

Combination of Mood and Intonation in Exclamatory Sentences: Phonetic and Functional-Lexical Analysis of Selected Examples from Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre

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Abstract: This study examines the interplay of mood and intonation in English exclamatory sentences, focusing on the contrasting use of low-falling and high-falling tones to signal varying degrees of emotional emphasis. Using the exclamatory sentences from Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre*, a detailed phonetic and functional-lexical analysis is conducted. The findings reveal systematic intonational patterns where low-falling tones correspond to non-emphatic, reflective moods, while high-falling tones convey stronger, more emphatic emotions. The study demonstrates the essential role of intonation in shaping the mood and pragmatic force of exclamations in literary discourse.

Keywords: *Exclamatory Sentences, Intonation, Mood, Low-Falling Tone, High-Falling Tone, Phonetics, Functional-Lexical Analysis, Jane Eyre, Charlotte Brontë.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Exclamatory sentences constitute a unique and expressive category within English grammar, primarily used to convey strong emotions, attitudes, or reactions such as surprise, admiration, anger, or urgency. Unlike declarative or interrogative sentences, exclamations are distinguished not only by their syntactic structure but also by their intonational features, which are crucial in shaping their meaning and communicative impact. Exclamatives may sometimes be marked by an exclamatory particle but are often identical in syntactic form to declaratives or interrogatives. In fact an exclamatory function is easier to identify than an exclamative form: basically, exclamations are expressive while statements are informative.¹ Having approved A. Cruttenden's idea on exclamatory sentences, we decided to remind you about other elements that determine exclamatory sentences, such as the use of "What" or "How" at the initial part of the sentence and the exclamation mark in final part. In addition to this concept, we can say that intonation itself can help us distinguish exclamatory sentences from declarative or other types of sentences. The intonation of an exclamatory sentence—the

pattern of pitch variation during its utterance—provides essential cues to listeners about the speaker's emotional state and the degree of emphasis intended.

Intonation plays a multifaceted role in language; it signals not only grammatical aspects but also the pragmatic and affective dimensions of communication.

Within exclamations, two primary intonational patterns have been widely recognized: the low-falling tone and the high-falling tone. The low-falling tone typically begins at a moderate pitch and gradually falls to a lower pitch level, generally associated with less emphatic, more reflective, or restrained emotional expressions. In contrast, the high-falling tone is characterized by an initial high pitch that drops sharply, marking heightened emotional intensity, urgency, or strong emphasis.

Even though linguists have described these intonation patterns, we still don't fully explore how they actually sound in detail or how they interact with words and grammar, especially in literature. Novels and other literary works give

¹ Lntonation / Alan Cruttenden. - 2nd edn.p. cm. (Cambridge textbooks in linguistics) Includes bibliographical references and index.ISBN O 521 59182 I

us a great chance to understand how mood and intonation come together in exclamatory sentences to bring characters and the story's tone to life. Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, with its vivid, emotional conversations and thoughtful narration, is a perfect example to study this.

This study aims to investigate the combination of mood and intonation in exclamatory sentences, with a focus on the contrast between low-falling and high-falling tones. By conducting a phonetic and functional-lexical analysis of six representative exclamations from *Jane Eyre*, the research explores how these intonational contours correspond to different emotional intensities and pragmatic functions. The study seeks to answer how intonation contributes to the mood conveyed and how lexical choices interplay with prosodic features to shape the expressive force of exclamations in literary discourse. Through this approach, the paper contributes to a deeper understanding of prosody's role in both spoken and written English, particularly in conveying subtle nuances of emotion and emphasis.²

II. METHODS

This study used a qualitative approach to analyze phonetic and functional-lexical features of exclamatory sentences taken from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Sentences were selected to represent varying levels of emotional intensity and pragmatic purpose, providing a diverse set of examples to explore how mood and intonation interact.

➤ Data Collection:

Six exclamatory sentences were carefully chosen from *Jane Eyre* based on their clear exclamatory form and the emotional emphasis they carry within their narrative context. These are:

- How weak my conduct! (p. 451)³
- Go to the devil! (p. 447)
- Come all of you—follow! (p. 445)
- How late it grows! (p. 422)
- For God's sake don't be ironical! (p. 395)
- Edward—my little wife! (p. 389)⁴

This selection offered a range of moods, from subdued reflection to strong emotion, allowing a comprehensive examination of intonational and emotional relationships.

➤ Phonetic Analysis:

The phonetic analysis concentrated on identifying intonation patterns, specifically distinguishing low-falling from high-falling tones. The analysis considered pitch

contours, stress patterns, and tonal shifts following recognized frameworks of English intonation such as those from the British School and Pierrehumbert's model. Since the data was drawn from written text, intonational patterns were inferred through syntactic clues, punctuation, stress tendencies, and well-established phonetic norms for English exclamations.⁵

• Pitch Patterns Considered:

✓ Low-falling tone:

A pitch starting at a moderate or slightly raised level and smoothly falling to a lower pitch, typically linked to less intense or contemplative emotional states.

✓ High-falling tone:

A pitch beginning high and dropping sharply, used to indicate stronger emotion or urgency.⁶

➤ Functional-Lexical Analysis:

This part of the study analyzed how lexical choices and sentence functions influence the mood and emotional intensity expressed. Focus was given to significant words, phrase construction, and pragmatic roles such as commands, pleas, or realizations. The use of intensifiers, imperatives, affectionate terms, and interjections were examined for their role in reinforcing the emotional weight conveyed alongside intonation.

➤ Contextual Analysis:

The broader narrative and dialogue context from *Jane Eyre* was also incorporated to better understand the situational mood surrounding each exclamation. This helped to interpret the subtle emotional nuances suggested by intonational emphasis and mood in the sentences.

• Limitations:

As this study is based on textual data, direct acoustic measurements were not feasible. Therefore, phonetic interpretations are based on linguistic theory and contextual insights. Further research involving spoken language data would provide more precise acoustic analysis.

The implementation of modern precise methods of phonetic analysis have brought about astounding results that made it possible to pronounce intonology an independent department of linguistics having its own object of research

² D.Crystal. Prosodic system and intonation in English. Cambridge University Press 1969 Library of Congress Catalogue Card Number 69-13792 ISBN O 521 07387 1 hard covers ISBN O521 290589, 366 p

³ Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Various editions, original work published 1847. P 451

⁴ Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Various editions, original work published 1847. P.389

⁵ Philip Lieberman, Intonation, Perception, and Language. (Research Monograph No. 38.) Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1967. Pp. xiii + 210.

⁶ D.Crystal. Prosodic system and intonation in English. Cambridge University Press 1969 Library of Congress Catalogue Card Number 69-13792 ISBN O 521 07387 1 hard covers ISBN O 521 290589,366 p

and its own methods of analysis.⁷ Building on this foundation, the study aims to deepen understanding of how intonation and mood combine to create expressive effects in literary exclamatory sentences, enriching linguistic and literary perspectives alike.

III. RESULTS

➤ *Phonetic Analysis:*

The analysis revealed that sentences 1 (“**How weak my conduct!**”) and 4 (“**How late it grows!**”) feature a low-falling intonation pattern, characterized by a smooth descent in pitch from a mid-level to a lower tone. This pattern reflects a mood that is more subdued and contemplative. The stress placed on the key words “weak” and “late” highlights moments of personal reflection and realization within these sentences.

In contrast, sentences 2 (“**Go to the devil!**”) and 3 (“**Come all of you—follow!**”) display a high-falling intonation, which begins with a high pitch peak followed by a rapid decrease. This kind of intonation conveys a sense of emotional intensity and urgency. The emphasis on the imperative verbs “Go” and “follow” strengthens the commanding and forceful nature of these exclamations.

Sentence 5 (“**For God’s sake don’t be ironical!**”) combines a high-falling tone with notable pitch elevation on the phrase “For God’s sake,” illustrating an impassioned plea alongside a tone of admonishment.

Sentence 6 (“**Edward—my little wife!**”) is delivered with a low-falling intonation that imparts warmth and tenderness. The lexical focus on the affectionate phrase “my little wife” underscores the intimate and loving mood of the exclamation.

➤ *Functional-Lexical Analysis:*

The presence of low-falling intonation correlates with expressions that are less intense and more introspective, revealing moods of regret or calm observation. Conversely, the high-falling tone is linked to assertive or emotionally charged statements that communicate urgency, rejection, or insistence.⁸

Lexical elements such as intensifiers (“For God’s sake”), commands (“Go,” “follow”), and terms of endearment (“my little wife”) play a crucial role in reinforcing the intended emotional tone and are closely intertwined with the intonation patterns to enhance the overall expressive effect of each sentence.

IV. DISCUSSION

This investigation reinforces the important role of intonation in expressing the subtle emotional and pragmatic meanings of exclamatory sentences. The clear distinction between low-falling and high-falling tones serves as a dependable phonetic signal to differentiate levels of emotional intensity. Specifically, low-falling tones tend to indicate calmer, more introspective, or gentle moods, while high-falling tones are associated with stronger emotions such as urgency, anger, or assertiveness.

The examples from Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* vividly illustrate how intonation not only reflects a character’s feelings but also guides the reader’s understanding of the emotional tone. For example, the low-falling tone in “**How weak my conduct!**” expresses quiet self-reflection and regret, whereas the high-falling tone in “**Go to the devil!**” clearly conveys sharp anger and rejection.

In addition to intonation, the study highlights how lexical choices work hand in hand with prosodic features to amplify the emotional and communicative impact of exclamations. Words like intensifiers (“**For God’s sake**”), commands (“**Go,**” “**follow**”), and affectionate phrases (“**my little wife**”) carry important meaning but also complement the tone to enhance expressiveness. This demonstrates the close relationship between prosody and vocabulary in conveying emotions effectively.

Analyzing these patterns in a literary context adds another dimension, as intonation shapes both how characters express themselves and how authors craft mood and characterization. The use of varied intonational patterns enriches the narrative and deepens the psychological and relational portrayals within the text.

Despite limitations arising from analyzing intonation based on written text rather than spoken data, this research opens pathways for further study. Future work could use acoustic analysis of performed readings to confirm and expand on these findings. Exploring other literary genres and time periods would also help to understand how intonation patterns and their emotional functions may vary.

Overall, this study offers a richer insight into how mood and intonation interact in exclamatory sentences, especially in literature. It shows that intonation is an essential element that shapes emotional meaning and communication, tightly interwoven with word choice and context. This integrated approach enhances both linguistic understanding and literary interpretation by emphasizing the power of prosody in human expression. In studying intonation we study how the pitch of the voice rises and falls, and how speakers use this pitch variation to convey linguistic and pragmatic meaning.

⁷ Vishnevskaya G.M Intonation and discourse European Journal of Natural History. – 2018. - № 3 – P.100

⁸ D.Crystal. Prosodic system and intonation in English. Cambridge University Press 1969 Library of

Further, it also involves the study of how the interplay of accented, stressed and unstressed syllables functions as a framework onto which the intonation patterns are attached.⁹

V. CONCLUSION

This investigation highlights the crucial role that intonation plays in expressing the emotional and pragmatic aspects of exclamatory sentences. By exploring the distinction between low-falling and high-falling tones, it has shown how these intonational patterns effectively convey a spectrum of moods, ranging from calm introspection and affection to strong emotion and urgency. The phonetic and functional-lexical analyses of selected exclamations from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* illustrate how mood and intonation work in tandem to enrich the expressive quality of language.

The results demonstrate that intonation is more than just vocal ornamentation; it is a fundamental means of communicating attitudes, emotions, and intentions. The close interaction between prosody and key lexical features, such as intensifiers, commands, and terms of endearment, further amplifies the emotional force and pragmatic significance of exclamatory sentences. This integrated approach reveals the complexity involved in conveying meaning beyond the literal words spoken or written.

In the context of literature, recognizing the synergy between mood and intonation opens new possibilities for interpreting character psychology and authorial voice. Intonational variation deepens the portrayal of emotions and relationships, enriching both dialogue and overall narrative mood. This underscores the value of paying attention to prosodic elements in literary analysis and instruction.

Although this research is based on written texts, it points to exciting opportunities for future studies using acoustic methods and performance analysis to deepen our understanding of intonation in emotional expression. Expanding this line of inquiry across different genres, languages, and time periods would also clarify how universal or context-dependent these intonational patterns are.

In general, this study advances a fuller appreciation of how mood and intonation combine to shape the expressive power of exclamations. It reminds us that effective communication depends not only on the words chosen but equally on how they are delivered through tone and mood. These insights have important implications for linguistics, literary studies, language education, and communication research, encouraging a holistic approach to spoken and written language alike.

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