taking into consideration its role to identify meaning, contribute to an overall semantic and grammatical completeness of an utterance or mark an emotional or modal meaning. We believe that numerous approaches to single out functional value of intonation are realized in the framework of 4 linguistic frameworks: **structural, pragmatic, functional and cognitive.**

The structural viewpoint [Laver, 1994; O'Connor, 1984] focuses primarily on what role intonation elements play to build syntactical structure of utterances, delimit boundaries between syntactical units and mark a communicative type of utterances. Thus, the **constitutive function** is realized in the ability of intonation units to form utterances as communicative units. Prosody unifies words into utterances, thus giving the latter the final form without which they cannot exist. A succession of words arranged syntactically is not a communicative unit until a certain prosodic pattern is attached to it.

*E.g. Pete has left for London.*

This sentence turns into a communicative unit when it is plunged into a certain communicative situation, when key words in its structure are accented and finalized by a terminal tone. Intonation system is the only tool that adds vocabulary items extra meaning, turning them into units of communication that can arouse the feedback of the listener. Intonation can dramatically change appellative function of a whole utterance altering pitch height of the terminal tone. For example, the same lexical meaning of the word “fire” being marked by a high pitched falling terminal tone is perceived as an emotional warning of threat, while the same direction of terminal tone realized in low pitch zone is perceived as a command.

*E.g. Fire! Fire!*

Distinctive function of intonation is revealed on a syntactical level, as intonation units mark the boundaries between grammatically relevant parts of the sentence structure, delimiting either subordinate/coordinate relations between them or marking syntactical functions of the sentence elements. In this case, intonation does not manifest any grammatical value, it serves as a clue for the speaker to interpret the grammatical ties between sentence stakeholders correctly. Thus, sentence stress combined with the falling terminal tone in the examples given below marks subject-predicate relations, whereas pauses and rising tone on the sentence constituents show a syntactical function of this word that is pivotal to comprehend the meaning of the message in general.

*E.g. Her sister, said Mary, | was a well-known actress (a compound sentence). // Her sister said |*

*Mary was a well-known actress (a complex sentence with an object subordinate clause)*

*Smiling Tom | entered the hall (“smiling” is an attribute). // Smiling | Tom entered the hall (“smiling” is an adverbial modifier).*

Depending on the situation of communication this utterance may become a question if the speaker changes its intonation contour into rising or it can sound as a thoughtful remark in case the terminal tone is level. It testifies the concept that intonation units are omnipresent tools of communication as they form and finalize communicative types of utterances – statements, questions, imperatives, exclamations and modal (attitudinal) types: categoric statements, non-categoric, perfunctory statements, quizzical statements, certainty and uncertainty questions, insistent questions, etc. In constituting an utterance, intonation at the same time performs the **segmentative and delimitative function**. It segments connected discourse into utterances and intonation groups and simultaneously delimits them one from another, showing relations between them. It also signals the semantic nucleus and other semantically important words of an utterance (or an intonation group).

In the framework of pragmatic approach [Bolinger, 1989; Chafe, 1994] intonation is viewed from three perspectives: the ability of intonation units to convey different shades of modal meaning or signal about emotional state of the speaker; the role of intonation to form sentence perspective. The **distinctive function** of intonation within this approach manifests itself on several levels. As the essential tool of communicative efficiency, intonation, first and foremost, distinguishes communicative types of utterances. Pitch, direction of the terminal tone clearly signals whether the speaker questions, commands, requests, exclaims or states something.

The ability of intonation units to mark different emotional states and communicate approval, disapproval, disbelief or acquiescence and other modal shades of meaning is viewed as attitudinal or modal distinctive function. In the example given below “splendid” bears different emotional or attitudinal meaning depending on pitch and type of a terminal tone. Low pitch in combination with low falling terminal tone makes it sound authoritative with the tint of certainty and approval. High pitch realization of falling terminal tone signifies elation and approval. In case the utterance is pronounced with rising high pitch terminal tone, it is perceived as doubt or surprise.

*E.g. Splendid! Splendid! Splendid!*

Various modal meanings can also be expressed and differentiated by lexical and grammatical means, such as modal words as “sure”, “undoubtedly”, “definitely”, “perhaps”, “may be”, “probably” and modal verbs “may”, “might” and so on. Usually, the speaker’s

attitude is in tune with the semantic meaning of these modal words or verbs. Anyhow, a single accent can completely change the modal meaning of the utterance and play a crucial role in decoding its true meaning that corresponds to the contents of the words the speaker chooses. However, modal meaning may disagree with word content and then intonation is the crucial factor in determining the modal meaning of the utterance.

*E.g. He is <sup>1</sup>sure to come. // He is <sup>1</sup>sure to come.*

In the first utterance an accent on the “sure” aligned with low falling tone contributes to a categoric and certain statement of the speaker, whereas in the second the accent on the same word is altered by a rising terminal tone turning the whole utterance into an uncertain or even condescending statement.

Multiple experiments into mechanisms of speech coding and decoding [Chomsky, 2002; Cook, 2002; Ladd, 2001] testify the fact that listeners rely on acoustic clues to single out rheme and theme of the utterance, because accents laid on the key words trigger decoding mechanisms of the listener and enable one to distinguish between what is already known and what is new in the utterance [Halliday, 1967, p. 199–244]. For instance, accent on a functional word or the position of the terminal tone within the utterance can considerably impact sentence perspective for the listener.

*E.g. My <sup>1</sup>friend (theme) has been a way (rheme). // My <sup>1</sup>friend (rheme) has been a way (theme).*

The position of sentence stress and terminal tone change sentence perspective, indicating that the part of the utterance marked by a terminal falling tone signifies new information (rheme) while sentence stress marks constituents of already known information (theme). The logical center of these two utterances is distinguished by intonation element that demonstrates discourse-distinctive function of intonation.

Functional approach takes into consideration the importance of intonation units to differentiate speaking styles [Красовська, 2022, с. 21–24] in compliance with the situation of communication, communicative aim, social status of speakers. Under different conditions (speaking in public, communicating to friends, making a spontaneous speech, etc.) speakers choose a number of intonation units that will enable them to achieve a pragmatic aim of communication. Thus, spontaneous speech is usually full of pauses, much slow in tempo, contains a lot of level and rising terminal tones to signal about more information ahead. Public speeches also vary in the array of intonation units used by the speaker to make the audience focused and comprehend the idea. These tools embrace accidental rise of the tone on the significant words, high pitch realization of terminal tones, high volume that contribute to an emotionally charged

message. Thus, intonation performs **stylistic–distinctive function** that manifests itself in the ability of intonation units to differentiate pronunciation (phonetic) styles, determined by extralinguistic factors (situation, audience, goal of communication) [Crystal, 1969; O’Connor, 1984].

Cognitive approach to the study of intonation function in the discourse originates from the study of cognitive mechanisms that ensure the basis of coding and decoding acoustic information [Калита, 2007; Красовська, 2024]. Within this approach intonation units are defined as acoustic clues able to activate more complicated cognitive operations necessary to convey and process acoustic information [Cook, 2002]. We believe that cognitive function of intonation is revealed through symbolism of certain intonation patterns or single intonation elements that are employed as clichés which stand for a number of unambiguously comprehensive concepts [Kazuko, 2010]. The realization of cognitive function can be modified by a communicative context that conditions the usage of particular intonation means to achieve a pragmatic goal of communication within an unambiguous intonation pattern.

However, the typology of intonation patterns remains a debatable question in modern linguistics, as scientists single out different structural elements that build up these intonation patterns. The structure of a typical melodic contour is approached as the movement of tone within utterance boundaries. From this perspective, 10 major contours have been singled out: For example, wave, wave with climax at end, rising wave, falling wave, arch, inverse arch (bowl), rising line, falling line, horizontal line, combination [Siegmeister, 1965, p. 64–77]. This approach interprets intonation patterns as a combination of different direction of the basic unit used to describe the pitch component – the tone. Depending on whether the pitch of the voice varies or remains unvaried tones are subdivided into kinetic and static. Static tones may have different pitch level of the voice – the high static tone, the mid static tone, the low static tone. Kinetic tones are characterized by the variation in the pitch movement direction. According to the direction of pitch movement, kinetic tones are subdivided into simple and complex. Simple tones are unidirectional: the falling and the rising tones. Complex tones are bidirectional: the falling-rising tone, the rising-falling tone, and the rising-falling-rising tone.

Another approach to the typology and architecture of intonation patterns originates from applying analysis of music into speech melody. It assumes that four basic characteristics of music (pitch, dynamics, tempo, timbre) in combination build up the system of logical forms that reflect “music moods”. [Seeger, 1960, p. 252]. The combination of pitch, dynamics, tempo and timbre are realized in two basic tonal

directions defined as tense and dense modes that reflect emotional tension of speaker. However, all the intonation patterns within this typology are characterized by ascending or descending terminal tone, their difference arises from realization of a pitch component on a certain element of an utterance that is defined as arch.

Melodic contour is defined as a certain symbolic pattern that is characterized by acoustically important features to decode a certain meaning. However, the controversy lies in differentiating the exact and universally relevant number of intonation elements that set the shape and boundaries of a melodic contour. An attempt to exclude ambiguity of intonation contours typology was made by Charles Adams within entomusical architecture of intonation patterns [Adams, 1976, p. 183–215]. The latter is singled out with the reference to essential acoustic parameters: boundaries, pitch, slope and deviation within the slope. First and foremost, an intonation pattern is defined in the minimum boundaries, delimiting its beginning and termination. Another intonation feature that contributes to the structure of an intonation pattern is pitch of the boundaries realization: high (H) or low (L). Relations between the pitches are measured in semitones that mark the extent or magnitude of these relationships. The third distinctive parameter is slope of intonation pattern that is termed as falling/rising/level direction of melody towards the final boundary of the intonation pattern. Variation of melodic slope within the boundaries that embraces increase or decrease of pitch level in contrast with the initial pitch level is viewed as one more constituent of intonations patterns, termed deviation.

The typologies of intonation contours or patterns envisioned above tend to single out distinctive universal features of intonation system that are approached as generative units of speech production. On the other hand, the melodic contours in terms of the presented approaches are viewed as logical constructs devoid of meaning and associated with some specific physiological states and process [Fougeron, 1989, p. 200–210]. However, the complexity of intonation parameters that enable to render and comprehend different meanings remains open for research.

**The goal of the research** is to throw some light on the universal character of intonation units in the English discourse. To attain this target, we have conducted a comparative phonetic experiment to define cognitive function of intonation units and single out prototypic intonation patterns that ensure the processes of coding and decoding of acoustic information in the course of communication. The object of the research is intonation features of emotional and neutral English discourse that are perceived by the listeners as correlates of certain meaning. The subject of the

experiment is the interplay of intonation elements within an utterance which convey an unambiguously decoded meaning during the communication.

**Experiment and Results.** The cognitive function of intonation units should be viewed in relation to meaning that is conveyed and perceived by communicants. The research into intonation of emotional speech and comparison it with neutral speech has enabled us to single out intonation patterns that are unambiguously decoded as meaningful units. The typology and architecture of intonation patterns depends on the interplay of several intonation elements depending on the intention of the speaker to convey a certain meaning. The shades of the meaning can be versatile, anyhow unmistakably comprehended universal meanings that have been singled out during our phonetic research are the following: incentivizing, intensifying, identifying and estimating. Thus, we have researched into prototypical combination of intonation units which function as symbolic meaningful patterns that are perceived by the listener and arouse a particular feedback. The distinctive features of a symbolic intonation pattern are pitch, direction of terminal tone, interval between the beginning and the end of intonation pattern and its duration (tempo of the speaker's voice). Our typology of intonation symbolic intonation patterns involves such types as:

- incentive intonation pattern that motivates the speaker to do some action;
  - intensification intonation pattern – lays accent or underlines importance of the key information;
  - identification intonation pattern – signals about emotional state;
  - estimation intonation pattern – renders the attitude of the speaker to the topic of communication.
- Incentive intonation model is built up by the interplay of falling terminal tone that can be realized on low or high pitch level. The deviation of pitch level marks how urgent the matter is for the speaker. Incentive intonation pattern is characterized by a narrow interval, anyhow its broad variant adds extra value to the utterance. Incentive intonational pattern communicates command, recommendation, guideline, warning or threat. Anyhow, the typology of incentive intonation patterns can be limited by the dichotomy of incentive vs statement.

*E.g. <sup>1</sup>All participants <sup>1</sup>have to <sup>1</sup>make a report. <sup>1</sup>Help me <sup>1</sup>right now. <sup>1</sup>Watch out!*

The given utterances are decoded as stimulating to do an action. The listeners interpret falling terminal tone as binding to complete an action. High pitch of its realization (<sup>1</sup>Watch out!) makes the utterance sound urgent and alarming. High pitch beginning of the utterance <sup>1</sup>Help me <sup>1</sup>right now in combination with a low pitched falling terminal tone adds sincerity and marks close ties between the interlocutors.

The place of accent in the utterance is conditioned by cognitive mechanism of foregrounding the key elements of information. This mechanism of foregrounding is based on hierarchical relations between type and form of the elements that constitute the mental block of information. Thus, doers of the action and the direction of the action, as well as an essential attribute can acquire accent, new information is foregrounded too. The intensification pattern is the most versatile and embrace a number of tools, such as sentence stress, accidental rise, terminal tone on the key element of a mental construct.

E.g. *Gabriel said*  $\tilde{z}$  *-if we*  $\backslash$  *won the war,*  $\tilde{z}$  *we could build the*  $\uparrow$  *whole 'new world.*||

*Your farther and I*  $\tilde{z}$  *are*  $\backslash$  *so*  $\rightarrow$  *proud.*||

In the given example rising terminal tone *war* does not just convey incompleteness, but marks the direction of the action and rests the attention of the listener on this element of the information construct. The accidental rise  $\uparrow$ *whole* lays emphasis on the dramatic change the action can bring about, while sentence stress in combination with the falling terminal tone  $\backslash$ *farther and I* intensify the actors, involved in realization of the action.

The architecture of the incentive intonation pattern can be viewed as the dichotomy of background intonation units and a foreground intonation element that is perceived as a nucleus of the information, conveyed in the utterance. Anyhow, the outstanding nature of the foreground intonation element, for instance the accidental rise on the word  $\uparrow$ *whole* or the rising terminal tone on *war*, become conspicuous and clear for the listener against the background of common intonation parameters.

The identification intonation pattern is a prototypical interplay of intonation elements that are able to trigger the cognitive mechanisms of the listener and enable the one to decode emotional state of the speaker. The nomenclature of emotional states is versatile and open to controversy. Thus, the survey into intonation parameters, employed to render and recognize emotions, is logically limited by the classificational schemes, accepted in the framework of the research. The procedure of our experiment involves comparing intonation patterns of emotional and neutral types of speech. Therefore, the assays show that emotional speech can be approached as the dichotomy of minor and major emotional states clearly perceived by the listener. Difficulties emerge at the stage of labeling a particular emotional state, while 85% of respondents are able to define a general slant of an utterance as positive/negative or, to put it in musical terms, as major/minor.

Prototypical intonation elements that constitute the identificatory intonation pattern are realized in different registers/pitch zones in reliance with a general slant of an utterance (major/minor). Thus, the

identificatory intonation pattern in major slant is characterized by a lower pitch of the initial syllables of the utterance in contrast to a high-pitched terminal tone that creates a broad positive interval between the beginning and the end of the utterance. This intonation contour communicates positive emotions that are clearly interpreted by listeners as the uplifted state of the speaker.

E.g. *-My man,*  $\tilde{z}$  *you touched me.*|| *-Look,*  $\rightarrow$  *who's here!*|| *Akim.*

In the given examples above the beginning of the utterance is pronounced at an average pitch level that goes in contrast with a low-pitched falling terminal tone. As a result, a positive interval adds sincerity and openness to the whole utterance. The contrast is achieved by the interplay of the same parameters in a different way, when low pitch of the beginning is accompanied by a high pitch falling or level tone, which is clearly defined as major slant.

E.g. *What a pretty outfit!*|| *Your farther and I*  $\tilde{z}$  *are*  $\backslash$  *so*  $\rightarrow$  *proud.*||

Apart from identifying emotional states, intonation units play an essential role to recognize attitude of the speaker about the information communicated. There are often cases when lexical and grammatical means can be misleading to clearly decode the attitude of the speaker, while intonation unambiguously estimates the speaker's approval or disapproval of the message. So, the estimation prototypical intonation pattern is also defined within the dichotomy of approval/disapproval. The listener can unmistakably interpret approval, if the utterance starts on the average pitch level and is finalized by a low falling terminal. This interplay builds a narrow interval that is perceived as positive attitude of the speaker or certainty of what one says. On the opposite, a high-pitched beginning together with a falling-rising or rising-falling terminal tone adds uncertain, hesitant or negative slant to the utterance.

E.g. *He isn't serious, I hope.* || *I*  $\rightarrow$  *hope,*  $\tilde{z}$  *he*  $\backslash$  *isn't serious.*

During the experiment the recipients were offered to differentiate between the utterances that have the same lexical means and grammatical structure, though bear opposite attitudinal meaning as it is exemplified above. The first utterance starts on an average pitch and ends in a low pitch zone marked by falling terminal tone. The combination of these parameters is interpreted by the listener as certainty of the speaker that the information is true. The second utterance is characterized by a high-pitched beginning and the complex movement of the terminal tone that starts as high falling and ends as rising which suggests disapproval of the speaker and intention to clarify the matter.

**Conclusions.** Summing up, it is important to emphasize that functional value of intonation can be

approached from the different scientific perspective that focuses on its structural, pragmatic or functional capacities as the subsystem of the language. The contemporary paradigm of phonetic research assumes that intonation units are triggers of cognitive processes that ensure generation and processing of information during communication. To give insight into cognitive mechanism of acoustic information coding and decoding, it is vital to single out the prototypical intonation patterns which lay basis of unambiguous understanding of the message conveyed. The architecture of these prototypical patterns involves meaningful intonation units which function as acoustic clues for the listener and allow the latter to code and decode the content of the message. The typology of the prototypical patterns is conditioned by unambiguously decoded meanings which can be viewed in the framework of such dichotomies as: incentive/statement; background/foreground; major/minor; approval/disapproval.

We believe that prototypical intonation patterns clearly show cognitive function of intonation units as leading mechanisms of speech generation and comprehension and open up new perspectives to research into intonation subsystems that render more complicated and subtle meanings.

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