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**Nature of Intonation in Speech**

Every language has its own melody or music.

In English, meaning is not carried only by grammar and vocabulary but also by tone.

A single sentence may communicate certainty, doubt, politeness, anger, or surprise depending on how it is spoken.

Therefore, intonation functions as a bridge between sound and meaning.

**Functions of Intonation**

**Grammatical Function**

Intonation helps identify whether an utterance is a statement, question, command, or exclamation.

For example, a rising tone can turn a statement into a yes–no question.

**Emotional Function**

Human feelings such as joy, sadness, irritation, excitement, or disbelief are mainly expressed through tone rather than words.

**Discourse Function**

Intonation organizes speech into meaningful units, showing where an idea begins, continues, or ends.

It guides the listener through the flow of conversation.

**Emphatic Function**

Speakers use pitch change to highlight important words or ideas, helping listeners understand what is most significant.

**Major Patterns of English Intonation**

**Falling Tone**

The pitch moves downward at the end.

It expresses completion, certainty, and confidence and is common in statements, commands, and WH-questions.

#### Rising Tone

The pitch moves upward at the end.

It signals incompleteness, doubt, politeness, or a request for confirmation, especially in yes–no questions.

#### Rise–Fall Tone

The voice rises and then drops sharply.

This pattern conveys strong emotion, such as admiration, surprise, or anger, and adds dramatic emphasis.

#### Fall–Rise Tone

The pitch falls and then rises slightly.

It often suggests reservation, politeness, contrast, or hidden meaning, indicating that the speaker's thought is not fully finished.

### **Role of Intonation in Communication**

Correct intonation makes speech sound natural, polite, and meaningful, while incorrect intonation may create confusion or unintended rudeness.

For learners of English, mastering intonation improves:

Listening comprehension

Pronunciation clarity

Fluency in conversation

Confidence in speaking

Thus, intonation is not an ornament of speech but a core element of effective communication.