



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF BIRMINGHAM

# Discourse Intonation Newsletter

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## Welcome from the Editor

Welcome to the first of the new-generation Discourse Intonation Newsletters. On our travels around and outside the UK we are often asked what is happening with Discourse Intonation since the passing of David Brazil in 1995. This newsletter is our response. This issue contains news of work done in the UK, Japan and Brazil (page 3); it also contains news from Martin Hewings on an American edition of his highly successful *Pronunciation Tasks* (page 2). Also, there is news of a second edition of *The Communicative Value of Intonation in English* (page 4).



The Editor, Richard Cauldwell

We hope to send out this newsletter twice-yearly. We would be delighted to hear from you and to print news of your work. Perhaps you are using David Brazil's *Pronunciation for Advanced Learners of English* and would like to report your experiences. Perhaps you are a teacher trainer, and have used the framework of Discourse Intonation in your courses for intending teachers. Perhaps you have memories of seminars and workshops that David Brazil gave that you would like to share with other people. Whatever your connection with Discourse Intonation, please contact us (see page 4 for contact details) and we will endeavour to publish your messages. Better still, we would like to hear from you if you have found valuable the published work of scholars, teacher trainers, and textbook writers who are not part of the Discourse Intonation fold: write and tell us your experiences.

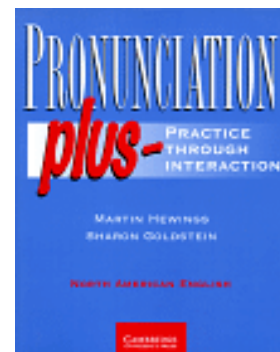
## Martha Pennington visits Birmingham

Martha Pennington, author of *Phonology in English Language Teaching* (Longman 1996) visited Birmingham on 8th February 2000 to give a seminar to staff. We were thus in the rare position of having an outsider talking to us about Birmingham work, and in particular the work of David Brazil.

Martha sees a relationship between the work of David Brazil and Relevance Theory of Deidre Wilson and Dan Sperber. Martha in particular focused on the use of high key and termination in the utterance //  $\text{v i } \uparrow \text{GOT it}$  // to aid a pragmatic interpretation. This was a well-attended, and interesting seminar. Martha is currently the Powdrill Professor of English Language Acquisition at Luton University in the UK.



## Martin Hewings



Following the publication in 1993 of *Pronunciation Tasks*, an elementary/intermediate level textbook on British English, I have worked with Sharon Goldstein on adapting this material for learners of North American

English. The outcome, published in 1998, is *Pronunciation Plus: Practice Through Interaction*. In this brief article, I shall focus on the difference treatment of intonation in the two books. In *Pronunciation Tasks* the intonation units offer practice in a selection of the significant choices recognised in the discourse intonation framework, focusing on what, it seems to me, cause students particular difficulties. For reasons of space, consideration of key and termination, and the level and rise-fall tones were excluded. The unit headings, together with a brief description of their contents, are given below:

*Prominent words* (introducing the idea that syllables are either prominent or non-prominent); *Repeated words and prominence* (on non-prominence on repeated words); *More on prominent and non-prominent words* (on non-prominence on pronouns, prepositions, etc); *Falling and rising tones* (discrimination and production practice of falling and rising tones); *Reasons for falling and rising* (introduces the idea that falling tone is used for 'news' and rising tone for material 'in play'); *A second rising tone* (introduces the fall-rise as an alternative to the rise); *Tonic words* and *Predicting tones* (both exploring tonic placement).

It was felt that this format would need to be adapted to be acceptable to teachers of North American English. While the units on prominence and tonic placement remain more or less as in *Pronunciation Tasks*, more substantial changes are made to those on tone choice. The association of particular tones with certain communicative functions is emphasised to a greater extent. For example, the tendency to use falling tone with 'wh' questions and rising tone with 'yes/no' questions is noted although care is taken not to present these as rules in the Student's Book. In the Teacher's Book a more detailed account of tone choice in questions is given, providing the teacher to some extent with an explanation when students note that these tendencies are not found in all questions. In addition, the use of rising tone in asking someone to repeat and in giving choices are practised. An almost entirely new unit on 'Leaving things open' is included in which we say that 'Rising intonation on a statement (either simple rising or falling-rising) usually suggests incompleteness – that something more could, should, or will be said by either the speaker or listener'. This unit offers something to the elementary learner on the 'continuative' significance of rising tones.

In working on these materials, Discourse Intonation has provided me with a sound and valuable framework both for thinking about intonation and pronunciation more generally and in devising a syllabus and activities. Compromises have had to be made, of course, in turning David Brazil's approach into material that is both comprehensible to elementary/intermediate learners and acceptable to teachers who are already familiar with other approaches to pronunciation teaching. But such, I imagine, is the task of anyone attempting to produce teaching materials informed by current theory.

Hewings, M 1993 *Pronunciation Tasks: A course for pre-intermediate learners Student's Book* (ISBN 0-521-38611-X); *Teacher's book* (ISBN 0-521-38610-1); *Classroom Cassettes* (ISBN 0-521-38453-2). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hewings, M and Goldstein, S. 1998 *Pronunciation Plus: Practice through interaction in North American English: Student's Book* (ISBN 0-521-57797-7); *Teacher's Manual* (ISBN 0-521-57796-9); *Classroom Cassettes* (ISBN 0-521-57795-0). New York: Cambridge University Press.

## PEOPLE

### Hanako Hosaka writes from Japan

My current research concerns the phonological characteristics of L2 speech, and the issue of 'foreign accentedness', i.e. the nature of L2 speech which often sounds different from L1 speech. Its focus is on the common nature of L2 discourse intonation in English and in Japanese. I have adopted Brazil's Discourse Intonation for data transcription in this study. Although Brazil's model was originally designed for describing English intonation, I believe that the model can serve to describe both English and Japanese intonation by both native and non-native speakers. The reasons are: 1) there are precedents for using the Discourse Intonation model to describe intonation of languages other than English, 2) it is suitable for describing intonation in discourse, the interest of this research, and 3) both English and Japanese intonation seem to share the four sub-systems of Discourse Intonation -- prominence, tone choices, key and terminations. I am observing the way Japanese and English speakers read a fairy tale aloud in both languages and the way they exploit intonation in the same context. The subjects were 10 each of native Japanese speakers learning English and of native English speakers learning Japanese. I used the same fairy tale in both English and Japanese as the text material, and asked the subjects to read it aloud and make recordings for this study. I transcribed and analysed the subjects' intonation following Brazil's model. The findings suggest that L2 speakers seems to have different tendencies from L1 speakers in choosing 'how to read the given sentences/ story aloud' in the given context.

'Brazil's Discourse Intonation ... can serve ... to describe English and Japanese intonation of both native and non-native speakers'

### Neide Cesar Cruz writes from Brazil

The growing number of non-native speakers in the world has reinforced the role of English as an International lingua franca. This fact has influenced pronunciation teaching, and a significant change is taking place at present: the pursuit of an intelligible pronunciation instead of a native-like performance. Having this principle in mind, I intend to investigate in my research the intelligibility of the pronunciation of Brazilian users of English when speaking to native speakers. The investigation will comprise segmental and intonational features. The Discourse Intonation theory devised by David Brazil will guide my analysis. The choice of such a model is that it provides a clear way of observing naturally occurring speech.

### John Sinclair retires

John Sinclair, Professor of Modern English Language, is retiring this June. John Sinclair was appointed to his post in 1966, and has been the driving force behind many of the initiatives undertaken at Birmingham in English Language Research. It was John who first invited David Brazil to come to work at The University of Birmingham on research projects in the 1970s. On May 18th this year John gave a Valedictory lecture entitled 'Spin', in which he looked at the power of lexical choice to add an approving or disapproving nuances to certain formulaic phrases. After the lecture there was a celebration at which John was presented with three gifts: a CD-ROM of articles written in his honour; a room in Westmere is now to be known as *The John Sinclair Room*; and there is to be an annual series of lectures given in his honour—the first, next year, will be given by Michael Halliday.



Professor John Sinclair giving his retirement lecture



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### In the next issue

In the next issue we expect to publish a review of David Brazil's prizewinning *A Grammar of Speech* (Oxford University Press, 1995). We also hope to announce a new Website devoted to Discourse Intonation Studies. There will be some information about Richard Cauldwell's publications involving Discourse Intonation. And we will give details concerning how to get hold of the CD-ROM published in honour of John Sinclair's retirement (see page 3). Above all, we are keen to publish news and views of and by you. So please get in touch at the address above.

### Seen and Heard

There is another Newsletter that we would like to draw your attention to: *Speak Out! Newsletter of the IATEFL Pronunciation Special Interest Group* (ISSN 1026-4345). This is a very valuable Newsletter—edited by Michael Vaughan Rees—that comes out twice a year, and deals with issues relating to the theory and practice of teaching pronunciation. The latest issue (No. 25) contains an interesting interview with Professor Peter Roach of Reading University concerning his role as joint editor of the 15th edition of Daniel Jones's *English Pronouncing Dictionary* (Cambridge University Press 1997). It also contains an article by Rosie McAndrew entitled *Is there Discourse Intonation after RP?* Rosie gives examples of analyses of non-RP accents (Australian, Scottish, Welsh, Irish, and Canadian), and queries whether the meaning attributed to the rise-fall tone (proclaiming, dominant) applies in these accents. Nevertheless, she praises Discourse Intonation for 'its logic, its consistency, and its coherence.' There is also an interesting article by Ricardo Da Silva *An Investigation into the Intelligibility of the Pronunciation of Brazilian Intermediate Students*. Each issue contains book reviews, and the next issue will be an 'Americas' issue co-edited by Judy Gilbert (in California) and Camillo Dixo Lieff (in Brazil). To get this newsletter, you have to be a member of IATEFL: for information on how to become a member, and to subscribe to *Speak Out!* (you have to join the Pronunciation Special Interest Group—*Pronsig*) you should contact IATEFL at 3 Kingsdown Chambers, Kingsdown Park, Tankerton, Whitstable, Kent, UK CT5 2FL, email IATEFL@compuserve.com.

## New Edition of *The Communicative Value of Intonation in English*

David Brazil's most influential publication was first published by English Language Research at The University of Birmingham in 1985. Many of you will be familiar with the white-covered version. We were delighted that Professor Malcolm Coulthard, a long-time friend and colleague of David's, persuaded Cambridge University Press to bring out a second edition. The contents of the second edition remain largely the same; there are corrections and minor modifications which bring the book into line with CUP's publishing house standards (this was painstaking work, and Martin Hewings did all of it). There are three features of the second edition which are worth noting however: there is a short foreword by myself and Martin Hewings; there is a complete bibliography of David Brazil's work; and the accompanying cassette tape has been completely re-recorded. It is good to see this influential work being published by a major publishing house.

