



COMMON INTONATION MISTAKES OF THE PRODUCTION IN LOWER INTERMEDIATE ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) ADULT STUDENTS

ERRORES COMUNES DE ENTONACIÓN DE LA PRODUCCIÓN DEL IDIOMA INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA (EFL) EN ESTUDIANTES ADULTOS DE NIVEL INTERMEDIO-BAJO

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the intonation of questions and requests produced by 10 adult lower intermediate students who are learning English as a foreign language during the first term of the year 2021 in a private institute in Quito-Ecuador. As these learners are not as exposed to the language as second language acquisition (SLA) learners, one of the biggest challenges for them when learning English is mastering speaking skills such as intonation. That is the reason why the aim of this study is to identify and analyze the most common intonation mistakes in order for further research to create methodological resources that fit different student's necessities. In order to achieve this objective, this quantitative and qualitative study compares the pitch contours of two questions and two requests produced by native speakers with the intonation of English as a foreign language (EFL) learners. In order to analyze the intonation of the learners, this research uses a software tool called Praat which is a platform that let the researcher visualize and compare different intonation patterns. This study concluded that: the learners seem not to be aware of pitch contours and the function of intonation patterns; moreover, it is concluded that the L1 influences the production of the L2. These results suggest that some technological tools such as Praat can be used in the process of teaching and learning intonation.

RESUMEN

Este proyecto investiga la entonación en preguntas y pedidos en 10 alumnos que aprenden inglés en un instituto privado en Quito-Ecuador durante el primer periodo del año 2021, y que tienen un nivel intermedio de inglés. Debido a que los estudiantes no están expuestos al idioma como aquellos que aprenden el idioma en el lugar nativo del mismo, uno de sus mayores desafíos cuando aprenden inglés es dominar habilidades del habla como la entonación. Por esa razón, el objetivo de este estudio es identificar y analizar los errores de entonación más comunes para, en un futuro, crear recursos metodológicos de acuerdo a las diferentes necesidades de los estudiantes. Para analizar la situación actual de entonación, este estudio cualitativo y cuantitativo compara los contornos tonales de dos preguntas y dos pedidos de hablantes nativos con estudiantes. Para analizar la entonación de los estudiantes, esta investigación usa la herramienta Praat que es una plataforma que permite al investigador visualizar y comparar distintos patrones de entonación. Este estudio concluyó en que los estudiantes parecen

KEYWORDS Intonation, Praat, rising and falling tones, pitch contours, suprasegmental features.

PALABRAS CLAVE Entonación, Praat, ascenso y descenso tonal, contornos tonales, características suprasegmentales.

no estar conscientes de los contornos tonales y la función que desempeñan los patrones de entonación. Además, se concluyó que el idioma nativo influye en la producción del segundo idioma. Estos resultados sugieren que herramientas tecnológicas como Praat pueden servir en el proceso de aprendizaje y enseñanza sobre entonación.

INTRODUCTION

This study is based on one complex area of English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching: intonation. Studies have stated that this area is not commonly touched in classrooms because the methodological resources to foster intonation do not seem to be enough (Nikolic, 2018). The general issue that this research found is the lack of intonation awareness. Hence, this qualitative and quantitative study identifies the most common intonation issues in EFL learners through the comparison of intonation patterns of questions and requests between native speakers and EFL learners. This has been done in order for further research to propose appropriate materials to foster this suprasegmental feature.

In this sense, author such as Krashen (2006) state that it is not necessary for people to know the sound system of a language to communicate. Rather, the suprasegmental features such as intonation are important to be developed because they have a social meaning implied. Thus, Krashen (2006) states that the sound system of a language is acquired naturally by the input learners receive. However, the acquisition in a Second language background seems to be more feasible than in an EFL background where students are not commonly exposed to the language, which means that students who are learning a second language in an EFL background would need direct instruction in order to acquire the language properly. However, it seems the methodological resources to work with intonation are not enough because the importance of teaching intonation in EFL learners is not well known. Hence, it is necessary to study the current state of intonation in order to propose accurate methodological resources regarding intonation.

This is why this research investigates intonation in lower intermediate adult EFL students. In order to achieve this objective, some studies that have been done in recent years will be described in order to clarify the importance of studying intonation. Furthermore, this study will present some intonation problems based on the analysis of the pitch contours produced by 5 female and 5 male intermediate students. Finally, according to the intonation problems found, some recommended intonation activities proposed by Collins, Mees (2013) Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin (2006) are analyzed.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The importance of intonation

One of the main reasons why students want to learn English is because of academic purposes. Douglas and Rosvold (2008) state that in many developed countries, there are growing numbers of students who come from different backgrounds seeking to get a bachelor or a master's degree. Consequently, EFL students need to learn how to interact efficiently in academic contexts, and it is the teacher and EFL institution's responsibility to carry out this task. In this sense, studying the current state of intonation in EFL students in order to propose different methodological resources to improve intonation plays a vital role.

In fact, Roach (2009) states that the function of intonation is similar to the role of punctuation in written production. The melody of delivered utterances termed as intonation is part of these suprasegmental features needed to produce our daily oral communication. It is also significant to mention the role intonation plays in effective interaction. Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin (2006) state that a word produced with a different pitch variation can produce different effects of communication. For example, Roach (2009) states that if the speaker wants to say «yes or no» to respond to someone, the «falling tone» will be probably used. If speakers use them in a questioning manner, the «rising tone» will predominate (Roach, 2009, p. 163). In this sense, if the speaker does not intonate properly, the delivered message could be misunderstood.

Linguistic functions of intonation

One of the functions of intonation mentioned by Collins and Mees (2013) occurs when the speaker highlights or emphasizes important and significant information by stressing the words. In this sense, Murcia et al (2006) states that there might be a lot of words receiving sentence stress, but there will be only one main idea or prominent element delivered in an utterance. Sometimes, the speaker tends to raise the pitch of the voice when delivering new information, and some authors state that stressed words generally occur at the end of an utterance.

Among other intonational functions, the attitudinal and discourse functions are commonly found in drama

plays. Intonation, therefore, has a grammatical function that let the speaker specific syntactic relationships (Collins and Mees, 2013). For instance, depending on the intonation of the speaker an utterance can be understood either as a question or an emphatic statement (see Figure 1).

The intonation patterns described above might depend on the intonational function which in turn will depend on the context and the intention of the speaker.

Intonation patterns in yes/no questions

The history of spoken English language is fairly broad. Indeed, there are different accents, dialects and varieties which come from different regions and are deserved to be studied. However, since the main concern of this research is to study the intonation in EFL students, we shall mention that the authors cited to explain the patterns of English intonation such Collins and Mess (2013) study a non-regional pronunciation which represents a «neutral type of modern British English». This research also presents the point of view of Murcia *et al.* (2006) who study the sound system of North American English. In this sense, the approaches on the analysis of English intonation patterns in questions and requests will be based on these systems.

There are some features that should be defined before analyzing the pitch contour of an utterance. For example, in any statement, question or request there is one stressed syllable that guide the flow of the intonation. It is stated that this stressed syllable is called *the intonation nucleus* which «has a marked change in pitch, and is somewhat longer and louder than the rest» (Collins and Mees, 2013, p. 142). From the *nucleus* there is the *fall-rise* and the *rise-fall* which involve the pitch movement either from high to low to mid or from mid to high to low. Moreover, the high-pitched syllable that is produced before the nucleus is termed as *onset*, and what is between the *onset* and the *nucleus* is termed the *head*.

As it was mentioned, intonation also meets a discourse function that covers the signals for turn taking in a conversation. In this context, there are two basic categories: the rising and falling tones. Yes/ No questions involve rising tones. This common English pattern has two diverse pitch contours. The first one goes from middle to high level and in the other, the voice rises from low to a middle level (Murcia *et al.*, 2006, p. 187). Thus, it is stated that Yes/ No questions tend to follow the middle to high rise pattern (see Figure 2).

In the case of the samples that are going to be used in this research, the questions and requests have the pattern described.

Some studies around intonation: The influence of the L1

Since this research is focused on common intonation mistakes in Yes/ No questions and requests in EFL students, it is also important to take into account the L1, and its influence in the production of a second language. A study done by Busa and Stella (2015) investigates the intonation patterns of English L2, Italian L1 and English L1, and it analyzes and compares the intonation contours of English L2 with the Italian and English L1 in 4 Italian native speakers.

This study concluded that the L1 has an important influence in the production of the L2. However, some dimensions of the L2 are acquired differently, which let the researcher state that «L2 learners may be able to acquire the phonology, but rarely the phonetics of L2 prosody» (Busa and Stella, 2015, p. 23) which means that it is difficult for learners to acquire and to be aware of the effects of rising and falling the pitch of the voice. This finding is related to what Derwing (2008) states. He mentions that before proposing materials to work with intonation, it is necessary to study the L1 to contrast with the L2 in order to comprehend their similarities and differences. In fact, this research found out that some mistakes are made because of the influence of the L1.

Technological tools to study intonation: Praat

Since this study uses a technological tool to analyze the intonation of EFL speakers, it is necessary to mention some studies related to the study of technological tools. In this sense, Zhang and Liu (2018) studied the prosody of spoken English produced by Chinese students. Through a computer assisted speech recognition tool, they could study speed, rhythm, accuracy and intonation. The authors concluded that the analysis of speech through this technological model could accurately reflect the level of English of the participants. Hence, the application of computer-aided speech recognition technology can support the process of learning a language in terms of evaluating speaking, and providing systematic feedback to students. Furthermore, these technological tools can also guide teachers and students in the process of teaching and learning speaking.

Hence, in order to measure the voice of students quantitatively, a software tool called Praat (Boersma and Weenink, 2011) can be used. Praat is a computer program that let the researcher analyze different phonetic features such as intonation, intensity, pronunciation, rhythm, among other suprasegmental features. This tool was developed by the Phonetics Department at the University of Amsterdam below the direction of Boersma and Weenink (2008). (Farías, 2013). In this sense, the tool provides spectrograms of the speaker's

(We might be able to go to Brazil.) °Wouldn't that be ex.pensive? (question)
 (We might be able to go to Brazil.) °Wouldn't that be `wonderful! (emphatic statement)

Figure 1. Examples of the grammatical function of intonation (Collins and Mees, 2013, p. 147)

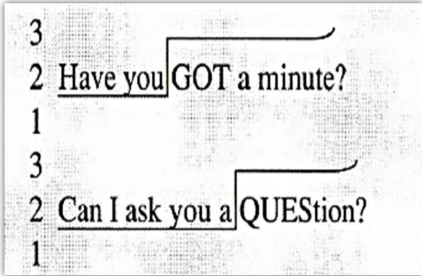


Figure 2. Example of Yes/No question intonation contour pattern (Murcia et al., 2006, p. 287)

Table 1

YES/NO QUESTIONS	REQUEST WITH MODALS
Q1. Were you born in Buenos Aires?	R1. Could you tell me where the nearest ATM is?
Q2. Did you take English classes in Argentina?	R2. Can you tell me how often the buses run?

voice in which the levels of pitch and intensity can be observed. A spectrogram, indeed, is a *spectro-temporal representation* of the sound (Boersma and Weenink, 2011). Furthermore, the graphics will contain time and frequency scale that is represented in Hertz (Hz). The spectrogram also shows a darker part that represents the density of the voice energy. On the contrary, the lighter parts mean a low density in regards to the energy of the voice. Moreover, there will be red, blue and yellow vertical time cursors representing the frequency of spectra peaks, the pitch and the intensity contour respectively.

In contrast, De Bot and Mailfert in the study: «The teaching of intonation: Fundamental research and classroom applications» (1982) mention that there could not be effective intonation teaching if students do not know the importance of it. This research concluded that «perception of intonation leads to improved production» (Kees de Bot and Kate Mailfert, 1982, p. 77). In conclusion, the idea is not only to have students in front of a technological tool that could help them improve intonation, but also to have students be aware of the role that intonation plays when speaking to someone.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative and quantitative research aimed to identify the most common mistakes in questions and requests made by EFL students in regards to intonation.

The participants were 10 Spanish native speakers (5 females, 5 males) who were learning English as a foreign language during the first term of the year 2021. It is significant to mention that in this foreign language context, the participants were not exposed to the language as in a second language learning environment. Thus, one of the biggest challenges for EFL learners was to master speaking skills. The participants who were randomly selected, have an A2+ level of English, and they were ranging the age from 20 to 25 years old. It is also necessary to mention that they were currently pursuing an English language certificate because it was a requirement to graduate from the university.

This research aimed to work with the pitch of the voice when asking questions and requests. For this reason, two questions and two indirect requests were extracted from Cambridge Interchange fifth Edition. In the following chart, it can be seen the samples used (see Table 1).

For the purpose of this study, the software tool Praat was used in order to visualize the pitch contour. This study also compared the data obtained from the intonation of native speakers and the participants in order to identify the most common mistakes produced by EFL speakers. Furthermore, it was believed that a good quality of the recordings can help this research to obtain more reliable results, thus every audio was improved in terms of quality in Adobe Audition (2019).

In order to carry out this investigation, a model of each question and requests from a native English speaker was extracted from the audios that are included in Interchange Cambridge fifth edition book (2018) (4 recordings in total). The audios obtained were analyzed in Praat. These models were described quantitatively and qualitatively.

The quantitative data presents an average of the minimum and maximum pitch, this average will help to calculate the «mean pitch» of each question and request. On the other hand, the intonation contour in blue was also described and compared according to what it was seen in the model audios and the recordings of the participants.

Second, the participants recorded their voice asking the same set of questions and requests, and the recordings will also be analyzed in Praat (40 recordings in total). It is significant to say that the participants did not listen to the audio models previously. Since the questions and requests proposed fit the level of the students, they were supposed to know how these questions should be pronounced.

Each student's recording was compared with the model audios, according to what could be seen in the spectrogram in relationship with the words, the mean pitch and the pitch contour presented. The results will also be analyzed according to a qualitative perspective using the different author's criteria, especially those developed by Roach (2009), Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin (2006).

RESULTS

Intonation contours in Yes/No questions produced by native speakers

Armstrong and Ward (1926) in Cruttenden (1980) stated some universal patterns related to ordinary statements and questions or requests; the falling tone is common in statements while «the rising tone is used for yes/no questions, requests, statements with implications» (Cruttenden, 1980, p. 78). In this sense, it is significant to mention that the questions and requests selected for this research have the common rising tone pattern. Indeed, in regards to the first yes/no question

produced by a native male speaker (figure 2) shows that the voice maintains a medium level of pitch in the words *were and you*, at the end of the last word the pitch of the voice falls and ascends in «born». The word «in» maintains the same level as «you», and the words «Buenos Aires» are higher. The highest level of pitch is located in the end of the question, and the mean pitch of this utterance is 122.95 Hz.

Figure 4 shows question 2. It can be seen that the pitch of the voice rises from low to high in the words «you, take and English», the voice falls and rises (H+L) in the last word, and there is a glide in the last syllable of the word «Argentina». The highest peak of the question is in the first letter of the word «English» and in the last syllable of «Argentina». The mean pitch is 144.50 Hz. The questions show a common pattern in English, according to Murcia, et al in «Teaching pronunciation» (2006) (see Figures 3, 4, 5, 6).

Intonation contours in requests produced by native speakers

Figure 6 shows that in the case of the request 1, the voice starts with a high pitch, and it falls in «tell». There is an H+L pattern in the beginning. The voice rises again in the word «me» and falls in «nearest» The pitch maintains the same level until «ATM» and it starts rising to say «is». The highest peaks are located in the beginning and in the end of the request.

It can also be seen in figure 8 that the pitch contour is similar to request 1. Indeed, it starts with a high pitch in the word «did» and it falls in «you» the voice rises again in «me» and «often», and it falls again in the article «the». Finally, the pitch ascends from low to high in the words «buses and run». The request ends with a high pitch. And the highest peak of the voice occurs in the word «run» that is located in the end of the request. The mean pitch in request 1 is: 214.74 Hz and 208.55 Hz in request 2 (see Figures 7, 8, 9, 10).

Intonation contours in Yes/No questions produced by EFL speakers

From men, only one participant's pitch was lower than the model. In figure 8, it can be seen the low pitch contour produced by participant 3, the pitch of the voice of the rest of participants were pretty higher. Furthermore, only 1 participant (P1) rises the voice at the end of question 1 representing the highest peak (figure 10). The others reached the highest peak in other parts of the question (see Figures 11, 12).

From the 5 female participants, 3 of them raise the voice at the end of the question as the native speaker does. The mean pitch in the case of women is higher than the male's participants because the frequency or women is higher. Moreover, 3 participants raised their

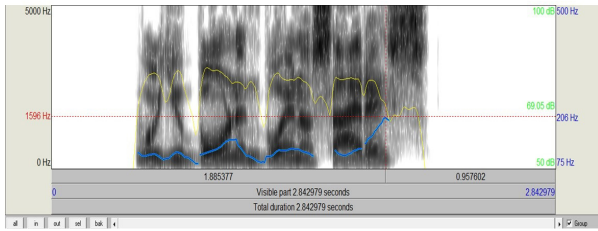


Figure 3. Spectrogram that shows the pitch contour in blue and the intensity contour in yellow of question 1 produced by a native speaker

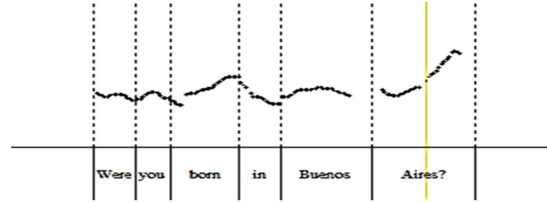


Figure 4. It specifies the pitch contour and the corresponding words of question 1 produced by a native speaker.

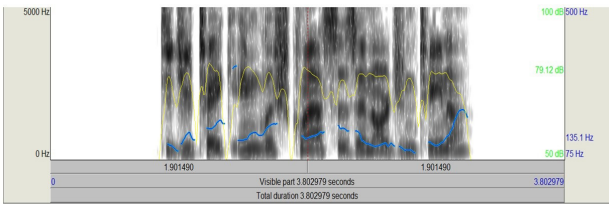


Figure 5. Spectrogram that shows the pitch contour in blue and the intensity contour in yellow of question 2 produced by a native speaker

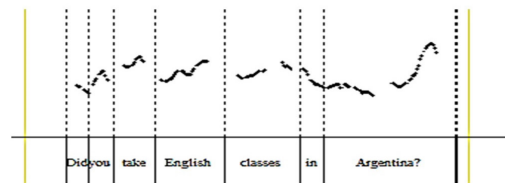


Figure 6. It shows the pitch contour and the corresponding words of question 2 produced by a native speaker

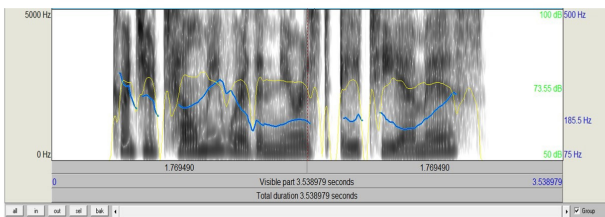


Figure 7. Spectrogram that shows the pitch contour in blue and the intensity contour in yellow of request 1 produced by a native speaker

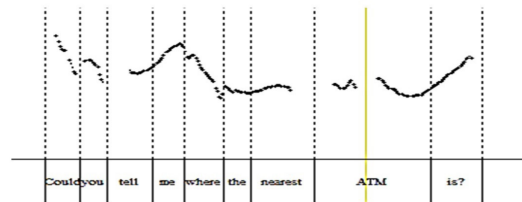


Figure 8. It shows the pitch contour and the corresponding words of a request produced by a native speaker

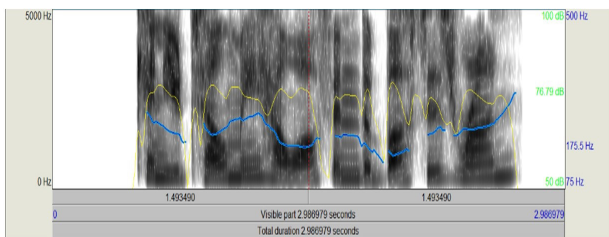


Figure 9. Spectrogram that shows the pitch contour in blue and the intensity contour in yellow of request 2 produced by a native speaker

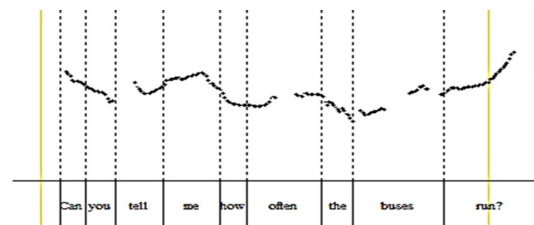


Figure 10. It shows the pitch contour and the corresponding words of a request 2 produced by a native speaker

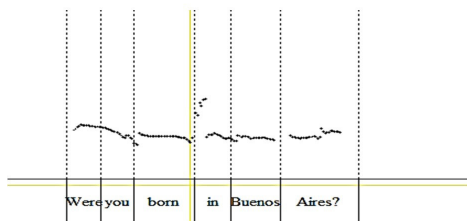


Figure 11. It shows the pitch contour and the corresponding words to question 1 produced by participant 3

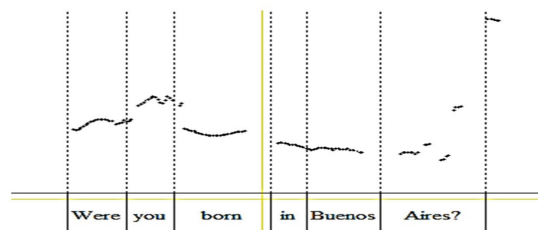


Figure 12. It shows the pitch contour and the corresponding words to question 1 produced by participant 1

voice since the beginning. It seems that most of them got confused between the WH question «here» and the verb to be in past «were». According to Murcia, *et al.* (2006) the pattern of a WH question is different from a Yes/No question.

In regards to question 2, only one male student (P1) raises his voice at the end of the question. The rest of the participants raise the pitch of the voice in the words «you and take». On the contrary, in the case of females, all of them rise the pitch of the voice at the end, and the pitch contour pattern is closer to the model than in the case of men (see Figures 13, 14).

Intonation contours in requests produced by EFL speakers

In relation with request 1, all the participants raised the pitch of the voice at the end of the requests. There are some peaks in words that should not be stressed. Since this request is longer than question 1 and 2, as it can be observed in figure 13, the intonation does not follow a natural contour. A similar pattern occurs in nearly all the participants (see Figure 15).

In regards to request 2, any male participant reaches the standard level of frequency, the mean pitch of the participants will be explained in the next part. Moreover, they all tend to stress in the word «you», and the words that are stressed in the model such as «tell and run» are not produced with a high pitch.

The difference of mean pitch

Since the two first samples (questions) were recorded by a male native speaker and the requests by a woman native speaker, the levels of frequency are going to vary because the frequency of women is different from men. However, as Murcia, et al Goodwin (2006) state, in reference to the phonetic notion of pitch, the levels that are analyzed are the «pitch levels of a given speaker» not the high or low levels that men's and women's voice might have.

The diagram below represent the difference existing between the mean pitch of the model (standard) and the mean pitch of the participants. Those participants who are closer to 0, are the ones who are closer to the intonation standard level.

In diagram 1, it can be seen the mean pitch of question 1, participant 3 has the lowest mean pitch. The rest of the audios have a higher mean pitch which means that they are very distant from the standard model audio. Since the model audio was recorded by a man, it can be seen that male participant's frequency is closer than the model audio. In regards to women, the diagram shows that participant 10 has the most distant mean pitch.

In regards to requests, any male participant reached the standard level of the native speaker intonation, the frequency is too low. However, in all the cases, the voice rises at the end of the request. The mean pitch of 3 out of 5 females is higher than the standard mean pitch of the model audio (see Figure 16).

DISCUSSION

In investigating the most common intonational mistakes by finding out the differences in the production of questions and requests between native speakers and EFL learners to know the current state of intonation, this study found that the frequency of requests is too distant from the model audios. It seems that the reason is because the requests provided are longer than questions. The pitch of the voice of students who deal with intonation have undetermined pitch contours, on the other hand. This means that the pitch of the voice tended to be raised in any part of the utterance. In other cases, the intonation seemed to be lineal, there were not rising or falling intonation contours. Moreover, in other cases, instead of raising, the pitch of the voice tended to fall as it can be seen in figure 14. As a result of this finding, it can be stated that students do not seem to be aware of the importance of stressing significant words in an utterance. Either in a statement or a question, stressing plays a phonological role, this is why, there are different intonation patterns that deliver different meanings.

In regards to what it has been stated, intonation may be difficult to teach because EFL learners «are not always aware of the uses and meanings of prosody even in their own language» (Busa and Stella, 2015, p. 16) Furthermore, it is known that intonation as part of prosody is the key for successful communication since intonation patterns reflect the grammatical and discourse functions of an utterance (Murcia *et al.*, 2006, p. 184). In fact, Collins and Mees (2013) state that if the *nucleos* of a yes/no question is produced with a falling pattern, it can reflect insistence. Likewise, another type of intonation can reflect other different discourse effects (see Figure 17).

Furthermore, there are some peaks that are extremely high or low. And they are abruptly separated from the intonation contour. This can be the effect of not following a natural flow of the request, the students, whose pitch contour have this problem, could not pronounce well the word. When listening the audio from participant 6, it was evident that she was doubting at pronouncing the words, which did not let her intonate properly. Thus, all the speaking features are related, and they have to be mastered in order to improve speaking's intelligibility (see Figure 18).

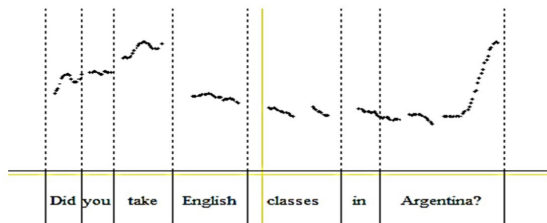


Figure 13. It specifies the pitch contour and the corresponding words of question 2 produced by participant 1

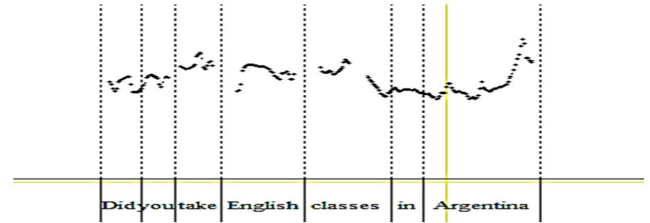


Figure 14. It shows the pitch contour and the corresponding words of question 2 produced by participant 9

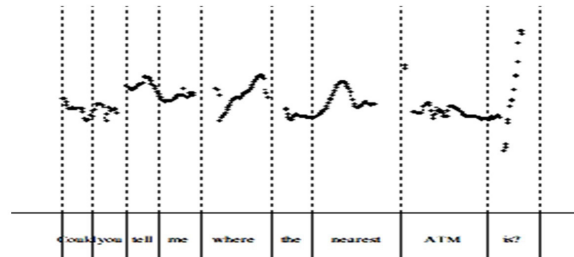


Figure 15. It shows the pitch contour and the corresponding words of request 1 produced by participant 9

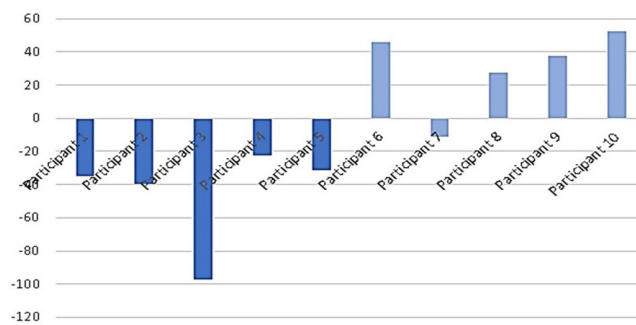


Figure 16. Request 2: Difference between the audio model and the participants in relation with the MEAN PITCH

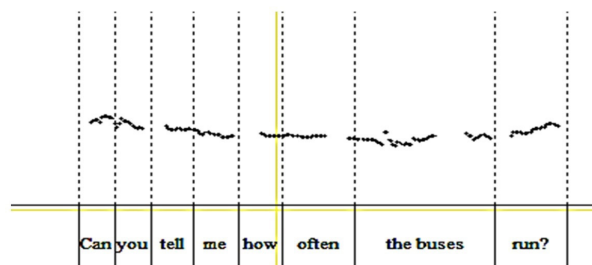


Figure 17. It specifies the pitch contour, and the corresponding words of the request 2 produced by participant 3

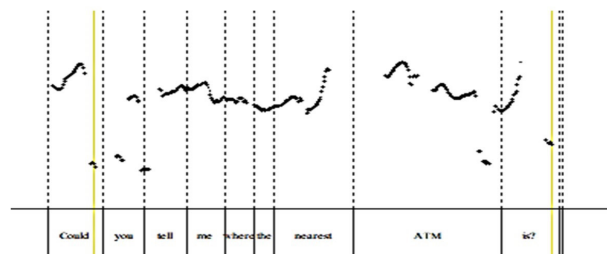


Figure 18. It shows the pitch contour and the corresponding words of request 1 produced by participant 6

The present research also holds the idea that the L1 influences the production of the L2 because it was found that there is a similar pattern between the intonation of yes, no questions and requests produced by the native English speakers and EFL students. Indeed, in the study done by Busa and Stella (2015) is stated that the L1 influences in the perception and production of the L2 in terms of prosody features such as intonation. In general, in the chart below it can be seen that most students tended to raise the pitch of their voice at the end of the questions. However, the questions seem to be easier to produce than requests.

This supposition let the research conclude that it may be significant to study the sound patterns of the native speaker's language in order to understand intonational EFL problems. In fact, Collins and Mess (2013) state:

The pronunciation errors that second language learners make are not just random attempts to produce unfamiliar sounds. Rather, they reflect the sound inventory, rules of combination, and the stress and intonation patterns of the native language. (p. 259)

Finally, through these spectrograms, we can not only measure intonation and the levels of the voice, but also the quality of speaking in general.

Recommended activities

In regards to the lack of stress awareness, Murcia *et al.* (2006) and Collins and Mess (2013) recommend some activities to present syllable prominence to students. As it has been stated, syllable stress can change the meaning of utterances, and it can change the discourse effect. At first, it is important for students to be aware of rising and falling movements.

Hence, in order for students to work with pitch and intonation. Collins and Mess (2013) propose an activity that consists of imitating the pitches described. Students visualize pitch contours and imitate what they see. There are a variety of systems in which students can visualize the frequency of the voice (see Figure 19).

Once students know what rising and falling mean in an utterance. The learner needs to know the functions of intonation. Thus, there is the possibility to have students be aware of the changes in meaning of the same utterance that is pronounced with different intonation patterns. In the activities based on Celce Murcia, et al (2006), students imitate the pitch contours. In activity 2 the stress syllable is presented in the upper case, in activity 1 students can visualize the pitch contour (see Figures 20, 21).

In order to let students, know the importance of intonation. After the previous exercise, students can notice the effects of pronouncing statements with different pitch contours (see Figure 22).

CONCLUSIONS

The data obtained aimed to identify common intonation mistakes of the L2 production in lower intermediate EFL adult students. Since intonation seems not to be commonly touched in classrooms, it is important to understand the type of errors that learners make in order to propose different teaching methods and materials.

After finding out the most common intonation mistakes in EFL students, it is concluded that the idea is not to have the learner sound like a native speaker, but to be aware of the features that are needed to improve our second language's intelligibility. It must be said that authors such as Krashen, (2013) point out that Second language pronunciation is acquired naturally and it can be successfully instructed by the input students receive without any planned instruction. For instance, based on his experience, it is stated that the second language accent will depend on the mood of the person, but not on formal instruction. In other words, if the learner does not feel comfortable with the people he is talking to, the affective filter will increase and consequently, it will affect all the features that let the speaker be understood. In this sense, the author states: «For pedagogy [...] there is no evidence that second language accent can be permanently improved by direct instruction» (Krashen, 2013, p. 19). However, the instruction of an EFL learner is different from students who acquire the language in a second language background because an EFL learner is not exposed to the language as a Second Language learner. Thus, some studies around this field are needed in order to improve EFL teaching. Moreover, the current research states some findings to develop awareness about the role of intonation in meaningful conversations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Having students practice different components such as pronunciation and intonation is part of mastering speaking skills. Furthermore, it is known that an accurate intonation facilitates an understandable communication; thus, more methodological and interactive activities are needed to be recommended since resources related to intonation does not seem to be enough.

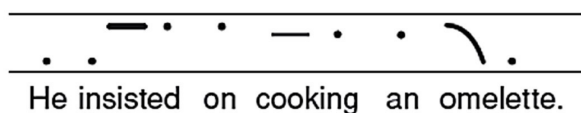


Figure 19. Exercise extracted from Collins and Mess (2013, p. 141)

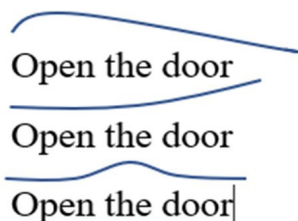


Figure 20. Activity 1

OPEN the door

Open the **DOOR**

Open **THE** door

Figure 21. Activity 2

1. ~~Great.~~ (perfunctory)
2. ~~Great.~~ (enthusiasm)
3. ~~G r e a t.~~ (sarcasm)

Figure 22. Exercise extracted from Murcia et al. (2016, p. 185)

This research has made the way for further intonation studies such as the analysis of how recommended activities work in real teaching settings. Moreover, since teaching in general have become virtual because of the pandemic, it would be significant to study some intonation activities and pedagogy guidance that could be used in virtual classes. Finally, the technological tool Praat that was used to analyze intonation can also be applied in efl classrooms as a tool of teaching speaking. Thus, further research can identify more valid and reliable technological tools that can be used in efl classrooms in order to foster speaking.

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