



Teaching the Pronunciation of Interpersonal Meaning

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ABSTRACT

Teaching communication is teaching how to exchange meanings. Theoretically, the kinds of meaning exchanged include ideational meaning or the information conveyed in the text, interpersonal meaning or the feelings expressed by the speaker, textual meaning where the text is organized to create cohesion and coherence, and logical meaning where the structural and the logico-semantic relations created by the speaker establishes clear relations between the utterances in the spoken text. This article focuses on the interpersonal meaning that is conveyed not by grammatical rules of Mood and modality but, rather, by intonation. The intonation addressed here is not the kind of intonation patterns commonly found in pronunciation course books showing the 'default' intonation patterns of declarative, interrogative, WH-questions, etc. The intonation addressed in this study is the one that expresses the speaker's feelings or interpersonal meanings that has yet to be thoroughly discussed in the existing literature. The present study tries to find out if there is a good model of teaching 'attitudinal intonation' by native speakers that has the potential to be developed further to address the issue of pronunciation at the text level. The rest of the article argues that the teaching of pronunciation needs to include the teaching of intonation to express different feelings at the text or discourse level.

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INTRODUCTION

My interest in interpersonal meaning expressed in intonation in connected speech was sparked when I observed some children involved in conversations. In the conversations some children said "Yeab, right?" using a particular intonation expressing the feeling of disbelief. Taken at face value in its written form, *yeab, right* can mean *yes, it is correct* or something that expresses agreement. However, in spoken communication contexts, the utterance was expressed with the intonation such that it carried nearly the opposite intent or feeling of that of the written version. As someone who teaches pronunciation, I started thinking about how I can teach intonations expressing various interpersonal feelings because intonation seems to be so powerful that it can override the lexico-grammatical meanings in expressing interpersonal meaning or the speaker's feelings. I would like to refer to the intonation that expresses nuances of feelings as *attitudinal intonation*. This kind of intonation expresses the speaker's attitude such as neutral, positive or negative feelings towards the interlocutor or whatever is being discussed. These three categories run the risk of simplification. However, this first step needs to be taken to embark on a journey in studying attitudinal intonation teaching that may lead to the exploration of less trodden paths in intonation studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching language is essentially teaching communication. When communicating, people exchange different strands of meaning, namely, ideational meaning, logical meaning, interpersonal meaning

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and textual meaning (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). These are the basic functions of language that are also known as metafunctions or the abstract functions of language.

Ideational meaning refers to the ideas or information conveyed by a speaker and people understand them by listening to a speaker's words or vocabulary used in the context or situation where a conversation takes place. These words are configured into various grammatical patterns, known as lexico-grammar, in the form of clauses that encapsulates other elements of clause grammar such as tense, polarity, agreement, and so on. When a clause is combined with another clause, the grammar also provides resources to express structural connectedness as well as ideational or logico-semantic connectedness. These resources include various conjunctions as well as structural relations known as co-ordination, sub-ordination and projections. Through these resources, logical relations between ideas in the clauses can be established and, therefore, logical meaning is created.

Interpersonal meaning refers to the enacting function of language. While conveying messages to other people, a speaker also enacts his/her personal and social relationship with the interlocutor. Enacting personal relationship means that when one says something, s/he also does something to the interlocutor; a speaker either gives or demands something and the 'something' to be given or demanded can be goods or services. The resources that enable the exchange of goods and services is the Mood and modality of the clause. Thus, when a speaker creates an utterance using declarative Mood *you are leaving tomorrow*, what the speaker does to the interlocutor is 'giving information'. Giving here is an act. Therefore, while the ideational meaning is about *you, leaving and tomorrow*, the interpersonal meaning is the intent 'I am giving you information' because the grammatical structure Subject[^]Finite ([^] means followed by) (*you[^]are*) is by default means giving information. In this perspective language can be seen as action.

However, when discussing interpersonal meaning, grammatical structure is only one resource that helps people express interpersonal meanings or feelings. There is another powerful resource that people use in expressing their intents or interpersonal meanings and that is intonation. An utterance *you are leaving tomorrow* when pronounced with the intonation commonly used for a declarative clause means 'giving information'. However, when the same utterance is said using a rising interrogative intonation, the interpersonal intent changes to 'demanding information'. It is obvious here that intonation pattern can override the declarative Mood expressed in the grammatical structure. This is the very issue that motivates the present research. The survey tries to address how interpersonal meaning or feelings through the 'marked' or 'incongruent' intonation patterns in spoken texts. This is the first attempt to find out if such spoken texts can be found in YouTube channels since the channel presents quite a few English lessons taught by native speakers of English.

The survey also attempts to find out how the intonation patterns are used beyond the utterance. In other words, the contexts where the intonation patterns are used need to be texts in the form of monologue. In order to create a monologue, a speaker needs to make use of another mode of meaning that enables the speaker to create cohesive texts and this is called the textual meaning.

The discussion so far has managed to contextualize intonation patterns, especially the marked or incongruent patterns as valuable resources in expressing interpersonal meanings, i.e., the speaker's intent, feelings or emotion. The question is, how can the patterns be taught as an integral part of the teaching of pronunciation? This needs to be investigated since nowadays the advancement of information technology (IT) has provided teachers and learners a super highway to access English lessons taught by English native speakers. In order to venture further into this area, it is important for us to know the history of pronunciation teaching that gives useful insights regarding what people had done in the past and what needs to be done now.

The teaching of pronunciation has been a subject of interest to English educators for centuries. The importance of intonation in language learning has been undeniable, yet the teaching of it does not seem to have made significant progress especially in terms of what a pronunciation

course needs to cover. This, one way or another, may have something to do with how people perceive what language is and what perspectives people use in studying language. A 150-year history of pronunciation teaching has been neatly outlined by Murphy and Baker (2015) covering the era when audio-visual recording was non-existent, to today when the use of the Internet has become commonplace.

Murphy and Baker (2015) divide pronunciation teaching periodically into four major waves of pronunciation teaching trends. The first wave is referred to as the precursors period (1850s-1880s); the second wave is called the reform movement (1880s- early 1990s); the third wave is labelled as communicative styles of pronunciation teaching (mid 1980s-1990s) whereas the fourth wave is depicted as the emergence of empirical research (mid-1990s-present). In a nutshell, pronunciation teaching undergone an evolution from the very rigid pronunciation of English individual sounds to a more communicative approach covering suprasegmental elements in extended speech, especially in conversation.

The current trend of including extended speech can be inferred by examining pronunciation course books such as Marks (2007), Bradford (1988), Gilbert (2008), and so on. These books do cover suprasegmental aspects by giving guidance in the forms of arrows to help students with intonations to represent the congruent meanings expressed in the lexico-grammar properties in the utterances. However, “In recent years, the focus has shifted to include a broader emphasis on suprasegmental features, such as stress and intonation” (Goodwin, 2001, p. 117).

This article argues that there is an urgent need to address intonation that expresses interpersonal meaning or intent that is not congruently expressed in the lexico-grammar of the utterances. For example, how can an utterance such as *yeah, right* can interpersonally mean disbelief when pronounced using a certain intonation. It is the intonation that has the absolute power to override the Mood expressed by the lexico-grammar. In this view, intonation can change the pragmatic meaning (Wichmann, 2015, p. 175) or meaning in interaction (Thomas, 1995) where context becomes paramount in assigning meanings to text. Taking the text-context aspect into consideration leads us to approach pronunciation/intonation teaching from discourse perspective. We are not only concerned about how to pronounce sounds, but also how to convey meaning through intonation. The purpose of studying this aspect of pronunciation can be a step in the right direction in furthering the advancements made in the fourth wave of communication studies.

It is generally acknowledged that teaching pronunciation is never easy. Harmer (2007) states that:

For many teachers the most problematic area of pronunciation is intonation. ... However, the fact that we may have difficulty recognizing intonation tunes does not mean that we should abandon intonation teaching altogether. Most of us can hear when someone is surprised, enthusiastic or bored, or when they are really asking question rather than just confirming something they already know (p. 250).

Extremely problematic as it may be, one needs to start to explore the possibilities of trying to teach intonation the overt way.

The complication of teaching the attitudinal intonation (expressing boredom, dislike, etc.) the overt way is immediately apparent here because it means that we teach something ‘invisible’ in the sense that we cannot symbolize those intonation tunes the way we write phonetic symbols or draw the ‘default’ intonation patterns. It would be safe to say that since it is nearly impossible to visualize attitudinal intonation, the best way to teach it is by using audio-visual means so that learners can have direct access to the models they can imitate. In this YouTube era, English teachers have abundant free access to English teaching videos produced by many online English teaching services.

The reason why it is difficult to put such intonation patterns on paper is that there is no way a writer can assign one type of intonation to one type of meaning in interaction. Goodwin (2001) offers a useful reminder:

Although intonation certainly carries meaning, it is dangerous to make on-to-one associations between a given emotion and an intonation contour. Often, intonation is one factor among many that communicate an attitude (p. 120).

The statement suggests the complexity of writing or drawing overt pronunciation contours to be presented in a course book. This is rightly so since “all interactions are multimodal” (Norris, 2004, p. 1). This can be a signpost directing intonation teaching to the use of multimodality to enable meanings to be conveyed using various contextual clues that help promote intelligibility. The use of audio-visual tools in teaching pronunciation, especially intonation, is inevitable. Norris (2004) explains that

Language ... is only one mode among many which may or may not take a central role at any given moment in interaction... gesture, gaze and head movement also may take the superior position in any given interaction, while language may be subordinated or absent altogether (p. 2).

The statement poses a more serious challenge in teaching attitudinal intonation: how can we design an overt program to address attitudinal intonation teaching? In order to answer the question, this small survey was conducted in order to find a model of teaching attitudinal intonation that has the potential to be further developed into a full-fledged overt pronunciation course.

The current exploratory survey sets out to answer the question: is there any model of teaching pronunciation that focuses on attitudinal intonation among the commercially produced video lessons found in YouTube? If there is, what potentials does it have to be further developed into overt pronunciation course at extended text level?

METHOD

This study is exploratory in nature in that it “stands out for the explorer’s interest in searching systematically for something in particular... because the explorer knows what to look for, innovation and broad discovery, if important at all, are decidedly secondary goals” (Stebbins, 2019, p. 2). This study aims at discovering any models of teaching marked or incongruent intonation that carries certain feelings or emotion that is not generally addressed in the pronunciation course books to date or in the free or commercially available online videos that can be accessed by language learners.

If and When such a course is discovered at all, it will be described and analysed further to see what potentials it has as the starting point to develop a pronunciation course that includes the teaching of attitudinal intonation that is overtly presentable or describable so that it can be taught systematically.

Data and Data Collection

The data collected for this survey are English on-line pronunciation courses available in YouTube channels. The first step to answer the questions was to make an inventory of nearly all pronunciation lessons presented by various online English courses in YouTube. Channels. The criteria for the selection is based on easy access to the lessons and whether or not the lesson is conducted by native speakers of English. The identified online courses that offer pronunciation courses were as follows. The links to the YouTube video lessons are available on the last page of this article.

1. BBC learning English
2. Learn English with Alice
3. mmmEnglish
4. Canguro English
5. Shaw English online
6. Oxford Online English

7. Learn English with Papa teach me
8. Crown Academy of English
9. IELTS English
10. English Language Academy

It is important to note that every English course mentioned above offers more than one video lesson. For example, BBC English displays quite a few pronunciation videos each of which teaches different aspects of pronunciation. Possibly because the video duration is limited, the programmer cannot include all English sounds in one video. Therefore, the video links provided in this article cannot do justice to include all BBC pronunciation links. This applies to the other English courses.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Each of the above-mentioned videos was closely watched, carefully scrutinized and analyzed to see whether or not they address not only the unmarked pronunciation but also the marked or attitudinal intonation contours in extended or connected speech or monologue. After some thorough observations, it was found that all of the courses share some things in common, namely, all of them address the pronunciation of individual sounds, intonation and connected speech. There are variations in terms of emphasis, but basically, they share the basic elements of pronunciation lessons.

- a) All pronunciation courses offer models and exercises of pronunciation of individual sounds including English vowels, diphthongs and consonants in different videos;
- b) All pronunciation courses offer models and exercises of unmarked intonation patterns of short utterances;
- c) Some pronunciation courses offer models and exercises of pronouncing short conversations;
- d) One pronunciation course, namely mmmEnglish (ME), offers models and exercises of individual sounds, intonation patterns, short conversations and a pronunciation course addressing the unmarked intonation contours that carry certain interpersonal feelings/intent and emotion in extended texts.

Further analysis on the texts suggests that the course tries to demonstrate how to express three types of attitude through intonations, namely, positive, neutral and negative attitudes.

The analysis finds that a course developed by ME offers a pronunciation course called Imitation Lesson. The name 'Imitation Lesson' suggests that the lesson is aimed at helping learners imitate the models in pronouncing. The difference between this lesson and the other imitation lessons offered by other course providers is that ME makes the learners imitate the pronunciation of short texts in the form of monologues. Judging from the registers used, the length of the monologues, and the intonation contours chosen to display certain emotions, it can be said that this imitation lesson is appropriate for those who have good command of English possibly at the upper intermediate level. This can be a good model in developing a pronunciation teaching that does not only focus on individual sounds, but also the pronunciation of a whole text. This is the first potential of this model that can be developed further into teaching intonation from a discourse perspective.

The imitation techniques used in the lessons are quite unique in that each lesson is divided into three stages or steps. The first step is listen & read, the second is listen and imitate and the third is called shadowing. In practice, the learners hear the same text three times, but each time they do different things. In the first step, the learners listen to the segments of a text while reading them as they appear on the screen. In the second step, the learners listen to the text segments with pauses in between and then they try to imitate the model as closely as they can. In the third step, the learners are supposed to shadow the native speaker. As the native speaker speaks, the learners

try to speak nearly simultaneously with the native speaker. Each step can be repeated before moving to the next step. In doing so, the learners have a good opportunity to perform various texts embodying words, stress, intonation, pause, emotion, body language and facial expression.

The advantage of letting the learners take their time in doing the repetitions and in repeating the text as many times as they need at every step is another strong point of this imitation technique. When learners take this course in an ordinary classroom, their opportunity to repeat the text pronunciation can be very limited whereas by using the videos and doing the exercises at their own pace at the comfort of their homes, this technique can lessen the unnecessary pressure and thus conducive for the learning to take place.

Ten models of imitation techniques can be found on ME's website for free along with additional models especially designed for those who are interested in further study. The survey ventured the observation further by gaining access to ME through registration.

In this domain, ten lessons can be found. Three lessons are designed to pronounce texts with positive emotion, three with neutral emotion, three with negative emotion and one bonus lesson. This description suggests that every lesson does not only take the ideational meaning into account. As a matter of fact, every text is developed to teach the learners to pay attention to other aspects of pronunciation. A spoken excerpt clearly describes the elements one can practice in all lessons as follows.

the imitation techniques is the awesome way to improve your pronunciation but also other important aspects of communicating in English... such as stress, intonation, pause, emotion, body language and facial expression... which are all important in English because we communicate with so much more than just words... to be an effective English communicator, you need to study the way the English is spoken and imitate it... until you yourself can naturally and comfortably speak English (ME Introductory Lesson)

The above introduction supports the theory that all interactions are multimodal and language is just one mode that takes a central role in the communication process. Other modes including gesture, gaze, body language may also take central roles when required by the context (Norris 2001). The EM's Imitation Lessons actually address these multimodal issues in pronouncing English texts. For this reason, EM's Imitation Lesson can be regarded as a basic model of teaching 'comprehensive' pronunciation and it has the potential to be developed further by English language teaching experts and practitioners. This is another strong, if not the strongest, point of the imitation lesson.

To discover what other aspects the imitation lessons offer, one transcript of a text is displayed here.

Job and Experience (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZGf8JY5_ck)

03:26 You know what? I think you should just go for it!
03:29 I mean, what have you got to lose?
03:32 You've got plenty of experience and nobody is more passionate about this
03:37 kind of work than you. Just because you don't have a degree shouldn't make a difference.
03:43 I mean, you've been doing this for real for so much longer than anyone
03:48 who's just come out of university.
03:51 Besides, what's the worst thing that can happen?
03:55 They might turn you down, but who cares? It's not like you really need this job.
04:00 But imagine if you get it!
04:03 Living on an island, going for a swim every morning
04:07 before work, eating fresh fruit and seafood every day!
04:13 I think you should just go for it!
04:15 Then I can come and visit you! What if I help you? I could make
04:20 you a logo or something? Or I could help you with your cover letter.
04:24 You've got to admit it's pretty exciting and you're perfect for this role.
04:29 Come on! What do you think?!

It is important to note that in order to have access to the multimodal expressions including intonation, gaze, body language expressing the holistic interpersonal meanings of this text, one needs to watch the video through the link above. The video displays the language used to talk in a particular register, using the proper word stress according to the context, using the appropriate intonations that express certain feelings or emotions, showing the acceptable body language and the facial expressions, all of which are very difficult to be verbally described here.

The mood analysis of the above text suggests that the communicative purpose of the text is giving encouragement to someone who is trying to find a job. The whole constellation of multimodal interpersonal resources contributes to the achievement of the communicative purpose of the whole text. This is evident in a brief genre analysis in the following section.

The communicative purpose of the text is to persuade or convince someone to do something or that something is the case (Gerot & Wignell, 1995). This kind of text is categorized into an exposition genre. In order to achieve the communicative purpose, such a text needs to contain some elements including the speaker thesis or statement indicating his/her stance toward the issue, the arguments to support the speaker's position and the restating of the speaker's position. These elements are evident in the text. In the first two moves, in 03:26 and 3:29, the speaker expresses her position or belief regarding the interlocutor's potential in getting a job. In moves 03:32 up to 4:20, the speaker presents her arguments to convince the interlocutor that s/he has so many things to offer or that s/he is good enough for the job. Finally, the speaker shows the stance she takes at the beginning in 04:24 and 04:29. These three main elements need to be put in sequence to help achieve the communicative purpose.

The text is structured more or less the way an exposition is written. It starts with an opening expressed by a gambit *you know what* signaling an interest and intention to make a statement indicating the speaker's stance in the topic and it is expressed by *I think you should just go for it!* Then the speaker continues by justifying his/her statement by saying *I mean, what have you got to lose? You've got plenty of experience and nobody is more passionate about this kind of work than you. Just because you don't have a degree shouldn't make a difference* in order to persuade or convince the listener to do something. This persuasive pattern is repeated throughout the text. At the end (04:24), the speaker restates his/her position or stance by saying *You've got to admit it's pretty exciting and you're perfect for this role* (04:29) *Come on!* The text elements and how they are structured help the speaker achieve the communicative purpose of an exposition text.

Regarding the linguistic features, the text displays some important spoken grammatical features that are included in the corpus-based grammar of spoken language (Biber et al., 1999). Some linguistic features exhaustively discussed in Biber et al. (1999) are *lexical bundles* defined as "recurrent expressions, regardless of their idiomaticity, and regardless of their structural status. That is, lexical bundles are simply sequences of word forms that commonly go together in natural discourse" (Biber et al., 1999, p. 990).

The lexical bundles included in Biber et al.'s (1999) book are those bundles that are used very frequently by native speakers of English based on their corpus analysis. The authors state that to be considered as a high-frequency bundle and thus included in the book, a four-word lexical bundle, for example, needs to occur at least ten times per million words. Some lexical bundles found in the texts include *I think you should, I mean, what do you think?*

The existence of many lexical bundles in the teaching materials can be beneficial for foreign language learners because, theoretically,

Conversation contains a larger stock of lexical bundles than academic prose. In addition, conversation uses over 1000 recurrent two-word contracted bundles (e.g. *I don't*)... There are almost ten times as many three-word lexical bundles as four lexical bundles, in both conversation and academic prose (Biber et al., 1999, p. 993).

The same authors explain further that "conversation is often regarded as extremely formulaic and some scholars have suggested that most conversational utterances are composed of relatively fixed lexical bundles" (Biber et al., 1999, p. 997). Interestingly, something called 'meaningless

sound bundles' such as *da da da*, *mm, mm, mm* or *ob ob ob* are considered common in spoken language and they serve several functions such as backchanneling, indication of repetition, and giving emphasis. As meaningless as they are lexicogrammatically, they are functional to achieve the communicative purpose in conversation. To save precious space, an exhaustive description of bundles and other expressions such as idiom, binomial expressions and the like that are found in the texts which cannot be provided here.

Thus far, the discussion has shown a great potential of the spoken texts in the Imitation Lessons. Apart from the multimodality aspects discussed earlier, such texts actually expose the learners to the spoken language grammar that is not generally addressed in the grammar books used in schools.

The texts also display grammatical features referred to by Thornbury (2004) as the most common one hundred words in English. As seen in the excerpt, the speaker says *you should just go for it* twice. The meaning of *go* in the dictionary can be to move or travel (away from the speaker), but when the word is combined with a certain preposition, the meaning can change drastically. According to Thornbury (2004), the word *go* "combines with many adverb and many prepositional phrases to form phrasal verbs" (Thornbury, 2004, p. 46). The spoken texts used in Imitation Lesson seem to include phrasal verbs and collocations that are often problematic to non-native speakers of English. The inclusion of high-frequency expressions in the texts has the potential of raising awareness that "it is very obvious but always mysterious fact that a word is not a single and separate entity; it is art of the other words... words belong to each other" (Thornbury, 2004, p. 1). Taking these kinds high-frequency expressions in the model texts can hopefully help learners learn the natural English.

CONCLUSIONS

An imitation lesson has been found in the commercially produced pronunciation videos available in YouTube channel. The imitation lesson developed by ME has a great potential to be developed by English language teaching professionals after further research is carried out. The imitation lesson does not only teach intonation to convey certain attitudes or emotions; the texts used encapsulate important aspects of spoken English communication including multimodality, text type, communicative purpose, text structure and spoken linguistic features, the grammar of spoken English. The linguistic features displayed in the texts are those described in some grammar books as the grammar of spoken English, an area that has not been exhaustively studied especially in relation to the teaching of pronunciation. By adopting and developing imitation lessons further, English teachers can address several issues simultaneously, using one stone to knock out two or three birds in one fell swoop. In summary, the endeavour of developing an overt program designed to teach the pronunciation of text can lead to the fifth wave of pronunciation teaching.

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Links to the YouTube Video Lessons accessed in December 2020 and January 2021

1. BBC learning English <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QxQUapA-2w4>
A complete guide to English Pronunciation. Learn all 44 sounds.
2. Learn English with Alice. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k57UkxLV-XU>
English Pronunciation Practice: Daily Pronunciation
3. mmmEnglish.
https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=mmmenglish+imitation+lesson+2
Imitation Lesson
4. Canguro English <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fxPgqGRmT8w&t=543s>
The ultimate English pronunciation guide
5. Shaw English online <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oJzRdqstKA>
Learn English Pronunciation Course for Beginners
6. Oxford Online English. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cX2dMKYYZI4>
English Pronunciation Secrets - 5 Tips to Improve English Pronunciation
7. Learn English with Papa teach me.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qKdxOR2Mk04>
Advanced British Pronunciation - Speak like a native in 5 sounds
8. Crown Academy of English
https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Crown+English+Academy+pronunciation
International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) | English Pronunciation
9. IELTS English. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MXBsy6sKP3Y>
IELTS Speaking: Pronunciation | THE 44 SOUNDS OF ENGLISH with Jay!
10. English Language Academy
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DSRQuDPkKF4>
Reading Practice (Improve your pronunciation in English)