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## Teaching the perception of the intonation of finally extended simple sentences: A demonstration by computer

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### Abstract

A simple sentence consists of just one independent clause with a subject and a predicate and no dependent clauses. In terms of structure, a simple sentence normally has to have at least a subject and a predicate. That is why a simple sentence is the smallest sentence unit we know. It can be extended from the beginning, middle, and from the end. Their intonation patterns change in accordance with the grammatical nature by the added structures to the simple sentence and what the speaker wants to do with the utterance. An analysis of expanded simple sentences in terms of intonation will promote the improvement of students' communication skills in English. The research on the sentence intonation is almost zero. The scarcity is the cause of this research in this paper. In this research, 12 sample sentences in the corpus, including finally extended sentences, will be given to 30 PhD students who will tape their utterances. They will hand in their taped corpus to the researcher on purposeful voluntary bases. By means of Grammar Intonation Approach and Discourse Intonation Approach the oral production of the participants will be evaluated via Audacity Program 1.2.6 in relation to perception and production of the intonation of finally expanded simple sentences in training foreign language teachers.

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### 1. Introduction

In terms of structure, it is a must that a simple sentence normally has at least a subject and a predicate. That is why the simple sentence is said to be the smallest sentence unit. It can be extended from the beginning, middle, and

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from the end. The intonation patterns of these extensions change firstly in accordance with the grammatical nature added structures to the simple sentence, and secondly what the speaker wants to mean with the utterance.

### 1.1. *The expansion of simple sentences*

Sentence expanding is the process of adding one or more words, phrases, or clauses to the beginning, middle, and the end of a main clause (or independent clause). Simple sentences in English can be expanded from the beginning, middle, and from the end. Simple sentences can be expanded by dependent structures like dependent adverbial clauses, dependent relative clauses, and the variety of phrases made up of dependent verbal, infinitive, prepositional, participle, participial, appositive, and absolute phrases, which happen to be altogether strategies of sentence expansion. This research will explore the intonational functions of these structures coming at the end of simple sentences because over the years, research on the intonation of finally extended simple sentences has received no considerable attention, amongst the native and non-native speakers of English even though they occurred a lot in written and spoken communication. Here are some examples on expansions from the end:

*An evil witch cast a spell on him, **turning him into a beast.***

*John waved to the waiter, **asking for the check.***

*Most teachers agreed with the principal, **with a few notable exceptions.***

*A date book would make a great gift, **except that a lot of people already have one.***

### 1.2. *The Intonational Features of Simple Sentences Expanded From the End*

Since intonation is generally considered to be more elusive and fishy, it is much less researched. That is why a few scholars have ventured into this domain. Intonation is, therefore, inherently more difficult to learn for foreign learners (Amayo, 1981; Cruz-Ferreira, 1989). Similarly, Selting (1995) describes intonation as the crucial impediment, which a vast majority of speakers of English as a foreign language never manage to cross. In addition, discourse organization, emotional or attitudinal meanings of intonation (Couper-Kuhlen, 1986) cannot be totally indicated by means of intonational phonemes. Due to these reasons, Brown (2014:196) states that teachers are reluctant to teach pronunciation and intonation.

## 2. **Theoretical background**

The intonational analysis of extended simple sentences is not specially encountered in books and articles. Here and there are some sentences in the books with CD. Byrne and Gordon's Listening Comprehension 1 Teacher's Book (1973) contains sample utterances to practice the phonology of simple sentences, stress, and rhythm and intonation units. The answers are given in an accompanying student's workbook entitled Pronunciation Practice. These materials have long been out of print. Most useful exercises, still available, for practice of stress timing and placement is Stress Time and Weak Forms contained in Mortimer's Elements of pronunciation (1985), which also helps the learners for self-studies in practicing stress timing, weak forms, consonant clusters, and link up. Cunningham and Bowler's book titled Upper intermediate: Headway-pronunciation book (2008) and elementary book combine phonology, stress, and intonation. Cunningham and Moor's Headway pronunciation: elementary book (2002), accompanied by cassettes, includes sample simple sentences in intonation. In addition, pronouncing dictionaries like Longman Dictionary of American English (2008), and Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2012) give many sentences from the voices of native speakers, which are very beneficial to the non-native speakers of English. Hahn (2004) and Thompson (1995) give certain explanations, again on pen and paper. A better explanation of this topic takes place in Well's book with CD (2007).

### 1.1. **The Intonation of extended simple sentences**

It must be noted that sentential intonation is not the most popular topic of instruction in ESL and EFL programs. It may be that teachers have so much other material to cover or because students do not think it's important, it is often ignored. It may not be so important for ESL and EFL programs, but it has a very crucial significance for English Language Education Departments whose graduates will be prospective teachers. The students cannot

acquire the foreign language on their own; therefore, they have to be trained on it. “The first step to teaching your students correct and effective sentence stress is to bite the bullet and teach it in the first place” (<http://busyteacher.org/16149-teaching-english-intonation-tips.html>).

A sentence is a unit of speech which conforms to the laws of sentential intonation, serving as a crucial means of conveying thought. In terms of grammatical structure, it contains a subject and predicate, if necessary followed by other words to complete the meaning of the utterance. An extended sentence may consist of a principal part which contains a subject and a secondary part that has a predicate, and more additional parts of phrases and clauses, all of which require special intonation units. However, sentence intonation is not something most teachers know how to talk about. In course books and many grammar books, Grammar Intonation Approach (Pierrehumbert, 1980: 60); Cauldwell and Hewings, 1996:327-333) which gives the intonation patterns of sentences without any information on intonation processing, was traditionally used. It is also based on the notion that there are typical intonation patterns associated with syntactic structures (Roach, 2000).

### 2.1. Parts of an extended simple sentence intonation

Simple sentences can take place abundantly on the pages of textbooks (Cunningham and Bowler, 1990; Batham\_Koenig and Exenden, 2013), grammar books (Alexander, 1988; Biber et al., 1999; Altenberg & Vago, 2010; Kroeger, 2005; Quirk, et al., 1985) and all other written material, but they are just lifeless groups of letters, which do not mean much aurally. Each student or teacher reads them out in accordance with their mastery over English, which may be faulty. Some course books give spoken sentences in CDs (Wells, 2007, 2014; Kelly, 2008; Miller, 2000; Orion, 1988; Hewings, 1993; Hewings and Goldstein, 1998); Celce-Murcia et al., 2010), which are very helpful.

Extended simple sentences often carry sentence adverbials, which often appear at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of sentences, followed by comma. They are particularly useful for linking together sentences in order to compose fluent, connected pieces of speech and writing. The intonation of English sentence adverbials is then considered with special reference to sentence-initial position (Allerton and Cruttendon, 1974). There have been diverse scholarly positions as regards the number of tone types of sentential adverbials in English; Cruttenden (1986) considers this as an area where most analysts vary in their judgments of what constitutes a major difference of intonation units. According to Wells (2007:197), who gives the following sample sentences by some intonation marks, claim that sentence adverbials that modify the whole clause or sentence typically have their own intonation pattern.

*I'll pay you back, obviously.*

*I've been talking to Robert, as a matter of fact.*

*I've been given a second chance, fortunately.*

But still such indications do not mean much to the learners; therefore, speaking sentences must be handled while training the students. Parts of a simple sentence that come after the main clause have a trailing tone (Wells, 2006: 69). With a trailing dependent element, the most usual tone is a rise. The tone meaning of this **trailing dependent rise** is merely to indicate that it belongs with what went before:

*I'm 'rather \annoyed, /frankly.*

*They're arriving to\morrow,| as far as I /know. Wells (2006: 69).*

*In the two sentences given below, the following intonation patterns are possible:*

*I'thought it was \terrible, \^personally. (leading fall-rise)*

*I'thought it was \terrible, \^personally. (trailing fall-rise) Wells (2006: 69)*

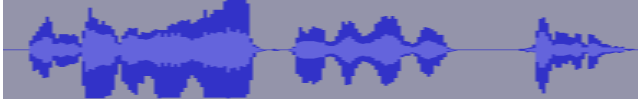
### 2.2. The intonation of finally extended simple sentences

Speech is broken into certain chunk units accompanied with a pause whenever or wherever necessary to specify the meanings of sentences uttered by the speakers. The broken chunk units may change depending on the type of speech, which can be fast, slow, careful speech. Although there are no rules about how to divide speech into units, some words are more likely to go together than others in order to make help sense of the message (Hewings, 2007: 70). In this respect, it must be noted that content words like nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs receive the

primary stress, while the function words like helping words, articles, prepositions, and pronouns, take the other types of stresses like secondary, tertiary, and weak stresses, under normal circumstances.

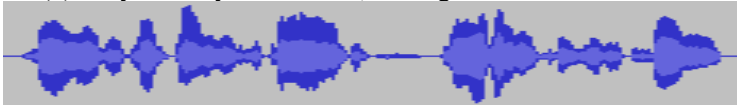
In this research, /2/ stands for pitch phoneme, /3/ represents high pitch phoneme, and /1/ shows the existence of a falling pitch phoneme that signals the end of utterances. In addition, the following examples, which are (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) are downloaded from Longman Dictionary of American English (2008, with DVD ROM) via Audacity program 2.0.5, mono 44100Hz, Audio Track 32-bit float to illustrate the physical nature of stress, pitch, and juncture phonemes in English. The existence of a comma in them, which is demonstrated by the sustained juncture phoneme (/→/), separates the main clause from the extended part of a simple sentence.

Ex. (a) He sat on a **ROCK** by the river, **FISHing**.



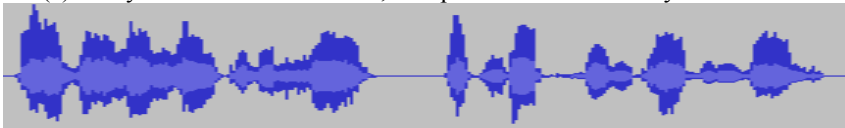
/<sup>2</sup>He sat on a <sup>3</sup>**RÓCK** by the river<sup>2</sup> → <sup>2</sup>F<sup>3</sup>**ÍSHing**<sup>1</sup>↘/

Ex: (b) Tony stood by the **STAGE**, waiting for his **CUE**.



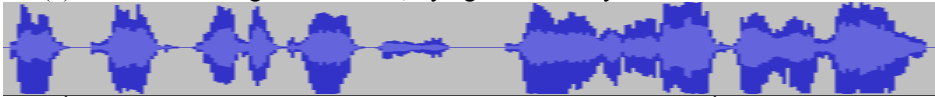
/<sup>2</sup>Tony stood by the <sup>3</sup>**STÁGE**<sup>2</sup> → <sup>3</sup>waiting for his <sup>3</sup>**CÚE**<sup>1</sup>↘/

Ex: (c) Everyone went to the **SHOW**, except for Scott and Danny.



/<sup>2</sup>Everyone went to the <sup>3</sup>**SHÓW**<sup>2</sup> → <sup>2</sup>ex<sup>3</sup>**CÉPT** for Scott and Danny<sup>1</sup>↘/

Ex: (d) I **PÉEK**ed through the curtains, trying to see if they were **HÓME**.



/<sup>2</sup>I <sup>3</sup>**PÉEK**ed through the curtains<sup>2</sup> → <sup>2</sup>trying to see if they were <sup>3</sup>**HÓME**<sup>1</sup>↘/

E: (e) An evil witch cast a spell on him, turning him into a beast.



/<sup>2</sup>An <sup>3</sup>**ÉVIL** witch cast a spell on him<sup>2</sup> → <sup>2</sup>turning him into a <sup>3</sup>**BÉAST**<sup>1</sup>↘/

In the following set of sentences like (aa), (bb), (cc), (dd), (ee), and (ff), no comma separates the main clause from its extended part, but there is an audible sustained juncture phoneme that divides the main clause and the finally extended part of the sentence:

Ex: (aa) We're open every day except Monday.



/<sup>2</sup>We're open <sup>3</sup>**ÉVERY** day<sup>2</sup> → <sup>2</sup>ex<sup>3</sup>**CÉPT** Monday<sup>1</sup>↘/

Ex: (bb) All information was correct at the time we went to press.



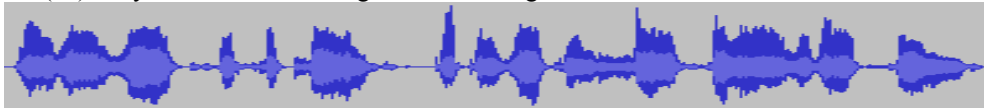
/<sup>23</sup>ALL information was correct<sup>2</sup> → <sup>2</sup>at the <sup>3</sup>TIME we went to press<sup>1</sup>↘/

Ex: (cc) Powerful people exerted pressure on the paper not to run the story.



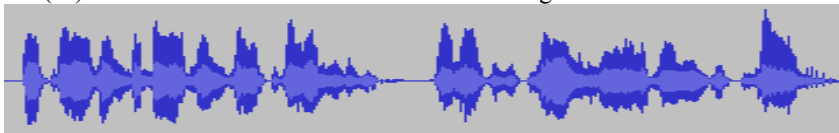
/<sup>2</sup>Powerful people exerted <sup>3</sup>PRÉSSure on the paper<sup>2</sup>→<sup>23</sup>NÓT to run the story<sup>1</sup>↘/

Ex: (dd) They were weak with fatigue after walking so far without food.



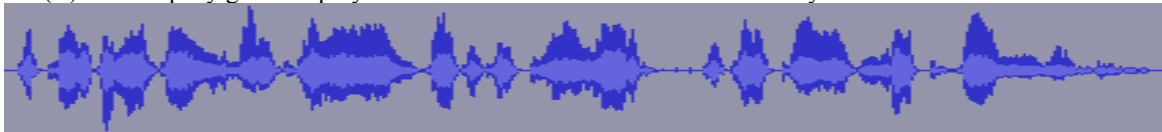
/<sup>2</sup>They were<sup>3</sup>WÉAK with fatigue<sup>2</sup>→<sup>2</sup> after walking <sup>3</sup>SÓ far without food<sup>1</sup>↘/

Ex: (ee) He told us about his vacation in excruciating detail.



/<sup>2</sup>He told us about his va<sup>3</sup>CÁtion<sup>2</sup>→<sup>2</sup>in ex<sup>3</sup>CRÚciating detail<sup>1</sup>↘/

Ex: (ff) The company gives employees extra time off to take care of sick family members.



/<sup>2</sup>The company gives employees extra time <sup>3</sup>ÓFF<sup>2</sup>→<sup>2</sup>to take care of <sup>3</sup>SÍCK family members<sup>1</sup>↘/

In the above-mentioned examples, which are (aa), (bb), (cc), (dd), (ee), and (ff), there are short pauses that divide the main clause and the finally extended phrase. In each of them there are short pauses which are not indicated by commas, but still their existence in between the main clause and at the beginning finally extended part of the simple sentence is an obvious fact that is not perceived by Turkish students and teachers of English.

### 3. Method

The purpose of this research is to help the ESL/EFL/ELT learners and teachers to identify sentence basics including identification of sentences in relation to the production of their intonation patterns in expanded simple sentences from the end. Teaching sentence intonation in English is a stressful process because extended simple sentences expose more interplay intonation units. This study addresses the following research questions:

1. Do the participants place the primary stress on the main clause?
2. Do the participants place the place of primary stress on the extended part of the simple sentence?
3. Do they put a sustained juncture as a pause in its right place?
4. Is comma a signal of pause-making?
5. What is their overall success?

### 3.1. Participants

This is a pilot study to test whether they produce the related intonation patterns of finally extended simple sentences. Participants are 30 in number, 4 males and 26 females, and they are the students of English Language Education Department at Hacettepe University. They form a homogeneous group as graduates of English Language Education Departments from four corners of Turkey. All of them are English Teachers, whose age range changes from 26 to 44. They have foreign language teaching experience ranging from 3 to 17 years. They had taken up a course titled Listening and Articulation in their BA education. In Addition, they had taken also up taken up an MA course titled Applied Phonology. So they are familiar with the subject of this paper.

### 3.2. Instruments

They were asked to read out and record the following 10 questions in a relaxed atmosphere and turn them in. The sentences of the corpus are also checked by three experts in the field. The statistics are based on SPSS 2000.

The sentences from 6 to 10 carry a comma to demonstrate the place of the sustained juncture. The comma in them is purposefully deleted so as to measure whether the participants made a pause somewhere after the main clause: this intention paves the way for the evaluation of the 4<sup>th</sup> research question.

Corpus:

1. He sat on a rock by the river, fishing.
2. Tony stood by the stage, waiting for his cue.
3. Everyone went to the show, except for Scott and Danny.
4. An evil witch cast a spell on him, turning him into a beast.
5. I peeked through the curtains, trying to see if they were home.
6. The tour does not include extras such as meals.
7. My mind was racing trying to think where I had seen him before.
8. They were weak with fatigue after walking so far without food.
9. Most teachers with principal with a few notable exceptions.
10. There may be feelings of dizziness especially when walking or turning.

### 3.3. Data Collection and analysis

As already expressed, the productions of the sentences by the participants are analyzed by three experts in terms of research questions in addition to the analysis of the researcher.

## 4. Result and discussion

### 4.1. RQ # 1: Do the participants place the primary stress on the main clause?

Descriptive Statistics- RQ1					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
RQ1	30	,00	7,00	2,8000	2,10746
Valid N (listwise)	30				

To check the rate of participants’ recognition level upon the place of primary stress on the main clause, an analysis on descriptive statistics is conducted. Ten test items are included into the analysis within the scope of the first research question. Accordingly, the mean score of the participants for these aforementioned questions is **2,80** out of **10** which means that participants’ scores range at the ratio of **28,00%**. Henceforth, it can be inferred that participants are not able to recognize the place of primary stress on the main clause as the success rate is rather low.

4.2. RQ # 2: Do the participants place the place of primary stress on the extended part of the simple sentence?

Descriptive Statistics- RQ2					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
RQ2	30	0,00	10,00	3,5667	2,60878
Valid N (listwise)	30				

To check the rate of participants' recognition level upon the place of primary stress on the extended part of the simple sentence, an analysis on descriptive statistics is conducted. Ten test items are included into the analysis within the scope of the second research question. Accordingly, the mean score of the participants for these aforementioned questions is **3,56** out of **10** which means that participants' scores range at the approximate ratio of **36%**. Henceforth, it can be inferred that participants are not able to recognize the place of primary stress on the main clause as the success rate is low.

4.3. RQ # 3: Do they put a sustained juncture as a pause in its right place?

Descriptive Statistics- RQ3					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
RQ3	30	1,00	9,00	5,1000	2,45441
Valid N (listwise)	30				

To check the rate of participants' putting a sustained juncture as a pause in its right place, an analysis on descriptive statistics is conducted. Ten test items are included into the analysis within the scope of the third research question. Accordingly, the mean score of the participants for these aforementioned questions is **5,10** out of **10** which means that participants' scores range at the ratio of **51%**. Henceforth, it can be inferred that participants, in half-shares, are able to put a sustained juncture as a pause in its right place.

4.4. RQ # 4: Is comma a signal of making a pause?

Descriptive Statistics- RQ4					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
RQ4	30	0,00	4,00	1,5333	1,25212
Valid N (listwise)	30				

To check whether comma is a signal of making a pause, an analysis on descriptive statistics is conducted. Four test items are included into the analysis within the scope of the fourth research question. Accordingly, the mean score of the participants for these aforementioned questions is **1,53** out of **4** which means that participants' scores range at the ratio of **38,25%**. Henceforth, it can be inferred that participants, at the ratio of less than half, are able to recognize the comma in given sentences; therefore, taking the comma as a signal, they tend to make a pause.

4.5. RQ # 5: What is the overall success of the participants?

Descriptive Statistics- RQ5					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation

RQ5	30	4,00	28,00	13,000	5,59556
Valid N (listwise)	30				

To check the overall success of the participants, an analysis on descriptive statistics is conducted. Thirty test items are included into the analysis within the scope of the fifth research question. Accordingly, the mean score of the participants for these aforementioned questions is **13,00** out of **30** which means that participants' scores range at the approximate ratio of **43,33%**. Henceforth, it can be inferred that participants, are not able to be successful from the test conducted as a part of this study as the rates are below 50%.

## 5. Conclusion

Apparently, intonation, which houses stress, pitch, and juncture collectively, is not the most popular topic of instruction in English Language Teacher Training programs. In this research, it is discovered that the production of the primary stress in extended simple sentences is ratio of 36%; in the extended part, the success is 36%. The production of pauses is 51%, while the perception of the comma as a signal of pausing is 38, 25%. Altogether, the overall success rate is 43,33%, which is not very pleasing: the participants are need of treatment pertaining to research questions. It is obvious that an analysis of expanded simple sentences in terms of intonation will promote the improvement of students' communication and conversation skills in English. The extended part of the main clause is characterized by final dropping in pitch, and all of the participants are aware of this fact.

Whether it is because teachers or pronunciation coaches have so much other material to cover or because students do not think it is important, the teaching of stress, pitch, and juncture phonemes is often ignored (Wells, 2014; Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). As demonstrated in the results of this paper, teacher training departments the teaching of intonation must not be neglected because the participants, who are active English teachers, sound choppy, non-native-like, inefficient, and immature, which signal the characteristics of unprofessional foreign language teachers.

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