

INTONATION NEWSLETTER

JULY 1990

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In case you did not receive our earlier letter, a word of explanation.

This is an attempt - experimental at this stage - to respond to comments from a number of colleagues who are working in some way with the 'Discourse' model of Intonation and who feel the need for contact with others who are doing similar things. Obviously, the area of interest we are addressing ourselves to is not large when seen in its natural context of language teaching and linguistic research. In a sense though, this could be said to make more necessary some channel for the informal exchange of ideas, for it is still the case that coverage in generally-available published material is very limited.

This, then, is the result of a first round-up of what - as we have so far ascertained - is going on.

Margaret Allan (*James Cook University of North Queensland, Australia*)

has recently been in Birmingham to set up a project directed towards using interactive audio technology to teach intonation.

'Disc technology allows the user, via the computer, to have very precise control of a recording for intensive listening work. The intonation analysis is stored in a computer program and a set of analytical tools and study guides can then be developed to allow users to explore the database of intonation features in different ways. I am particularly interested in the possibilities the technology offers of catering to different users with different interests and learning styles. I would be very interested to hear from people who are teaching intonation and who would like to pass on ideas about teaching discourse intonation or who would be in a position to field test the materials. (This will require a Macintosh SE or above, linked to a CD-ROM drive).'

Pauline Barr (*Ealing College of Higher Education*) is continuing her

research into lecture comprehension, using discourse intonation as one of her principal analytical tools. She also teaches a 10 hour course in D.I. to M.A. and ELT students. *'This presents some interesting challenges, since many of these students are not themselves native speakers, and several come from countries where English is the second language and the medium of instruction. One or two have used DI as a supplementary tool in their dissertations to help in their analysis of lectures.'*

It is good to be able to report that **Barbara Bradford's** (SOAS, London) book, 'Intonation and Context' (C.U.P.) was shortlisted in the English-Speaking Union Duke of Edinburgh Language Book Competition, in November 1989.

Anna Maria Burdach and **Juanita Magana** (*University of Concepcion, Chile*) have been in touch since Discourse Intonation and Language Teaching first became available in their country. After presenting the results of their reading to a group of Chilean teachers, they produced a paper 'An approach to the analysis of intonation in texts used by teacher trainees'. They are using the Discourse approach in teacher training classes and report good results. They would like to be able to compare them quantitatively with those obtained by adopting other approaches.

Richard Cauldwell (*University of Birmingham*) is studying the way in which poets read their own poetry. He is working on a PhD under the supervision of David Brazil. He writes:

The purpose of my PhD is to identify, exemplify and evaluate

a) ways of representing, in transcription, phonetic evidence of the intonation of poets' recordings of their own poetry, and

b) ways of responsibly commenting on the meanings added/selected by poets in reading their poems aloud,

so that these recordings can be used as literary evidence in discussion of particular poems and of poets reading styles. I am focusing on recordings (poetry readings, interviews, lectures) made by Philip Larkin.

Evelina Dimitrova (*Sofia University, Bulgaria*) is undertaking a small- scale comparison of English and Bulgarian intonation as part of her undergraduate work at **Sofia** University. She promises a report in due course.

Tim Duvivier (*University of Rouen*) is preparing a PhD thesis on the topic 'Intonation in lecture discourse'. His work on a unit of discourse he identifies as a *focusing move* suggests to him that *although intonation may at times parallel discourse information present in the lexis it ... represents the sole discourse functor at other times ... I also believe that there is strong evidence to suggest that one should view the selection of key between two tone units as a cohesive device between two Acts combining to form a discourse Move in certain circumstances.*

He is working on a corpus of science lectures at the University of Sussex, and has a similar set recorded in French in Rouen.

Richard Francis (*Recently moved to the University of Bologna*) has been using the model on advanced courses with students from the Boccini University and also encouraging RSA Certificate trainees to use it during teaching practice. He draws attention to the need for 'a battery of practical exercises' for trainee teachers who want to familiarise themselves with the model. He is also interested in looking at interruptions and parallel turns in the video corpus of TV discussions that he has

collected.

'The Italians are notorious for trying to shout each other down but what is remarkable is how they manage not only to maintain their turn and its internal coherence but also remain sensitive to their interlocutors' utterances The intonation characteristics of 'non-cooperation' might throw some interesting light on the concepts of 'convergence' and 'divergence' in discourse intonation.'

He hopes that his new job will allow him more time to develop these and other research interests.

Iria Garcia (*Brazil*) has just returned home after working in the English Department at Birmingham for a year. She has been investigating among other things the extent to which intonation contributes to, or detracts from the intelligibility of Portuguese speakers using English.

Martin Hewings (*University of Birmingham*) is continuing his research into the English intonation of learners. He is comparing native and non-native speaker readings of dialogues and their performance of various 'information gap' activities. Preliminary findings suggest that many of the 'problems' of learner intonation can probably be accounted for by factors other than language transfer.

Professor Yoshio Ido (*Ehime University, Japan*) spent quite a lot of time at Birmingham in 1985 and has since followed up the interest in DI that he developed then. He writes enthusiastically about the possibility of comparing notes with others who are working in the same field. Ido's current research is concerned with the Pitch Sequence and the contribution it makes to 'connectedness' in discourse. It is his belief that in this way he is able to pinpoint a serious weakness in the English of Japanese university students.

Richard Janney and Horst Arndt (*University of Cologne*) are involved in a project to develop a rationale for, and a systematic approach to, investigating verbal and nonverbal aspects of speech from a unified point of view. They say that, *'Intonational phenomena figure importantly in the work of the Cologne collective, as intonation clearly straddles the border between the symbolic and gestural, the cognitive and emotional, and the verbal (of the mind) and kinesic (of the body) in face-to-face speech. The project team is 'interested in all types of research focusing on functional interfaces between discourse intonation and other (verbal or nonverbal) speech phenomena.'*

Ann Jefferies (*Gainsville, U.S.A.*) has been working in Zimbabwe on the intonation of Shona. Although her analyses have not been explicitly in terms of the D.A. categories, they do have considerable interest for us. An extension of our field of interest to take in tone languages will obviously be necessary if the cross-linguistic applications of the model that several people are now turning their attentions to are to be

fully exploited. She says; *'My research so far has led me to think that the speakers of tone languages like Shona use intonation and accent no less than speakers of intonation languages like English.'*

We have seen interesting material put together by **Almut Koester** (*British Council, Munich*) for *'...trying to get cross the main ideas of Discourse Intonation to people to whom it was completely new, as well as addressing some practical teaching applications ... in three hours !'* The question of what best to do when time is limited like this is one that others have raised too. Any suggestions ?

Rosa **Konder** (*Federal University of Santa Catarina, Brazil*) and a group of colleagues have been for some time working on a project whose aim is to apply D.A. analytical procedures to Brazilian Portuguese, particular attention being given to any systematic differences that may exist between varieties of Portuguese within the country. The abstract of a recent paper reads as follows: *'The aim of this paper is to analyse the communicative value of questions and answers in a context of interaction in which the questions are requests for information. (The DI framework is used) according to which the choice of the variables of the intonation system is not prompted by grammatical categories, but rather by the speaker's presuppositions and expectations - which is fully confirmed in the (Portuguese) data.'*

In Argentina, **Louisa de Grasso** and her colleagues at La Plata University have had as much experience as anyone we know in successfully teaching intonation, particularly at university and teacher-training level, along the lines of the discourse approach. Their work, and two one-week seminars arranged by the William Blake Institute in Buenos Aires have done much to stimulate interest throughout Argentina. **Lucrecia Luque de Aurich** (*Cultura Britanica, Cordoba, Argentina*) reports briefly on having used the approach successfully for the past three or four years.

Professor Hisao Minami (*Tezukayama Gakuin University, Osaka, Japan*) has been working with us in Birmingham since September 1989. He has been particularly interested in intonation in weather and shipping forecasts, looking specifically at the placing and intonation of adverbials of time and location. He is presently working towards a more general theory of how 'intonational salience' makes a spoken text more or less easy for non-native speakers to understand. He hopes to continue this work on his return to Japan in August.

Agnes Molnar (*Eger Teacher Training College, Hungary*) was in Birmingham during the Autumn term of 1989. She is pursuing research into 'Repetition in Conversation' and took the opportunity of being here to familiarise herself thoroughly

with Discourse Intonation work.

Georgina Pirt (*The British Institute, Rome*) writes of a very specific problem. As teacher responsible for the 'phonology slot' in RSA Diploma courses, she must provide 'a *simplified, practical description of the model... in a couple of two or three hour sessions,*' and finds it difficult to give 'a *version which is compatible with RSA questions such as "English is a stress-timed language. Discuss"*'.

This is another case where others might have suggestions concerning the design of input for a limited time-table slot. The examination demands complicate the matter, though. The problem of traditional examination practices that make it difficult to use innovative methods in the classroom is, of course, not a new one; but this is certainly a new aspect of it. Any views would, I am sure, be warmly welcomed by Georgina, and by us.

Professor Shoko Senda (*Nara, Japan*) says that her students have responded well to Barbara Bradford's book, and want to know what to do next!

OTHER NEWS...

There are a number of **books in preparation** which may be of interest.

The latest English Language Research, Discourse Analysis Monograph is to be "Papers in Discourse Intonation", edited by Martin Hewings. The papers are

Pauline Barr, *The role of discourse intonation in lecture comprehension*

Richard Francis, *The intonation of fixed expressions read aloud*

Madeleine Wulffson, *Gnomes in context: a look at discourse intonation in Swedish*

Gillian Mansfield, *Discourse intonation in English and Italian news broadcasts*

Laurie Anderson, *Intonation, turn-taking and dysfluency: non-natives conversing* Jane

Cullen, *The teacher's intonation when using personal pronouns: a language classroom study*

Georgina Pirt, *Discourse intonation problems for non-native speakers*

Martin Hewings, *Patterns of intonation in the speech of learners of English*

Almut Koester, *Intonation in agreeing and disagreeing in English and German*

It should be published at the end of September this year and will cost £8. As a special offer to the Discourse Intonation enthusiasts receiving this newsletter, anyone placing an order which reaches us by the end of September can buy it at the pre-publication price of £7! Send your remittance to Marilyn Washbrook, School of English, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, B 15 2TT. Contributors will, of course, receive a free copy.

David's new course book, to be published by CUP (its provisional title is *Advanced Pronunciation*, but this will probably be changed before publication) is well under

way. Based on prerecorded conversations, etc., it handles intonational and segmental matters alongside each other. Starting with the concept of the tone unit, it provides practice in making use of the meaningful variables that are associated with it. Simultaneously, residual segmental problems that advanced learners may still have are practised in the context of the tone unit instead of by means of the commonly-used word list. The emphasis throughout is on 'exploration' and self-diagnosis. Hopefully, it will be out some time in 1991.

David's other major project is the 'Grammar of Speech'. Essentially, this attempts to extend the principles of the intonation work to the description of phenomena which have been traditionally treated as 'syntax'. By emphasising concepts like 'communicative value', 'existential choice' and 'linearity', it develops a 'real-time' model of 'used language'. One of the aims is to show how intonational and syntactic features work together in the pursuit of a particular communicative purpose. More ambitiously, it will try to show how matters that are often discussed separately under the headings *Intonation*, *Grammar and Discourse Structure* can be brought together in a single focus.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE NEWSLETTERS

Please send further news on your research, teaching and teacher training in the area of intonation to us. We would also be interested in receiving any **brief notes**, observations on intonation in discourse which you consider are worth passing on to a wider audience but that perhaps are not substantial enough to report in a journal article.

A further possibility is to establish a **question/answer** section. Do you have any questions about the Discourse Intonation model which you feel existing publications don't answer? If we can't provide an explanation, we will pass on the query through the Newsletter to others to think about.

We would be very happy to receive other suggestions and ideas. If we have enough material by the end of 1990 we will put together another edition then.

David Brazil
Martin Hewings