



The Importance of Teaching Intonation Patterns at Secondary Level: A Case Study of English Language Teachers

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Abstract

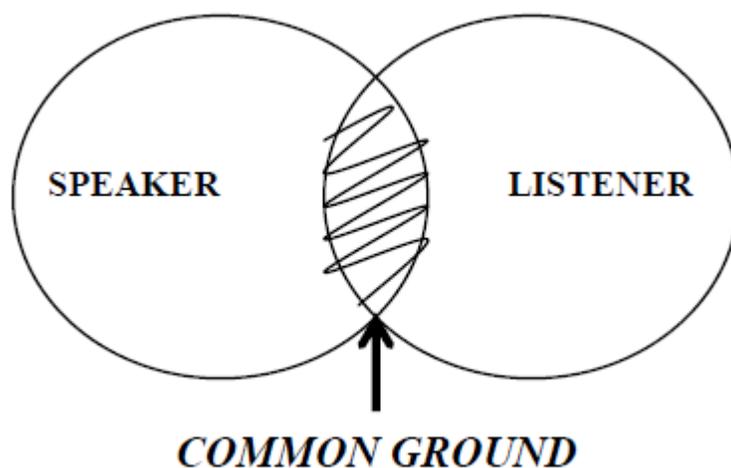
The current study investigates to know the importance of teaching intonation in communicative English or spoken English. As it is well known fact that, knowing and using the right intonation patterns in day-to-day communicative English is a challenging and one of the most difficult tasks to L2 learners of English. In general, most of the schools and colleges, L2 learners are hardly ever trained and to use the right patterns of intonation. The problem is that majority of the teachers of English are not confident in teaching intonation as it is difficult. Even though some of them are confident in teaching segmental features like consonants and vowel sounds when it comes to supra-segmental features; word stress, intonation and rhythm most of the English teachers dare not to attempt and teach. The reality is that majority the teachers of English themselves feel difficulty in using right intonation patterns on right syllable. The data were collected from the two schools of Lahore region. The data were analyzed and interpreted through graph charts. Through the calculated and analyzed data it is concluded that the importance of teaching intonation patterns is very important to teach at secondary level because through the close ended questionnaire it is analyzed that mostly teachers are agreed and strongly agreed with the importance of intonation patterns and only few teachers are not decided and disagreed with the intonation patterns.

Keywords: Intonation, segmental-features, word stress, tonicity, tone, tonality

Introduction

Learning English as a second language is very significant because when we use rhythm in each sentence and what for intonation it will be used. These are parts of pronunciation in English language. As world is changing drastically and rapidly it is very important to know the use of right intonation patterns on right syllables. This is the need of the hour where teachers of English could concentrate and focus on English intonation patterns and motivate their students to use and know the right intonation in their communicative English. It is a fact that, English is spreading to every nook and the corner in the world. Moreover, it became of international language or global language, further; it can be considered or called as language of job opportunities, library language and link language. It is high time to speak with intelligibility just not only in segmental features but also supra-segmental features. Intonation is one of the important suprasegmental features in communicative/spoken English.

It is necessary to learn how to avoid the Interference of mother language in order to improve the utterance near the native speakers. The role of mother tongue influences in a language acquisition for rhythm, stress and intonation when they adapt the same process of acquisition. Intonation is a meaningful choice speakers make to convey meaning (Bolinger, 1951). Intonation signals functions in spoken language that cannot be interpreted otherwise. It is said to be “inevitable whenever a language is spoken” (Bolinger, 1985) as it carries meaning that will often be the most relevant part of the message. Speakers, then, have the option of producing different versions of the same units when intending to communicate different meanings. In this sense, intonation carries a communicative value that cannot be left aside when teaching English as a foreign language. Language students and teachers should deem intonation as a key feature and, as a consequence, they should consider it as integral to the study of any language. According to this notion, speaker and listener share an interactional history that will define their intonational choices during their interactions as a result of the knowledge they both share. At the moment of interaction, we may propose that speaker and listener’s knowledge can be represented as follows.



Common ground refers to the assumptions speakers make about their listeners according to the knowledge shared by them at the time and place of their interaction. This knowledge is defined by the situational and physical contexts and cultural background shared by the participants. As a consequence, the context is crucial when dealing with intonation due to the fact that this aspect of the language is determined by speakers’ assumptions, common ground as well as by the context in which interaction occurs. Intonation is the music of a language, and it is maybe the most important factor of good accent. English has intonation to tell the way how speakers express. The following examples illustrate the intonation:

- **He’s COMing. (statement)**
- **He’s comING? (question)**

The rise and fall of pitch occur in the sentence we called intonation contour. English language has intonation in order to give the meaning of utterance such as the belief, the any emotion, the agreement and disagreement, the question, the statement. Teaching intonation at schools poses a major challenge for teachers. Teaching intonation means not only that student will be required to

analyse, identify and study the different meanings intonation may carry, but also that they will need to employ these in spoken interaction in the classroom. Thus, teachers will need to expose students to different formats of spoken interaction where speaker status, the situational context and the physical context vary.

A native speaker confronted with utterances that do not carry the right intonation would probably think “Why does the question/sentence sound so odd?”

Native speakers are not conscious of the value intonation has for them, but they do have an intuition of what their language “sounds” like. They just use intonation naturally, the same way we use Spanish intonation.

Students should not be expected to master the intonation system of the target language, but they should at least be aware of the relevance of intonation in spoken interaction as well as use those features of intonation which would aid them in oral communication in order to interpret and convey meaning. A clear example of how intonation aids comprehension is a listening passage in which one of the questions is “How is the woman feeling?”. Of course, words could help understand the way that person is feeling when speaking, but intonation can be said to be more effective in this respect.

Furthermore, if we pay attention to what international examinations have to say about intonation and its role in communication, we will find that Cambridge University acknowledges the relevance of this aspect of the English language when assessing candidates’ performance in the Speaking paper for both PET (Preliminary English Test)

Of course, it should not be expected that students become experts on intonation, but rather that they will be able to recognise its relevance in discourse so that they can make correct choices to deliver the message as effectively as possible.

Students should be given the necessary tools that will help them develop their communicative competence, and intonation has been argued to be a crucial part English due to the fact that it carried meaning other than the one which could be interpreted from words alone. Intonation contributes to the communicative value of every act of speech. Learners should be encouraged to practice common patterns and meanings intonation has.

Intonation functions

Following Wells (2006) presented these functions into four groups.

- **Linguistic form-based:** i.e. grammatical (the intonation of Yes/No or Wh- questions) or lexical (intonation on modifiers like really or absolutely);
- **Attitudinal or Interpersonal:** e.g. sounding enthusiastic, interested, polite; showing disbelief
- **Accentual:** especially in contrasts, e.g. ‘special stress’, emphasizing, correcting;
- **Conversation management-related:** asking someone to repeat something, disagreeing strongly.

These categories are combined into a single focus, e.g. attitudinal and grammatical (“showing interest and surprise in reply questions”) or accentual, conversation management and interpersonal (“correcting politely”).

Intonation Pattern

The three main patterns of intonation in English are: falling intonation, rising intonation and fall-rise intonation. Falling intonation describes how the voice falls on the final stressed syllable of a phrase or a group of words. Falling intonation is very common in wh-questions.

On the other hand, rising intonation describes how the voice rises at the end of a sentence. Yardi (1970) argues that rising intonation is common in yes-no questions. While fall-rise intonation describes how the voice falls and then rises. We use fall-rise intonation at the end of statements when we want to say that we are not sure, or when we may have more to add. We use fall-rise intonation with questions, especially when we request information or invite somebody to do or to have something. The intonation pattern makes the questions sound more polite:

Research Objectives

This study has the following objectives:

- To explore the role of intonation in communication
- To investigate how intonation change the meaning of a sentence in spoken language

Research Questions

This research aims to find answers to the following questions:

- What role does intonation play in language classroom by the English teachers?
- How does intonation patterns change the meanings of the sentence?

Significance of the Study

This study will provide an overview of role, functions and levels of intonation patterns and it might help us determine the differences and similarities between the native and non-native speakers 'use of intonation patterns in English that can be concentrated upon while addressing the issues of intelligibility.

Research Design

The purpose of the study to know the opinion of The English Language teachers regarding the importance of teaching intonation patterns at secondary level. This chapter places the study with in the teachers of secondary level and discusses the methodology in terms of population, sample. Instrument, data collection and data analysis.

Population:

English language teachers from the area of Lahore region were the population of the study. The population was consisted on English language teachers.

Sample:

Two schools were randomly selected for the study and 10 teachers were taken as a sample.

1. Government Boys High School Walton, Lahore
2. Government Pilot Secondary School For Boys, wahdat Road, Lahore

Instrument:

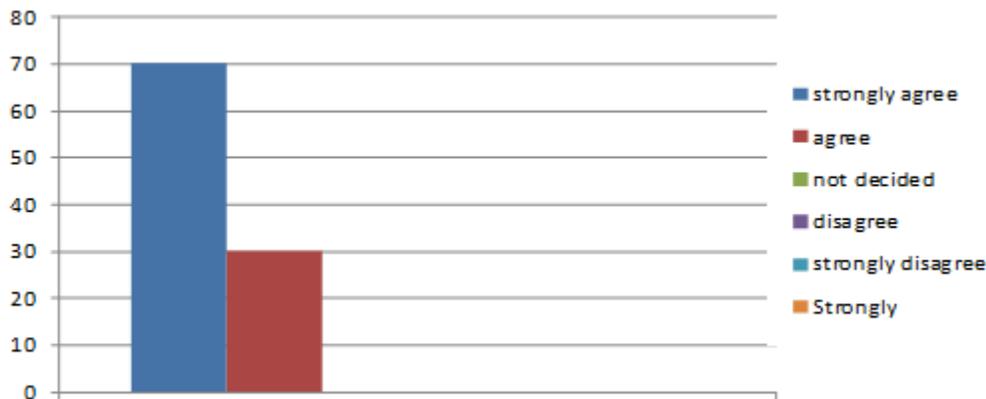
It was considered that the most suitable tool for collecting data was questionnaire for teacher's .The researcher has developed a comprehensive questionnaire for the study. The researcher personally visited the schools and collected data through questionnaire. Quantitative research

method was used to analyze the data. The data was presented into tabular form. Percentage method was used to know the opinion of the English language teachers about the importance of teaching intonation patterns.

Data Analysis

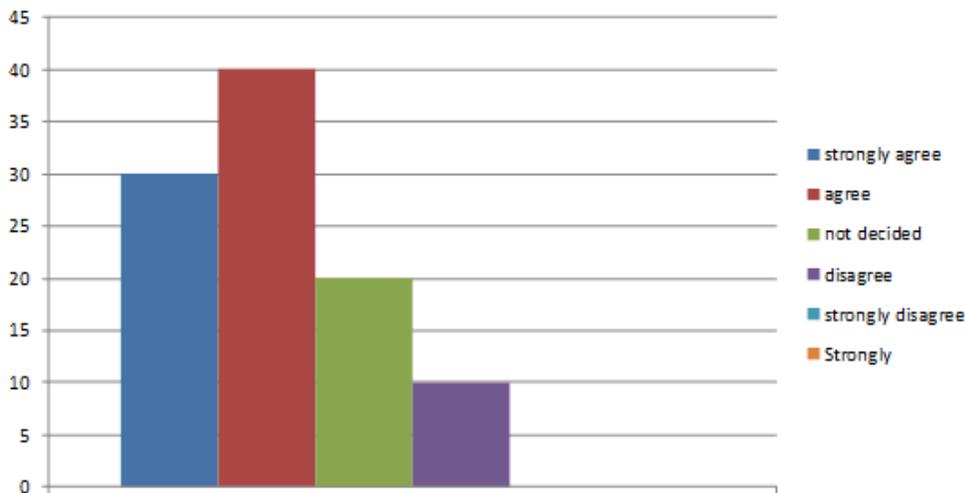
In this section, analysis and interpretation of the data have been presented. “To know the opinion of the English Language teachers regarding the importance of teaching intonation patterns at secondary level. For this purpose comprehensive questionnaire was constructed and distributed among 5 teachers at secondary level. The responses tabulated, Analyzed and interpreted. The results were shown in the form of Percentage Method.

Question 1: Intonation plays an important role in communication.



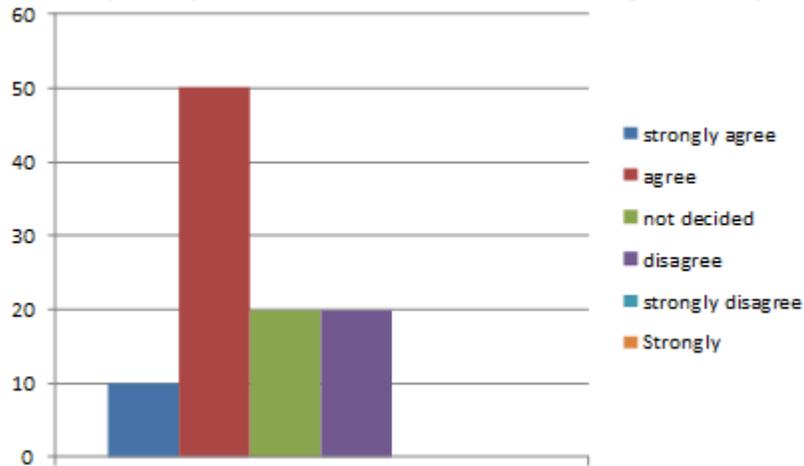
Graph 1 shows that 70% respondents were strongly agreed and 30% respondents were only agreed that the Intonation plays an important role in communication.

Question 2: L1 influences directly while focusing on intonation.



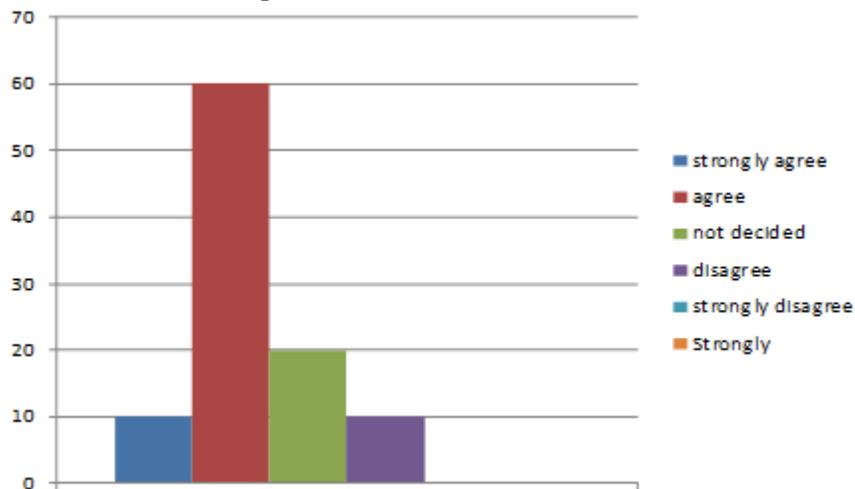
Graph 2 demonstrates that 30% respondents were strongly agree, 40% were agreed. 20% were not decided and only 10% respondents were disagreed that L1 influences directly while focusing on intonation.

Question 3: Meaning changes when intonation is utilized in spoken English language



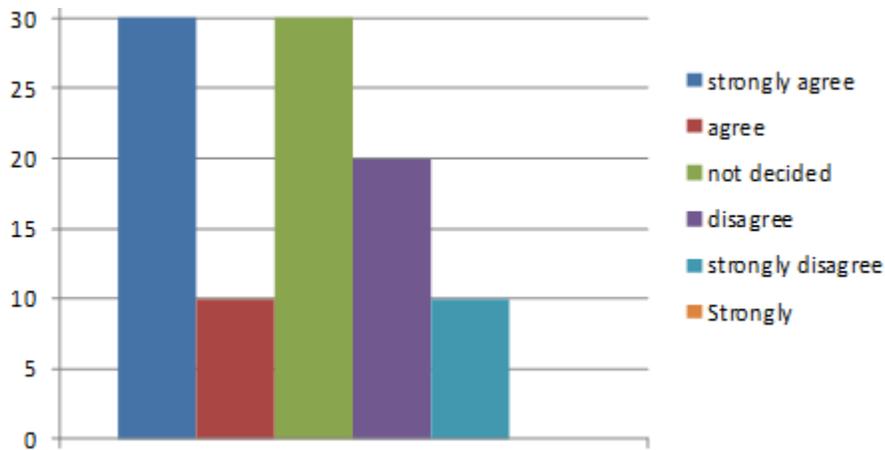
Graph 3 shows that 10% respondents were strongly agreed, 50% were agreed, and 20% were not decided and 20% were disagreed that Meaning changes when intonation is utilized in spoken English language

Question 4: An intonation pattern in L2 makes clear sense to others



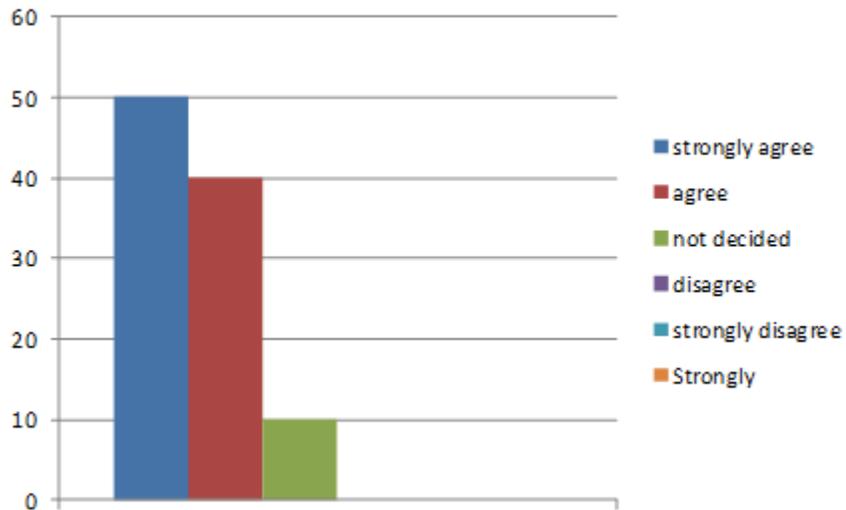
Graph 4 shows that 10% respondents were strongly agreed, 60% were agreed, 20% were not decided and 10% were disagreed that An intonation pattern in L2 makes clear sense to others

Question 5: In long sentences there is no need of intonation pattern.



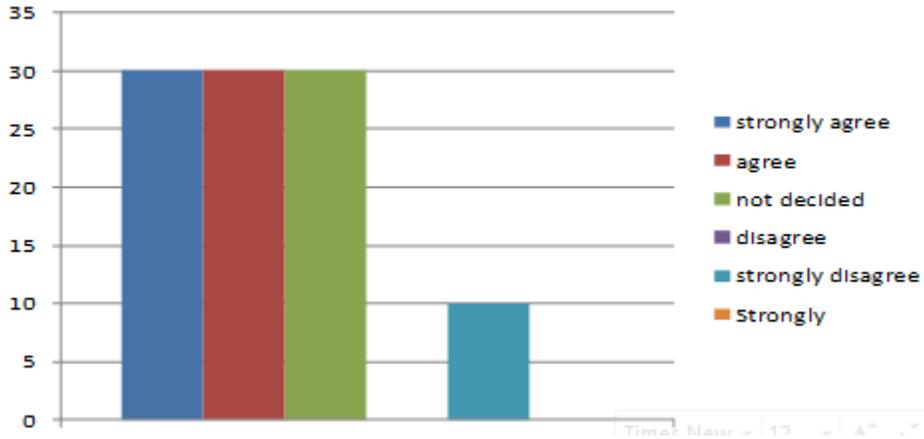
Graph 5 displays that 30% respondents were strongly agreed,10% were agreed,30%were not decided and 20% were disagreed and 10% respondents were strongly disagreed that In long sentences there is no need of intonation pattern.

Question 6: Intonation is used to emphasize the meaning.



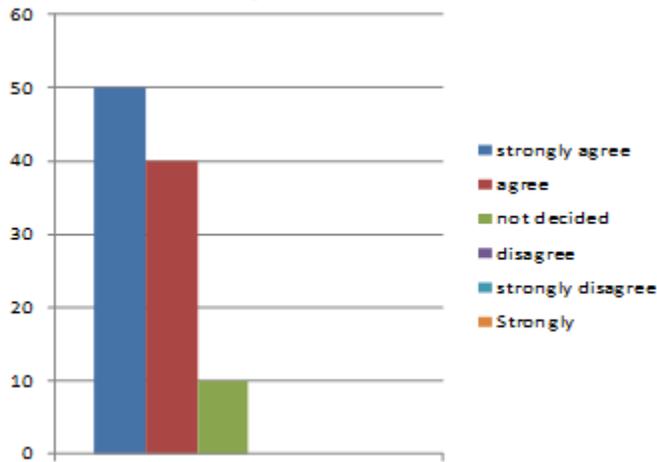
Graph 6 shows that 50% respondents were strongly agreed, 40% were agreed, 10%were not decided that Intonation is used to emphasize the meaning

Question 7: Intonation differentiates between L1 and L2 learners.



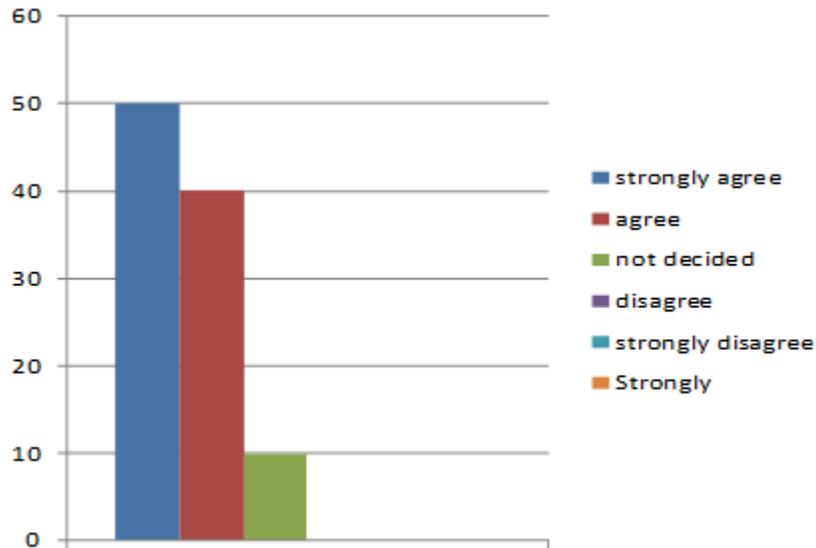
Graph no 7 showed that 30% respondents were strongly agreed, 30% were agreed, 30% were not decided and 10% respondents were strongly disagreed that Intonation differentiates between L1 and L2 learners.

Question 8: Intonation can improve the accent of L1 learners



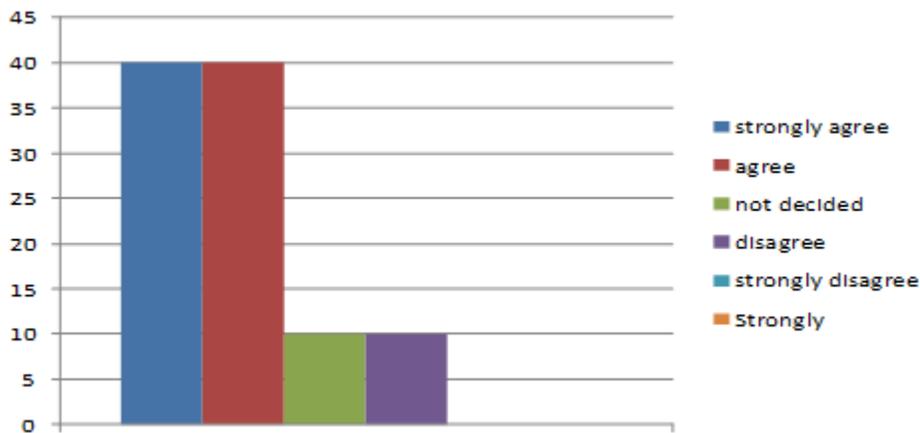
Graph no 8 showed that 50% respondents were strongly agreed, 40% were agreed, 10% were not decided that Intonation can improve the accent of L1 learners.

Question 9: Intonation can improve the accent of L2 learners.



Graph no 9 showed that 50% respondents were strongly agreed,40% were agreed,10%were not decided that Intonation can improve the accent of L2 learners.

Question 10: Higher and lower tone of intonation make the meaning clear especially in tag questions.



Graph no 10 showed that 40% respondents were strongly agreed,40% were agreed,10%were not decided and 10% respondents were disagreed that higher and lower tone of intonation make the meaning clear especially in tag questions .

Discussion

Teaching intonation plays an important role in educational system. It is a basic part of Phonology. It helps in understanding the language. Intonation also helps in the pronunciation of sounds. The problem under the study was to know the opinions of the English language Teachers regarding the importance of teaching intonation patterns at secondary level. The objectives of the study were to find out the role of intonation in communication. To know about the patterns and functions of the intonation in speech and to find out how intonation change the meaning of a sentence in spoken language. The sample for this study was consisted of the 10 English language teachers at secondary level. Closed ended Questionnaire was developed about the importance of

teaching intonation and collected data through questionnaire from these teachers. Percentage method was used to analyze the data.

To sum, intonation is a part of suprasegmental phonology. Intonation helps to recognize the language that you hear in the same way as the melody of a song helps to recognize the song that you hear. The basic key components are pitch, sentence stress and rhythm. Theoretically, intonation is the outcome of the vibration in the vocal cords that helps in production of sounds. This vibration renders pitch to the sounds and basically it is understood as the thickness and thinness of sound.

Findings

- 1.) In question one 70% respondents were strongly agreed and 30% respondents were only agreed.
- 2.) 30% respondents were strongly agreed, 40% were agreed, 20% were not decided and only 10% respondents were disagreed.
- 3) 10% respondents were strongly agreed, 50% were agreed, 20% were not decided and 20% were disagreed
- 4) 10% respondents were strongly agreed, 60% were agreed, 20% were not decided and 10% were disagreed
- 5) 30% respondents were strongly agreed, 10% were agreed, 30% were not decided and 20% were disagreed and 10% respondents were strongly disagreed.
- 6) 50% respondents were strongly agreed, 40% were agreed, 10% were not decided.
- 7) 30% respondents were strongly agreed, 30% were agreed, 30% were not decided and 10% respondents were strongly disagreed.
- 8) 50% respondents were strongly agreed, 40% were agreed, and 10% were not decided.
- 9) 50% respondents were strongly agreed, 40% were agreed, and 10% were not decided.
- 10) 40% respondents were strongly agreed, 40% were agreed, 10% were not decided and 10% respondents were disagreed.

Conclusion

Through the calculated and analyzed data it is concluded that the importance of teaching intonation patterns is very important to teach at secondary level because through the close ended questionnaire it is analyzed that mostly teachers are agreed and strongly agreed with the importance of intonation patterns and only few teachers are not decided and disagreed with the intonation patterns.

Recommendations

1. To improve pronunciation
2. Focus on the news caster's lips movement and try to imitate them.
3. Hear audio pronunciation for every word.
4. Buy yourself some audio English books and listen to them intently.
5. Read out the book aloud and record voice to check the pronunciation and mistakes.
6. Always begin with the notion of breathing more often.
7. Emphasize particular points and ideas and make breaks at the end of clauses and phrases.

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