Pragmatic analysis of intonation in Jim Carrey's Movie 'The Mask'

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Abstract:

This study presents a pragmatic exploration of the role of intonation in the realization of speech acts in spoken English, with reference to the American movie 'The Mask'. Though intonation is a central feature of spoken interaction, its pragmatic impact on speech act interpretation has not been sufficiently explored within audio-visual discourse. Accordingly, this study investigates how intonation features contribute to the realization of illocutionary force and to the interpretation of speaker's intention in spoken data. Utilizing an eclectic model and Praat software, five main speech acts have been analysed in the movie as uttered by the hero and heroine. The findings revealed that intonation holds a crucial pragmatic role in the realization and interpretation of speech acts. It is concluded that intonation functions as a context-pragmatic source rather than a purely phonetic phenomenon, and that different speech act types tend to display recurrent intonational configurations that influence their illocutionary force. Nuclear tones and prominence emerge as particularly prominent features in signalling pragmatic weight and speaker intention. Furthermore, intonation is shown to assist indirectness and pragmatic distinction in spoken interaction. Assertive and directive speech acts are found to exhibit the highest degree of intonational variation in the data.

Keywords: The Mask, comedy, intonation, speech acts, Praat software.

تحليل تداولي للتنغيم في فيلم القناع لجيم كيري

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المستخلص:

تقدم هذه الدراسة دراسة تداولية لدور التنغيم في انجاز الأفعال الكلامية في اللغة الإنجليزية المنطوقة، بالرجوع إلى الفيلم الأمريكي."The Mask القناع, على الرغم من أن التنغيم هو سمة أساسية للتفاعل المنطوق، إلا أن تأثيره التداولي على تفسير الأفعال الكلامية لم يتم استكشافه بشكل كافٍ في الخطاب السمعي البصري. وبناءً على ذلك، تبحث هذه الدراسة في كيفية مساهمة سمات التنغيم في تحقيق القوة الانجازية لفعل الكلام وتفسير نية المتحدث في البيانات المنطوقة. باستخدام نموذج انتقائي وبرنامج Praat، تم تحليل خمسة أفعال كلامية رئيسية في الفيلم كما نطقها البطل والبطلة. كشفت النتائج أن التنغيم يلعب دورًا تداوليا حاسمًا في تحقيق وتفسير الأفعال الكلامية. وخلصت الدراسة إلى أن التنغيم يعمل كمصدر تداولي سياقي وليس ظاهرة صوتية بحتة، وأن أنواع الأفعال الكلامية المختلفة تميل إلى إظهار تشكيلات تنغيمية متكررة تؤثر على قوتها الانجازية. تبرز النغمات المركزية بشكل خاص في الإشارة إلى الوزن التداولي ونية المتحدث. علاوة على ذلك، يظهر أن التنغيم يساعد على عدم المباشرة والتمييز التداولي في التفاعل اللفظي. كما وجد أن الأفعال الكلامية التأكيدية والتوجيهية تظهر أعلى درجة من التباين التنغيمي في البيانات.

1. Introduction

Every language in the world has intonation, i.e., it is a universal feature (Katamba, 1989, p.293; Yip, 2002; Tench, 2005) which means ''the way the voice goes up and down during an utterance'' (Trask, 1997, p.117). Intonation is a distinctive feature of human language in which speaking without it results in an inhuman quality in speech (ibid). As a term in supra-segmental phonology, it is "the distinctive use of patterns of pitch, or melody" (Crystal, 2008, p. 252). This use of pitch variations/patterns in the voice is intended to communicate discourse meaning and phrasing in varied linguistic environments (Reed & Levis, 2015, p.139).

Consequently, intonation does not denote the lexical meaning; rather it conveys additional meanings. According to which, the functions of intonation can be described mainly in relation to the domains of discourse, grammar, accent, and attitude. That is; intonation can indicate the attitude of the speaker, emphasize certain aspects of the utterance, manage turn taking, and determine the grammatical intent of the expression in which the same piece of language can be changed from a statement to a question by pitch variation (Bani Younes, 2020, pp. 65, 25-28; Alsmadi et al., 2020, pp. 27, 66).   Furthermore, intonation has a pragmatic function that can be used to convey different meanings to change the illocutionary force of an utterance. This function is the main concern of this study; it is when ''the pitch of the voice rises and falls to deliver linguistic and pragmatic meaning'' (Wells, 2006, p. 1; Rogers, 2018, p.29).

Intonation along with pragmatics can contribute mainly to determining and understanding the intended meaning of the utterance (Leech, 1983:45 as cited in Ali, 2020, p.7323). It plays an essential role in disambiguating and clarifying the equivocal meanings of items. Moreover, intonation helps to convey the speaker's intention and can be the main "factor in distinguishing one speech act from another" (Wennerstrom, 2001:131).

Thus, the current study is concerned with investigation pragmatic structure and functions of in tonational patterns in Jim Carrey's masterpiece 'The Mask', which is one of the most influential comedies in the global comedy. More specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1)   What are the types of speech acts performed in the selected utterances?
2)   What are the intonation patterns associated with certain speech acts?
3)   How does intonation contribute to communicative function (illocutionary force) change in speech acts?
4)   How does intonation lead to different realizations and perlocutionary force of the same speech act?
5)   What are the most recurrent functions of intonation patterns appeared in the data?

The current study is expected to add value to the field of phonological pragmatics, and to shed light on the impacts of intonation on understanding and communication. Then, it is hoped to contribute to the research knowledge on function studies on English. As well as, it attempts to increase information about the relationship between intonation and speech acts.

2. Review of Literature

This section is concerned with presenting a theoretical background on pragmatics, intonation, their definitions, approaches and some previous studies.

2.1 Intonation

There appears to be no consensus on one definition for intonation. Thus, different scholars view intonation from different perspectives. From a phonetic perspective, Henry Sweet (1890, p.64) for instance, views intonation as variations of pitch (tone) which depend on the vibrations in the vocal cords. These variations refer to the pitch changes that occur on the nuclear syllable (also known as the nucleus or the tonic syllable) in an intonation group.

As for Jones (1960, p.55), these variations in the pitch of the voice found in connected speech, i.e. he refers to the musicality of the note of language via the use of intonation. Moreover, Robinett (1972) refers to intonation as the tune of spoken language. He specifies more saying; intonation is the combination of the musical tones on the pronunciation of the syllables in our speech (p.38).

Ladefoged (2001, p.99) indicates that intonation represents changes in pitch at the level of sentence. Then, he calls "the part of a sentence over which a particular pattern extends as an intonational phrase" (Ladefoged, 2001, p. 99). Similarly, Crystal (2008) specifies intonation to refer to "the distinctive use of patterns of pitch, or melody" (p. 241). In which he regards melody and pitch as being near-synonyms or informal equivalents. Thus, when referring to pitch, all aspects of intonation such as tone units, tones, tonic syllables and so on would be covered.

Clark et al. (2007, p. 361) assert that pitch choices are highly organized structures. Thus, intonation as a choice that is structured in a patterned way supposed to meet a purpose. Moreover, Bhatnagar (2010, p.142 as cited in Bani Younes, 2020, p.67) portrays intonation as the music of a language and perhaps is the most crucial element of a correct accent. Intonation, as defined by Pickering (2012), is "the systematic and linguistically meaningful use of pitch movement at the phrasal or suprasegmental level" (2012: 280).

All in all, intonation, as a feature of suprasegmental level phonetics, is made by pitch variations which are patterned and organized in a systematic and meaningful way selected by the speaker to serve a purpose in communication.

Intonation has been discussed phonetically considering it as a physical feature throughout the definitions above, however, it could be described phonologically too as will be elaborated below.

Mattews (2007, p. 201) sees intonation as a distinctive system of tones occurring over a piece of language in principle larger than a single word. Similarly,

Crystal (2008) defines intonation as a term used in the study of suprasegmental phonology, referring to the distinctive use of patterns of pitch, or melody. The study of intonation is sometimes called intonology.

Ladd (2008, pp. 5-6) presents some features to define intonation from such perspective. Thus, it is a phonological supra-segmental feature in which there is no difference between fundamental frequency (F0) as a physical feature and its physiological correlate (pitch).It is a sentence-level or post-lexical feature in which it is related to the meaning of whole phrases and sentences such as sentence type, information focus, and speech act. Hence, this definition excludes aspects of tone, stress, and accent that are determined in the lexicon. Furthermore, intonation is a linguistically structured feature organized in terms of distinctive entities and relations (e.g. low/high) in which other paralinguistic features such as tempo and loudness are to be excluded.

2.2 Pragmatics: Speech Act Theory

Pragmatics can originally be traced back to philosophical roots as the philosopher Charles Morris (1938) who being influenced by Pierce was the first to refer to it as the third dimension of a threefold semiotic division along with syntax and semantics. In this division, pragmatics is "the study of the relation of signs to interpreters" (Morris, 1938, p. 6 as cited in Bublitz & Norrick, 2011, p.2). This definition highlights the relation between linguistic signs and their users.

Pragmatics is also seen as concerned with the description of the use of language in communication including the effect use has on interpretation, as well as, the role of the linguistic aspects involved in the speech event including the participants, their intentions, their knowledge, belief, and the temporal and spatial parameters in communication (Carnap, 1942, pp.7-9 as cited in Levinson, 1983, pp.2-3). For Austin (1962), it is how to do things with words in the real world particularly through speech acts (p.120). This perspective initiated the study of speech act theory.

Speech Act Theory has been shaped by several key scholars, each contributing significant advancements to its development. The most influential figures include: J.L. Austin (1911–1960) and John R. Searle (1932–2022).

Austin (1962), in his book '*How to Do Things with Words'*, developed the linguistic philosophy by introducing the concept of 'Speech Act Theory', in which language is seen as a means of performing actions. Austin in his view challenged the traditional believe that sentences are either true or false (the descriptive theory of meaning) and instead indicated that many utterances function as actions, which he called 'performative utterances'. The performative, which makes the force of the statement explicit, is a unique kind of speaking act (Levinson, 1983).

Speech acts are communicative actions that can be performed by saying and implying that one is performing them, but they are not required to be (Van Dijk, 1977, p. 102). According to Yule (1996), they can be defined as actions via

utterances (p. 47). Speech acts are language-based actions that can be analysed pragmatically. Bach (1979) emphasizes that communication involves not only language but also action. This action carries a message in itself. Birner (2013) also claims saying anything is equivalent to performing something. The speaker can express the action in words and sentences via speech acts.

Speech acts are actions that can, but do not have to, be performed by speaking and implying that one is doing so. Many people consider them to be the most important units of communication, with the phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic features of an utterance indicating whether the speaker is making a promise, a prediction, a declaration, or a threat. Some speech acts are significant because an appropriate authority can declare war or imprison a person simply by stating so (Green, 2016, p. 2).

The nature of speech acts thus has been modified and he classified utterances into two types : constatives and performatives. Constative utterances are as statements that are used to describe or report facts in which judgment of true false is possible. The performative utterances on the other hand are these utterances that perform actions under certain conditions and reflect no reality (Mey, 2009). Such actions might be apologising or declaration. **E.g. I apologise for the inconvenience**.

Thus, performatives are not judged depending on reality or truth condition but as meeting the conditions necessary to achieve and perform the act of speaking; they are evaluated as successful (felicitous) or unsuccessful (infelicitous). The performative, is what makes explicit the force of the utterance (Green. 2016, pp. 2-4). That is, when the speaker says something, "he intentionally does something with his utterance". Consequently, saying an utterance like **"I warn you, there is a snake near your car"** is not merely conveying a piece of information. Rather, "it is intended to perform the speech act of warning".

Several theories of speech acts tend to fall into one of two traditions: intentionalist or conventionalist. The former views speech acts as being governed by communicative intentions alone, while the latter opposes rules that resemble games and sees them as being similar to moves in a game, such as "doing A counts as doing B." Another point of contention is the extent to which speakers can conduct one speech act indirectly by performing another (see Alkhazaali & Al-Hindawi, 2017).

2.3 Phonopragmatics: Speech Acts and Intonation

As part of phonopragmatics, which is related to the integration of pragmatics and phonology, the relationship between speech acts and intonation lies at the core of the prosody–pragmatics interface. Speech act theory, as originally formulated by John Searle (1969, 1979), conceptualizes utterances as actions performed through language, distinguishing between locutionary content, illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect. However, while the theory provides a functional taxonomy of acts (representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations), it offers limited specification of the

phonological mechanisms through which illocutionary force is signaled in spoken interaction. In naturally occurring discourse, grammatical structure alone is often insufficient to determine communicative intention. Rather, illocutionary force emerges from the interaction of syntax, context, and prosodic realization (Levinson, 1983; Yule, 2010).

Intonation, as a central component of prosody, involves systematic variations in pitch (F0), prominence, and phrasing across utterances. Within the systemic-functional tradition, Halliday (1967) argues that intonation encodes not only textual (information-structural) meaning but also interpersonal meaning, thereby contributing directly to pragmatic interpretation. Similarly, Wells (2006) maintains that nuclear tone selection—such as fall, rise, or fall–rise—signals speaker attitude and communicative intent. A falling tone frequently conveys finality, certainty, or assertion; a rising tone may index incompleteness, demand, or interrogation ; and a fall–rise contour often signals reservation, contrast, or politeness. These tonal distinctions frequently determine whether an utterance is interpreted as a statement, request, warning, or ironic remark.

From a pragmatic perspective, intonation functions as a disambiguating device. Thus, intonation is not limited to expressing the lexical meaning; rather it carries extra meanings. According to them, the functions of intonation can be labelled chiefly in connection to the domains of grammar, discourse, accent, and attitude. That is; intonation can specify the attitude of the speaker, highlight some aspects of utterances, manage turn taking, and govern the grammatical intent of the expressions in which the same piece of language can be transformed from a statement to a question by pitch variation (Cruttenden, 1997; Alsmadi et al., 2020, pp. 27, 66).

Intonation contributes to the realization of indirect speech acts, a concept central to Searle's (1979) work. For instance, indirect speech acts rely on inferential processes, yet prosodic cues often guide the hearer toward the intended interpretation. In this sense, intonation operates as an acoustic index of illocutionary force. Consequently, intonation can be used to convey different meanings to change the illocutionary force of an utterance. (Roach, 2009; Rogers, 2018, p.29).

Areading of speech acts and prosody can display the role intonation incorporates to perform these acts. Viewing speech acts simply as making utterances with intended purposes to initiate actions might not be sufficient to understand the real meaning of utterances. For instance, if the requesting utterance **"would you pass me the salt, please?"** is said with a rising rather than falling tone, it might be understood as an insult to the hearer. Ultimately, this can impact the illocutionary force of the utterance or alter it to be differently interpreted. In fact, there appears to be a sort of outstanding interaction between the successful performance of these illocutionary forces and intonation (Alsmadi et al., 2020, p. 77).

Though intonation is an intrinsic feature of speech acts, it has been recently given attention in researches. There are various studies, actually, attempt to discover more characteristics that can be added to the speech act theory concept by recognising the role intonation plays in operating these acts.

2.4 Previous Studies

Several studies, since the 1990s, have indicated and focused on the relationship between intonation and speech acts. Cruttenden (1997) is one of the authors who tackled intonation in details and represented an investigation on the influence it has on different speech acts. This one study aims at exploring the role of intonation in the performance of different speech acts.

Schack (2000), focusing on the same aims, expands to investigate how intonation might be influenced by language system by presenting a comparative analysis of intonation patterns in both Mandarin Chinese and English. The study focuses on how a bilingual speaker employs intonation in realizing different speech acts. That is, through highlighting key differences in the intonational systems of the two languages—such as the tone-based structure of Mandarin versus the intonation-based modulation of English. It also investigates how these systems affect the pragmatic interpretation of utterances.

In an introductory chapter from the volume 'Where Prosody Meets Pragmatics', Wichmann, Dehé, and Barth-Weingarten (2012) emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of prosody and pragmatics, exploring how prosodic phenomena—such as intonation, rhythm, stress, and pitch—interface with pragmatic categories like speech acts, information structure, discourse coherence, and speaker attitude. It investigated how prosodic cues guide listener's interpretation and contribute to the communicative force of utterances.

Fretheim and Dommelen (2012) support the assumption that different intonation features are significantly influencing the hearer's realization of the utterances produced and change them drastically and lead to differences in sentence type and speech acts all due to specific communicative purposes. For example, in East Norwegian intonation, a statement typically sounds identical to a question to non-native listeners, with a final pitch movement of an EN utterance is categorized as a rise to a high or a fall to a low target tone; however, such perceived distinction has no phonological value unless it is systematically employed for a communication intent.

A Phono-Pragmatic analysis of some homonymous items in the glorious Qur'an with reference to their realisations in English is conducted by Abdul-Wahid (2017) which aligns with the main concern of the thesis for it finds that different usages of intonational features and sounds that lead to different interpretation of certain Quranic homonymous items which are used in certain Ayahs.

Heim's (2019) dissertation presents the ingredients for solving a long-standing challenge in linguistics. What is the relationship between the structure of an utterance (clause type) and its purpose (speech act).claiming that intonation is

crucial to resolving the Speech Act Problem. In North-American English, the form of the sentence-final contour carries two conversational variables: excursion and duration.

Tonhauser (2019) examines the role of prosodic cues (particularly intonation) in signalling focus in spoken language. The study utilises insights from experimental phonetics and pragmatics to investigate the production, perception, and interpretation of prosodically marked focus. Tonhauser's work is directly pertinent to the investigation of the interplay between intonation and speech acts, especially threats and warnings.

Ali (2020) also tackles "the pragmatic function of intonational variations" which are used in the Glorious Qur'an; specifically, sura Al-Ghashiyah. Its aims are: revealing and discussing the "intonational patterns of different illocutionary forces" used in sura Al-Ghashiyah. This study is significant because it explores these intonational variations of the speech act types adopting "the autosegmental-metrical phonology (AM) model of Pierrehumbert (1980)". Although the study is concerned more with a deeper understanding of the intended meanings of the Quranic verses, to clarify the interpretation of them in sura Al-Ghashiyah, it is relevant to the present thesis because of its focus on illocutionary act and use of specialised software.

Barone (2020) studies the intonation system of, Pescara, an Italian variety and two sentence types (contrastive focus statements and neutral polar questions) which were found to display the exact "two pitch accents as allophonic variants by the old speakers. This study revealed that polar questions are more equivalent to phonetic convergence than contrastive statements. "As we encounter the same accents for the two types of sentences, the asymmetry in variations detected between the two sentence types solely relies on their pragmatics."

Alkumet (2021) conducts a phono-pragmatic analysis of three speeches delivered by U.S. President Donald Trump in 2020. Utilising Speech Act Theory (SAT) and Brazil's model of intonation, the research examines how threats and warnings—classified as commissive speech acts—are realised through prosodic features. The study employs a descriptive qualitative methodology, analysing pitch, frequency, and tone units to uncover the interplay between intonation and illocutionary force. Findings indicate that Trump's use of intonation serves to reinforce the communicative intent of his threatening and warning statements, often manifesting as indirect illocutionary acts.

One study is concerned with the interaction and relationship between intonation and pragmatics in general or speech acts in particular which analyses Barack Obama's usage of speech acts in his speech "A More Perfect Union". The study focuses on Searle's speech act classification: directive, commissive, representative, declarative, and expressive and analysis of political speech (Utami *et al*., 2022).

Maghrabi (2022) analyzed the pragmatic functions of the proclaiming and referring information tones observed in the Saudi Ministry of Health's (MOH)

official spokesperson's speech on COVID-19 and termination. It also investigates whether the termination component is related to dominance-non-dominance factors utilizing Brazil's model. In this study, data were analyzed acoustically using Praat software. The results reveal that the speaker's most frequently deployed tone was the (rise) referring+ tone with a high pitch value. This study focuses on the phonological-pragmatic associations.

One more study focuses on the function of intonation, namely the acoustic cues (prosodic strategies) used by the speaker to divide the narrative inside Robert Frost's poem 'Mending Wall' is conducted by Al-Badri and Al-Zubaidi (2023). Three prosodic features are proposed as indicators for spoken text segmentation: pitch reset, boundary tone, and pausing. These characteristics enable researchers to investigate how prosody signals thematic hierarchical narrative structure. In this study, it is proved that prosody serves as a key interpretive device, marking shifts in tone, speaker stance, and rhetorical emphasis.

By identifying how intonational boundaries correspond to discourse moves, such as elaboration, contrast, and irony, they demonstrate that poetic structure is deeply intertwined with speech act dynamics. These cues help signal when a character is making a claim, expressing doubt, or initiating a subtle challenge—thereby enhancing the pragmatic depth of the poem.

3. Methodology

In this section, the study sketches methods of analysis, theoretical model and data collection and description.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

This study employs two related theoretical foundations: the speech act theory and intonational phonology. Together, these frameworks offer the conceptual tools required for analyzing the way intonation contributes to the pragmatic functions of utterances in spoken discourse.

3.1.1 Searle's Taxonomy of Speech Acts

At the central point of the pragmatic dimension of this study lies John Searle's (1969) theory of speech acts.

Searle (1969) classifies illocutionary acts into five major categories:

1. **Assertives or representatives**: statements that describe the world or convey information about it including; for instance, claiming and reporting.

2. **Directives**: attempts from the speaker to get the hearer to do something such as requesting or commanding.

3. **Commissives**: get the hearer to commit to a future action (e.g., promising and offering).

4. **Expressives**: expressions of psychological and mind states (e.g., thanking or apologizing).

5. **Declaratives**: utterances that bring institutional changes by their performance such as declaring war or naming.

This taxonomy is central to the present study, as it provides the basis for classifying the communicative intent behind the utterances examined in *J. Carrey's 'The Mask'*. Notably, speech acts are not always marked explicitly by syntactic or lexical forms; intonation often plays a vibrant role in signalling the speaker's intent, distinguishing, for example, a question from a command despite identical wording (e.g., "You're going now?" vs. "You're going now!"). Thus Searle's (1976) classification is necessary because it is considered the principal pragmatic framework in the study. Utterances are investigated and categorized as assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives (Mann, 2009, p.317).

3.1.2 The Autosegmental-Metrical Model

The phonological analysis of intonation in this study is based on the Autosegmental-Metrical (AM) theory of intonation, initially established by Pierrehumbert (1980) and later developed in subsequent work (Ladd, 2008). The AM model considers intonation as a system of discrete tonal events—that is pitch accents, phrase accents, and boundary tones—that are accompanied with metrically strong syllables and prosodic boundaries. This model is combined with Searle's impressionistic classification of speech acts to achieve the anticipated result.

To analyze intonation, the study adopts the Autosegmental-Metrical (AM) model of intonation, using the ToBI (Tones and Break Indices) annotation system. This model allows for precise phonological representation of pitch events (such as pitch accents and boundary tones) and is fully compatible with instrumental analysis software such as Praat. It facilitates the identification of patterns such as rising, falling, or complex pitch contours and how these correlate with the pragmatic intent of the utterance.

3.1.2.1 ToBI (Tones and Break Indices)

ToBI (for Tones and Break Indices) is a system proposed by Silverman et al. (1992) and designed in order to transcribe the intonation patterns and features of the prosody of English utterances. It was developed by a number of speech scientists from different disciplines (such as linguistics, electrical engineering, psychology, etc.) who aimed to form a common standard for the transcription of a conventional set of prosodic elements, in order to facilitate sharing prosodically transcribed databases across different research sites, thereby accomplishing diverse research purposes and various technological aims (Beckman and Ayers Elam, 1997).

Cruttenden (1997) states that ToBI has four tiers in which the first one is called an Orthographic tier, the second is a Break Index tier, the third a Tone tier, and a Miscellaneous tier fourthly (p.59). The tone and break index tiers are central to linguistic analyses, and they deal with the lexical and phonological phenomena. The tone tier is primarily concerned with the phonological events by abstracting several pitch movements into a binary system of H (high) and L (low). That consists of three main kinds of pitch movements including pitch accents, phrase

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accents, and boundary tones. Pitch accents include six types (e.g. H*, L*, L+H*, L*+H, H+L*, and H*+L (the asterisk * refers to the central part of the pitch accent)) which mark stressed syllables (ibid).

Next , the boundary tone which is symbolized by either H% or L% and is located as the last component of a tune signaling the end of an intonational phrase. Then, the phrase accent, which is found between the last pitch accent and the boundary tone, is represented by H- or L- with no diacritic added. Remarkably, in this case, the most prominent accent in intonational phrases; the nuclear stress is identified by word placement since it positioned typically in the last or only pitch- accented word in the phrase. From this point to the final boundary tone in the utterance, the intonation tends to fall towards the end (Halliday and Greaves, 2008, pp.12-13).

Figure (1): ToBI Annotation

John didn't go
H*   L⁻L%
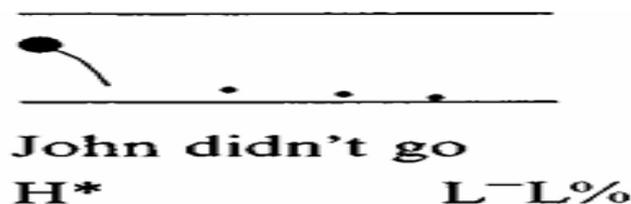
This example shows a peak accent(H*), which refers to the point where a syllable accented in the middle or upper part of the pitch range of voice, is followed by a low (L-) phrase accent and a low boundary tone (L%) (Cruttenden, 1997, pp.60-61).

In contrast, the break index tier is indirectly related to the prosodic events; that's, it ascribes numerical indices to rate on a scale (0–4) the degree of perceived juncture between each pair of words, including the final word and the silence at the end of the utterance. These indices reflect the perceptual disjuncture and help outline prosodic phrasing based on phonetic cues(ibid).

Notably, while the tone tier is structured around prosodic units such as pitch accents, the break index tier closely aligns with grammatical units which determine the boundaries, meaning that each index is inserted on the basis of sounds between lexical and grammatical items, without separating them. Both tone and break index tiers are accountable for a variety of linguistic phenomena encompassing aspects of lexis, phonetics, and phonology (ibid).

As the name indicates, the orthographic tier (also known as word tier) provides a word-for-word English transcription for utterances proving a visual reference to facilitate cross-comparison between written forms and prosodic structures. Finally, the miscellaneous tier which includes the paralinguistic features, such as disfluencies, filled pauses, laughter, or any other phenomena that cannot be captured by tonal labels. The ToBI system was originally developed to transcribe the mostly spoken varieties in English discourse, thus the current

study selects native speakers for data collection rather than non-native ones(ibid).

3.1.2.3 Praat Software

To analyze intonation acoustically, it is necessary to use a speech processing software that can visualize the elements of the speech signal. The three main displays used in studying intonation are : the waveform, spectrograms, and the fundamental frequency (F0) trace, which refers to what is heard as speech melody or pitch (Reed and Levis, 2015, p. 142). Praat is the most commonly software that is used in the annotation of the acoustic displays (Boersma & Van Heuven, 2001). It is utilized for speech analysis, synthesis, and manipulation.

This computer program has been developed by David Weenink and Paul Boersma in 1992. Praat provides a rich analysis of speech displaying a visual representation of acoustic phenomena including sound wave forms represented by analyses of spectrograms (high and low frequencies), pitch contours, and formant contours. This kind of analysis permits annotation to be determined by the tones used in several layers and "in terms of auditory perceived phonological categories (falls, rises, or more often H*L, L*H, etc.)". Such computer software is able to show the nature of the perceived sounds, but it is unable to show the linguistic functions of them (Reed and Levis, 2015, p. 143; El-Garawany, 2021, p. 105). Therefore, this study combines pragmatic and phonological perspectives and uses computerized software to accomplish the most precise analysis.

Figure (2): Praat window
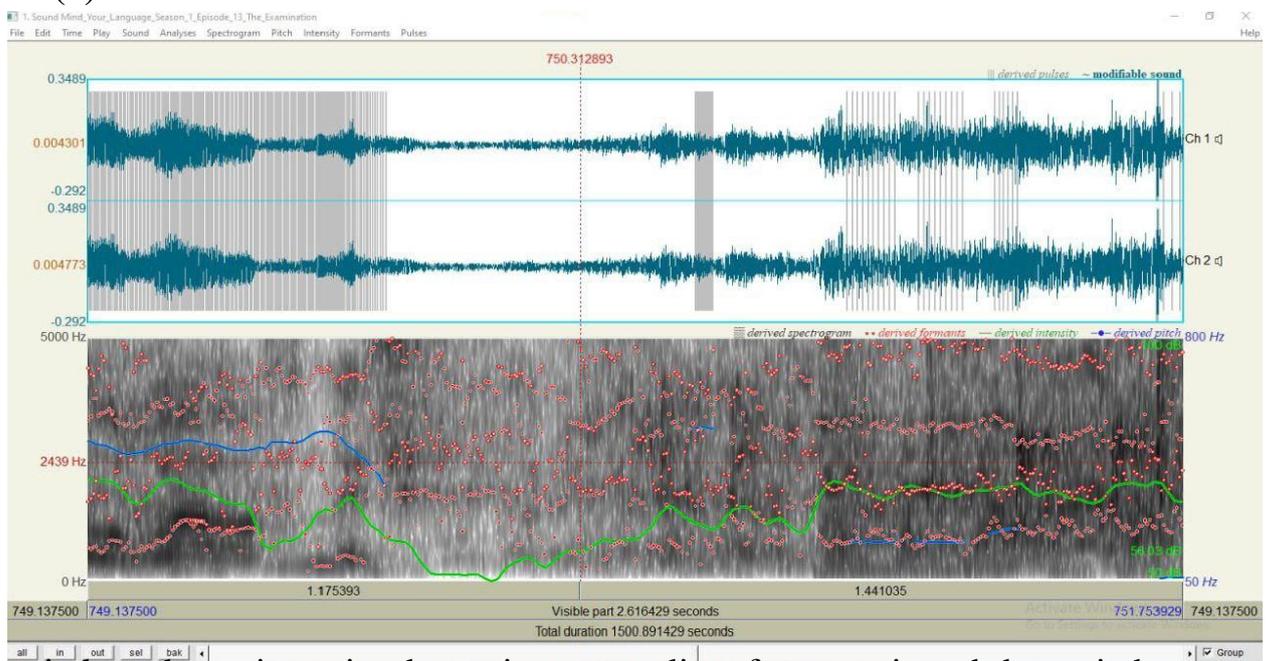
This window shows intensity drawn in a green line, formants in red dots, pitch in a blue line, and spectrogram as grey background lines; the above part shows waveforms in blue lines and pulses as blue lines along with other details.

Therefore, to operationalize the model, each utterance in the dataset will go through three steps of analysis: (1) classification into one of the five speech act categories, (2) prosodic measurement and description of the relevant

intonational features, and (3) labeling of the utterance based on the pragmatic function realized through its intonational contour. This threefold process ensures that speech acts are observed in actual performance through intonation, rather than being treated as abstract categories.

Here is the final form of the model of analysis:

Fig. (3): Model of Analysis
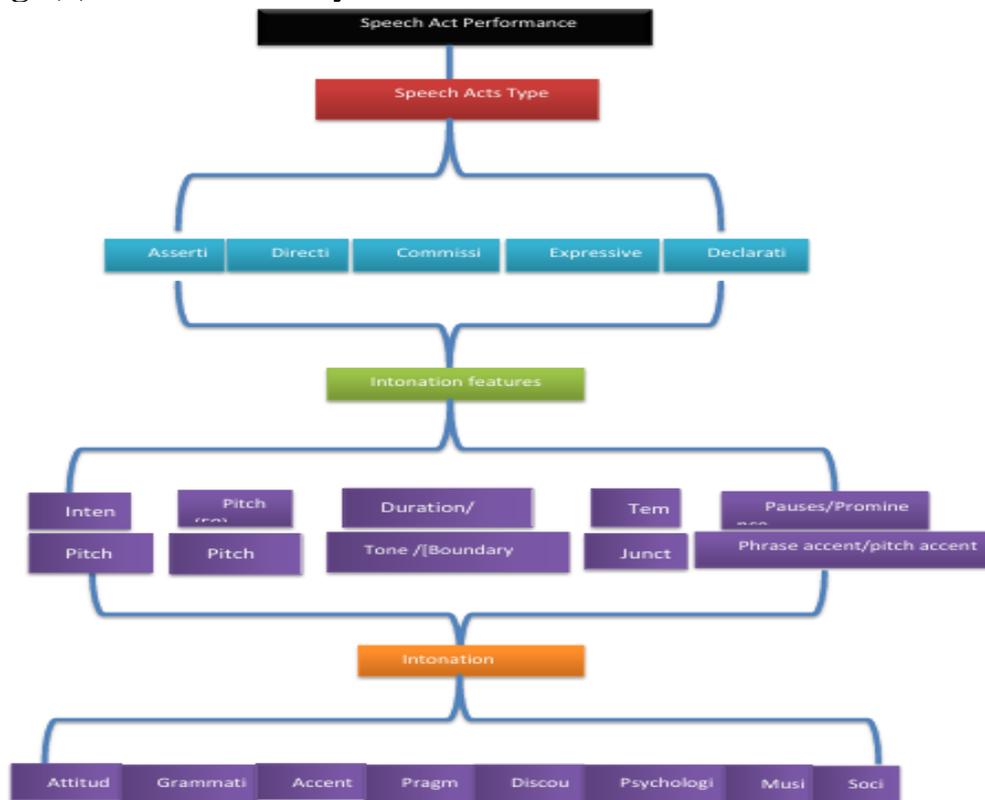
3.2 Data Collection

The data collection method followed in the current study is internet-based. The selected data for this study consists of utterances extracted from the episodes of the romantic fantasy comedy *The Mask*. The (5) utterances are chosen based on their relevance to the research aims and the diversity of speech acts performed by the characters, as well as, the richness in prosodic features – tones. They are selected only from the speech of the main characters; Stanley Ipkiss and Tina. This number is determined by balancing the need for qualitative depth with quantitative practicality. These utterances are clearly audible, contextually rich, and pragmatically interpretable. Each one of them is isolated, transcribed orthographically, and saved in WAV format for analysis in Praat.

The selection of data is purposefully intended. That is; data is selected for the purpose of meeting the aims of the study. This refers to purposive sampling which is a broadly used non-probability technique essential to qualitative and mixed methods research due to its focus on thorough and context- based understanding. Purposive sampling can be defined as the intentional selection of specific units (e.g. individuals, cases, or actions). This selection is grounded on

their relevance to the research question and interest. It allows the researchers to get deep understandings into the complex phenomena (Tajik et al., 2024). Accordingly, this selection can be justified by the use of the following criteria:

First, since the current study is focusing on English intonation, the utterances chosen for analysis are of leading speakers to gain a clear vision of the prosodic features. Second, as the videos are available on YouTube, the researcher can watch the episodes and be aware of the context of the utterances. Third, for clarity and avoidance of variables interference, as well as, richness and amount of production, two speakers are selected; one male and one female character. J. Carrey (playing the role of the hero Stanely Ipkiss) and Miss Cameron Diaz (playing the role of heroine, Tina Carlyle) are the only native English-speaking characters who are featured in all episodes of the selected movie.

 aims of the study, five speech acts for each character: Ipkiss and Tina.

'The Mask' (1994), directed by Chuck Russell and starring Jim Carrey, is one of the most iconic comic book comedies of the 1990s. It blends slapstick humor, romance, and supernatural elements in a way that only Carrey could pull off. Here's a complete breakdown of the film, from its story to behind-the-scenes trivia. Stanley Ipkiss (Jim Carrey) is a mild-mannered, kind but unlucky-in-love bank clerk living in Edge City. His life is defined by constant humiliation—by his boss, his landlord, and even mechanics. His only true friend is his dog, Milo. Everything changes when Stanley finds a mysterious wooden mask in the river, an ancient artifact said to embody the Norse god Loki.

When Stanley wears the mask, he transforms into a zoot-suited, cartoonish figure with supernatural powers. The Mask exaggerates his suppressed desires and emotions, turning him into a whirlwind of chaos. With newfound confidence, Stanley confronts those who mistreated him and crashes a nightclub performance, where he meets lounge singer Tina Carlyle (Cameron Diaz, in her film debut).

Meanwhile, mobster Dorian Tyrell (Peter Greene) plots to overthrow his boss and take over Edge City. When Tyrell discovers the power of the mask, he seeks to steal it from Stanley. The rivalry intensifies when both men desire Tina, who finds herself torn between her attraction to Stanley's shy kindness and the magnetic but dangerous Mask. The Mask causes havoc throughout the city—dancing with the police in a musical number, outwitting criminals with cartoon physics, and romancing Tina. However, Stanley struggles to control the Mask's power, realizing it reveals his inner self but without restraint. Eventually, the police capture him, believing him to be responsible for the Mask's crimes. Dorian eventually acquires the Mask, transforming into a monstrous version of himself. With Tina's life in danger, Stanley and Milo team up to stop him. In the climax at the Coco Bongo nightclub, Stanley defeats Dorian by using his wit and bravery rather than the Mask's powers.
(https://spoilertown.com/the-mask-1994/).

4. Data Analysis, Results and Discussion

This section is allotted to the practical analysis depending on the qualitative method reviewed above. five utterances are analyzed in terms of the following steps:

1- Finding and selecting the scripts of the two English speakers according to the criteria of data selection.

2- Replaying the video recordings of the speakers several times and comparing them to their scripts as a procedure to reinforce the reliability of the resource and check the accuracy of the scripts.

3- Presenting the contextual factors before analyzing the utterances, such as the setting, participants, and the other elements of the Hymes' SPEAKING model.

4- Selecting fifty utterances as samples for analysis and excluding the rest of the scripts from the thesis to avoid redundancy and lengthiness of the analysis.

5- Ten utterances are selected representing the five speech acts to be analyzed in details. The selection of the utterances is based on their richness with the features and speech acts types outlined in the model, and their representativeness to meet the requirements of the analysis.

4.1 Data Analysis

Utterance (1): "LOOK AT THAT! It's exactly two seconds before, I honk your nose and pull your underwear over your head. Come on!"

**Speaker:** Stanley (The mask)

Addressee: Gangsters

a) Context

At the confrontation seen with some gangsters and troublemakers, the mask tends to utter these clauses. This type of utterance functions as mocking act as well as commissive threat. While syntactically declarative and imperative, pragmatically it carries instructive functions: directing those gangsters to obey him and follow his orders and to threaten them saying: come on.

Speech Acts Type: Commissive

This utterance functions as a commissive act mixes mocking, sarcasm with threatening. This is the masterpiece of fantasy comedy. Thus, it establishes a threat from the side speaker to do a future action at a specific time and anticipates the gangsters to follow his orders. The speaker's use of a falling nuclear pitch on the final word of the utterance conveys definiteness and closure, emphasizing the certainty of the commitment. This signals to the audience that the action is set and non-negotiable, while maintaining an informative and neutral delivery. Thus, the intonation aligns with the commissive function by reinforcing both the speaker's commitment and the expectation of compliance.

b) Intonational Features
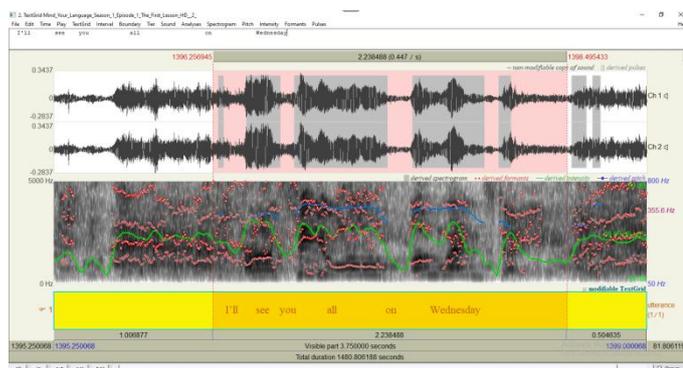
From an intonational and acoustic stance, the utterance displays a relatively smooth and controlled pitch contour that reflects its primary communicative function as a commissive speech act. The overall contour remains within a mid pitch range, with moderate pitch fluctuations rather than abrupt excursions, indicating a neutral yet authoritative delivery. Pitch accents are observable on *look, honk*, and most prominently on *Come on*, which carries the nuclear accent. The nuclear tone is realised as a falling contour (H*+L followed by L%), signalling completion and certainty. This falling boundary tone is crucial in construing the utterance as a firm commitment rather than a tentative arrangement. The absence of a final rise excludes any interrogative or conditional interpretation and reinforces the speaker's intention to present the meeting as settled and non-negotiable.

With respect to prominence, duration, intensity, and pausing, the utterance demonstrates systematic prosodic organisation that aligns with its commissive force. Lexical items that encode temporal reference and commitment, particularly *look, honk, come on*, are acoustically highlighted through increased duration approximately 2.23 seconds and elevated intensity.

Intensity values peak at approximately between 50-70 dB range toward the utterance-final position, coinciding with the nuclear accent, which enhances perceptual salience.

c) Pragmatic Function

Pragmatically, although the grammatical structure is imperative+declarative, the utterance functions as a commissive speech act in Searle's sense, whereby the speaker commits himself to a future course of action. Intonation plays a decisive role in activating this illocutionary force. The falling nuclear tone, coupled with controlled intensity and absence of mitigating prosodic cues, signals speaker commitment and sincerity.

The perlocutionary effect intended is reassurance, threat and mocking, as the addressees are led to expect the speaker's presence at a specified time. Thus, intonation transforms a structurally simple declarative into a socially binding act, reinforcing the central argument that prosodic features, particularly nuclear tone and boundary configuration, are essential in differentiating speech act types and shaping pragmatic meaning in spoken discourse.

Utterance (3): "As I was saying about that tie, it kinda reminds me of one of those... what do you call it? Inkblot tests."

Speaker: Tina

Addressee: Stanley

a) Context

Tina said this to Stanley in the first dating sitting in a restaurant when he offered her Kleenex to clean herself od moister. She discovered that Stanley and the mask are the same person. She sarcasticized his appearance as being ridiculous. He was unorganised due to his hesitation and instability. On the surface, the utterance is polite and positive, but contextually it conveys mild sarcasm a mix

of genuine relief and ironic frustration. This dual meaning is prosodically signaled through tone choice, stress pattern, and pitch contour, demonstrating the close link between intonation and pragmatic interpretation.

b) Speech Act Classification : Expressive

The utterance functions primarily as an expressive speech act, conveying the speaker's affective state in response to the communicative situation. At first sight, it demonstrates politeness and positive engagement; however, given the context, Tina simultaneously communicates mild irony and frustration. Her emotional stance thus combines genuine relief at Stanley's hiding of the secret of the mask. The utterance is a way to express politeness yet ironic state of social situation.

This statement is pragmatically realized as an expressive speech act, with the principal illocutionary force being the display of politeness, friendliness, and favourable affect upon seeing the addressee. Formally, the utterance is declarative; yet, its communication value is based on the speaker's affective posture and tone rather than propositional constituent.
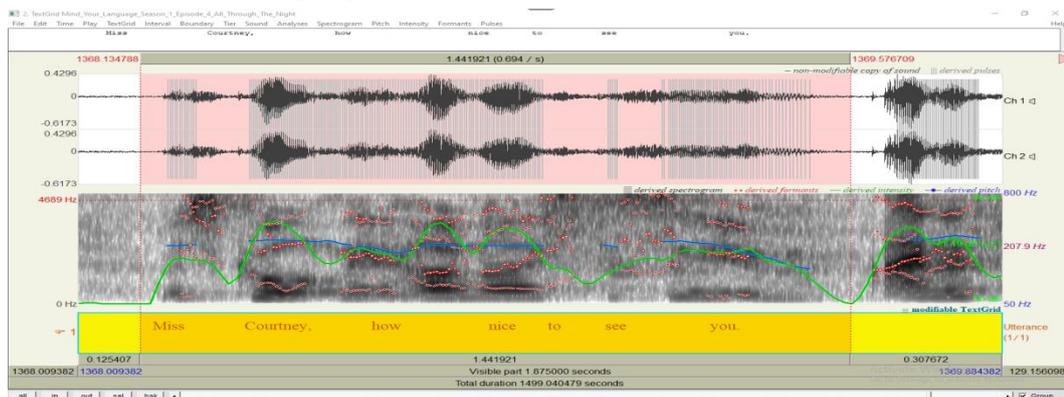
c) Intonational Features

Prosodically, the statement lasts around 1.44 seconds, indicating a calm and methodical delivery typical of polite social norms. The vocative word Miss Courtney has a distinct prosodic contour, separated from the rest of the utterance by a tiny juncture that serves as a barrier between address and criticism. This split allows the speaker to emphasize interpersonal alignment before moving on to the expressive evaluation. The temporal organization thus reflects the pragmatic nature of the utterance, which progresses from social acknowledgment to affective expression.

The pitch contour shows a reasonably high beginning, with the fundamental frequency gradually rising on "tie" and keeping a generally smooth contour over the clause. Pitch values range from 200-210 Hz, indicating pleasant engagement without emotional exaggeration. The nuclear emphasis falls on "inkblot", followed by a falling terminal contour, indicating a completed, non-interrogative expressive act. In simplified ToBI notation, the contour can be expressed as *H L-L%**, which indicates pragmatic closure and communicative completeness.

Intensity assessments reveal a constant and moderate amplitude, often ranging between 60 and 75 dB. The absence of rises in boundary tone suggests that the utterance was socially respectable and customarily polite rather than emotionally intense. However, the rise on "you" both in intensity and pitch values indicates a sense of humorous disappointment and sarcastic tone.

d) Pragmatic Function

The utterance serves no directive or commissive purpose; rather, it establishes relationship and promotes social harmony. The expressive force is mainly dependent on prosodic realization: a different intonation pattern, such as an accentuated pitch rise or compressed intensity, might readily shift the interpretation to sarcasm or insincerity, and that is clear in the last word of the utterance although it is a slight variation which does not lead to a dramatic change in the meaning. In this case, the dropping boundary tone and restricted pitch range indicate genuine friendliness and cooperative intent. The perlocutionary effect desired is reassuring and positive alignment, eliciting a polite reaction from the addressee who, in contrast, responds with a mild uninterested tone.

This excerpt clearly demonstrates that intonation is essential to the successful performance of expressive speech acts, particularly those involving social courtesy. The interplay of vocative structure, falling or rising terminal contour, and pitch range demonstrates how prosodic choices encode interpersonal meaning outside of grammatical form and how possible it is to radically or slightly change the pragmatic force and intent of linguistic expressions. As a result, this example confirms the study's overall premise that expressive acts in spoken discourse rely largely on intonational cues to convey speaker attitude, sincerity, and pragmatic intent. Thus, she pretends to comment on his appearance seriously while she actually does playful teasing.

Utterance 8: "It's party time! P-A-R-T-Y!... Because I gotta!"

Speaker: The Mask (Stanley)

**Addressee:** Environment and nightlife audience

a) Context

Stanley said this after he put on the mask declaring his power, desire and inclinations. He marks the starting point of his new character as ' the mask'. He intended to make all the surroundings hear him and went to begin his new steps of action and excitement with his noisy and messy night club population.

b) Speech Acts Classification: Declaration

The utterance functions primarily as a declaration speech act, conveying the speaker's affective state in response to the surrounding situation. Although, it does not demonstrates any emotional affection, it expresses encouragement, transformation and freedom in given the context. Stanley declared his transform through the mask from the shy clerk to the active playful and powerful Mask.

c) Intonation Features
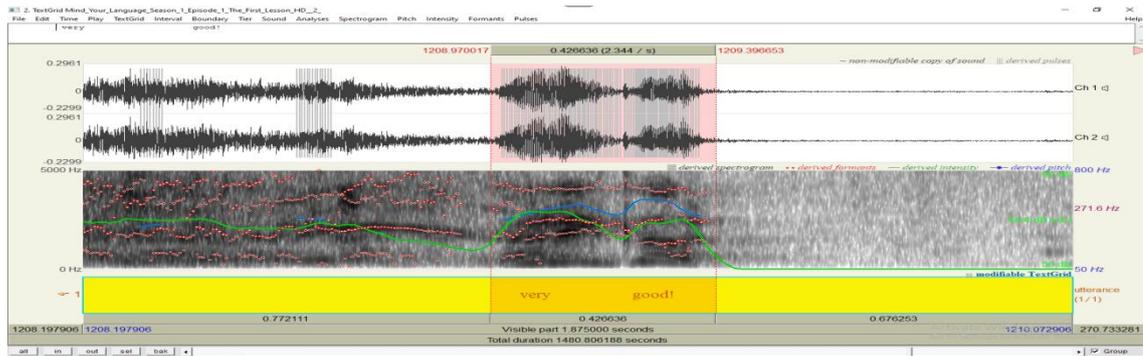
Prosodically, this short phrase lasts around 0.42 seconds, indicating a confidential and quick delivery typical of encouragement stances which are expected to convey no extra feeling rather just a sense of approval. This duration is significant to reflect that the phrase is uttered to meet its purpose with no additional intents.

There are no pauses or breaks except for the slightly required break too move from "party" to "gotta". This allows the speaker to emphasize on the interpersonal meaning of both expressive and declarative evaluation.

The pitch contour shows a reasonably high movement, with the fundamental frequency slightly rising on "party" emphasizing its crucial value in the meaning intended. Pitch values range from 27-275 Hz, indicating emotional exaggeration and desirable effect. The nuclear emphasis placed on "good", then followed by a fall, indicating a completed, and finality in the expressive act. In simplified ToBI notation, the contour can be expressed as *H-L%**, which indicates pragmatic closure and communicative completeness.

Intensity calculations express a high and steady amplitude, often ranging between 55 and 70 dB. The dropping of rises in boundary tone suggests that the utterance is complete and no additional information required.

d) Pragmatic Function

The utterance serves as a declarative and expressive perlocutionary effect. The positive declaration creates a promising active environment that implicitly solicits further participation.

The rise-fall contour is crucial to transform what could be a flat acknowledgment into encouraging feedback with forward interactional force. This supports the broader claim that intonation is instrumental in disambiguating speech-act force beyond grammatical form. The expected perlocutionary outcome is that the student feels encouraged and proceeds with the coming tasks willingly which increases confidence and affects the overall performance. Thus, prosody not only encodes evaluation but actively shapes social behaviour or change.

In this case, the expressive force is mainly dependent on prosodic realization: any difference in intonation pattern can shift the interpretation to disapproval, sarcasm, exclamation, etc.

Utterance (4): "You don't know that, Charlie.. She's an artist. She's…she's sensitive."

Speaker: Stanley

Addressee: His friend Charlie

a) Context

This utterance occurs in his office when he met his friend Charlie. He expresses his feelings about his beautiful girlfriend, Tina. This speech is said by Stanley when he first met Tina in the bank where she worked as part of criminal scheme which he doesn't know. His friend Charlie was more realistic asserting that a girl like her could not love one like Stanley the shy bank clerk. This utterance functions as part of his reaction towards Tina and he directs the conversation and utters judgmental stances depending on his belief. The communicative environment is friendly and emotional.

b)) Speech Acts Classification: Assertive

Pragmatically, this utterance transmits an assertive act in which the speaker informs his reactions and explains his beliefs concerning the situation. The utterance exemplifies a series of declarative sentences functioning as an assertion with a secondary reflection of expressive act of emotionality and loving outcome.

b) Intonational Features
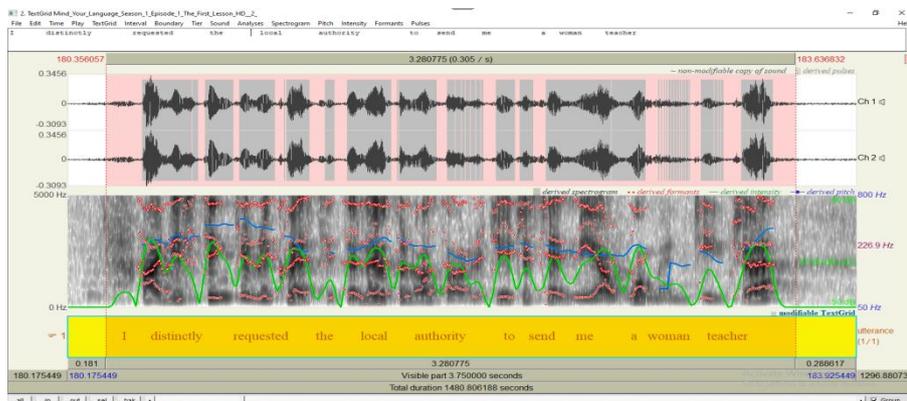
From an intonational and acoustic perspective, the utterance displays a controlled yet marked prosodic configuration that contributes decisively to its pragmatic interpretation. The pitch contour shows a generally mid-to-high pitch range, with noticeable pitch excursions on lexically and pragmatically salient items, particularly *distinctly*, *requested*, and *woman teacher*. The F0 contour exhibits local rises aligned with stressed syllables, indicating pitch accents that serve to foreground the speaker's stance and intentionality. The nuclear accent is realized on the final noun phrase and represented in simplified ToBI terms H*+L, followed by a low boundary tone (L%), which signals completion, determination, and non-negotiability. This falling nuclear tone signals assertiveness and finality, reinforcing the speaker's insistence rather than inviting negotiation or response. The absence of a rising boundary tone further

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confirms that the utterance is not interrogative or tentative, but rather declarative in form with a strong pragmatic force.

In terms of prominence, duration, intensity, and pausing, the utterance demonstrates systematic prosodic structuring. Prominent syllables are lengthened and accompanied by increased intensity values, with intensity ranges approximately between 50-70 dB.

The overall duration is around 3.28 with content words being noticeably longer than function ones, which supports rhythmic prominence and informational focus. Pauses are minimal and internal, suggesting fluency and confidence rather than hesitation.

c) Pragmatic Function

Pragmatically, although the utterance is structurally declarative, its illocutionary force aligns with a expressive speech act, more specifically an indirect expressive that functions as a complaint-cum-assertion. The speaker is not merely stating a past action but is implicitly pressing the addressee to acknowledge, justify, or resolve the situation.

Intonation plays a crucial role in disambiguating this force: the falling nuclear tone, reinforced prominence, and lack of interrogative contour collectively signal that the speaker expects submission or explanation rather than information. The pragmatic meaning thus extends beyond the propositional content to convey emotivity, admiration and insistence. The perlocutionary effect is intended to pressure the hearer to apologize, explain, or take corrective action. Thus, intonation functions as the decisive mechanism through which grammatical declarativity is pragmatically reinterpreted as assertives requiring responses, therefore intonation carries an instrumental role in differentiating speech acts and shaping communicative meaning in spoken discourse.

Utterance (5): Please, don't hurt him!
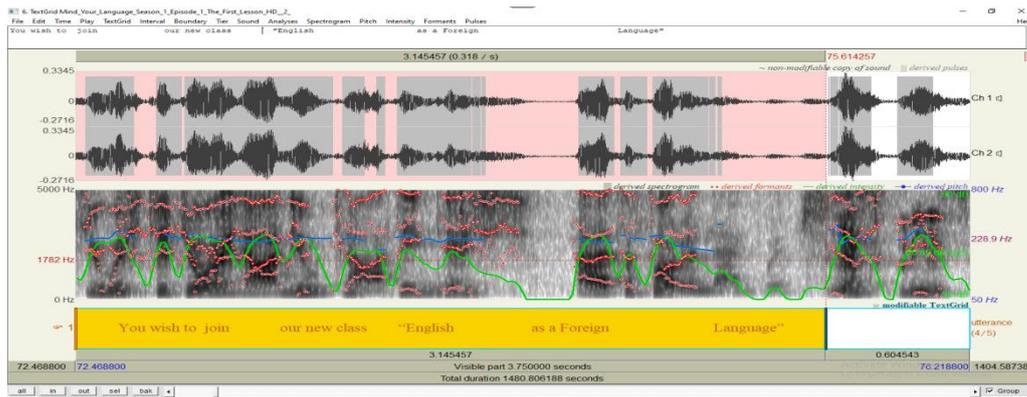
Speaker: Tina

Addressee: Dorian

a) **Context**: in a polite form, Tina ask Dorian her old boss in the gang to be merciful with Stanley her lover. She attempts to beg mercy for him and not to cause harm to him. She felt that Stanley is in danger and alone in front of the gangsters of Dorian. The situation is highly violent and power imbalance occurs.

b) Speech Act Type: Directive

This utterance forms an imperative structure which functions pragmatically as a directive request or plea not to hurt Stanley. Thus, the illocutionary act is an imperative employed to confirm understanding, placing it within the directive category. It also involves a polite expression (please) indicating that this is her desire and intent.

c) Intonational Features

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Although syntactically realized as an imperative clause, the statement serves pragmatically as a directive with polite force, urging the interlocutor to be more merciful and kind.

The statement is articulated as a single long intonational phrase lasting around 3.14 seconds, representing its informative density and institutional formality. Acoustic examination of the fundamental frequency contour reveals a primarily level-to-falling pitch trajectory throughout the utterance, with localized pitch accents occur on lexically significant terms such as join, class, and English. The pitch range is relatively steady for the majority of the utterance, demonstrating declarative force and speaker authority.

Unlike clarification requests, there is no final rise at the utterance boundary; rather, the contour ends in a low boundary tone, indicating pragmatic completion and epistemic trust. In a simplified ToBI paradigm, an utterance can be represented as *H L%**, with the final low boundary tone indicating closure and confirming the speaker's intimacy over the interactional ground.

Content words with critical importance are intentionally prioritized hence, the word "please" and the phrase "hurt him" gain emphasis, which is achieved through pitch, increased intensity, and longer stressed syllables. Intensity measurements show values ranging between 50 and 70 decibels. This alignment of pitch and intensity increases perceptual salience and emphasizes the course's institutional label, directing the addressee to the administrative aspect of the interaction. The nuclear accent appears late in the utterance on 'don't', followed by a falling contour that verifies the statement's requestive prosodic identity.

d) Pragmatic Function

From a pragmatic viewpoint, the utterance is a directive speech act in Searle's sense, serving as a request for being kind or as a plea rather than a neutral statement. The directing force is indirect because the speaker does not openly ask a question, but rather delivers an assumed premise for validation. Intonation is key in forming this interpretation: the falling nuclear tone and low boundary tone express authority, anticipation, and pragmatic finality, quietly compelling the addressee to respond favourably or negatively within the speaker's restrictions. The lack of a rising contour distinguishes this statement from information-seeking queries and matches it with friendly intimacy.

The intended perlocutionary impact of the utterance is for the addressee to ask for plea and kindness. The prosodic completeness of the utterance, reinforced by the last low boundary tone and post-utterance junction, provides the interlocutor with the conversational basis while also restricting the range of appropriate responses.

Methodologically, this utterance supports the current study that intonation is an important aspect in speech act realization, especially when declarative syntax is pragmatically understood. The convergence of intimacy-control, falling pitch movement, prominence placement, and intensity modulation demonstrates how intonation encodes authority and directive force of intimacy, reinforcing the study's central claim about the pragmatic role of prosody in spoken interaction.

Conclusions

On the basis of the findings of analysis, the following concluding remarks are presented:

1. Intonation plays a critical role in distinguishing speech acts that are structurally similar at the syntactic and grammatical levels since tone serves as a major disambiguating cue in spoken engagement.

2. Intonation, along with context, contribute significantly to the variation of pragmatic force and interpersonal relations. Variations in pitch range, intensity, and prominence allowed speakers to express different levels of authority, politeness, emotional involvement, and commitment. The findings show that intonation serves not only as a level of speech act categorization, but also as a strategic means of negotiating social meaning, thereby increasing the communicative effectiveness of utterances within their situational context.

3. Intonation can also determine the illocutionary force of acts when context and syntax find ambiguity and uncertainty in the outcome. In this sense, speakers can manipulate the perlocutionary effect of utterances through controlling specific intonational features to convey particularly intended meanings.

4. The analysis demonstrates that intonation is not merely a phonetic phenomenon but a functional resource for managing interactional meaning. In comic scenarios, as portrayed in the movie 'The Mask', speakers use prosodic cues to negotiate authority, convey politeness, mitigate face-threatening acts, and guide hearers' interpretations of intended speech acts. These patterns underscore the inherently social dimension of intonation, confirming its role as a pragmatic marker beyond phonological categorization.

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