Intonation Maxims Role in Utterance Meaning

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Abstract:

It is generally known that intonation or the pitch of an utterance plays a major role in assigning utterance meaning .According to this role; a certain classification can be attributed to utterance type in the light of its meaning.

The present study shows how intonation maxims play their role in assigning utterance meaning and what classification they lend utterances according to that role .They make a close relation between an utterance and its implicit meaning in the same way that Grice maxims relate between and utterances and their implicit meanings .The relation is to be shown towards the application of these roles in to the selected data chosen as extracts of questioning conversation .
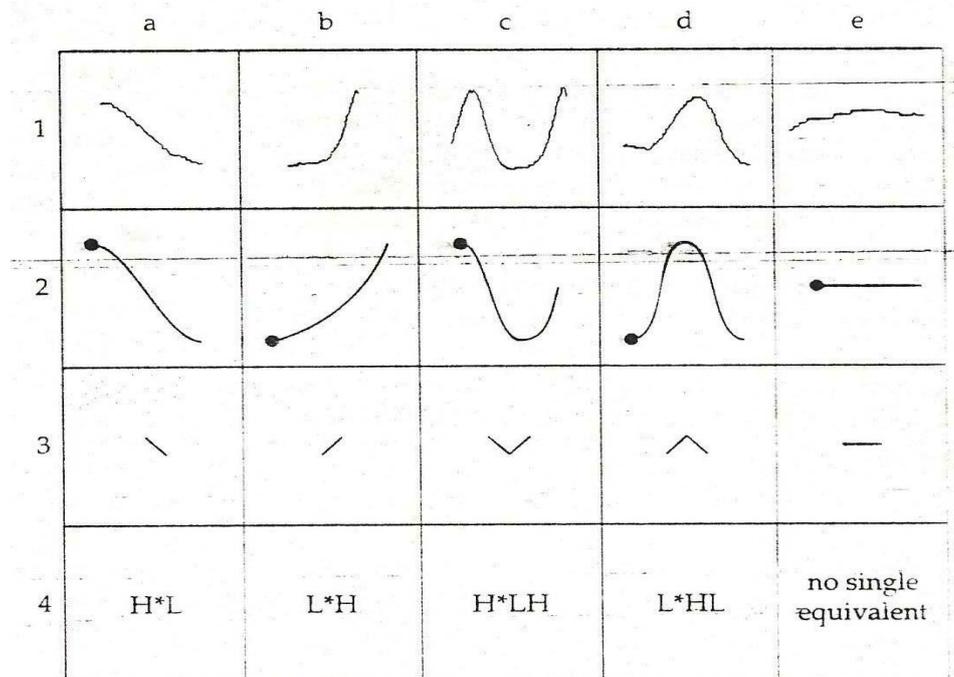
دور أنماط الترانيم في تحديد معني المفردات

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الخلاصة :

ان المعروف بصورة عامة ان الترنيم او نبرة الصوت في لفظ اي مفــردة يلعبــان دورا اساسيا في تحديد معنى المفردة .وبناء على هذا الدور يمكن تصنيف انواع المفردات كل في ضوء معانيها .يوضح هذا البحث كيف تلعب انماط نبرة الصوت دورها في تحديد معاني المفردات اضافة الى توضيح تصنيف المفردات في اطار هذا الــدور زان انمــاط النبرة تشير الى وجود علاقة وثيقة بين المفردات ومعانيها الضمنية بنفس السياق الــذي توضح فيه انماط كرايس العلاقة بين كل مفردة ومعناها ز لقد تم توضيح هــذه العلاقــة بتطبيق تصنيف هذه الادوار على مقاطع بيانات ماخوذة من محاورات تحقيقية.

1.1 Introduction :

Intonation means the change in the pitch or music of voice while producing speech (Nasr; 1980:46). It is one of the aspects of prosody that are most commonly studied for it turns syntactic structures into statements or questions (Verchurene, 1999:121). As it is known that with pitch ,utterances can have meaning which signals to the listener whether an utterance is a question or a statement .Gee(1999:104)states "....what sort of pitch movement the speaker chooses , that is ,of pitch movement ,up ,down .up then down , or down then up ,has meaning (for example ,the speaker's pitch glide in certain sorts of statements)".It is the meaning that pitch movements assigns to an utterance and its classification according to the sorts of meaning attached by roles of intonation maxims .Thus, it is the pitch of the voice that plays the most important part.(Roach;1999:30)though it is not the pitches by themselves that produce meanings beyond the meanings of words and grammatical structures of an utterance ;rather it is the combination of different pitches or levels of intonation and their formation as glides or contours that does that(Nasr ;1980:47).These contotours or glides are represented differently by different authors . Fortunately, these different representations of tonal pitch contours are gathered by Wichmann (2000:11) in the following diagram:

1.1   Differant Representation of Tonal Pitch Conotours
    1.F0 Conotours of typical tones
    2.Tadepole Transcription of Tones
    3.Iconic Symbols as used in SEC
    4.Autosegmental Representation of Tones
        {H*L,L*H,H*LH,L*HL}

These contours are the elements by which pitch assigns utterance meaning and according to which utterances are classified wether in relation tothier implicite meaning or to thier being requests or commands .

1.2   Intonation Role in Utterance Meaning:

Spech is music . So ,in the same way that amusician expresses his inner feeling in what he composes , a speaker gives an immpression of what he feels wether anger, sorrow , or surprise thrugh the tone of his speech .

In relation to the diagram mentioned in the previous section, it is nessaryto indicate that each tone the representation of which mentioned above gives a meaning for an utterance .The following points illustrates these facts :

• Fall `: refers to the fact that least needs .If a question is asked and answered by a fall tone. This indicates that there is nothing more needs to be said .In sum, fall could be said to give an impression of finality.

• Rise ´: conveys that something more is to follow.

• Fall- rise ˇ: could be described as limited agreement or response with reservation. In other context, it indicates "hesitation","given" or "concession".

    . Rise – fall ˆ: conveying strong feelings of approval, disapproval or surprise.

• Level   —: Usually used in restricted contexts .It almost conveys (on single syllable utterance) a feeling of saying something routine, uninteresting or boring (Roach; 1999:138-140).

1.3 Intonation Maxims as Equivalant to Grice Maxims :

It is worthy to refer to the fact that the role intonation plays in assigning utterance meaning can be said to be equivalant to that of implicature.Implicature is an inference of the sort people make in rputinly in order to interrpret each other's discourse as coherent ,relevant and cooperative . Grice 's theory suggests why and how speakers are able to make sense of utterances that appear to violate the

basic requirments as quality and quantity (Bousiac ,1999:302) .In fact , the role of intonation ,stress ,and other parakinguistic faetures are one of the issues for the study of implicatures in stretches of discourse (Grice ,1975:46).Thus ,intonation maxims are as Hischberg (2002)states :

- Maxim of Pitch: Try to make the rise and fall in the pitch of your utterance correspond to the degree of confidence you wish to convey .Let your pitch rise o convey uncertainty.

- Maxim of Emphasis: Try to make information ally important portions of your speech intonation ally prominent.

- Maxim of Range: Let the width of your pitch range reflect the location of your utterance in the topic structure of the discourse .Increase your range to start new topics .Decrease your range to end old ones.

- Maxim of Phrasing :phrase your utterances so that it is divided into meaningful portions of speech{cited in Nilesenova2006:29}

These Maxims are said to be associated with Grice maxims .For example, the use of fall-rise is largely associated with the maxim of quality, for it says'but. .'Or' that is all I can say –draw your conclusions; .one considers the following example :

ᵥ

I have finished my homework
Or
ᴧ

It may be raining,
It is not clear from the context precisely what the speaker is not saying as in;
ᵥ

It is very clever
But the tone warns the listener that he must work this out. The maxim of relation can be invoked too, as:
A: Iam out of petrol
B: There is a garage round the corner.
This implicates that the garage is open ,otherwise, the comment would not be relevant (Palmer ;1998:174).According to these maxims ,intonation plays another role related also to utterance meaning which is that it provides a classification for utterances according to their types as evaluative response seeking utterances, proper utterances as

will be mentioned later in details .In fact, intonation and Grice maxims are two phases for the same coin .They both help in making utterances meaning very clear .a May (1993;69)cites following Leech (1983:80)in relation to the function of rising –falling 8intnation ;as in:
Parent: Someone's eaten the icing of the cake.

^

Child: It wasn't ME

The parent uses a way of insinuating a possible action by the child is considered more polite that a direct accusation .So, the parent violates maxim of quality under the cooperative principle and the tone of the utterance signals to the child that he is accused indirectly that is why he answers 'It wasn't ME'. In both cases intonation plays a role in utterance understanding.

1.4   Intonation Role in Utterance Types :

Depending on the context in which they occur and the tone of the sound in which they are pronounced, utterances are labeled as either one of the following:

A. Evaluative Responses Seeking Utterances.
B. Acknowledgment Seeking Utterances.
C. Proper Utterances.

The application of these utterances on the data of this research lies in the fact that such utterances have the form of declaratives though they may be in the light of their pronunciation questions .Evaluative response seeking declaratives are those WH-less non – interrogative utterances that are turn final followed by a reply that contextually entailed a Yes/No or I do not know answer and satisfy the question test (i.e. in the context would be felicitous as interrogatives). (Nilsenova, 2006:62)

This means that such utterances do not have e question form but they have the structure of declaratives which do not start with a WH-word as in;
A: You hit Lisa?
B: No.
A: So, She wasn't hit?

The last sentence can be considered as a guessing question. The speaker guesses form the previous utterance said by the addressee that the victim was not hit. This guessing question has the structure of

a declarative sentence and it is free from the existence of a WH- word by which questions are usually characterized. Similar examples are;

1. And you were taking photos?
2. Imprisoned before?
3. The quarrel was about something serious?

   The following example may have a structure somehow different from the previous ones:

        Who came first? Those with whom you quarreled at the shop? Utterances like this consist of two parts ,a question structure plus an evaluative response seeking declarative .This utterance makes it clear to the reader that it is a guessing question ;that is ,you evaluate the cases in away similar to guessing .

   Response seeking declaratives, as questions, are usually answered with an evaluated response. So, most of the above mentioned examples are to be answered by a confirmation or a negation of what has been said 'guessed'.

   Acknowledgment seeking are categorized by backchannels by the addressee but not turn completing (ibid.).Backchannels is one of the basic requirements of active participation by both parties in a two party dialogue . This means that the current listener is not allowed to remain passive .S(he) is not allowed even to provide silent feedback like head nods ,smiles and eye –glances. The same kind of oral responding is expected mainly in the form of backchannels .Examples of backchannels are :ah,oh ,mmm,yes ,sure ,Oh God ,really ..etc. (Stenstrom; 1994:81) Examples of questions like these questions in the form of acknowledgement seeking declaratives is as follows:

A: You understand what he said?
B: Ya.
A: and you are willing to talk to us?
'You are willing to talk to talk to us' is a declarative sentence having the form of questions but not a guessing question as in evaluative response seeking declaratives. It is a 'semi-'urging question for seeking acknowledgment .Such questions are replied to by brief acknowledgment in which the addressee shows that s (he) has heard and understood the speaker while the speaker continues talking as in the following:
A: ah, the quarrel was about something?
B: Photos.

The direct answer is brief and show that the addressee is in contact with the addresser. On the part of the addressee another case is:

A: To your knowledge, she was hit by Hedda?

B: mmmm.

Shriberg etal. (1998) state that, there is an overlap un the lexical expression used for backchannels (Which acknowledge the speaker's contribution without taking the floor and are indicative of acknowledgment seeking declaratives) and a confirmation is used to assert an opinion and indicative of evaluative response seeking declaratives. This overlap can be resolved by the means of prosody. (Cited in Nilsenova; 2006:62).

The category of proper declaratives is formed by non-turn completing utterances immediately followed by another utterance by the same speaker but not responded to by the addressee in the following turn (ibid.) as in:

A: Since you've heard your rights, now we'll work with you?

This declarative utterance is giving a hint that now it is time to confess, that is, it is signaling to the addressee to start confessing and it is natural that the addressee will not answer but will wait for the first question to come. In this way the speaker will just continue talking without expecting to receive a reply from the addressee.

From what is mentioned above, some sort of matching can be achieved between types of declarative questions and their replies, as in the following:

Evaluative response seeking declaratives are replied to by evaluative response , Acknowledgment seeking declarative are replied to by brief answer ,and proper declaratives are to be kept unanswered till the conversation is in progress.(ibid:63)

1.5 Conclusion:

It is clear that the classification of thee utterances and their replies is of great importance for it helps solve the problems that arise because of the confusion that may exist in utterance structures and another declarative questions .This classification can be considered as a solution for the overlap among these types of utterances .It is said that it can be solved by prosody.

This makes it clear that intonation maxims play a role in providing this overlap –solving classification. Not to forget the fact that intonation work side by side with Grice maxims

in assigning utterance meaning and making it clear to the addressee.

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