

# Chapter 5

## English Words and Sentences

# The strong form and the weak form

1. The form in which a word is pronounced when it is considered in isolation is called its **citation form**. At least one syllable is fully stressed and has no reduction of the vowel quality.
2. There is a **strong form**, which occurs when the word is stressed, as in sentences such as "I want money and happiness, not money or happiness." There is also a **weak form**, which occurs when the word is in an unstressed position.

Word	Strong Form	Weak Form	Example of a Weak Form
a	eɪ	ə	a cup [ ə 'kʌp ]
and	ænd	ənd, ɹd, ən, ɹ	you and me [ 'ju: ən 'mi: ]
as	æz	əz	as good as [ əz 'gʊd əz ]
at	æt	ət	at home [ ət 'həʊm ]
can	kæn	kən, kɪ	I can go [ aɪ kɪ 'gəʊ ]
has	hæz	həz, əz, z, s	he's left [ hɪz 'left ]
he	hi	i, hi, ɪ	will he go? [ wɪl ɪ 'gəʊ ]
must	mʌst	məst, məs, mʃ	I must sell [ aɪ mʃ 'sel ]
she	ʃi	ʃɪ	did she go? [ 'dɪd ʃɪ 'gəʊ ]
that	ðæt	ðət	he said that it did [ hɪ 'sed ðət ɪt 'dɪd ]
to	tu:	tʊ, tə	to Mexico [ tə 'meksɪkəʊ ]
would	wʊd	wəd, əd, d	it would do [ 'ɪt əd 'du: ]

# When to use weak forms

1. “**That**” represents a **demonstrative pronoun** in a phrase such as “**that boy and the man,**” but it represents a **relative pronoun** in “he said **that** men were better.” **Only the relative pronoun has a weak form.** The demonstrative “that” is always pronounced [ð → t → d]. Similarly, when “has” indicates **the perfect form**, it may be [z], as in “**she's gone,**” but it is [z → s → h] or [s → h] when it indicates possession, as in “**she has nice eyes.**”
2. **Weak forms** and **assimilations** are common in the speech of every sort of speaker in both Britain and America. Foreigners who make insufficient use of them sound stilted.

# Assimilation

## 1. Progressive assimilation

look        looks

love        loves

like        liked

love        loved

## 2. Regressive assimilation

input        have to

## 3. complete assimilation

cupboard

## 4. Coalescent assimilation

this year; would you...; set you up

# When fricatives are followed by /j/



p <sub>1</sub>	p <sub>2</sub>	p <sub>3</sub>	Examples
/s/	/j/	◊	this year miss you
/z/		☾*	How is your day? He loves you.
/t/ or /ts/		/◊◊ /	next year last year Who set you up? That's your problem.
/d/ or /dz/		/◊☾* /	Did you do that? What would you do? My dad's your partner.

# Stress

1. The most reliable thing for a listener to detect is that **a stressed syllable frequently has a longer vowel than that same vowel would be if it were unstressed.**
2. Stress can always be defined in terms of something a speaker does in one part of an utterance relative to another.
3. A stressed syllable is often, but not always, louder than an unstressed syllable.
4. A stressed syllable is usually, but not always, on a higher pitch.

# Stress: example 1

*'John or 'Mary should 'go.*

*'I think 'John 'and 'Mary should 'go.*

*an 'insult, to in'sult*

*an 'overflow, to over'flow*

*an 'increase, to in'crease*

*a 'walkout, to 'walk 'out*

*a 'put-on, to 'put 'on*

*a 'pushover, to 'push 'over*

*a 'hot dog,*

*a 'hot 'dog*

*I'll de'fer to your opinion*

*I'll 'differ from your opinion*

## Stress: example 2

' \_\_\_\_\_

diplomat  
photograph  
monotone

' \_\_\_\_\_

diplomacy  
photography  
monotony

' \_\_\_\_\_

diplomatic  
photographic  
monotonic



# Listen and see if you can find “stressed” vowel



1. That’s what I thought.



2. So what did you dream?



3. I thought it was good.



4. He’s lazy and crazy and stupid.



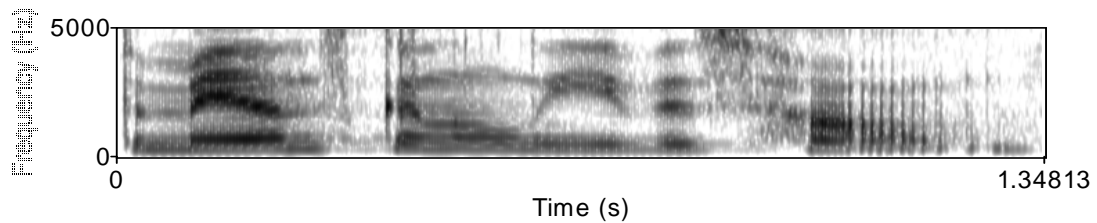
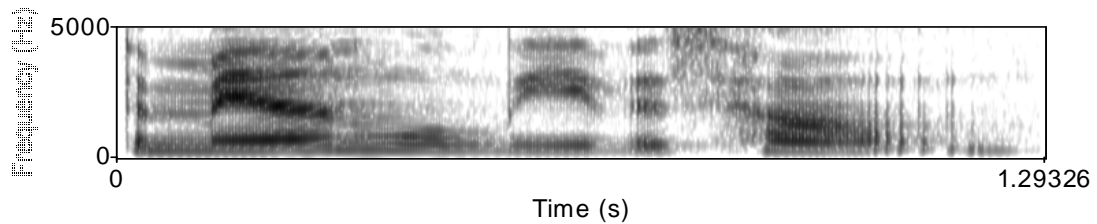
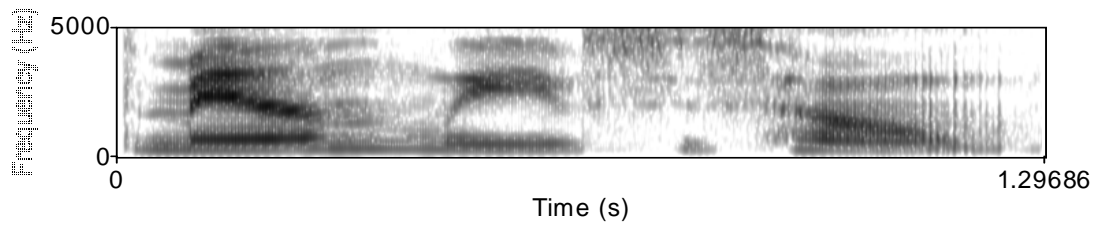
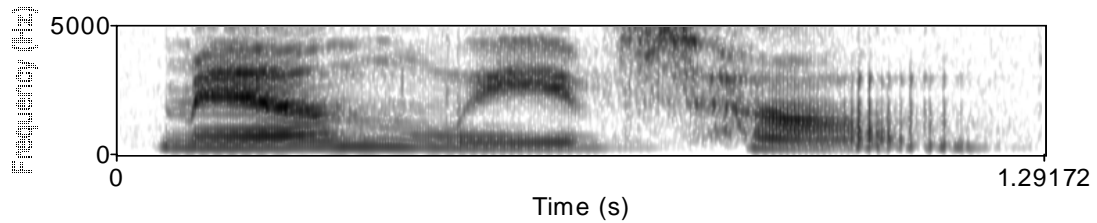
5. If he can then there’s no argument about it.

# Tap out the beat

1. The best way to decide whether a syllable is stressed is to try to tap out the beat as a word is said. This is because **it is always easier to produce one increase in muscular activity—a tap—exactly in time with an existing increase in activity.** When as listeners we perceive the stresses that other people are making, we are probably putting together all the cues available in a particular utterance in order to deduce the motor activity (the articulations) we would use to produce those same stresses. It seems as if listeners sometimes perceive an utterance by reference to their own motor activities. **When we listen to speech, we may be considering, in some way, what we would have to do in order to make similar sounds.**
2. Example: Tap out the beat  
In a dialogue



# Tap out the beat



# The functions of stress

1. A stress can be used simply to **give special emphasis to a word (new information)** or to **contrast** one word with another.

Example:

A: 'John **or** 'Mary should 'go

B: 'I think 'John **and** 'Mary should 'go.

2. Another major function of stress in English is to indicate the syntactic relationships between words or parts of words. For instance, there are noun-verb oppositions, such as "an **'insult**, to **in'sult**; there are a compound as a noun, e.g., "a **'hot dog**" (a form of food), and an adjective followed by a noun, as in the phrase "a **'hot 'dog**" (an overheated animal).

# The degree of stress

1. In some longer words, it might seem as if there is more than one degree of stress. For example, say the word “**psycho-lingistics**” and try to tap on the stressed syllables. You will find that you can tap on the first and the fourth syllables of “**psycho-lin'guistics**.” The fourth syllable seems to have a higher degree of stress.
2. Try saying a sentence such as “**The 'psycholin'guistics 'course was 'fun.**” If you tap on each stressed syllable, you will find that there is no difference between the first and fourth syllables of “psycholinguistics.” If you have a higher degree of stress on the fourth syllable in “psycholinguistics,” this word will be given a special emphasis, as though you were contrasting some other psychology course with a psycholinguistics course.
3. Other examples:
  - She’s only **thirteen**.
  - Thirteen people** were killed last night.

## Reduced vowels and unstressed vowels

The words in both columns have the stress on the first syllable. The words in the first column might seem to have a second, weaker, stress on the last syllable as well, but this is not so. **The words in the first column differ from those in the second by having a full vowel in the final syllable. This vowel is always longer than the reduced vowel—usually [★]--in the final syllable of the words in the second column.** The result is that there is a difference in the rhythm of the two sets of words. **This is due to a difference in the vowels that are present; it is not a difference in stress.**

Three-syllable words exemplifying the difference between an unreduced vowel in the final syllable (first column) and a reduced vowel in the final syllable (second column).

'multiply	'multiple
'regulate	'regular
'copulate	'copula
'circulate	'circular
'criticize	'critical
'minimize	'minimal

## More examples for the intonation peak

In the words of more than four or more syllables, there might be more than one stressed syllable. However, there is always one intonation peak for those words with many syllables.

*explain, explanation, exploit, exploitation,*

*postman, bacon, gentleman,*

*mailman, moron, superman*

# Deletion

## 1. Loss of /h/ sound

ask him

did he

## 2. Loss of /θ/ sound

tell them

something

## 3. Loss of /t/ or /d/ before /★■/

sudden

sentences

## 4. Loss of a syllable

family; temperature; camera; potato; etc.

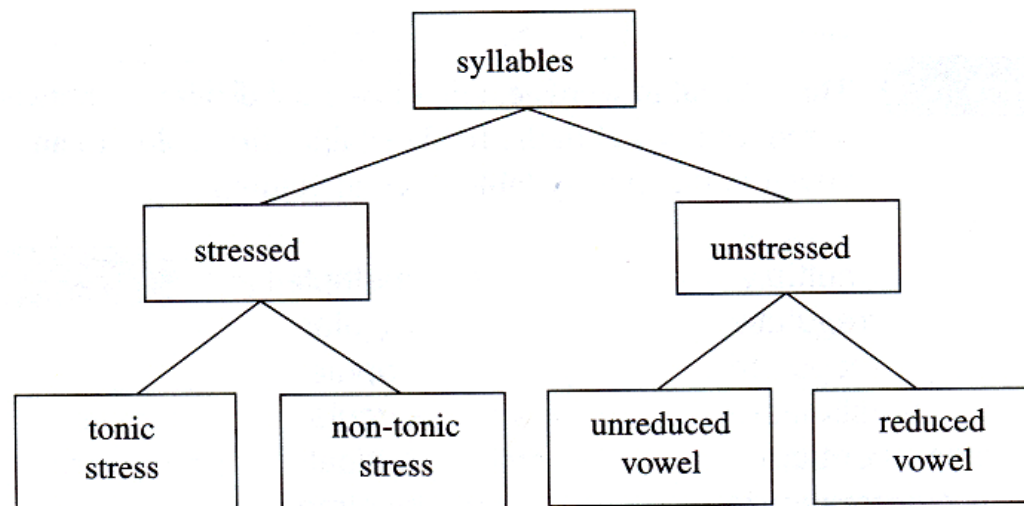


# The tonic stress

A syllable may be especially prominent because it accompanies a peak in the intonation. We will say that syllables of this kind have a tonic stress. Given this, we can note that English syllables are either stressed or unstressed. If they are stressed, they may or may not be the tonic stress syllables that carry the major pitch change in the tone group. If they are unstressed, they may or may not have a reduced vowel.

**FIGURE 5.1**

Degrees of prominence of different syllables in a sentence.



# Examples:

<i>Intonation Peak</i>	↑	↑	↑	↑
<i>Stress</i>	ex'plain	'expla'nation	ex'ploit	'exploit'ation
<i>Segments</i>	[ɪkspleɪn	ɛkspləneɪʃən	ɪksplɔɪt	ɛksplɔɪteɪʃən]

**TABLE 5.4**

The combination of stress, intonation, and vowel reduction in a number of words.

	<b>explain</b>	<b>explanation</b>	<b>exploit</b>	<b>exploitation</b>
tonic accent	- +	- - + -	- +	- - + -
stress	- +	+ - + -	- +	+ - + -
full vowel	- +	+ - + -	- +	+ + + -

# Sentence stress

1. The stresses that can occur on words sometimes become modified when the words are part of sentences. The most frequent modification is the dropping of some of the stresses. (CD 5.7)

'Mary's younger 'brother wanted 'fifty chocolate  
'peanuts.

2. As a general rule, English tries to avoid having stresses too close together. Very often, stresses on alternate words are dropped in sentences where they would otherwise come too near one another.
3. The 'big brown 'bear ate 'ten white 'mice.

# More examples

1. The tendency to avoid having stresses too close together may cause the stress on a polysyllabic word to be on one syllable in one sentence and on another in another sentence.
2. Consider the word "clarinet" in "He had a 'clarinet 'solo" and in "He 'plays the clari'net." The stress is on the first or the third syllable, depending on the position of the other stresses in the sentence.
3. Similar shifts occur in phrases such as "'Vice-president 'Jones" versus "'Jones, the vice-'president."
4. Numbers such as "14, 15, 16" are stressed on the first syllable when counting, but not in phrases such as "She's 'only six'teen."

# Tap on the stressed syllables

Try tapping on the indicated syllables while you read the next paragraph.



*'Stresses in 'English 'tend to re'cur at 'regular 'intervals of 'time. ( ' ) It's 'often 'perfectly 'possible to 'tap on the 'stresses in 'time with a 'metronome. ( ' ) The 'rhythm can 'even be 'said to de'terminate the 'length of the 'pause between 'phrases. ( ' ) An 'extra 'tap can be 'put in the 'silence, ( ' ) as 'shown by the 'marks with'in the pa'rentheses. ( ' )*



*She 'wanted a 'pretty 'parrot.*



*My 'aunt wanted 'ten pretty 'parrots.*



*The 'unknown 'man*



*The 'man is un'known.*



*Speed, speedy, speedily*

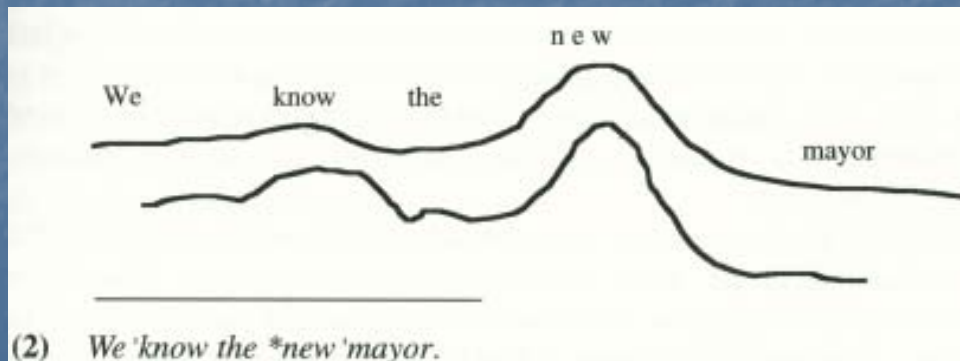
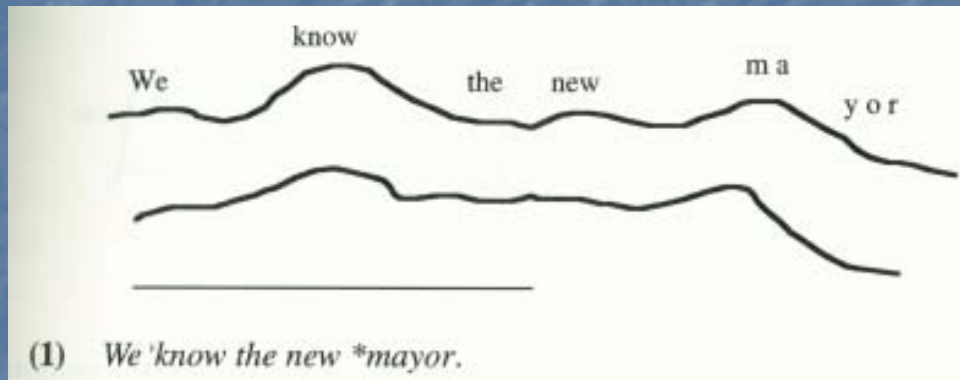


*The 'red 'bird flew 'speedily 'home.*



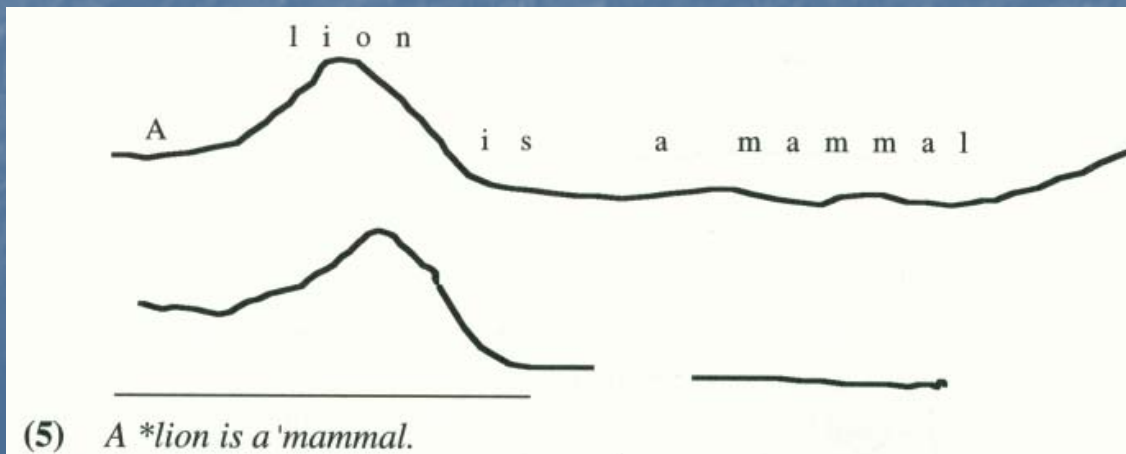
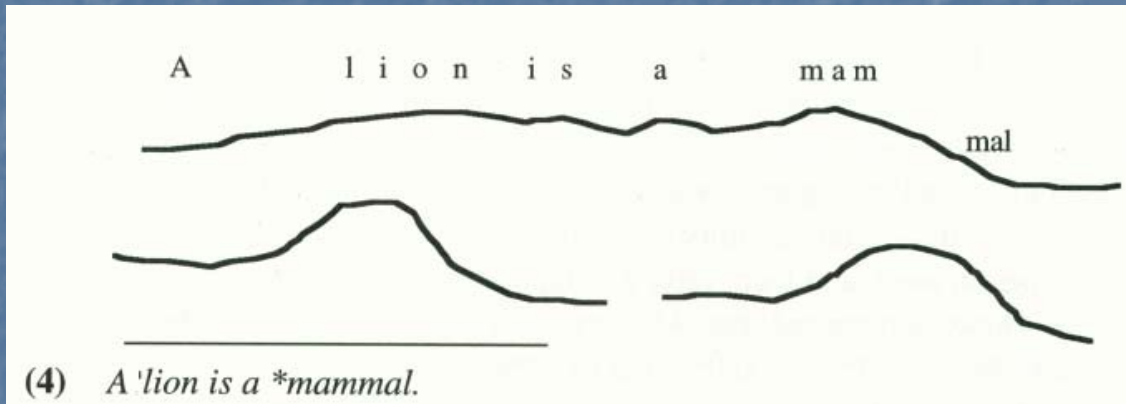
# Intonational phrases and the tonic syllable

Within the intonational phrase, each stressed syllable has a minor pitch increase; but there is usually a single syllable that stands out because it carries **the major pitch change**. A syllable of this kind is called the **tonic syllable** (marked with an “\*”).



# The tonic syllable and the meanings

If I were telling someone a number of facts about lions, I might say the sentence (4). In discussion of mammals, sentence (5) tells that a lion fits into this category.





# Yes-no questions

## Typical yes-no questions

Will you mail me my money?

Will you mail me my money?

(6) Will you 'mail me my \*money?

The diagram shows two pitch contours for the sentence "Will you mail me my money?". The top contour shows a steady rise in pitch across the entire sentence, ending with a sharp peak at "ey?". The bottom contour shows a dip in pitch at "mail", a rise at "me", and a higher peak at "money?".

Will you mail me my money?

Will you mail me my money?

(7) Will you \*mail me my 'money?

The diagram shows two pitch contours for the sentence "Will you mail me my money?". The top contour shows a steady rise in pitch across the entire sentence, ending with a sharp peak at "ey?". The bottom contour shows a dip in pitch at "mail", a rise at "me", a dip at "mon", and a final rise at "ey?".

# Wh-questions

## Typical wh-questions



When will you mail me my money?

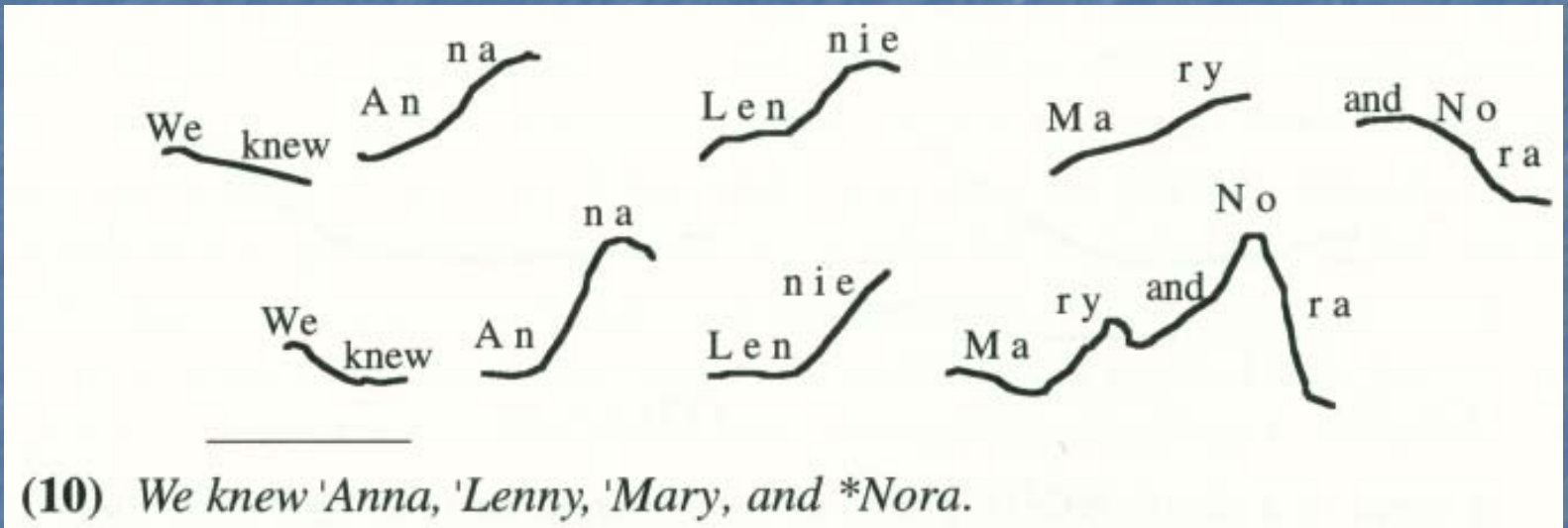
When will you mail me my mon ey?

(8) 'When will you 'mail me my \*money?



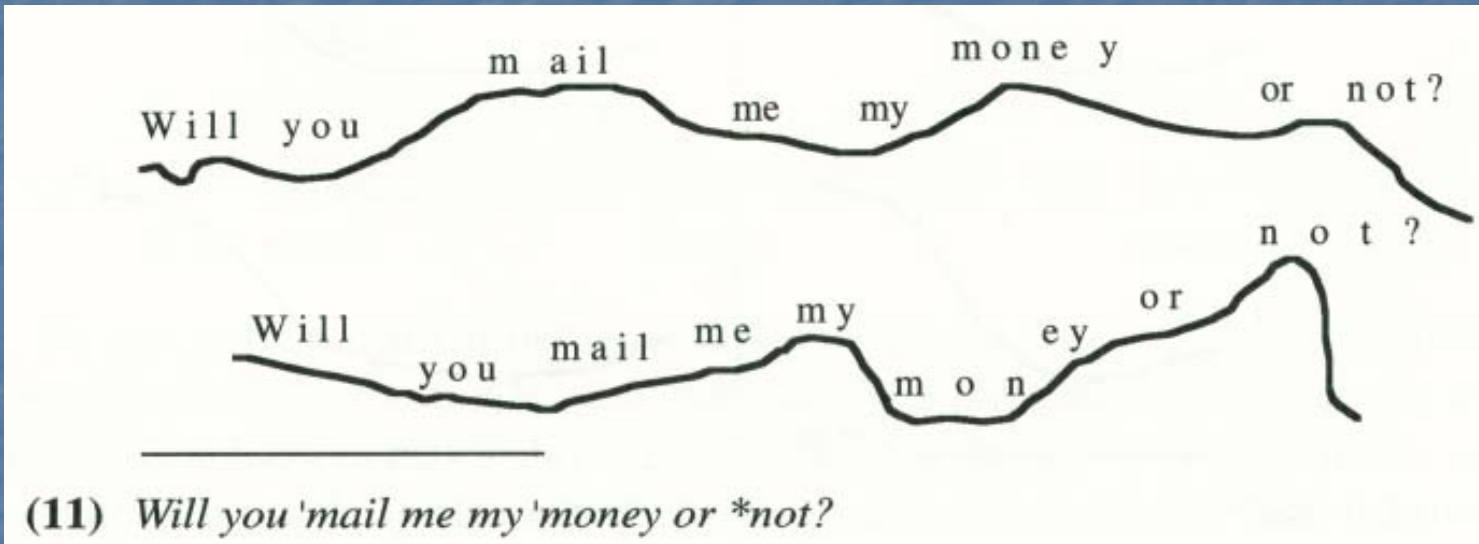
# The expression with coordinators

Sentence (10)



# The questions with “or not”

Sentence (11)

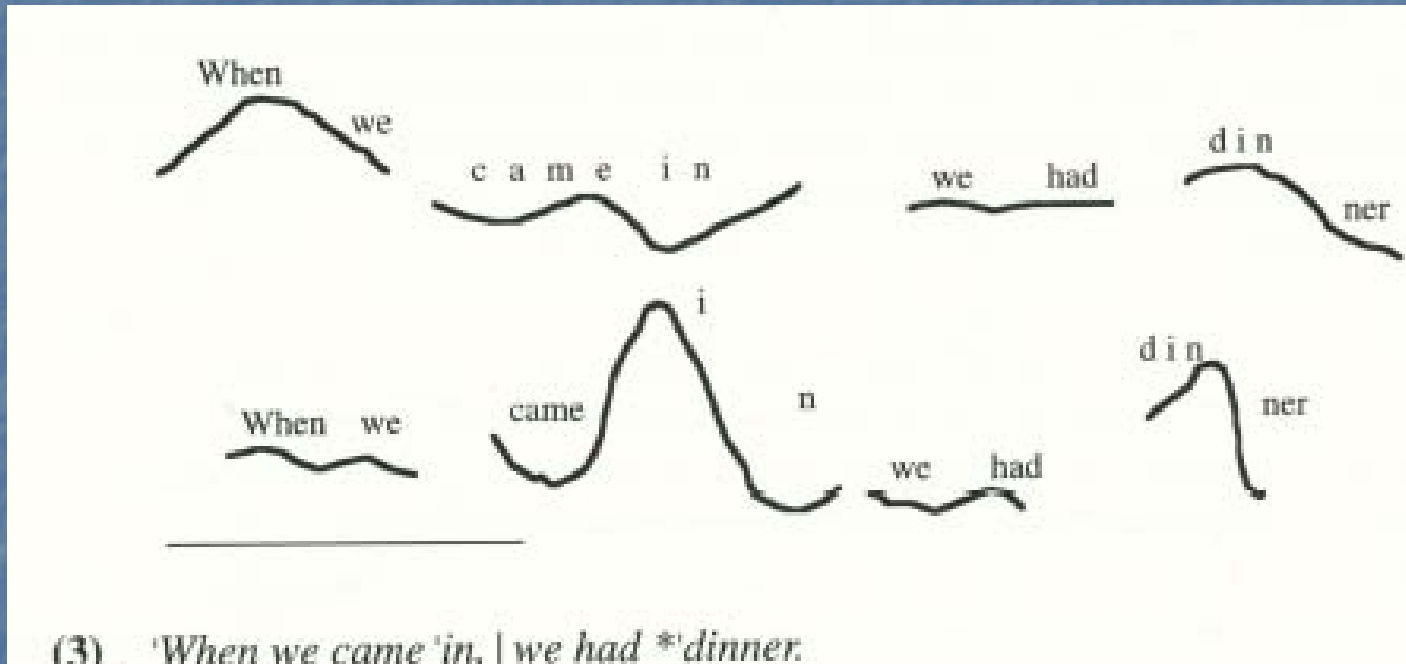


The image displays two intonation diagrams for the sentence "Will you mail me my money or not?". The top diagram shows a pitch contour that rises to a peak at "mail", dips at "me", rises to a higher peak at "money", and then falls at "or not?". The bottom diagram shows a pitch contour that rises to a peak at "my", dips at "money", and then rises to a peak at "or not?".

**(11)** *Will you 'mail me my 'money or \*not?*

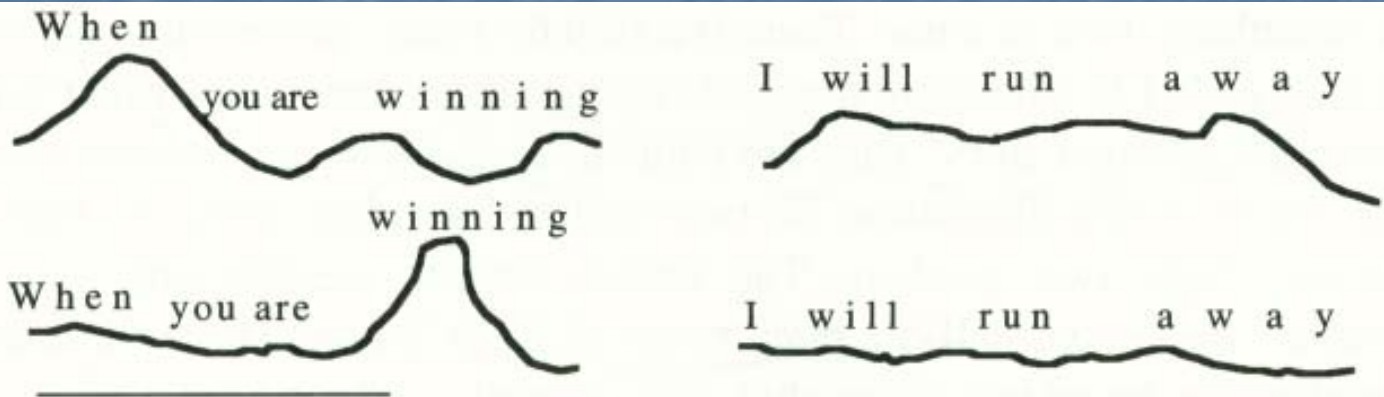
# If there are more than one intonational phrases

Sometimes there are two or more intonational phrases within an utterance. The beginning of a new intonational phrase may be marked, as in (3), by ⑦.



# The complex sentence

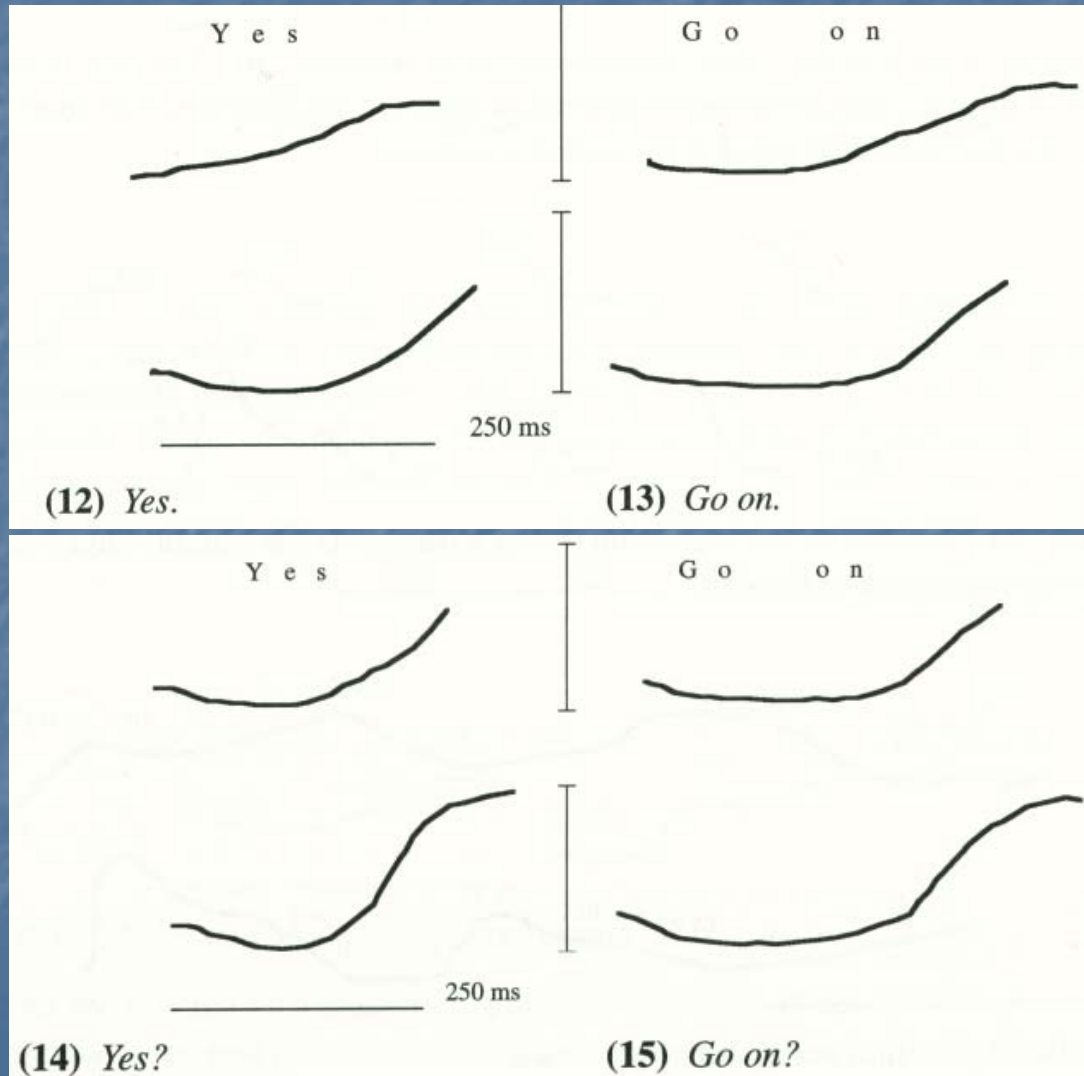
## Sentence (9)



(9) 'When you are \*winning, | I will run a\*way.'

# The continuation rise (in the middle of utterances)

Sentence (12-15)

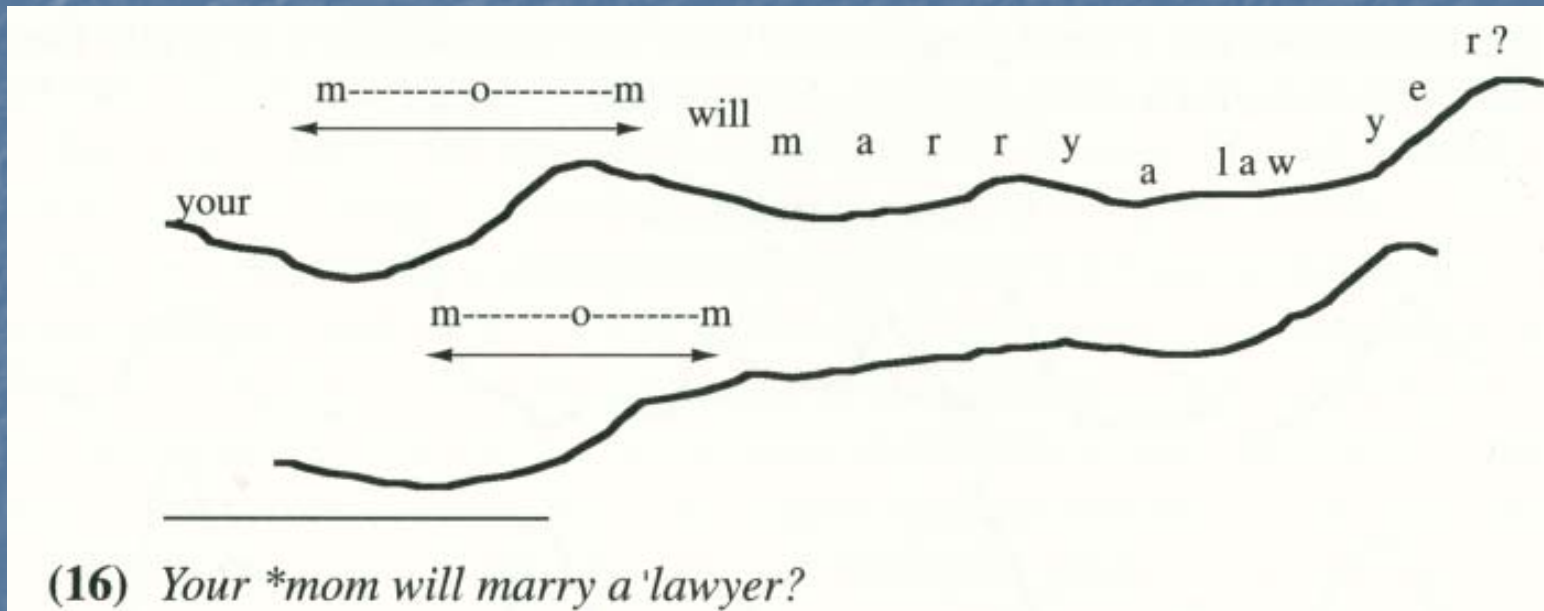


I hear you,  
please  
continue.

Did you say  
“yes”?

# The low pitch as a tonic syllable

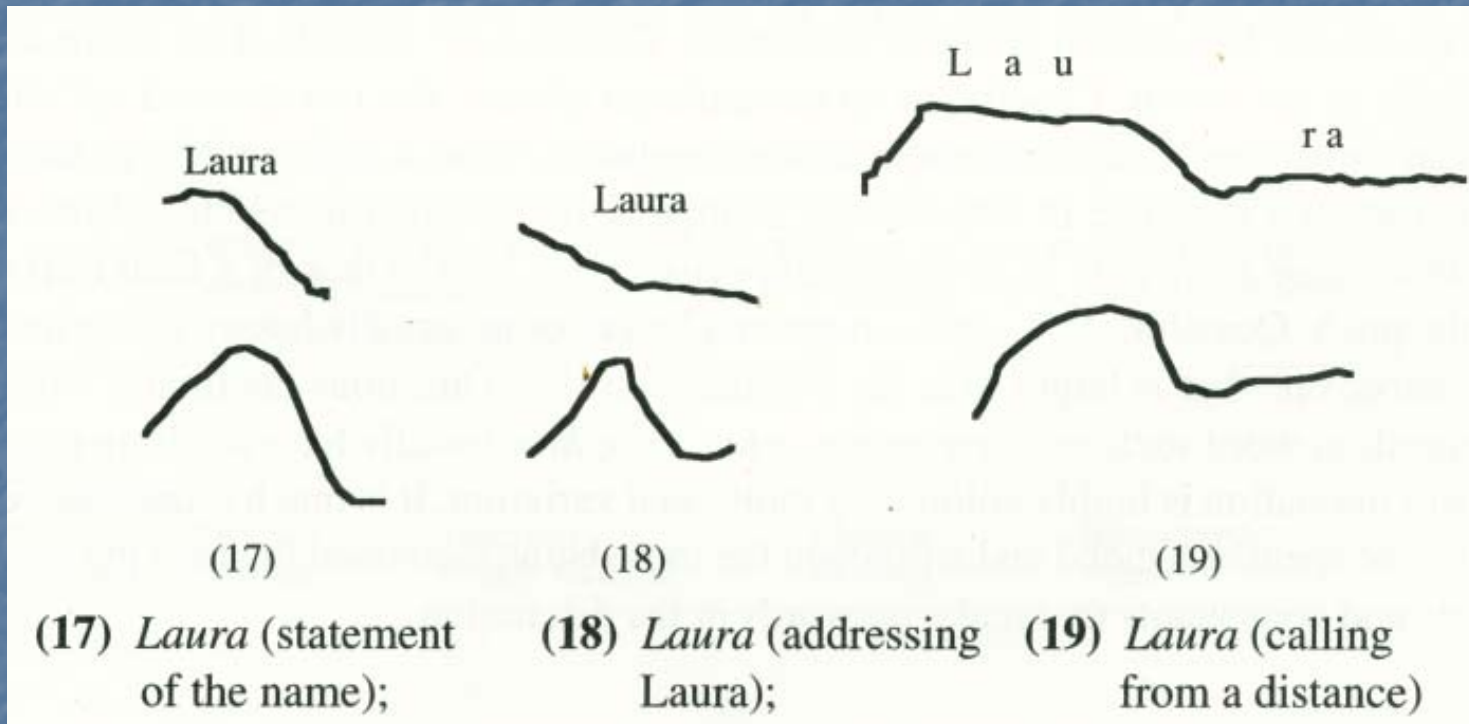
Sentence (16)





# The meanings and the contours

Sentence (17-19)



# Where is the tonic syllable located?

1. In general, new information is more likely to receive a tonic accent than material that has already been mentioned.
2. The topic of a dialogue.
3. However, the topic of a sentence is less likely to receive the tonic accent than the comment that is made on that topic.
4. Contrasting elements
5. Emphasized materials

# Amelia: different contours reflects different meanings

These curves show different pronunciations of the name "A'melia."

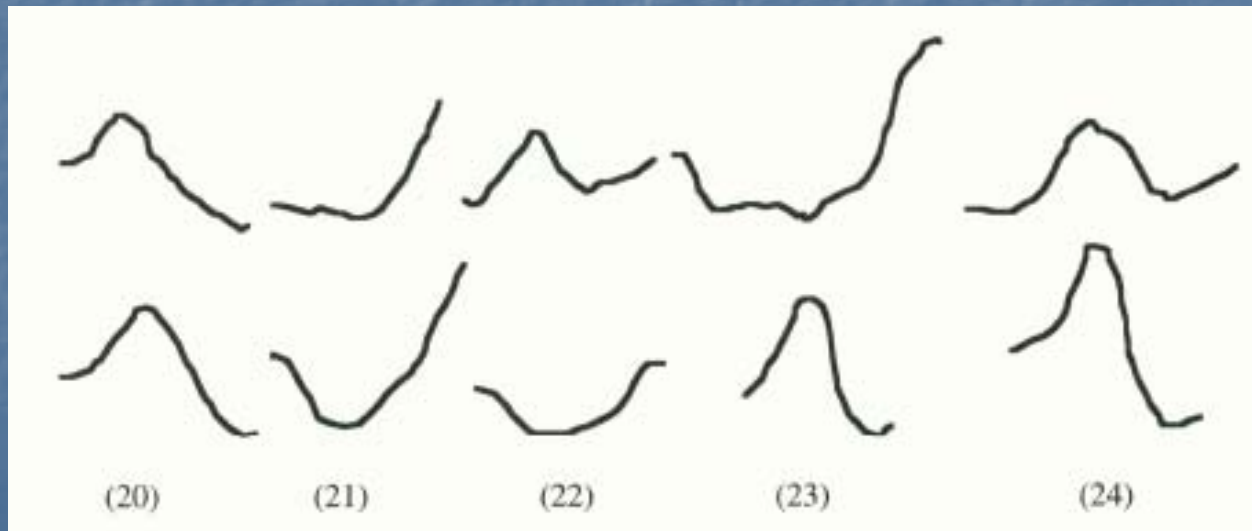
(20) is a simple statement, equivalent to "Her name is Amelia."

(21) is the question, equivalent to "Did you say Amelia?"

(22) is the form with the continuation rise, which might be used when addressing Amelia, indicating that it is her turn to speak.

(23) is a question expressing surprise, equivalent to "Was it really Amelia who did that?"

(24) is the form for a strong reaction, reprimanding Amelia.



# ToBI

One system for representing pitch changes is known as **ToBI**, standing for Tone and Break Indices. In this system, target tones  $H^*$  and  $L^*$  (called H star and L star) are typically written on a line (called a tier) above the segmental symbols, and put immediately above the stressed syllables. A high tone,  $H^*$ , can be preceded by a closely attached low pitch, written  $L + H^*$ , so that the listener hears a sharply rising pitch. Similarly  $L^*$  can be followed by a closely attached high pitch,  $L^* + H$ , so that the listener hears a scoop upward in pitch after the low pitch at the beginning of the stressed syllable.

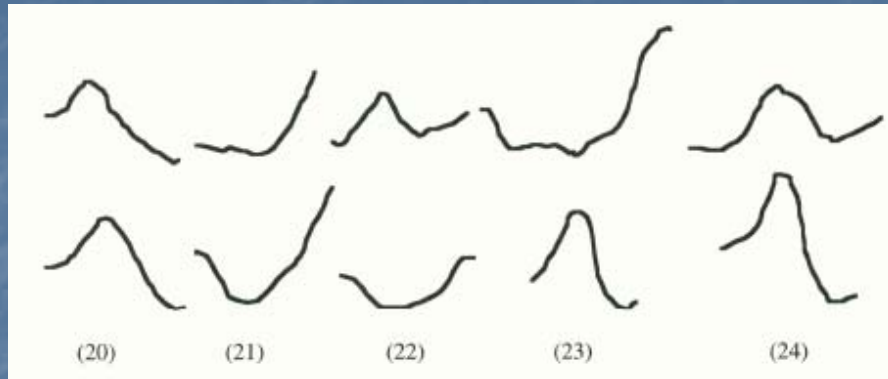
# The pitch accent

There are therefore six possibilities, shown in Table 5.5, that can be regarded as the possible pitch accents that occur in English.

**TABLE 5.5** The ToBI system for characterizing English intonations. Each intonational phrase (tone group) must have one item from each of the last three columns, and may also have additional pitch accents marked on other stressed syllables, as shown in the first column. The parenthesized accent, (!H\*), will be explained at the end of this section.

<b>Optional Pre-nuclear Pitch Accents on Stressed Syllables</b>	<b>Nuclear Pitch Accent</b>	<b>Phrase Accent</b>	<b>Boundary Tone</b>
H*	H*		
L*	L*		
L + H*	L + H*	L-	H%
L* + H	L* + H		
H + !H*	H + !H*	H-	L%
(!H*)	(!H*)		

# Using the ToBI system to transcribe “Amelia”



20

(20) A'melia.  
Simple statement in response to  
“What is her name?”

Tone tier [ H\* L-L% ]  
Segmental tier [ ə m i: l i: ə ]

21

(21) A'melia?  
A question, equivalent to  
“Did you say Amelia?”

Tone tier [ L\* H-H% ]  
Segmental tier [ ə m i: l i: ə ]

22

(22) A'melia—  
Addressing Amelia, indicating  
that it is her turn to speak.

Tone tier [ L\* L-H% ]  
Segmental tier [ ə m i: l i: ə ]

23

(23) A'melia!?  
A question indicating surprise.

Tone tier [ L + H\* L-H% ]  
Segmental tier [ ə m i: l i: ə ]

24

(24) A'melia!!  
A strong reaction, reprimanding Amelia.

Tone tier [ L + H\* L-L% ]  
Segmental tier [ ə m i: l i: ə ]

# Other examples:



(1) *We know the new mayor.* TONE TIER [ H\* H\* L- L% ]

Simple statement. SEGMENTAL TIER [ wi: nou ðə nu 'mer ]



(6) *Will you 'mail me my 'money?* TONE TIER [ H\* L\*H- H% ]

Simple yes/no question. SEGMENTAL TIER [ wil ju: meɪl mi: maɪ mʌni ]



(9) *When you are 'winning, I will run a'way.* BREAK INDEX [ 1 1 1 4 1 1 1 4 ]

Two clauses with a TONE TIER [ H\*L- H% H\* H\*LL% ]  
break index of 4

SEGMENTAL TIER [ wən ju: ɔ: wɪnɪŋ aɪ wɪl rʌn əweɪ ]

## Downdrift / downstepped highs: !H\*

The pitch in most sentences has a tendency to drift down. Earlier, when discussing stress, we considered the sentence "'Mary's younger 'brother wanted 'fifty chocolate 'peanuts," with stresses on alternate words, "Mary's," "brother," "fifty," and "peanuts." If you say this sentence with these stresses, you will find that there is an H\* pitch accent on each of the stressed syllables, but each of these high pitches is usually a little lower than the preceding high pitch. This phenomenon is known as **downdrift**.



[H\*                      !H\*                      !H\*                      !H\* L-L%]  
(25) Mary's younger brother wanted fifty chocolate peanuts.

Cf.



[H\*                      H\*                      !H\*                      !H\* L-L%]  
(26) Mary's younger brother wanted fifty chocolate peanuts.



# Is the ToBI system only good for English?

The ToBI system is a way of characterizing English intonation in terms of a limited set of symbols--a set of six possible pitch accents including a downstep mark, two possible phrase accents, two possible boundary tones, and four possible Break Indices, going from 1 (close connection) to 4 (a boundary between intonation phrases). It was designed specifically for English intonations, but, with a few modifications, it may be appropriate for other languages as well.