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Investigation of Tonicity in British and Nigerian English Utterances

Andrew Onoja & Obins Nuhu Isaac

Department of English, University of Jos

Correspondence: onojaandrew@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study examined the role of tonicity in the communication of speaker messages in the utterances of native and non-native speakers of English. Tonicity operates within the context of intonation and refers to the placement of sentence stress in utterances, which affects meaning. The subjects comprised a British speaker of English and an educated Nigerian speaker, while data consisted of a transcribed text of the book of Luke, Chapter Six (NIV), which was read by the subjects. The Bible text, which has 49 verses, was broken into 191 Intonation Phrases (IPs) based on a careful perceptual analysis of the data. 30 of the IPs were found to involve the use of 'marked tonicity' or narrow focus (translating to emphatic and constative stress) in the native speaker's reading of the text. The marked IPs of the native speaker were then read by the Nigerian speaker, who produced only five, indicating about 17% rate. The analysis revealed that the Nigerian speaker of English realized significantly less marked tonicity in speech than the native speaker did, leading to the conclusion that it is not a common feature of English spoken in Nigeria. It was recommended that the teaching of English intonation should focus more on sentence stress given its important role in the communication of meaning in the language.

Keywords: Tonicity, Utterances, Intonation Phrases, & Marked Tonicity



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Introduction

Speech has been, and will continue to be, a very important and integral part of man's experience in his existence on earth. It has been argued that man has spent (and is still spending) a greater percentage of his time on earth speaking comparatively more than he has been writing or even listening or reading. Additionally, speech is usually the language skill through which children and even adults learn to communicate by imitating the sounds they hear through listening or paying attention to native speakers. Thus, in his quest to communicate, man, in different times and places, has consistently employed the biological organs adaptable to speech more than he has employed those associated with reading or writing (Cruttenden, 3).

Speech has been considered the primary medium of language. It is so important to human beings "that human institutions would be impossible without it" (Adetugbo, 1). Adetugbo cites the biblical story of the Tower of Babel as a good illustration of the fact that communication and interpersonal interaction would completely break down if there were no common speech or mutual intelligibility. He further argues that formal education in a bid to promote literacy has distorted the relationship between speech and writing by an overemphasis on the latter. The choice of emphasis on writing, as he points out, is informed by its more permanent characteristics compared to speech. However, like Cruttenden and others, he states that speech predates writing, arguing that:

writing is a later development than speech in human history. It is assumed that man has always made use of speech when he started living with other men. Speech reaches back to the origins of the human history... (1)

The prominence given to speech in human interpersonal communication has no doubt resulted in a growing interest in the study of meaningful sounds in different natural languages, hence the linguistic fields of phonetics and phonology. But the learning or acquisition of these speech sounds, as Cruttenden observes, 'is by no means simple' (4). He gives further clarification as to the difficulty that underlies the analysis of the spoken form of English thus:

Each of us uses an infinite number of different speech sounds when we speak English. Indeed, it is true to say that it is difficult to produce two sounds which are precisely identical from the point of view of instrumental measurement... (4)

Apart from the isolated analyses of the meaningful sounds of a language or what Cruttenden (4) refers to as 'significant sound units (the PHONEMES)' in phonetics, there is a further ordering or arrangement of these significant sounds in syllables as well as their phonological realizations in higher speech features known in phonology as prosody. By these, phonemes, which are segments of sounds, are further 'supra-segmented' into syllables, words, and strings of words and realized in speech through the prosodic features of stress, pitch, rhythm, and intonation in larger linguistic units. Phonemes can equally be arranged through other less central features like voice quality, volume, and tempo (Ballard, 236). Phrases, clauses, and sentences usually constitute the larger linguistic units within which supra-segmental features are prominently assessed.

The use of language either through speech or writing is principally for communication. In speech, a message is usually encoded in words or linguistic forms through the use of sounds with or without facial expressions. The sounds do not constitute the message but merely the medium through which the message can be transmitted (Adetugbo 3). However, the extent to which a hearer decodes the message borne by sounds depends on the way or pattern in which the speaker uses the sounds. These variations in the use of the speech form of communication, which usually involve prosodic features, paralinguistic features, and extra-linguistic features, may be consciously employed by a speaker (depending, for instance, on what they want to 'emphasize' or 'stress') or unconsciously used (occasioned by certain biological traits over which the speaker does not usually have control).

A speech sound as a single segment may have such features as quality, length, pitch, and loudness relative to a speaker or the speakers of the given language in which it occurs. These features usually constitute the minimal units for contrasting, describing, and classifying meaningful speech sounds and are notably described as such in the Distinctive Feature Theory of generative phonology. However, features of pitch, length, and loudness, according to Cruttenden (53), may become prominent in 'larger chunks of utterance than the single segment,' characterized as supra-segmental or prosodic. The use of these speech features, specifically pitch, in utterances for the purpose of conveying a speaker's intention is the principal focus of this investigation.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this investigation is to assess the realisation of tonicity by speakers of English (native and non-native alike) since it is central to the communication of meaning in the language. The objectives are to:

- i. Identify marked tonicity in the utterances of the selected speakers of English.
- ii. Ascertain the frequency of marked tonicity in English spoken in Nigeria and the implication for the communication of meaning.

Significance of the Study

Phonological research in the area of stress is crucial, especially in the context of Nigeria or other countries where English is not spoken as a native language. Stress is no doubt one of the most problematic aspects of spoken English to a nonnative user of the language. As Banjo has asserted, the appropriate use of the supra-segmental features of stress and intonation in English constitutes the ‘final hurdle,’ which many L2 speakers of English ‘never manage to cross’ (in Jowitt, 11).

The influence of mother tongue may result in a non-native speaker assigning, for instance, the main stress to a wrong syllable, sometimes assigning it to even an unstressed syllable, and this may arguably bring about a distortion in the intended message. In addition, English is not a tonal language in which pitch is used to distinguish lexical meaning. Instead, pitch is used in utterances to show different attitudes of speakers as well as to convey particular information. Most, if not all, Nigerian languages, like many others around the world such as Chinese and Thai, are tonal, and this can adversely affect correct English stress placement for the majority of speakers of those languages.

Also, the investigation is particularly significant in the assessment of the deliberate use of sentence stress by native speakers of English for conveying some level of information in their speech—an aspect of speech that is arguably ‘strange’ or non-existent in the Nigerian context of English usage. Thus, meaningful information that native speakers normally convey can get distorted or even lost to a Nigerian user as a result of differences in the use of sentence stress. It is therefore hoped that this study will provide, in addition to the already existing data, insights into the use of tonicity in English speech in view of its importance in communication, especially in ESL contexts.

Conceptual Clarifications

The major concept which underlies this investigation is tonicity which operates within the framework of intonation.

Intonation

Intonation is said to be “the melody of speech” without which spoken language would be monotonous (Wells, 1). It “is the pattern of pitch changes within an utterance, or the distinctive use of patterns of pitch or melody in an utterance” and is generally considered a matter of sentence stress in English (Adetugbo 76). In utterances, pitch is varied to convey both linguistic and pragmatic meaning. Intonation plays various functions in speech, among which are focusing (accentual or informational) as well as pragmatic and indexical functions. Wells considers the accentual function one of the most important functions of English intonation and probably the most readily taught in the EFL classroom. It is equally the function that is closely related to emphasis and contrast in spoken communication. Elaborating on the accentual function, Wells posits that,

Intonation helps to show what information in an utterance is new and what is already known. We use it to bring some parts of the message into focus; to emphasize or highlight some parts and not others. We do this by **tonicity** and by the placement of other accents. (11)

The intonation of English has three principal ‘systems’ which are characterized by Wells as the three Ts, namely tonality, tonicity and tone. He provides further explanations on them as follows:

As concerns intonation, speakers of English repeatedly face three types of decision as they speak. They are: how to break the material up into chunks, what is to be accented, and what tones to be used. These linguistic intonation systems are known respectively as tonality, tonicity and tone. We refer to them as the three Ts. (6)

Tonality involves breaking up spoken material into meaningful units known variously as intonation phrases (IPs), ‘intonation groups,’ ‘intonation units,’ ‘tone groups,’ ‘tone units,’ or ‘word groups’ (as in Roach 121). The label ‘Intonation Phrase (IP)’ is adopted in this investigation. Each IP is considered a chunk or a division of spoken material—a unit of information or “one ‘block’ in the message that the speaker is

communicating” (Halliday, 3), which has its own pattern or tune involving pitch movement and the placement of the nucleus. The number of clauses that make up an IP is usually determined by the number of ‘blocks’ or ‘chunks’ of meaning it contains. Thus, in reading aloud in formal speech, clauses tend to be divided into quite a number of IPs because they are rather long and full of information (Halliday, 4).

Tonicity has to do with what speakers accent or stress in speech. It involves the placement of sentence stress (also known variously as ‘nucleus,’ ‘tonic,’ ‘intonation center,’ or ‘sentence accent’) in utterances. The sentence stress is the part of intonation that is considered the information centre where meaning is generally located in speech. It is the overall stress in an IP. Speakers generally use the placement of sentence stress to highlight some words or syllables as important for the meaning they wish to convey. The highlighted words or syllables are usually ‘stressed’ in order to focus the hearer’s attention on them. The sentence stress is usually placed at the end of the intonation phrase on the last lexical item (usually a content word such as noun, verb, adjective, and adverb). This is ‘unmarked’ or neutral tonicity or IP. However, speakers can vary the position of the sentence stress for either linguistic or pragmatic reasons. Thus, the sentence stress can be placed on lexical items other than the last one or even on function words (pronouns, articles, prepositions, etc.) in the IP largely for the purpose of emphasis or contrast. This is ‘marked tonicity’ or IP and constitutes the major focus of this investigation.

Tonicity is the intonation feature that generally causes a negative transfer of negative intonation habits from another language into English. Such transfers are usually from languages that have little or no use of tonicity. Speakers of such languages tend to stress the last word in an IP even in cases where a native speaker of English would not do so. Consequently, this can make them “sound bizarre or absurd to the listener since it sends out the wrong signals about where the new information in the message ends or about what is in focus and what is not” (Wells, 14). For instance, English and French have different tonicity patterns. Function words are not usually stressed in English. Let us consider the following:

English	French
A: What job would you like to have?	Quel emploi voudriez-vous avoir?
B: I haven’t <u>thought</u> about it.	Je n’y ai pas <u>pense</u> .

Since the last two words in the English speaker’s response are function words, the stress normally falls on ‘thought,’ which is the last lexical word in the IP. If the sentence stress is placed on ‘about’ or ‘it,’ this would be for special purposes such as emphasis contrast. Conversely, the French response Je n’y ai pas pense, could have any one of the following English meanings:

I haven’t thought about it.

I haven’t thought about it.

I haven’t thought about it.

Different tones are used to express attitudes or meaning in English depending on the speaker’s goal. Several tones are attested in English, such as fall, rise, fall-rise, rise fall and level tone. Many languages have characteristic tone patterns or tone uses that may sound strange or misleading in English. For example, many Norwegians and Danes use a rise on simple statements where most English speakers would be likely to use a fall (Wells, 13).

Research Methodology

An audio recording of the sixth chapter of the gospel of Luke (NIV) read by a British speaker of English (Tenniel Evans) constitutes the primary data for this investigation. First, the entire text of Luke Chapter Six was written out. Second, the audio tape was played back several times while simultaneously following the written text to identify the intonation phrases. Third, the text was divided up into intonation phrases (a process known as ‘chunking’) after some thorough listening sessions. Fourth, the IPs with marked tonicity were identified through auditory analysis to highlight their semantic and pragmatic significance in the text. Thereafter, the IPs with marked tonicity in the British speaker’s production were read by an educated Nigerian speaker of English (a university graduate and Christian cleric) to identify points of similarities or differences in the production of both speakers. The production of the Nigerian speakers was also recorded and analysed through perceptual means.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The entire text of Luke Chapter Six has a total of 49 verses which were divided up into 191 intonation phrases from the reading of the British speaker based on the researcher's perception. Out of this number, 30 IPs were identified with marked tonicity. The intonation boundaries in the data are marked by single or double strokes. Single strokes (|) correspond to lexical, phrasal or clausal boundaries while double strokes (||) correspond to sentential boundaries. The symbol (:) is used for reporting clauses not considered as true IPs. Each IP is numbered for ease of reference and analysis. The IPs with marked tonicity are IPs 3, 10, 12, 13, 18, 20, 25, 35, 71, 73, 79, 90, 103, 107, 121, 123, 142, 145, 148, 150, 153, 155, 156, 158, 159, 160, 167, 168, 188, and 189, as presented and analysed. Below is a sample tonality of the first two verses of the text, corresponding to six IPs: ¹One Sabbath | ²Jesus was going through the cornfields, | ³and his disciples began to pick some ears of corn, | ⁴rub them in their hands | ⁵and eat the grain. || ⁶Some of the Pharisees asked, | "Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" ||

The goal of analysing the intonation pattern of a recorded speech, according to Wells, is basically "to infer the pragmatic effects intended by the speaker" (248). He further observes that the analyst usually tries to get into the speaker's head to bring out the parts of the message the speaker makes into topics that are accented. Wells additionally points out that the analyst has to also consider the discoursal effect the speaker aims to achieve in the audience or listener as well as how he or she signals the grammatical structures through which the message is to be conveyed in intonation (248). These observations are largely (if not exhaustively) adopted in the analysis of tonicity in the data used for this investigation. The analysis is in two parts: the first analysis centres on the marked IPs, which are identified in the native speaker's speech, while the second analysis centres on the control subject (how the Nigerian speaker reproduced the marked IPs).

For the purpose of analysis, letter 'B' is used to indicate the production of the British speaker of English, while letter 'N' indicates that of his Nigerian counterpart. The word with the marked tonicity is underlined in addition to the use of stress mark, while content words with inherent stress are indicated with only stress marks.

IP 3 – and his di'sciples began to pick some ears of /corn, | (B)

IP 3 – and his di'sciples began to pick some ears of corn, | (N)

This IP is the beginning of the second element in the compound structure which begins in the first two IPs (¹One Sabbath | ²Jesus was going through the cornfields|. They are linked by the coordinator 'and'. Since 'corn' which is not only the last lexical item but the last noun in the IP has already been mentioned in IP 2, it is counted as old information and deaccented. Consequently, B brings 'ears' into narrow focus. This implies that the focus is no longer on 'fields' of corn highlighted in IP 2 or even on 'roots' of corn but on 'the edible parts of the corn' which the disciples were picking. The item 'ears' therefore has the marked pitch change and thus constitutes the nucleus. Both speakers realized the same marked tonicity on 'ears'

IP 10 – he 'ate what is lawful only for priests to eat. || (B and N)

In this IP, the last lexical item 'eat' is taken out of focus since it constitutes 'a given' in its participle as the head of the IP. Consequently, 'priests' is brought into narrow focus with the nucleus on it since it is new information. The pattern is the same for both B and N.

IP 12 – Then Jesus said to them, | "The 'Son of 'Man is Lord of the Sabbath". || (B)

IP 12 – Then Jesus said to them, | "The 'Son of 'Man is Lord of the Sabbath". || (N)

The first part of this IP is a reporting clause which is generally not considered a 'true' IP. Hence, no tone or accent is assigned to it. The quoted assertion which Jesus made is the core IP. The IP also has a complex head since the words 'Son' and 'Man' are both accented by B. This adds emphasis to the entire IP since the quoted material is a strong assertion. 'Lord' constitutes new information and thus received the sentence stress instead of 'Sabbath'. The emphasis is on 'the relative superior position of the Son of Man to the Sabbath'. Both speakers accented 'Son' and 'Man'. However, N does not place any emphatic stress on 'Lord' like B. This is shown in the two patterns of the IP above. Consequently, the nuclear accent is on the last noun 'Sabbath' in the speech of N.

IP 13 – ‘On a nother Sabbath | (B)

IP 13 – On another Sabbath | (N)

This is a leading dependent element (an adverbial) which begins with a high pre-head, adding emphasis to the IP. The falling nuclear tone used by B is on a syllable in the word ‘another’—an adjective denoting ‘a different one.’ The reason for this marked tonicity is the fact that ‘Sabbath’ is considered a given. The narrow focus is on what happened on a Sabbath other than the given one in the discourse when Jesus’ disciples picked ears of corn. The strong emphasis on ‘another’ no doubt heightens the hearer’s anticipation about the new event on a new Sabbath. There is no emphasis on ‘another’ in the speech of N. Instead, the default nuclear syllable in the last lexical item ‘Sabbath’ receives the nucleus even though it is a given.

IP 18 – were looking for a reason to a ccuse Jesus, | (B)

IP 18 – were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, | (N)

This is the comment (rheme) of the structure within which it is an IP. As part of a statement, B emphasizes the verb ‘accuse,’ which precedes the last lexical item and noun ‘Jesus’ in the IP. The reason for this shift is to bring into focus ‘what the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law planned to do to Jesus’ while taking ‘Jesus’ out of focus. In B, ‘Jesus’ is old information. N, on the other hand, places the sentence stress on the noun ‘Jesus’ even though it is a repeated word.

IP 20 – But Jesus knew what they were thinking | (B)

IP 20 – But Jesus knew what they were thinking | (N)

For B, the tonicity in this expression is marked in that there is an emphasis on the verb ‘knew’ instead of the last lexical item ‘thinking’. This change in focus is understood from the context of the discourse in which ‘thinking’ is implied. In IP 19, the Pharisees were watching to see if Jesus would break the Law by healing on the Sabbath. This is the implication of ‘what they were thinking’ in this IP. As ‘given’ information, therefore, it goes out of focus, while Jesus’ perception of the same intention is brought into focus as new information. The intonation pattern is reversed by N, where the first syllable of the last verb, ‘thinking,’ receives the sentence stress.

IP 25 – which is lawful on the Sabbath: | (B)

IP 25 – Which is lawful on the Sabbath: | (N)

This IP is part of a wh-question which begins in IP 24. B puts a falling nuclear accent on the adjective ‘lawful’ instead of the last noun ‘Sabbath,’ which has been repeated several times in the discourse. Since healing on the Sabbath is considered illegal to the legal custodians of Jesus’ time, he sought to know the ‘legal’ thing to do on the Sabbath. This enquiry therefore receives the emphatic stress in ‘lawful’ in contrast to what is ‘unlawful’ in IP 6, not the ‘Sabbath’ itself. N does not emphasize ‘lawful’ like B in this IP since the last lexical item ‘Sabbath’ receives the marked tonicity even though it is a repeated item in the discourse.

IP 35 – and be began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus. || (B and N)

As a statement, this IP has a falling but marked tone. The sentence stress shifts from the last noun ‘Jesus’ to ‘do’ which functions as a main verb with an auxiliary ‘might’. While ‘Jesus’ is a given from the context of the passage, ‘what the legal luminaries intend to *do* to him’ in contrast to what they might ‘say’ or ‘think’ constitutes another dimension to the story and consequently receives an emphasis. The same pattern was realized by N.

IP 71 – Blessed are you who hunger now | (B)

IP 71 – Blessed are you who hunger now | (N)

The adverb ‘now’ which is the last lexical item in this IP, goes out of focus in order to emphasize ‘hunger’ in contrast to ‘being full’ or ‘satisfied’ in the succeeding IP. The emphasis is further strengthened by the complexity of the head of this IP since B stressed both ‘blessed’ and ‘you’. This gives the entire clause a strong assertive tone evidenced in the use of a definitive falling nuclear tone. For N, the verb ‘hunger’ is equally marked even

though the Nigerian reader unwittingly fails to utter the last item in the IP – the adverb ‘now’. Also, N does not stress the adjective ‘blessed’ like B. Only the pronoun ‘you’ is said with marked tonicity. In other words, the Nigerian pattern has a simple head while the British pattern has a complex head. Consequently, the strong assertive tone observed in the speech of the native speaker is absent in that of the Nigerian speaker.

IP 73 – ‘Blessed are ‘you who weep now, | (B)

IP 73 – Blessed are ‘you who weep now | (N)

In this IP, B puts the verb ‘weep’ in narrow focus because the adverb ‘now’ which is the last lexical item is a repeated word. Moreover, ‘weep’ is in a contrastive focus with ‘laugh’ in IP 74 which follows – “Blessed are you who weep now, |⁷⁴for you will laugh”. || The tone is a definitive fall as in IP 71. This, in addition to the complex head, gives it a strong assertive tone. The strong assertive tone is lacking in the Nigerian pattern with the use of a simple head. Also, N puts the last lexical item ‘now’ in broad focus unlike B, who emphasizes ‘weep’. This variation may be underscored by the inadvertent omission of the adverb ‘now’ in the previous IP by the Nigerian reader, which would have taken it out of focus.

IP 79 – Rejoice in that day | (B)

IP 79 – Rejoice in that day | (N)

The verb ‘Rejoice’ which is the first element in this IP has a marked tonicity instead of ‘day’, the last lexical item in B’s reading. This is to undoubtedly heighten the expected reward of whoever is hated, excluded, insulted or rejected for the sake of the Son of Man. The reason for this ‘joyful’ command is provided in IP 81 – “because great is your reward in heaven”. The Nigerian speaker does not place any emphasis on the verb ‘Rejoice’ like B but rather places the sentence stress on the last lexical item ‘day’.

IP 90 – for ‘that is how their fathers treated the false prophets. || (B)

IP 90 – for ‘that is how their fathers treated the false prophets. || (N)

The adjective ‘false’ is emphasized in this IP by B since it is not the last lexical item. The last lexical item ‘prophets’ is left out of focus because it is a repeated word. This is because ‘false’ adds a new dimension to the noun ‘prophets’ in this IP which makes it different from the meaning it conveys in IP 82 in which it was previously mentioned. ‘Prophets’ conveys a positive sense in IP 82, implying that those were the ‘true’ prophets while the ones mentioned in this IP are ‘false’ prophets. For the Nigerian speaker, this IP is unmarked since the last lexical item ‘prophets’ is stressed even though it is not a new information. This is in contrast to the British pattern in which ‘prophets’ is out of focus while ‘false’ is emphasized to distinguish one kind of prophets from another – true from false – as provided in the discourse background.

IP 103 – ‘Do to others | (B and N)

This IP is part of a larger imperative with a definitive falling tone. Both speakers place a narrow focus on the pronoun ‘others’ since the verb ‘do’ is both a repeated word and a prospective given. As old information, ‘do’ has been mentioned several times in the discourse in IPs like 26, 27, 35, 99, 102 etc. As prospective given, it receives the sentence in IP 104. Placing an emphasis on ‘others’ implies that the listener is supposed to look outward from himself. It is a way of promoting good interpersonal relationship and de-emphasizing selfishness. The emphasis is further heightened by the use of a high pitch on ‘do’ since it carries stress. The intonation pattern of N is the same as that of B in this IP in terms of the use of marked tonicity on ‘others’.

IP 107 – Even sinners love those who love them. || (B)

IP 107 – Even ‘sinners love those who love them. || (N)

The noun ‘sinners’ is emphasized by B to show a contrast between Jesus’ hearers and another set of people. During the time of Jesus, those who were not from the Jewish stock were usually considered ‘sinners’ especially by the Pharisees and teachers of the Law. Consequently, no good behaviour was expected from them. However, Jesus showed that such individuals still love those who love them. His listeners who were largely of Jewish origin would therefore not be doing anything different from these ‘sinners’ if they stopped at loving only those

who love them. This pragmatic consideration no doubt accounted for the emphasis placed on the word by the British reader which at the same time gives the IP a long tail. Unlike B, N puts the verb 'love' (the last lexical item in this IP) in broad focus.

IP 121 – just as your Father is merciful. || (B)

IP 121 – just as your Father is merciful. || (N)

The adjective 'merciful' is left out of focus by B in this IP because it is given in IP 120. In addition to this, 'Father' has marked tonicity as a way of drawing the listeners' attention to his merciful attribute which they must emulate. In other words, they are to emulate their 'Father', not their 'friends', other relatives or any other individual in the matter of showing mercy. N on the other hand puts 'merciful' in focus as in IP 120, thus resulting in an unmarked IP.

IP 123 – and you will not be judged. || (B)

IP 123 – and you will not be judged. || (N)

In this IP, B puts a narrow focus on the pronoun 'you' in order to emphasize the subject of the command which begins in the preceding IP. In other words, the person 'who does not judge will himself not be judged' implying that whoever judges will also be judged. The main verb 'judged' is left out of focus as a given. N on the other hand puts 'judged' in broad focus without marked tonicity on the pronoun 'you'.

IP 142 – will be like his teacher. || (B)

IP 142 – will be like his teacher. || (N)

In this IP, B leaves the last lexical item 'teacher' out of focus since it is old information; it is mentioned in IP 140. Consequently, the adjective 'like' has marked tonicity. This emphasis is to relate the position of a student to a teacher: since it has already been stated that 'a student is not above his teacher', it becomes imperative to highlight the place of the student 'who is fully trained' (IP 141) vis á vis his teacher. Conversely, N does not emphasize 'like' but keeps the nucleus on 'teacher'.

IP 145 – in your own eye? || (B)

IP 145 – in your own eye? || (N)

This IP is part of a wh- question which begins in IP 143. B therefore places emphasis on the adjective 'own' even though it is not the last lexical item in the IP. The reason is to emphasize the need for the hearer to focus on himself – on addressing his own faults – before attempting to address those of other people. The last noun 'eye' is left out of focus because it has been mentioned in the previous IP. Conversely, the noun 'eye' receives the nucleus in the N' reading even though it is a given information in the discourse.

IP 148 – 'let me take the speck out of your eye', | (B)

IP 148 – let me take the speck out of your eye', | (N)

This IP is part of a quote within a quote. There is a narrow focus on the functional item 'your' in B's reading, making it emphatic since possessive determiners do not generally receive stress. This is a pragmatic contrast to 'my' since a critic usually concentrates on someone else's failings more than on his/her own. Moreover, the last lexical item 'eye' is considered old information and thus de-emphasized. In fact, the noun 'eye' occurred many times in the discourse. N on the other hand keeps 'eye' in focus.

IP 150 – in your own eye? || (B)

IP 150 – in your own eye? || (N)

This IP constitutes the concluding part of the wh-question which begins in IP 146. As in IP 145, ‘eye’ is a given, thus the adjective ‘own’ has a marked tonicity in B’s reading. This strengthens the understanding that the hearer would not be able to address someone else’s inadequacy or shortcoming if he were oblivious of his own. For N, this IP has the same structure as IPs 145 and 148 already analysed above in which the last noun ‘eye’ has marked tonicity instead of another item.

IP 153 – and then you can see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye. || (B)

IP 153 – and then you can see clearly | to remove the speck from your brother’s eye. || (N)

In this IP, B places a marked tonicity on the genitive ‘brother’s’ and not on the last lexical item, ‘eye’. The marked tonicity contrasts ‘brother’s’ with ‘own’ which appears earlier in the discourse. This derives from the logical assumption that as the ‘critic’ takes the plank out of his own eye, his critical vision will become better to remove the speck from the eyes of another person. While B realizes the utterance as a single IP, N splits it into two IPs without any marked tonicity in any of them. In the first IP, the nucleus is on the adverb ‘clearly’, while ‘eye’ still retains its focus like in IPs 145, 148, and 150 respectively.

IP 155 – nor does a bad tree | (B)

IPs 155 and 156– nor does a bad tree | bear good fruit. || (N)

B places an emphasis on ‘bad’ obviously to contrast the ‘tree’ in this IP with that mentioned in IP154 – the good tree. Thus, ‘tree’ constitutes a given and is consequently de-emphasized. N adds IP 156 to 155 and makes them one IP with the nucleus on the last noun ‘fruit’. This is in contrast to the British pattern in which the utterances constitute two IPs to heighten the emphasis.

IP 156 – bear good fruit. || (B)

In this IP, B places the sentence stress on the adjective ‘good’, contrasting it with the ‘bad’ fruit mentioned in IP 154. This takes the noun ‘fruit’ out of focus since it is already mentioned. This IP does not have any parallel in the Nigerian pattern since, as noted above, realised together with IP 155 by N.

IPs 158, 159 and 160 – is recognized | by its own | fruit. || (B)

IPs 158, 159 and 160 – is recognized by its own fruit. || (N)

These IPs would usually constitute a single one in informal conversation but are split into three B for emphatic purpose. The reason is due to the formal nature of the reading of the Bible text. The three IPs with their several emphases collectively emphasize the difference between a bad tree and a good one with a final assertion or climax on ‘fruit’. Conversely, N does not split this IP into three.

IP 167 – and the evil man | (B)

IPs 167-170 – and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up his heart. || (N)

The last noun ‘man’ in the IP is a given information in the discourse and thus left out of focus by B, while the adjective ‘evil’ receives the narrow focus. This is to contrast the qualities of ‘the good man’ in IP 163 with those of ‘the bad or evil man’. For N, IP 167 is realised with three others (as identified in the British pattern) as a single IP, with a broad focus on the noun ‘heart’.

IP 168 – brings evil things | (B)

Like IP 167, the last lexical item is de-emphasized by B. Again, the marked tonicity is on the adjective ‘evil’ which portrays ‘the kind of things’ an evil man is bound to exhibit out of his evil predisposition. Thus, the evil man must necessarily display evil/bad character traits contrary to the ‘good’ character traits which are exhibited by ‘the good man’ mentioned earlier in the discourse. There is a parallel contrast between ‘good tree’ and ‘good man’ on the one hand and ‘bad tree’ and ‘evil man’ on the other. This IP has no correlation in N’s speech since it is embedded in IP 167.

IP 188 – is like a 'man who 'built a 'house on the 'ground with\out a foundation. || (B)

IP 188 – is like a 'man who 'built a 'house on the 'ground without a foun\dation. || (N)

This IP constitutes the second part of a complex structure which begins in IP 187. B places emphasis on the preposition 'without' which should conventionally not be accented, while the last noun 'foundation' goes out of focus. The essence of this shift is to contrast this particular house – the house which has no foundation – with the one whose foundation was on rock and which was equally well built, as mentioned previously in the discourse. N, on the other hand, puts a broad focus on 'foundation' without any emphasis on the preposition 'without' as observed in B's reading.

IP 189 – The 'moment the 'torrent 'struck \that 'house, | (B)

IP 189 – The 'moment the 'torrent 'struck that \house, | (N)

This is a leading dependent element. For B, the nucleus in this IP starts on the determiner 'that' with a fall, which then rises on the noun 'house'. 'that' is brought into focus to emphasize the house without a foundation in contrast to the one on a good foundation, thus heightening the expected result of the effect of the 'torrent' on it (the house without a solid foundation). Conversely, N puts a broad focus on 'house' which is the last lexical item in the IP.

Findings and Discussion

From the analysis, remarkable differences are identified in the placement of marked tonicity in the reading of both speakers. While the British speaker realised marked tonicity in thirty intonation phrases, the Nigerian speaker realised marked tonicity in only five IPs, which represents about 17%. The five include IPs 3, 10, 35, 71, and 103. Also, the Nigerian speaker merged some IPs, which the British speaker recognized as single ones. These include IPs 155 and 156 (two IPs realised as one), IPs 67, 68, 69, and 70 (four IPs realised as one), and IPs 158, 159, and 160 (three IPs realised as one IP).

From the results, it can be surmised that vital pieces of information, particularly with regard to points of emphasis and contrasts contained in the British speaker's reading, are lost in the Nigerian reading due to non realisation of marked tonicity in twenty-five intonation phrases. This would obviously result to a misunderstanding of the text if a native speaker of English were to listen to its reading by the Nigerian speaker. Also, the merging of some IPs in the speech of the Nigerian speaker indicates that some pieces of information have not been properly and clearly delineated ('chunked') by the Nigerian speaker. This no doubt results to the lumping together of information that should have been conveyed distinctly, making the speech cumbersome. Ultimately, communication of meaning on the part of the speaker becomes fuzzy, and understanding on the part of a listener becomes difficult.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that marked tonicity is inherent in native English speech but sporadic or 'inadvertent' in Nigerian spoken English discourse. Thus, English spoken in Nigeria lacks marked tonicity (which usually manifests as emphatic or contrastive stress) since 17% realisation rate is considered poor. It is therefore suggested that the teaching of English intonation should focus more on the use of sentence stress, given its important role in the communication of meaning in the language.

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