An Alternative Approach to Intonation Treatment: Raising Awareness of Form in a Discourse-based Framework

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要　　旨

　英語の発音指導においては個別単語の音素やストレス（強勢）に課題の焦点を置く場合が多く，発音が，ストレスの位置も含め，辞書やテキスト通りに規則的にできるかどうかが問題にされる。しかし，辞書等に掲載されている音素やストレスはあくまでプロトタイプであり固定されており，ストレスそのものは意味を伝達しない。ストレスのある音節とない音節が交互に現れ英語のリズムが完成するストレスタイムリズム理論が採用され，ストレスのある音節が情報を運ぶと言われるが，指導において形式に話者の解釈は求められない。本小論では，ディスコースイントネーションの考え方をもとに，形式と意味を関連づけ，イントネーションのメッセージ伝達機能の習得／指導に目標を設定する。ストレスとプロミネンス（際立つもの）を分け，同じ記号表現でも話者によって異なる意味を持つとき，プロミネンスが相手話者に意味の違いを伝える役割を担う。英語の言語構造や文法規則の制約は受けるが，その制約は盤石な制約ではなく，イントネーションは主観的でもあり，イントネーションによって話者間の共有と差異を示すことができる。前半では，ディスコースフレームワークの中でイントネーションを捉える場合の各要素の説明をストレスタイムリズム理論との比較の中で紹介し，後半においては，テキストブックにおけるイントネーションの扱いをディスコースイントネーションとの比較で検証する。

キーワード：explicit teaching（明示的指導），focus on form along with meaning（意味と
形式との関連），awareness raising（意識化），learner-centered approach（学
習者主体のアプローチ），discourse-based framework（ディスコースフレー
ムワーク）

Introduction

This paper reviews a more traditional treatment of intonation in my adult beginner-level-class textbooks and suggests an alternative approach to intonation by raising awareness of its message-conveying function and by focusing on the speakers' selection of intonation in context. In the first half, the traditional approach to prosodic features is referred, followed by the outline of the discourse intonation theory including the description of the key elements. The stress-timed rhythm theory is briefly introduced for later reference when reviewing the intonation in the textbooks, which is discussed in the second half of the paper. The discourse-based framework is communicative-oriented, however, this paper does not encourage teachers to totally discard the explicit way of teaching or the use of textbooks and tapes that are often regarded as non-naturalistic. By utilizing the dialogues and recordings, an attempt is made to help adult beginner-level learners deliberately draw their attention to the meaning and function of intonation and help them become aware of its communicative value.

Traditional Explicit Instruction by Presenting Rules

Unlike young learners or children who are generally considered capable of implicitly perceiving the pronunciation and intonation of a foreign language, adult or mature learners seem to need more or less explicit learning and practice. Learning experience of information being given in previous classroom experience and their intellectual maturity make them expect explicit explanations or instruction of the target language system (Sharwood Smith 1981). This explanation seems plausible and the phenomenon is a common reality for ELT practitioners in adult learners' class.

What makes difference between explicit and implicit learning is the presence of awareness: learning with or without awareness (DeKeyser 2005). Explicit instruction is

usually adopted in grammar teaching context, and the grammar-translation method is the embodiment of explicit instruction, in which learners learn the rules of grammar and memorize vocabulary. They try labeling the elements as S, V, C, O, and arranging them in a grammatically and structurally correct manner. The textbook presents a list of vocabulary and its translation. The method is still most widely used (Adamson 2005), and a remark in the past that teachers as well as many learners view explicit explanations as short-cuts (Sharwood Smith 1981) has even now currency. However, the exclusive study of the form and structure of words and sentences will not complete the teaching and learning of a language. In reality, a sentence cannot be fully analyzed without closely looking at the context. Grammatical form and its function do not always correspond, but work in harmony (McCarthy 1991).

The similar approach has been taken in teaching and learning the English sound system, as the rules are presented and correct pronunciation as suggested in a dictionary is required. The English language has been treated to have stress-timed rhythm (Brown 1994; McDonough and Shaw 1993), which implies that stressed syllables tend to occur at relatively regular intervals, falling on the main information-carrying items; weak forms often have reduced vowel sounds (McDonough and Shaw 1993). However, there is no firm evidence (McCarthy 1991; Roach 1991). As for intonation, pitch movement has also been traditionally treated as being fixed in relation to the form of a sentence: the wh- question has a falling tone, while the yes-no question has a rising tone. As apparent in real interaction, however, the wh- question can have a rising tone, and a falling tone can be used for the yes-no question form.

Awareness on Form along with Meaning and Discourse Intonation Approach

What is necessary for passing and receiving the speaker's message in interaction? It is needless to mention of the ability to distinguish sound as a meaningful unit of a particular language; words should be pronounced appropriately so that listeners will be able to distinguish them as words of a particular language. Even though words are distinguishable, there are cases that a message is not understandable. In order to understand a message, intention, or purpose of the speaker, not only the form but also context that allows the listener to create imagination is necessary (Tsukimoto and Uehara 2003). Also from the pedagogical point of view, an approach to pragmatics instruction

is to raise learners' awareness of a particular form, what is more important, in a meaningful way. The relation between form and function of prosodic features such as stress and intonation should be treated in context, as a sentence in written text cannot be fully analyzed without referring to the physical, social, and psychological world in which it takes place. The totality of all the above elements interacting is referred as discourse (Cook 1989). In conversation, which is an excellent example of the interactive and interpersonal nature of communication in spoken discourse (Brown 1994), the time dimension should be taken into account for analysis, since participants jointly contribute to the context of interaction. Discourse intonation (DI) theory supposes intonation to play a crucial part in the pursuit of communicative purpose with regard to communicative value (Brazil 1992). On-going real-time selection of intonation by the speaker is given focus, by taking into consideration the common ground between the speaker and the listener. The context of interaction includes the shared knowledge between the speaker and the listener, not only limited to the shared awareness of what has been said before between the participants or personal closed relationship at a specific time and place between the participants, but also extended to a wider context of the mutual understanding of their society.

The attempt in my class is to apply the discourse intonation concept—how prosodic features are related to one another in discourse meaning—to beginner-level class, by referring to *PALE* (*Pronunciation for Advanced Learners of English*, 1994a, 1994b). The course is designed by Brazil for learners in written-text advanced level, takes an inductive approach and aims at raising awareness of how the intonation and pronunciation systems really work in communication; thereby, learners can have insight into how speech conveys messages. In my class, the intonation system is explicitly provided, focusing on the meaningful selection of its form. For a rule of moderate level or a little above in difficulty, the role of explicit instruction will be effective and more important (DeKeyser 2005). The rule difficulty is an individual and subjective issue, though. It is also supposed that the availability of imagination helps them link form and function.

The key elements of the design are 'tone unit', 'prominent syllables', 'tone', and 'key/termination'. The prominence fixes the domain of the three variables of key, termination, and tone, all of which contribute to the communicative value of the tone unit (Brazil 1997). Their description follows in the next section.

Tone Unit and Prominent Syllables

The basic meaningful block is defined as 'tone unit': speech is a sequence of tone units, not a sequence of words. Each tone unit has one or two 'prominent syllables'. A definite line should be drawn between the concept of 'prominence' and that of 'stress'. Stress of a word is a citation form in a dictionary; therefore, it is fixed. It does not have significance on its own. The allocation of prominence is variable and meaningful. When words are combined to produce a meaningful phrase or clause, some syllables become prominent to show significance to the listener in interaction. There are cases that the basic agreement according to the inherent rules of the English language system does not allow prominence as in the example 'He wanted *to* find it', in which 'to' will usually never be highlighted; however, on which syllable or word prominence is given should be decided by the speaker according to the DI theory. In compound nouns, for example, the most familiar type is the combination of two nouns, and the stress is normally placed on the first word. However, both patterns of either stress on first or second word are found (Roach 1991). In the DI approach, it is the speaker who makes the meaningful choices of words to be contained in one tone unit to show special significance in a particular intonation in preference to another, keeping the listener in mind. 'Speakers are constantly making assumptions about what will and what will not amount to a selection in the here-and-now state of communicative understanding they share with the hearer(s)' (Brazil 1995: 57). If a particular word is fairly predictable by the listener, the speaker does not assign prominence to it. The following cases, therefore, are possible: 'bad-<u>TEM</u>pered', 'a BAD-tempered <u>TEACH</u>er', 'TEACHers who are bad-<u>TEM</u>pered', or 'we HAVE a bad-tempered <u>TEACH</u>er ' (prominent syllables are indicated in upper-case letters. The last prominent syllable in a tone unit is underlined as well).

Tone

'Tone' is also the speaker's selection based on whether the utterance to be made would be common ground or news to the listener. While prominence is treated as an attribute of a word, tone attributes to the whole of a tone unit: it starts at the last prominent syllable in a tone unit and continues to the end. Table 1 compares the meaning of tone choices and their description. A referring tone is selected when there is an assumption

that the meaning can be taken for granted by the listener, or in questions to make sure about some information. A proclaiming tone is selected when the information is imagined to be new, or an inquiry is made to the listener. These two tones have two versions respectively. What makes the two versions meaningfully distinctive is the role-relationships in the context of interaction. The dominant speaker may use a rising tone and a rise-fall tone to show control over interaction. In informal 'social' conversations, however, the speaker sometimes prefers a fall-rise tone to reduce friction and to be friendly to the listener. In making inquiries beginning with 'perhaps' or 'I wonder', a falling tone is preferred to avoid an unpleasant atmosphere, not to sound as though the speaker has already made an assumption about the reply (Brazil 1994a, 1994b). Finally, selecting a level tone implies that the speaker is carefully selecting words and taking time to put the language together, or is mentally preparing for the next step. Therefore, a level tone tends to be followed by a pause.

Orientation	Meaning	Description		Others
		PALE (1994a, 1994b)	DI code (1997)	
Direct (towards the listener)	Referring (common ground)	↗ (rising)	r+	Dominant
		↘↗ (fall-rise)	r	
	Proclaiming (news)	↘ (falling)	p	
		↗↘ (rise-fall)	p+	Dominant
Oblique (towards the language)	Opt out	→ (level)	o	

Table 1. Five Tones and Their Meanings

Key and Termination

The pitch-level system also contributes to the description of intonation and projects the relevant utterances made by participants. The pitch level can be realized by three keys of 'high', 'mid', and 'low', which are indicated with an upward or downward arrow; key height is relative, though. The description differs depending on where the key movement occurs. While the choice of pitch level on the first prominent syllable is called a choice of 'key', the choice of pitch level on the last syllable is called a choice of 'termination'. The same as tone selection, key selection attributes to a tone unit as a whole. There is distinction in meaning associated with them. While the key refers back

to the preceding utterance, the termination usually refers forward to the utterance assumed to come next in the discourse. The key selection of either 'high', 'mid', and 'low' projects 'contrasting, particularizing, or adjudicating', 'asserting or concurring', and 'equating' implications of the speaker respectively under the context of interaction.

The second half of the paper discusses the treatment of intonation in the textbooks used in my beginner-level and compares it with *PALE's* accounts of intonational meaning. Follow is a case study of applying *PALE's* concept by utilizing some of the textbook's dialogues and tape recordings. While using textbooks is often criticized from the perspective of authenticity, there is, on the other hand, a claim that the DI theory does provide an answer to the problems caused by the practice of recorded utterances (Cauldwell and Allan 1997).

Review of Textbooks Regarding Treatment of Intonation

The textbooks examined are *East West Basics* (Graves and Rice 1994) and *New Person to Person Student Book 1* and *New Person to Person Student Book 2* (both Richards, Bycina, and Aldcorn 1995) used in my beginner-level classes.

Textbooks	Treatment of Intonation
East West Basics	Pronunciation focus activity is provided. Students are suggested they repeat after the tape. Yes-no questions and wh- questions have rising and falling tones respectively, and they are fixed. Word stress is fixed. Handclapping is suggested on the stressed syllable. Sentences have the same rhythm. Rhythm has regular beats. Unstressed syllables in multi-syllable words usually have reduced sound. Rise-fall and rising tones are introduced in questions, however, without explanation. Reply to a question (whichever, yes-no or wh- questions) is divided into units, accompanied by a comma. They always have a falling tone. Speaking with the tape is suggested.

New Person to Person Student Book 1	Pronunciation focus activity is provided. In compound nouns, the first noun has heavier stress and a higher pitch. In normal speech, 'to', 'and', 'are', and 'do' are unstressed. The vowel has reduced sound. Words that carry stress usually have more important meaning than the other words in a sentence. Wh- questions have a falling tone. Stressed words in a sentence usually compose a regular beat. Words that require attention are in italics.
New Person to Person Student Book 2	Pronunciation focus activity is provided. Word stress is fixed. Words that carry stress usually have important meaning. Listening practice to stressed and unstressed words in sentences and phrases is suggested. 'can' is usually unstressed. The vowel has reduced sound. Words that require attention are in italics.

Table 2. Treatment of Pronunciation and Intonation

Their treatment, as it is obvious in Table 2, is rather a PPP (presentation, practice, and production) one. The textbooks do elicit learners' attention to particular features of intonation, however, none of them are given relative values according to context but important meaning on stressed words. Mapping the form to meaning and function is not provided either. They demonstrate the word stress (accented syllable) to be fixed and the English language speech has rhythm with a regular beat on stressed words. Compound nouns in *New Person to Person Student Book 1* have stress on the first noun, which is fixed. The term 'stress' is used interchangeably between 'an accented syllable' and 'a prominent syllable'. The tone of wh- questions is given a conventional treatment, that is, the wh- question form has a falling tone. In one example with a question starting with 'which', it is obvious from the context that the speaker's intention is confirmation; the speaker already has some expectations about the reply. Under a particular situation, the tone to be selected could be a referring one. Regarding the output side, repetition after the tape and handclapping to acquire the rhythm are suggested.

Analysis in Discourse-based Framework and Suggestion of Applying *PALE* Concept

The following extract is from the recording attached to the textbook. With an encoding, the selection of prominence, tone, and key is analytical described to draw learners' attention to the meaning of intonation in communicative contexts (see Table 1 for the meaning of the codes). The pronunciation focus activity provided in the textbook would give learners the impression that intonation is fixed and makes a regular rhythmical sound (see Table 2). However, some dialogue on the tape can show the difference of intonation related to the meaning in context. The tape usually has the rather exaggerated and slow recording, which may be suitable for deliberately drawing attention to discourse intonation for beginner-level students (Cauldwell and Allan 1997).

East West Basics

TUESDAY

(1) G: // ↘↗ THAT was <u>FUN</u>! //

(2) B: // ↘↗ yes, it <u>WAS</u>.// // ↘↗ you're very <u>GOOD</u>.//
         // ↘ how OFten do you <u>PLAY</u> ?//

(3) G: // ↘ oh, about TWICE a <u>WEEK</u>.// // ↘ how about <u>YOU</u>?//

(4) B: // ↘↗ about TWICE // // ↗ a ↑ <u>YEAR</u>!//

The previous dialogue tells that the girl and the boy are talking about the tennis game they just played (refer to Appendix). In spite of the stress-timed rhythm theory that the textbook presumably supports, the recording is rather different (this itself gives confusion). Replies (3) and (4) show easy examples of 'selective' prominence: the number of times and the time duration are selected among various choices. The difference is the boy's 'high' key selection on the prominent syllable. He is contrasting what it is actually the case with what the girl might expect, by using the same word pattern as the girl, but he emphasizes the contrast with the key. He also selects a referring tone. Under this situation, the tone selection implies about the game and the previous utterances; the orientation directs to the girl's previous comment. The textbook clearly defines that replies to questions always have a falling tone, though.

Another example of selective prominence is for the subject of a sentence. There

has been noticed in my experience with beginner-level learners that quite a few tend to place stress on the subject of a sentence, such as 'I', 'He', or 'She' without any purpose or reason. This may be by reason of their high concern of the correct pronunciation of every word rather than the meaning of intonation. In real interaction, however, the subject is not usually given prominence. It is because the subject is fairly predictable and needless to be highlighted in comparison with other words, as you see in (2). On the contrary, as apparent in (1), the subject is purposefully highlighted for the listener. The prominence projects the speaker's decision on which word, or precisely which accented syllable should be made significant for the listener. Further, selecting a referring tone will not only tell the listener which object is denoted by the subject 'that' but also confirm the listener in sharing the feeling of having had 'fun'.

The DI theory can explain the selection of a proclaiming tone for the interrogative sentences in (2) and (3) that the speaker is asking for information that the listener knows but the speaker does not have. If a referring tone was selected as '↘↗ how OFten do you PLAY?', the same utterance should be taken as having a checking function. The textbook gives a notion that the interrogative-question form always has a fixed intonation of a falling tone; however, it is not the form that decides the tone selection, but the speaker' choice in communicative contexts.

The traditional approach focuses on distinguishing the form. The objective is obtaining the knowledge of the rules by mechanically describing and producing each element correctly. In class, however, the objective in class should be learning form for meaning, as a clause without meaning is no more than a formation of linguistic symbols. The notion of stress does not coincide with that of prominence in the discourse approach. Stress itself is a physically emphasized sound and is not provided with meaning or interpretation; on the other hand, prominence in a clause provides a distinctive quality compared to other sounds and shows the speaker's subjective viewpoint, which will be conveyed to the listener. Stress-timed rhythm theory has nothing to do with discourse. A clause is no more than a formation of sounds with fixed, regular beats. Meaningful distinction in comparison with other sounds is not allowed under the theory. Since form and function work in harmony and form should be selected meaningfully, the learning focus should be also given to the observation of context that helps create imagination. The discourse approach is supposedly more appropriate than the traditional approach in that perspective.

Most beginner-level students are busy with acquiring basic linguistic features. Their first concern is form rather than meaning; producing a sentence with correct grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. They are more dependent on the written text than listening to a story. When they refer to a textbook while listening, they appear to be trying to match every word they hear to the word in the textbook. In a listening-focus activity, many students often refer to the transcript after listening to find out the words that they couldn't catch. In either situation, most of their questions are related to the correctness of pronunciation, the position of accented syllables, and connected sound. Intonation is beneath their notice. It is therefore not surprising that their awareness of its communicative value is very low. The evidence can also be demonstrated on the output side when they read an article or do pair-work on a dialogue: intonation is not distinctive, pauses are frequently inserted at meaningless places, the subject of a sentence is usually highlighted. They apparently fail to associate the form with its function or they lack understanding of the meaning of the complete text and fail to fit together bits of text coherently. The effect of the traditional approach of focus-on-form-in-isolation is apparent. However, there is a valuable comment of a student that she wants to have the meaning clear before practicing reading. Focus-on-form-in-isolation can be effective in teaching very young beginner-level learners because of its simplicity and their cognitive development. In case of adult learners, however, because of the availability of their imagination and analytical abilities, raising awareness of form should be associated with meaning.

Conclusion

It is not, of course, claimed here that the teaching with conventional rhythm pattern is of no use whatsoever. Rather, an interpretation of intonation in a discourse-based framework is suggested for an alternative pronunciation focus activity: "in the beginning is not the language form in isolation, but rather meaning." On which syllable stress is put in comparison with others or to show difference in communicative value should be voluntarily selected by the speaker. However, the textbooks used with my students treat intonation as a discrete item in the language system. The students' awareness of the communicative value of intonation is low. Although the textbooks' treatment of intonation is not that of the discourse approach, some recorded dialogues

on the tape can be utilized to raise students' awareness of how intonation works in communication, regarding the context including the relationship between the speaker and the listener. The DI theory proposed by Brazil (1994a, 1994b) considers that systematic treatment of intonation will be useful to those who have already achieved an advanced level of proficiency in the written language, and *PALE* is designed with such students in mind. However, everyday speech interaction such as short verbal responses usually doesn't require advanced-level knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. The discourse approach to intonation would encourage even beginner-level students to see intonation from the point of view of how the speaker can convey their message to the listener most meaningfully.

Note: The study contained in this paper was originally conducted in my beginner-level class at a language school. It is reedited for the submission for this bulletin.

Appendix

East West Basics (Graves and Rice 1994), Unit 6, Dialogue
SUNDAY
Julie:　Wow! That was a great match. I really like tennis.
Chris:　Me, too. I think tennis is exciting.
Julie:　Do you play tennis?
Chris:　Yes, but not very well. Do you play?
Julie:　A little. How about a game on Tuesday afternoon?
Chris:　Sure.

MONDAY
Andy:　Were you at Sue's party yesterday?
Julie:　No. I was at a tennis match.
Andy:　How was it?
Julie:　It was lots of fun. Where were you yesterday?
Andy:　At a rock concert.
Julie:　Really? How was it?
Andy:　Ugh! It was awful.

TUESDAY

Julie: That was fun!

Chris: Yes, it was. You're very good. How often do you play?

Julie: Oh, about twice a week. How about you?

Chris: About twice a year!

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