
Intonation As A Politeness Marker In Nigerian English

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Abstract

This research studies intonation as a politeness marker in Nigerian English. It aims to highlight the various ways intonation influences the perception of politeness among English-speaking Nigerians, show the interrelationships between intonation and politeness, and evaluate the importance of intonation in social interaction. The study adopts David Brazil's discourse intonation theory as well as the pragmatic theories by Ndimele and Kempson, respectively. Data were obtained from some sentences that the respondents were asked to read aloud and analyze. The University of Uyo town campus and the annex campus were the areas of study. Twenty-five students from the University from distinct Departments and levels of study made up the population samples. Findings revealed that the rise [] and fall [] intonation patterns index greater politeness in communication than other intonation patterns. The study concludes that intonation in relation to context, paralinguistic features, sentence types, the relationship between speakers, and other variables are the determinant factors in evaluating whether an utterance is polite or impolite.

Keywords: Intonation, Politeness Marking, Nigerian English, Tone Patterns

Introduction

Language is a brilliant means of communication among human beings. By doing so, man has the ability to engage himself in interactions and sustain them to a desired level. Certain factors contribute to achieving the desired communicative goals, and intonation is one of them. Intonation is a crucial part of English language, which performs important semantic, discourse, and pragmatic functions. It is employed in everyday use of language, such as in giving and obeying orders, asking and answering questions, describing places and events, giving directions, and so on. However, intonation is considered both an area of difficulty for foreign learners and a challenge to theory and description, as acknowledged in a number of research studies. Thus, several recent studies have drawn attention to the role of intonation in discourse (Crystal, 1975; Roach, 1991; Atoye, *et al.*, 2018)

Roach (1991) observes that there is no definition of intonation that is completely satisfactory; however, "voice pitch" is the most crucial, and it refers to "an auditory sensation experienced by the hearer" (p. 150). The source explains that intonation is an aspect of phonology, classified under prosodic or suprasegmental features, and human beings normally speak with an unfixed, varying pitch. Areas of interest are basically those that carry some linguistic information. The basic function of intonation in discourse is to convey a speaker's attitude rather than dwell on the meaning of individual words.

According to O'Connor & Arnold (1993), intonation is defined as "musical features" or "speech tunes or melodies." Such factors as tempo, pitch setting, voice range, etc. are components of intonation, signalling what may be termed "attitudinal actors," s such as the speaker's tiredness, anger, happiness, excitement, politeness, impoliteness, and so on. In English verbal usage, intonation, among other functions, plays an attitudinal role in discourse.

The basic function of intonation in discourse is to convey a speaker's

attitude rather than the meaning of individual words. For the purposes of this study, however, we will be dealing with intonation as a politeness marker among English-speaking Nigerians, i.e., how intonation influences the perception of politeness in discourse. Based on the attitudinal and discourse functions of intonation, intonation and pragmatics are interrelated, as explained by Udofot:

Pragmatics analyzes utterances based on the situation in question in which the utterance is produced, the shared previous knowledge or common cultural background of the speaker and the hearer, the linguistic context in which a particular utterance occurs as well as paralinguistic features like facial expressions, nodding of the head, gestures (Udofot, 1998, p. 128).

What may be perceived as polite by a particular group of speakers may be interpreted as impolite by another. Furthermore, an utterance may be perceived as impolite, even though the tone of the speaker may be polite, because there are other paralinguistic features that mark impoliteness. For example, if one says the conventional "nice to meet you," which is generally a polite statement, but says it while looking away, wearing a frown, and rolling one's eyes away, all of these things add up to impoliteness. Udofot (1991) emphasizes this point as follows: "Knowledge of pragmatics enables one to interpret, not only the literal meaning of an utterance, but also the meanings that derive from the norms of formality and politeness that exist in the society where the language is used...." (p.127).

Politeness is best expressed as the practical application of good manners or etiquette. It is the quality or state of being courteous in behavior and

speech, with refined manners and complaisance. It is a culturally defined phenomenon; therefore, what is considered polite in one culture can sometimes be quite rude or simply eccentric in another cultural context. Anthropologists Brown and Levinson (2016) identify two kinds of politeness, deriving from Erving Goffman's "concept of face." These include negative politeness: for instance, making a request less infringing, as in "If you don't mind..." or "If it isn't too much trouble..." respects a person's right to act freely; in other words, it gives deference. Positive politeness, on the other hand, seeks to establish a positive relationship among parties and respects a person's need to be liked and understood.

While beauty is in the eye of the beholder, Locher and Watts (2005) believe politeness is also subjective. A speaker may use politeness strategies, but the listener may not understand them. Therefore, speakers who are conversant with the norms of behaviour established in a particular type of interaction will more likely have a similar interpretation than interactants who are newcomers to a particular community. Watts (2003) and Golato (2005) note that, universally, most linguistic structures do not directly index politeness. This means that most linguistic structures that mark politeness in certain social contexts may not necessarily have the same meaning in other social discourse contexts.

Research Objectives

This study has the following objectives:

1. To show how politeness is marked by intonation
2. To explain how intonation influences the perception of politeness among English-speaking Nigerians,
3. To highlight the interrelationship between intonation discourse and pragmatics.
4. To evaluate the importance of intonation in social interaction.,

Conceptual Issues on Politeness

Face

In a bid to explain how languages exploit their linguistic means to express politeness, various scholars hold distinct ideas. These involve ideas like being tactful, modest, and nice to other people. The most relevant concept in linguistic politeness is "face." Face is defined in pragmatics as one's public self-image, and politeness is showing reverence for another person's face. Yule (1996), in his view of politeness, gives a comprehensive description of the notion of face. According to him,

If you say something that represents a threat to another person's self-image, that is called a face-threatening act. For example, if you use a direct speech act to order someone to do something (Give me that paper!), you are acting as if you have more social power than the other person. If you do not actually have that social power, then you are performing a face-threatening act. An indirect speech act, in the form of a question (Could you pass me that paper, please?), removes the assumption of social power. You appear to be asking about ability. This makes your request less threatening to the other person's sense of self. Whenever you say something that lessens the possible threat to another's face, it's called a face-saving act. (p.134)

Being polite in this sense means being conscious of another person's self-

image and dignity and giving reverence to them. Crystal (2006, p. 275) states that "pragmatic distinctions of politeness... are spread throughout the grammatical, lexical, and phonological systems, ultimately reflecting matters of social class, status, and role." Leech (1983) also looks into how the choice of correct verbal tense and modal auxiliaries contributes to achieving, among other things, the effect of politeness. The use of the past tense, for instance, to refer to the present makes the request "indirect and therefore more polite." An example is: "Did you want me? Yes, I hoped you would give me a hand with the painting (p. 15)."

Brown and Levinson (1987) describe politeness as a complex system for mitigating face-threatening acts. They argue that interactants have linguistic strategies at their disposal that allow them to appear polite in various degrees. Behaviour that is not considered polite is then implicitly interpreted as impolite. The same dichotomy can be noticed in Fraser's (1975) approach to politeness. He argues that politeness is the norm and is not commented on, while impoliteness, which constitutes a breach of this norm, is remarked on by participants.

Politeness is also necessarily marked by interactants' social status, age, and formality. For example, Ide (1982, 1989) opines that in Japanese society, social rules such as being polite to a person of higher social status, a person with power, and an older person must be strictly observed by the use of honorifics. According to Ide and Yoshida (1999, p. 448), "honorifics are linguistic forms to index the speaker's acknowledgement of this sense of place towards the addressee or referent." They refer to this practice of polite behaviour as "discernment."

Swan (1991) suggests a way of mitigating an imperative statement (i.e., to soften its authoritativeness and turn it more polite). He describes the use of question tags after imperatives, for example: "Give me a hand, will you?" (N/B: the tag questions are said with a rising intonation.) He further explains that the tag questions are not real questions that probably require a yes-or-no answer but mean something like please. He stresses further that such questions usually have a rising intonation (p. 515). Bolinger (1989, p.

276) suggests the use of a discourse-initial "oh" to blunt the force of a command. Examples are: "Oh! Stop bothering me!" "Oh! Go away, will you?" He believes that these reprimands, with "Oh," can actually be playful and induce smiles.

Mey (2001) holds that when judging the politeness or impoliteness of an utterance or utterances, first, the social position of the speakers may indicate politeness values for individual cases; the existence of a social hierarchy, as in institutionalised contexts like schools, the military, religious communities, etc., often preempts the use of politeness altogether. Secondly, he notes that the politeness of an utterance also depends on the person who is giving the order, and that one of the functions of politeness is to create (or manifest) a distance between the interlocutors, as in the case of social-hierarchical placements that have to be maintained through language use.

Politeness is also culture-specific (as is obtainable among the Yoruba in Nigeria) and based on individual perception. As previously stated, Japanese cultures use honorifics to mark politeness; other cultures encode politeness through slower speech tempo, rising intonation, and the attachment of certain linguistic forms to words and sentences. Udoudom (2013) says that "ideas about what constitutes the appropriate markers of politeness differ substantially from one culture to another, as there is no one-to-one correspondence between a linguistic form and social meaning" (p. 204). According to Yule (1996), some cultures have a preference for indirectness and the avoidance of imposition. For example, "Could you pour me some coffee?" is considered polite, while in other cultures that are more oriented towards directness, "Pour me some coffee" is a more valued way of speaking.

Intonation in Discourse

Intonation in relation to discourse shows how intonation patterns in English affect the communicative value of speech through the use of falling

and rising tunes along with changes in pitch. It also makes it possible to explain, much more comprehensively, the uses that speakers make of intonation. The functions of intonation are analysed based on isolated sentences or tone units in relation to their linguistic and situational context. It is also important in the conversational interaction of two or more speakers, just as, for instance, the difference between a falling and a rising intonation on question tags is supposed to indicate to the listener the attitude of the speaker as well as the expected response.

Intonation, in conjunction with paralinguistic features such as gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, etc., is used to decode stated and unstated information, as well as for establishing or confirming the status of the participants in a conversation. Improper use of tone patterns can make a hearer in an interaction decode a message that was not intended by the speaker. Thus, Atoye et al., (2018) note that:

Intonation significantly contributes to meaning in the sense that the choice of a particular intonation pitch or tune in making an English utterance, determines the specific meaning of that utterance which is different from the semantic import the same utterance would have with another pitch (p.137).

As such, the judicious use of intonation in verbal interaction is mandatory.

Polite Intonation/Context

It would be wrong outright to assume that intonation patterns have fixed and constant meanings. We must therefore be conscious of the fact that intonation varies with the type of utterance, situational context, etc. Pakosz (1983, p. 313) discusses the importance of context by stating that "the

recognition of emotive meaning as expressed by prosodic features is likely to remain inaccurate in so far as part of this meaning is specified by cognitive and contextual factors." He goes on to say that "talking about contour meanings in a principled way would mean to divorce the meaning of intonation patterns from context." The importance of context is also supported by the fact that politeness, which is the focus of this paper, is a context-dependent phenomenon. Gimson (2001) is in accord with this approach, thus:

It should be remembered that the attitudinal **meaning of an utterance** must always be interpreted within a context, both **of the situation** and also of the speaker's personality. **It may** well happen that an intonation which is polite in one set of circumstances might, for instance, be offensive or patronizing when used by another person or in other circumstances (268).

Schere et al., (1984) posit that "intonational contours do not have meanings of their own, but only through configurational relationships with other variables" (cited in Bolinger, 1989, p. 425). Udoudom (2013, p. 203) is of the opinion that "a cover linguistic label, which encodes politeness in all social contexts, is rare, and different socio-cultural contexts have different politeness forms and strategies, which are determined by the operative culture in the society in question." The source provides an illustration using the English politeness marker "please" to explain that it may constitute plain polite behaviour together with other dimensions of social and cultural contexts. For instance, it may be used to indicate superior authority without any polite implications when used in a final sentence in issuing directions

to subordinate officers by their superiors at work. Ludwig Wittgenstein, a German philosopher, taught that the meaning of language depends on the context in which it is used. In the English language, polite expression refers to the consideration a speaker has for his listener when speaking. We all have expectations as to how we should be addressed by the various people we meet in the various contexts in which we meet them.

Intonation and its Role in Marking Politeness

It is generally understood that in order to behave in a socially appropriate way, people make use of both verbal and non-verbal strategies. This goes far beyond just saying "thank you," "please," etc. Intonation plays a crucial role in the manifestation of politeness. As Crystal (2006) puts it, "It ain't what you say, but the way you say it" (p. 73). The semantic contents of lexical units can be enriched, modified, or completely changed by the tonic realization of a particular utterance. Intonation has the power to render an utterance both polite and impolite. Ofuke, et al., (2000) experimented with Japanese and showed that the tone pattern at the end of a sentence has a great impact on how politeness is judged. In his findings, he discovered that, for requests, a majority of listeners rated a final rise version more polite than a final fall version (p. 209).

LaPlante and Ambady (2003) examined how non-verbal cues affect politeness and assertively said that "tone of voice" is very crucial as a politeness cue (p. 434). In their study, two actresses were given two sets of sentences, one with a positive message such as "Would you like to see a movie?" and the other with a negative message, "Would you get out of my way?" and both performed these utterances with a positive tone and a negative tone, observing how the positive and negative tones influenced the perception of politeness. They reported that a positive tone shifted perception towards greater politeness for both positive and negative messages, while a negative tone shifted perception towards impoliteness for negative and even positive messages. In addition, they observed that "no matter how hard we try to soften the blow of a negative statement, non-verbal cues may not be able to compensate enough to result in a polite

message overall" (p. 438). Understanding how people communicate is actually a process of interpreting not just what speaker's say, but also how they say it and what they intend to mean.

Theoretical Framework

A relevant theory to this study is "Discourse Intonation," an offshoot of discourse analysis, first put forward by David Brazil in 1980. This theory places great emphasis on the communicative and informational use of intonation, pointing out its use for distinguishing between presenting new information and referring to old, shared information, as well as signalling the relative status of participants in a conversation; for example, teacher-student, doctor-patient, etc. This approach, however, owes much to M.A.K. Halliday. David Crystal (1975) emphasized the importance of making generalizations about intonation based on authentic, unscripted speech, as well as the roles played by prosodic features such as tempo, pitch range, loudness, and rhythmicity in communicative functions usually attributed to intonation.

The pragmatic theory of meaning is also relevant to this study, with particular reference to Ndimele and Kempson. They defined pragmatics as a branch of study concerned with the "ability of language users to pair sentences with the context in which they would be appropriate" (Levinson, 1983, p. 24). Ndimele (1997, p. 117) sees pragmatics as "the choices the users make, the constraints they encounter in using their language for social interaction, and the effect their use of language has on other participants." Kempson (1996) defines pragmatics as the study of the general cognitive principles involved in retrieving information from an uttered sequence of words. Its goal is to explain how a hearer can successfully retrieve from an uttered sequence of words the interpretation intended by the speaker, as well as derive further information constituting the full import of the utterance. It takes into account the situation in which an utterance is produced, the shared previous knowledge or common cultural background of the speaker, as well as the linguistic context in which a particular utterance occurs (Udofot, 1998).

Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design, which involves the administration of questionnaires and interviews to collect data from a sample that has been selected to represent a population to which the findings of the data can be generalized. The study also adopted a recording technique whereby data were collected from the subjects studied by recording their utterances.

The study was carried out at the University of Uyo. This area of study was considered because of the researcher's observation of the students' use of intonation in their communication. This was to determine how much knowledge the university students have about public relations, as well as their possible reactions and ability to decode meaning from intonation, a feature of the English language that they use in their day-to-day communication.

The sample population for the study consisted of 25 students from the university mentioned above. It cuts across all levels of study. A random sampling technique was adopted for the study. A structured questionnaire and a recorder were used to collect data.

Data analysis and discussion of findings

Data Analysis

Table 1: Sentence 1: “I don't have your time?”

Intonation	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulat ed Percentage
Rise	12	60%	60%	60%
Fall	8	40%	40%	40%
Rise Fall	-	-	-	-
Fall-Rise	-	-	-	-
Level	-	-	-	-
Total	20	100%	100%	100%

In Table 1, with the tone marker on "time," twelve (12) of the respondents, making a total of sixty percent (60%) of the *sample*, said a rising intonation was more polite, as it sounded lighter and suggested friendliness among and between interactants. It was further stated that a falling intonation expressed a sense of finality and reproach and was therefore impolite. Eight (8) others, making up forty percent (40%) of the *sample*, however, thought the falling intonation tended to sound cooler, more polite, and more like a simple fact. Three respondents added that the meanings depended on the context.

Table 2: Sentence 2: “Excuse Me”

Intonation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulated Percent
Rise	-	-	-	-
Fall	-	-	-	-
Rise Fall	-	-	-	-
Fall-Rise	20	100%	100%	100%
Level	-	-	-	-
Total	20	100%	100%	100%

The result in Table 2 shows that all respondents agreed that the sentence was a polite demand, and as a request, a tonal rise on the word “me” was polite, whereas a falling intonation would sound like a demand and therefore less polite.

Table 3: Sentence 3: “Can you please explain?”

Intonation	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulated Percentage
Rise	20	100%	100%	100%
Fall	-	-	-	-
Rise Fall	-	-	-	-
Fall-Rise	-	-	-	-
Level	-	-	-	-
Total	20	100%	100%	100%

Analysis in Table 3 shows that all respondents admitted that a rising intonation on the word “explain” made the utterance a polite request rather than a falling intonation, which would sound like a demand.

Table 4: Sentence 4: “Don't touch that.”

Intonation	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulated Percentage
Rise	12	60%	60%	60%
Fall	-	40%	40%	40%
Rise Fall	-	-	-	-
Fall-Rise	-	-	-	-
Level	-	-	-	-
Total	20	100%	100%	100%

As shown in Table 4, twelve (12) respondents, making a total of sixty percent (60%) of the sample, said a rising intonation on "that" was milder and less weighty and therefore polite. On the other hand, eight (8) respondents, who made up forty percent (40%) of the sample, said a falling intonation on the word "that" suggested calmness and therefore considered it more polite. Furthermore, three (3) respondents emphasized that the issue of politeness in the utterance depended solely on the context and the interactants involved.

Table 5 – Sentence 5: Are you the only Godwin in this school?

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulated Percent
Polite	0%	0%	0%	0%
Impolite	20%	100%	100%	100%
Total	20	100%	100%	100%

Table 5 is an excerpt from a recording of a naturally occurring interaction between two people, one of a higher social status than the other. As mentioned in the review, context and paralinguistic features contribute to answering the question of politeness. In this context, however, the question was more about sarcasm, with a falling intonation. All respondents admitted it was an impolite utterance.

Table 6: Sentence 6: “You are not looking bad.”

Intonation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulated Percent
Rise	-	-	-	-
Fall	5	25%	25%	25%
Rise Fall ↘↗	15	75%	75%	75%
Fall-Rise	-	-	-	-
Level	-	-	-	-
Total	20	100%	100%	100%

According to the analysis in Table 6, fifteen (15) respondents, comprising seventy-five percent (75%) of the sample, chose a rise-fall () intonation on "bad" to be the most polite, adding that it suggested a good impression. Five other respondents, making up 25 percent of the population, chose the falling () intonation to be the most polite.

Table 7 – Sentence 7: “May I come in, Sir”

Intonation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulated Percent
Rise	-	-	-	-
Fall	-	-	-	-
Rise Fall	-	-	-	-
Fall-Rise ↘↗	20	100%	100%	100%
Level	-	-	-	-
Total	20	100%	100%	100%

According to the analysis above, Table 7 shows that all respondents chose the fall-rise () on the word "sir" because it was considered more appropriate for a polite request.

Table 8 – Sentence 8: “Nice to Meet You”

Intonation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulated Percent
Rise (/)	10	50%	50%	50%
Fall	6	30%	30%	30%
Rise Fall	4	20%	20%	20%
Fall-Rise	-	-	-	-
Level	-	-	-	-
Total	20	100%	100%	100%

In Table 8, the analysis shows that ten (10) respondents, making a total of fifty percent of the sample, chose a rising intonation on the word "you" to be the most polite. Six (6) others, making up a total of thirty percent (30%) of the sample, chose the falling intonation, and four (4) others, making up twenty percent (20%) of the sample, chose the rise-fall intonation, meaning that a greater number perceived the rising intonation to mark politeness in the utterance.

Intonation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulated Percent
Rise	13	65%	65%	65%
Fall	4	20%	20%	20%
Rise Fall	-	-	-	-
Fall-Rise	-	-	-	-
Level	3	15%	15%	15%
Total	20	100%	100%	100%

Analysis in Table 9 shows that thirteen respondents, or sixty-five percent (65%) of the sample, chose the rising intonation on the word “you” as being more polite, suggesting excitement and good humor. Four (4) others, making up twenty percent (20%) of the sample, chose the falling tone without reason, and three (3) respondents, making up fifteen percent (15%) of the sample, chose the level tone, stating that the most important were one's facial expressions and gestures.

Table 10 – Sentence 10: “Pass me the book please”

Intonation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulated Percent
Rise	-	-	-	-
Fall	6	30%	30%	30%
Rise Fall	-	-	-	-
Fall-Rise	14	70%	70%	70%
Level	-	-	-	-
Total	20	100%	100%	100%

The analysis in Table 10 shows that fourteen (14) respondents, or 70% of the sample, said the sentence was more polite with a fall-rise () intonation on the word "please," as it sounded more like an appeal. Six (6) respondents, making up thirty percent (30%) of the sample, chose the falling tone (), opposing the fall-rise () tone. In their opinion, the falling tone was simple, polite, and straight, without sounding like one was begging.

Table 11 – Sentence 11: You didn't have to say that, did you”

Intonation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulated Percent
Rise	-	-	-	-
Fall	-	-	-	-
Rise Fall	8	40%	40%	40%
Fall-Rise	12	60%	60%	60%
Level	-	-	-	-
Total	20	100%	100%	100%

From Table 11 above, the results show that twelve (12) respondents, comprising sixty percent (60%), said the fall-rise () tone on the question tag "did you?" sounded more polite and less harsh, whereas a rise-fall () tone on the question tag was formal and abrupt. Eight (8) other respondents, making up forty (40%) of the sample, chose rise-fall () with the opinion that the utterance is simply a polite and stern reprimand.

Table 12 – Sentence 12: Can I borrow your book, Ma?

Intonation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulated Percent
Rise	-	-	-	-
Fall	-	-	-	-
Rise Fall	-	-	-	-
Fall-Rise	20	100%	100%	100%
Level	-	-	-	-
Total	20	100%	100%	100%

All respondents chose the fall-rise () tone on the word "Ma" because it sounded more like an appeal for permission and was most appropriate for a person of higher social and academic status, as shown in Table 12.

Table 13 – Sentence 13: “You always have the same excuses”

Intonation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulated Percent
Rise	15	75%	75%	75%
Fall	-	-	-	-
Rise Fall	-	-	-	-
Fall-Rise	-	-	-	-
Level	5	25%	25%	25%
Total	20	100%	100%	100%

Table 13 analysis shows that fifteen (15) respondents, making up a total of seventy-five percent (75%) of the sample, chose a rising intonation with a slower speech rate in marking politeness, and five (5) others, making up twenty-five (25%), simply chose the level tone (-).

Table 14 – Sentence 14: “How are you today”? “Fine thank you”

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulated Percent
Polite	0	0%	0%	0%
Fall	20	100%	100%	100%
Total	20	100%	100%	100%

This, like sentence five (5), is a naturally occurring interaction between two speakers A and B. Much of the focus is on sentence B. B's response is said with a level tone, whereas A's statement is made with a high-rising tone (), suggesting excitement. After listening to B's response, all respondents considered it impolite and deeper, expressing boredom, disinterest, or any other negative feeling. This further explains the importance of intonation in speech.

Table 15 – Sentence 15: “I never knew you were this brilliant”

Intonation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulated Percent
Rise	-	-	-	-
Fall	-	-	-	-
Rise Fall	18	90%	90%	90%
Fall-Rise	-	-	-	-
Level	2	10%	10%	10%
Total	20	100%	100%	100%

Table 15 shows a positive remark and would most likely be polite, but to tell which tone pattern marked more politeness, eighteen (18) respondents, making up ninety percent (90%) of the sample, chose the rise-fall pattern on the word "brilliant," and two (2) respondents, making up ten percent (10%) of the sample, chose the level tone.

Discussion of Findings

From the tables above, the analysis shows that a majority of the 4

respondents decoded politeness as rising intonation or falling intonation ending with a rise, i.e., fall-rise () intonation, rather than falling intonation () or level intonation (–). Requests such as "May I come in, sir?" or "Can I borrow the book, ma?" "Pass me the book, please" and "excuse me," all respondents perceived politeness in a fall-rise tone.

For declarative sentences, which are known for stating facts and giving orders, higher percentages of respondents perceived more politeness in the rising tone, such as "I don't have your time," "Nice to meet you," "You always have the same excuses," and "Don't touch that." Question tags, such as the sentence "You didn't have to say that, did you?" had the fall-rising tone as the highest preference for polite markedness.

One noticeable fact is that questions ending with a falling tone were perceived as impolite while a rising tone was preferable, as in the sentence "Are you the only Godwin in this school," which, with a falling tone sounded more like the speaker was making a statement. Obviously, the addressee was not the only one bearing the name Godwin.

The first and second objectives of this study were to show how politeness is marked by intonation and how that fall-rise intonation perceives greater politeness for requests, as observed in sentences two, seven, ten, and twelve. Also, declarative would rather take on rising intonation as politeness cues than the fall, fall-rise, or level tone, as evident in sentences one, eight, and thirteen. Again, the rising intonation was most suitable for questions, and if questions ended with a falling intonation, it had a negative impact. For instance, the sentences "You didn't have to say that, did you?" and "Are you the only Godwin in this school?" both had negative connotations with a falling tone and were more polite with a rising tone. It is important that we say what we mean, mean what we say, and do this rightly.

The third objective was to show the interrelationship between intonation, discourse, and pragmatics. Intonation can only be realised in discourse. Thus, an interaction is needed to notice voice range, tempo, etc., which contribute to politeness. In relation to pragmatics, the tone of voice can

send a positive message, but certain factors, such as the context, the relationship between the interactants, and some paralinguistic features, are final determinants of politeness in conversation. Imagine saying the conventional and polite "Nice to meet you" while rolling one's eyes away in disgust. This is a contradiction, however polite and light-sounding the intonation may be. To put it another way, wrong intonation can send a contrary message in a good conversation. The above reaction might likely make the addressee confused about the response. Therefore, intonation and pragmatics work together to achieve polite communication.

Summary of Findings

Based on discoveries on how intonation in English helps speakers to convey politeness and listeners to perceive politeness, it is worthy of note that some sentences can only be perceived as polite when used with specific intonation patterns. In a more simplified way, it is possible to summarize intonation patterns which are believed to function as politeness markers in the following ways:

- i. A fall-rise for requests, as opposed to a fall.
 - ii. A rising tone for question tags.
 - iii. A rising tone for an imperative/command, as opposed to a falling tone.
 - iv. A rising tone for questions, as opposed to a falling tone.
 - v. A rising tone or rise-fall for compliments and pleasantries.
- Impoliteness, on the other hand, can be perceived through the raising of voice and abruptness. From this summary, it can be inferred that rise and fall-rise are most often used for signaling politeness in communication.

Conclusion

The concept of politeness is widely used in language. Being polite therefore involves speaking to people appropriately in the light of the

relationship with the speaker. The need for politeness in our daily communication cannot be overemphasized. Communicative success can only be achieved when a speaker chooses his/her words in a way that the hearer will recognize his communicative intention, using appropriate tone for the appropriate context. This study sets out to ascertain the fact that the undergraduate students of the University of Uyo are aware of the concept of politeness and its role in public relations and are able to decode politeness cues by tonal realizations. Most importantly, it is necessary to be conscious of the fact that intonation in relation to context, facial expression, sentence type, relationship of speakers, and other variables can enable us to produce some kind of evaluation of whether an utterance is polite or impolite. Most times, what we say does not really matter, but how we say it.

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