Teaching English Intonation using Entertainment shows

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1 Introduction

Many elementary and secondary school EFL teachers in Slovenia believe that teaching intonation is useless as it can hardly ever be faulty. The remaining few believe that it is enough to equip the learners with a set of very general rules explaining which pitch movements are used in which types of grammatical and syntactic structures (e.g. rising intonation in questions). Such simplifications are often misguided as they may apply to only a small set of utterances said in a particular context of interaction.

Linguists generally limit intonation analysis to three main functions: grammatical, discourse and pragmatic. Different intonation models emphasize different functions of intonation although they are all intertwined and dependant upon each other. Teachers should be aware of that and should try to combine different communicative meanings into an approach which is most suitable for the needs of their learners. The paper presents how an entertainment show, such as *The Weakest Link* quiz, can be used in classroom to explain some aspects of discourse and pragmatic functions of English intonation.

2 The discourse function of intonation

The discourse function of intonation concerns the relationship between the speaker and the message, on the one hand, and between the interlocutors on the other. Although it is generally believed that cohesive ties are realized by different grammatical and lexical references, it is plausible to claim that different prosodic features may play an equally important role in achieving cohesion in spoken discourse. The pioneering and seminal work has been carried out by Brazil (1997) who has established that the prosodic features of 'tone', 'key' and 'termination' play an important part in expressing cohesion in speech. The 'referring' tones (i.e. the fall-rise, the rise) are to express the anaphoric reference to everything that is shared by the interlocutors, whereas the 'proclaiming' tones (i.e. the fall, the rise-fall) are usually used to express cataphoric reference, i.e. to introduce information which is not yet part of the common ground. Key and termination are used to establish contrastive or equivalent meaningful relations between two pieces of information where the high key is used to express the former and the low key the latter. The function of termination is primarily to limit and predict the addressee's response: the high termination is said to encourage further conversation, while the low termination indicates the possible end of conversation.

The speaker who is in charge or takes control of a successful development of communication is the so-called dominant speaker. The dominant speaker can be understood from the type of interaction, appointed in advance, can hold the position by unspoken agreement for the time being, or can seek to take control briefly in the course of a conversation. Dominant speakers have a choice: they can either make use of the dominant referring (i.e. the rise) and proclaiming tones (i.e. the rise-fall) to underline their present status as controller of the discourse, or they can refrain from doing so and use the non-dominant ones (i.e. the fall-rise and the fall, respectively).

3 The pragmatic function of intonation

The pragmatic function of intonation has been the preoccupation of a number of renowned linguists (Crystal & Davy, 1975; O'Connor & Arnold, 1975; Tench, 1996; Couper-Kuhlen, 1986) who have tried to establish the predicted attitudinal meanings of intonation in a particular context. O'Connor and Arnold (1975) have developed a list of ten intonation patterns or tunes which vary in the degree of the pitch range they cover, as well as in the pitch movement. Each of the tunes has a number of meanings which often depend on the type of a syntactic structure and the context in which they occur.

4 *The Weakest Link* in a classroom

The purpose to use the *Weakest Link* quiz in a classroom was to illustrate how intonation is used to express cohesion and coherence in speech, dominance, as well as some attitudinal aspects which are vital for the success of the show. The quiz is an endurance test characterized by Anne Robinson's putdowns and bitter and sarcastic chats with the contestants. It is also a show with a strictly defined discourse structure in terms of question-answer sequences and the distribution of roles where the dominant role is played by the hostess who asks questions, evaluates the answers as correct or wrong, and chats with the contestants with the purpose of putting at risk their self-confidence.

One episode of the show was chosen for presentation and analysis in classroom. The audience were the 4th-year students of English with special interest in intonation who were familiar with both intonation models: the discourse intonation model by Brazil (1997) and the attitudinal model by O'Connor and Arnold (1975). They had also taken courses in discourse analysis of speech and writing. They watched the entire episode, but the analysis of discourse functions of intonation concentrated on achieving cohesion and coherence by means of different tones and keys in Robinson's opening speech, explanation of the rules of the game and her evaluation of individual rounds of questions, as well as on cohesion across turn boundaries. The analysis of the attitudinal aspects of intonation was based on Robinson's linguistic behaviour in her 'chats' with the contestants.

The students were given the written transcript of the episode which had been divided into intonation phrases with marked pre-nuclear accents and nuclear syllables. They only had to concentrate on the pitch movements and mark the keys and tones. Due to their previous intonation ear-training and interest in the subject, they quite successfully managed to mark the intonation. The marking of intonation was followed by the analysis of discourse and attitudinal communicative functions of tones and keys.

5 The discourse and pragmatic functions of intonation in *The Weakest Link Quiz*
5.1 Cohesion and coherence within a single turn
In order to explain to the learners the cohesive function of intonation within a turn, the best way is to look at Anne Robinson's opening speech, her explanation of the rules, as well as her recap of each questioning round.

In the opening speech Anne interchangeably uses the fall-rises and the falls which is according to Brazil's theory the way of achieving anaphoric and cataphoric references, respectively.

(1) The 'nine contestants in the ↘↗ studio here today / are ↘students. // They 'might think that makes them ↗clever.//↗↗We will find ↘out. // They are ↘↗here to play for up to 10,000 pounds.// They ↑don't ↗know each other. // How↘ever, / if they ↘↗want that prize money, / they'll ↑have to work as a ↘team. // ↑↘But / ↗eight of them / will ' leave with ↗↘nothing, / as ↗↗round by round we lose the ↘player /→ voted / the ↑*weakest*↘ *link*. // Let's ↘meet the team. //[1]

It is clear that the fall-rise is often used to make reference to the shared knowledge between Anne, on the one hand, and the contestants as well as the viewers, on the other. It has to be remembered that this is a well-known quiz, so the viewers and the contestants already know a lot about the structure and the rules of the quiz. Hence, the falls are used strictly only on those items which convey truly new information, such as, the fact that the contestants are students (in contrast to other shows when the contestants come from all parts of the UK, have different occupations and belong to different age groups).

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[1] Table of symbols: the tones:↘ fall, ↗ rise, ↘↗ fall-rise, ↗↘ rise-fall, → level; the keys: ↓ low, ↑ high.
' mid; ↘↘ falling head, ↗↗ rising head.

A similar exchange pattern of falls and fall-rises can be observed in the part where Anne is explaining the rules of the game.

A very good example of how cohesion is established by means of intonation, is example (2) where Anne briefly summarizes the contestants' performance in that round:

(2) And ↘↘ in that ↘↗ first round, / you a→chieved / a 'rather ↘sad / '800 ↘ pounds.// ↘↗ **Sad** / be↘ause / at ↑one ↓↗point / you had a ↓ ↗chain / of ↘ten / cor↘rect / ↓ ↘ answers.//

Here cohesion is established by means of the fall and the fall-rise used on the same lexical item: the fall on the first *sad* introduces new information, the fall-rise on the second *sad*, establishes the anaphoric tie with the first *sad* and serves as an introduction to the explanation why the team performed badly.

5.2 Cohesion and coherence across turn boundaries
The question-answers sequences are an excellent example to illustrate to the learners how the pitch height (i.e. key) and the pitch movement (i.e. tone) can work hand in hand to create cohesion and coherence across turn boundaries. In questions which consist of an introductory part and the direct question, Anne uses the high key and the falling tone on the latter, as in example (3):

(3) Anne: ↘Andrew. // An 'annual e↗vent / 'takes ↘place /↑ **how many times a ↑↘year?**//

If the contestant's answer is correct, Anne evaluates it as such, using the low key, which expresses equivalence, and the fall, as in example (4):

(4) Andrew: ↘Once.
    Anne: **Cor↓↘rect**.//

She continues the turn by calling the next contestant. For that purpose, she uses the high key and the fall, as in example (5):

(5) Anne: Cor↓↘rect. // **↑↘Katy.** // Which 'two-letter ↗word / can →mean / out of ↗bed / in 'residence at uni↗versity / or ↘in / an ex'cited ↘state?//

If the contestant's answer is wrong, Anne corrects it by using the high key and the fall, as in example (6):

(6) Katy: ↘In
    Anne: **↑↘Up.** //

5.3 Dominance in speech
According to Brazil's theory, the dominant speaker can, in addition to the two neutral tones, also use their marked variants, i.e. the proclaiming rise-fall and the referring rise. There are two phrases which function as frames between different parts of the quiz. These are: *Time's up* and *Voting over*. The hostess often chooses to exert her dominant role and pronounces the phrases using the dominant rises and rise-falls, as in examples (7) and (8):

(7) //↑Time's↑↗up//
(8) //↑Voting ↑↗↘over//

5.4 Ways of expressing sarcasm and condescension
Anne's bitter comments on behalf of the contestants occur in her chats with them after each round of questions. The analysis has shown that the prevailing tone is the rise-fall. She has

used it three times when she has announced the strongest link in a particular round, as in example (9):

(9) We'll start with the strongest link from the last round. // **That's ↗↘Katy.** //

O'Connor and Arnold (1975) explain the attitude of the rise-fall as that of sarcasm and disbelief, while Brazil (1997) explains this marked variant of a proclaiming tone as information that is new or unexpected to both, the speaker and the addressee, hence its local attitudinal meaning of sarcasm and disbelief.

Two occurrences of the rise-fall preceded by the high key, which makes the speaker sound 'complacent, self-satisfied, smug, challenging or censorious' (O'Connor and Arnold, 1975: 79), have been used by Anne in her comments on the contestants' general and individual performance in answering the questions, as in example (10):

(10) // Who is ↑clearly educated beyond their in ↗↘telligence?//

The second most frequently used intonation pattern to express 'categorical, weighty, judicial' attitudes, but also 'detached, flat and unsympathetic' (O'Connor and Arnold, 1975: 48-50) is the combination of the high key and the low fall (11) or just the low fall (12):

(11) Anne: Stuart. What are you smiling at?
     Stuart: Your lovely face, Ann. I can't resist myself. I'm sorry.
     Anne: //**You ↑can't resist your ↓↘self,**/ **or you ↑can't resist ↓↘me?**//

(12) Ben: I study zoology Ann.
     Anne: // **↓↘Why?**//

6. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to illustrate how a popular entertainment show, such as *The Weakest Link* quiz, can be used in classroom to explain to learners different communicative functions of intonation. The show is particularly good to demonstrate how cohesion and coherence can be achieved in speech by means of the prosodic features of tones and keys. The anaphoric reference is usually expressed by means of the fall-rise or rise, whereas the fall and the rise-fall are used to realise the cataphoric reference. Coherence between two successive pieces of information is realised by means of key, where the high key expressed contrast and the low key expresses equivalence. Tones are also very important in conveying the dominant status of the speaker. In the quiz the hostess constantly reminds the contestants of the fact by using rising or rise-falling tones. Sarcasm and condescension are the two prevailing attitudes in the *Weakest Link* quiz. They are expressed by means of two pitch patterns: the rise-fall or the high key followed by the low fall.

In conclusion we can safely claim that discourse and attitudinal meanings of intonation are strongly intertwined. We believe that using entertainment shows or dramatised texts can be a very successful way of illustrating the pragmatic value of speech which depends on the speakers' perception of the context of interaction and their understanding of intonation, lexis and grammar.

6. References
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