



# Unit 9

## Intonation (1):

### tonality and tonicity

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9.1

English Phonetics: Unit 9:  
Intonation (1)  
tonality and tonicity

[ˈɪŋ.gəl.fə.ˈnet.ɪks ˈjuː.nɪt ˈnɑːn]  
[ˈɪnt.ə(ʊ).ˈneɪ.f.ən ˈwʌn]  
[tʰə(ʊ).ˈnæ.l.ɪ.t.i.jən tʰə(ʊ).ˈnɪs.ɪ.t.i]

Robert Spence, based on material by M. A. K. Halliday

[ˈrɒb.ət ˈspens ˈbeɪst ɒn mə.ˈtʰɪ.ɹ.i.əl bɑː ˈdʒem ˌeɪ kʰeɪ ˈhæ.l.ɪ.d.eɪ]

9.2

## 1 Language and music

Language and music have common origins

A piece of music (e.g. a song) consists of

- **melodic phrases**,  
which are made up of
- **bars** (dt.: *Takte*),  
which are made up of
- **notes**.

Each bar starts with either an ‘accentuated’ note (one that is louder than normal), or else a ‘silent beat’, and may also contain one or more unaccented notes as well.

A piece of spoken English consists of

- **tone groups**,  
which are made up of
- **feet**,  
which are made up of
- **syllables**,  
which are made up of
- **phonemes**.

Each foot starts with either a ‘stressed’ syllable, or else a ‘silent beat’, and may also contain one or more unstressed syllables as well.

9.3

## 2 On the term “intonation”

On the term INTONATION

- The term INTONATION, as used here, encompasses three partly related phenomena:
  1. TONALITY — the division of continuous speech into *melodic units* called TONE GROUPS;
  2. TONICITY — the placement of the *melodic nucleus* or TONIC of each tone group;
  3. TONE — the choice of *melody* or INTONATION CONTOUR for each tone group.
- We shall examine each of these in turn.

9.4

## 3 Tonality

TONALITY

- TONALITY is the realization of INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION.
- One TONE GROUP corresponds to one INFORMATION UNIT.
- 
- (...) 

INFORMATION	UNIT
-------------	------

INFORMATION	UNIT
-------------	------

 (...)
- 
- (...) 

TONE	GROUP
------	-------



TONE	GROUP
------	-------

 (...)
- 
- *Unmarked* information distribution  
(= ‘unmarked tonality’):  
one non-rankshifted clause  
corresponds to  
one information unit.
- *Marked* information distribution  
(= marked tonality):  
one non-rankshifted clause  
corresponds to  
less or more than one information unit.

9.5

### 3.1 unmarked tonality

Examples of unmarked tonality (1)

INFORMATION UNIT	INFORMATION UNIT
β clause:	α clause:
When they go abroad,	they take the car.
↓	↓
TONE GROUP	TONE GROUP
 wen ðei gəʊ ə bɪːd	 ^ ðei teɪk ðə kɑː

9.6

### Examples of unmarked tonality (2)

INFORMATION	UNIT
-------------	------

independent clause (with rankshifted clause inside):

They take the car [[ that they inherited ]].



TONE	GROUP
------	-------

^	
	<p>ðeɪ teɪk ðə kɑ: ðət ðeɪ ɪnheɪtɪd</p>

9.7

### 3.2 marked tonality

#### Examples of marked tonality (1)

INFO	UNIT	INFORMATION	UNIT
------	------	-------------	------

independent clause:

*He* prefers the *Ferrari*.



TONE	GP	TONE	GROUP
	pɪ		
		<p>fɜ:z ðə fəɪrɪ</p>	

9.8

#### Examples of marked tonality (2)

INFORMATION	UNIT
-------------	------

α clause:	β clause:
-----------	-----------

His wife insists on the <i>Merc</i>	when they go abroad.
-------------------------------------	----------------------



TONE	GROUP
------	-------

^	
	<p>hɪz waɪf ɪnsɪsts ɒn ðə mɜ:k wen ðeɪ ɡəʊ əbrɔ:d</p>

9.9

## 4 Tonicity

### TONICITY

- TONICITY realizes the internal *structure* of the INFORMATION UNIT as a configuration of 'Given' and 'New' elements, with a 'Focus' within the 'New'.
- The internal structure of the TONE GROUP is: PRETONIC segment (optional) plus TONIC segment (obligatory).

(information unit:)

			Focus
Given →	←	←	← New
They	take	the	CAR.

↓

(tone group:)

('Auftakt')	Pretonic	Tonic
(foot:)	(foot:)	(foot:)
∧ ðeɪ	teɪk ðə	ka:

9.10

## 4.1 meaning of given and new

### Meaning of 'Given' and 'New'

- 'Given' and 'New' are statuses assigned by the speaker to various parts of the information (s)he is transmitting to the addressee.
- 'Given' means: 'this is something you already know, or else it's information you can recover from the situation'.
- 'New' means: 'this is something I assume you don't yet know, and it's something you can't recover from the situation'.
- The meanings 'Given' and 'New' thus constitute part of the 'textual' function of language — establishing relevance, relating an utterance to what has gone before it and what is going on around it.
- Even though these meanings are orientated to the addressee, they are assigned by the speaker.
- The speaker can play games with the addressee, presenting 'given information' as 'New' and 'new information' as 'Given'.

9.11

## 4.2 unmarked tonicity

### Unmarked tonicity

- A tone group has 'unmarked tonicity' if the tonic segment begins on the main stress-bearing syllable of the last 'content word'.
- The utterance we looked at a few moments ago ("They **take** the CAR") had 'unmarked tonicity', because its last word was the content word "car" (a noun).
- So does the following example, because the last word is a 'function word' (the pronoun "it").

(information unit:)

	Focus
Given →	← New
They	TAKE it.

↓

(tone group:)

('Auftakt')	Tonic
(foot:)	(foot:)
∧ ðeɪ	teɪk it

9.12

### 4.3 marked tonicity

Marked tonicity (with post-tonic lexical material as ‘Given’)  
(information unit:)

			Focus			
Given →	←	←	← New	Given →	→	→
They	take	the	CAR	when they	go a-	broad



(tone group:)

(‘Auftakt’)	Pretonic	Tonic			
(foot:)	(foot:)	(foot:)	(foot:)	(foot:)	(foot:)
∧	∧	∧	∧	∧	∧
ðei	teɪk ðə	kɑ:	wen ðei	gəʊ ə	bɾɔ:d

Once the tonic segment begins, the tone contour of the rest of the tone group is already decided. In the example shown here, the tone contour is ‘falling’. The pitch of the voice falls dramatically on the tonic syllable [kɑ:], then continues falling slightly all the way to the end of the tone group. All of the lexical material following the tonic syllable is thus signalled as being ‘Given’.

9.13

### 4.4 given-new transition

Hearing the beginning of the ‘New’

			Focus			
Given →	←	←	← New			
They	take	the	CAR.			
(‘Auftakt’)	Pretonic	Tonic				
(foot:)	(foot:)	(foot:)	(foot:)	(foot:)	(foot:)	
∧	∧	∧	∧	∧	∧	
ðei	teɪk ðə	kɑ:				

‘(I’ll tell you about what they do:) they take the car’

			Focus			
Given →	→	→	← New			
They	take	the	CAR.			
(‘Auftakt’)	Pretonic		Tonic			
(foot:)	(foot:)	(foot:)	(foot:)	(foot:)	(foot:)	
∧	∧	∧	∧	∧	∧	
ðei	teɪk	ðə	kɑ:			

‘(I’ll tell you about what they take:) they take the car’

9.14

### 4.5 broad vs. narrow focus

Broad vs narrow focus

- The previous slide showed an example of ‘broad’ vs. ‘narrow’ focus:
- In “they **take** the **CAR**” the focus is ‘broad’, because the information being treated as ‘new’ (culminating at the word “car”) extends all the way back to “take” (what they did was: take the car).
- In “they take the **CAR**” the focus is ‘narrow’, because the information being presented as ‘new’ only covers the information that what they took was the car.
- Here it was possible to actually ‘hear’ the point at which the ‘New’ begins: at the beginning of the first ‘full’ foot.
- In many cases, however, the only way to tell where the ‘Given’–‘New’ transition occurs is to work it out from the context.

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