

## INTONATION OF INTERROGATIVE SENTENCES IN ENGLISH AND POLISH

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When discussing intonation patterns of any language we must make a distinction between two basic functions of intonation. The *accentual* function becomes important when the speaker makes those parts of a sentence prominent on which attention should be concentrated and where the word carrying primary accent is marked by the pitch change occurring at the beginning of this word. The other function, the *non-accentual* function, helps to distinguish different types of sentences, e.g. the same sequence of words may be used with one type of intonation and be interpreted as a statement or with another and be interpreted as a question. Besides this, information as to the speaker's emotional attitude may be derived from his intonation.

Intonation in its accentual and non-accentual functions, concerned with the distinction of sentence types, constitutes a linguistic system which has a communicative function within a particular community.

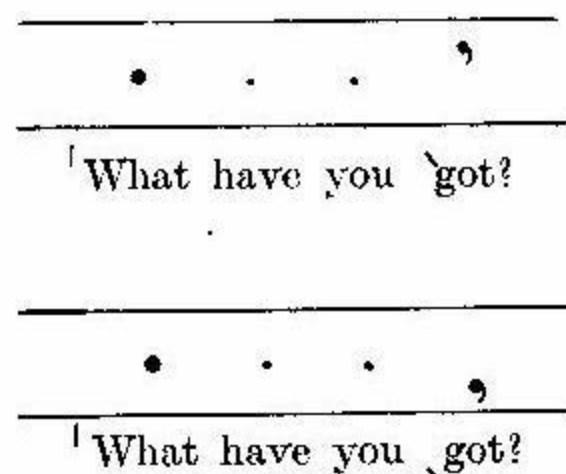
Let us see how both the functions of intonation are realized in English and Polish in the case of questions. There are four degrees of accentuation in an English utterance:

- a) primary (or nuclear) accent — the syllable which receives the accent is the one on which the change in the direction of pitch starts. The nucleus is on the syllable on which particular attention is to be concentrated. There are four types of nucleus: falling, rising, falling-rising and rising-falling.

### *The falling nucleus.*

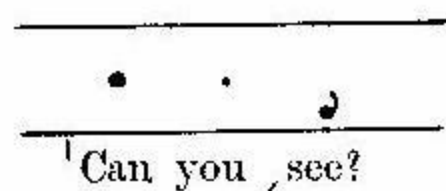
The glide may start from the highest pitch of the voice range and fall to the lowest pitch (high fall) or from a mid pitch to the lowest pitch (low fall).

When a fall occurs on a syllable containing a short vowel the glide of a low fall is rapid and not easily perceptible. It may also be realized as low pitch in relation to a preceding higher pitch.

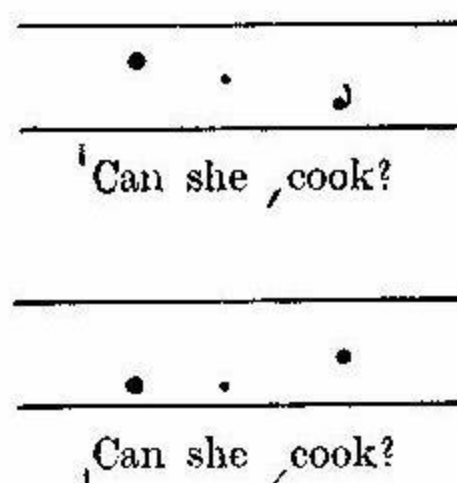


#### The rising nucleus.

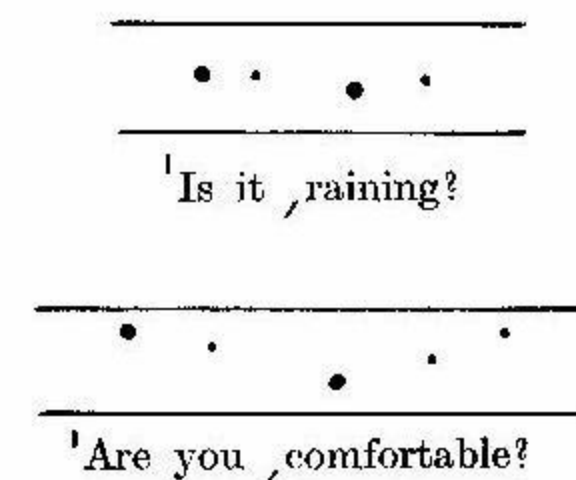
The glide may start from a low pitch and go up to mid, or start from mid pitch and go up to the highest pitch. As with the falling nucleus, it is most easily perceptible when it occurs on a syllable containing a long vowel or diphthong or a voiced continuant consonant:



When it occurs on a short syllable, it is usually more rapid and not easily perceptible:



When syllables follow the nucleus — the tail — the rise is achieved by means of a relatively low pitch on the nuclear syllable:

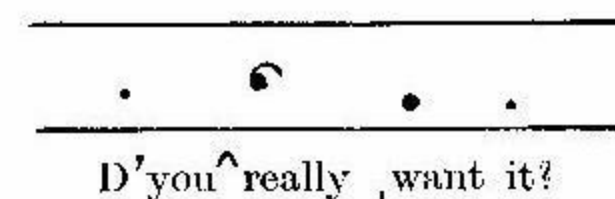


#### The falling-rising nucleus.

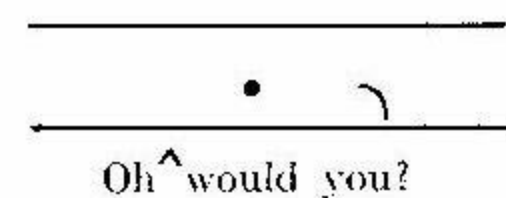
The voice falls from a fairly high to a rather low pitch and then, still within the word, rises to a mid pitch. It never appears with questions.

#### The rising-falling nucleus.

The glide rises from a fairly low to a high pitch and then quickly falls to a very low pitch. A fall may be reinforced by a rise, especially on a long syllable containing a voiced continuant consonant:

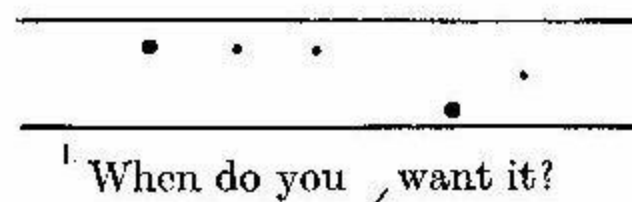


A short syllable followed by a tail may be realized as a low accented nuclear syllable followed by a fall on the tail

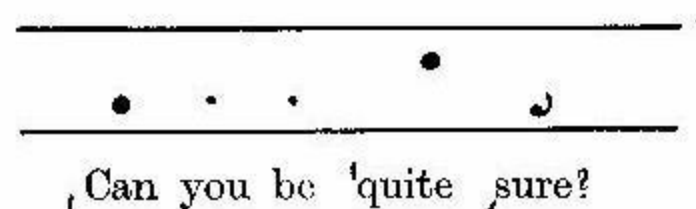


- b) secondary accent — the pitch level changes on the accented (marked) syllable in the case of a pitch prominent accent and
- e) in the case of a secondary accent without pitch prominence the accent is marked by qualitative, quantitative or rhythmic prominence (marked).

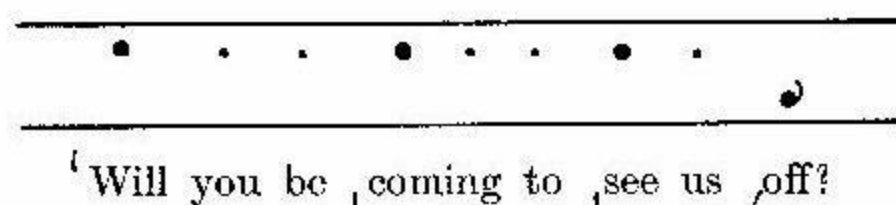
When there are syllables which precede the nucleus, they may have pitch prominence which means that they are given a high level pitch when initial, or a high level pitch in relation to preceding syllables



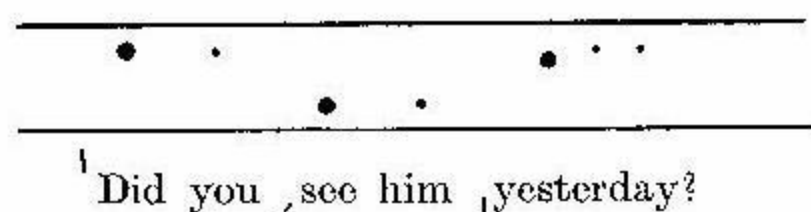
The first prenuclear accented syllable is known as the head. The syllables occurring between the head and the nucleus constitute the body. Accented syllables within the body may be given pitch prominence by means of a step down in pitch or by means of a step up. Prenuclear syllables may also be accented without pitch prominence only for reasons of stress. They may be said on a relatively low level, especially when they precede a high head:



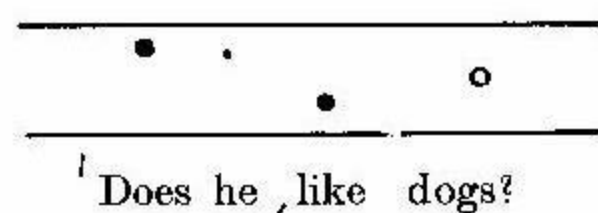
If these syllables occur within the body, they have the same pitch as the preceding pitch prominent syllable:



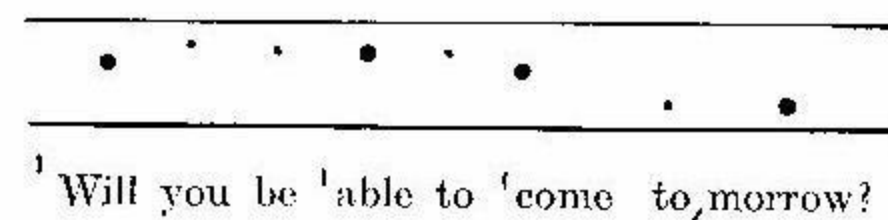
After a rising nucleus the syllables given secondary accent continue on a rising pitch:



If they are in the final position, they may have additional pitch prominence:



- d) Unaccented syllables do not usually have pitch or any other kind of prominence and they are unmarked. They are normally relatively low whether the nucleus is a fall or a rise. Within the body they remain at almost the same pitch as the preceding accented syllables:



In Polish changes in the pitch of the voice are not connected with particular grammatical forms but they characterize longer spoken utterances. Intonation may also have the non-accentual function and inform the listener about the speaker's emotional attitude.

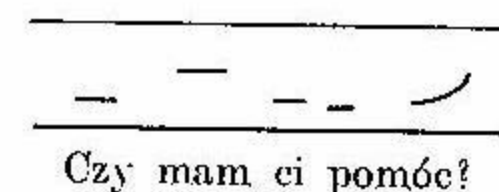
The last syllable in Polish questions is usually a high one. The tune of the last or the last two syllables of the utterance plus the stressed syllable has the most important function. The changes of the pitch on these syllables constitute the basic tune.

In Polish the following syllables may be accented:

1. The first syllable of the basic tune.
2. In the longer utterance the syllable on which the pitch is the highest, that is, the tone is higher than at the end of the preceding and the beginning of the following syllable.
3. The syllable which precedes the one with an equally high tune, and the tune falls down then, but the following syllable is still lower.
4. At the beginning of an utterance the stressed syllable precedes the syllable bearing the lower tune, or
5. Precedes the syllable with an equally high tone after which the tune falls.

Intonation is closely connected with stress in Polish.

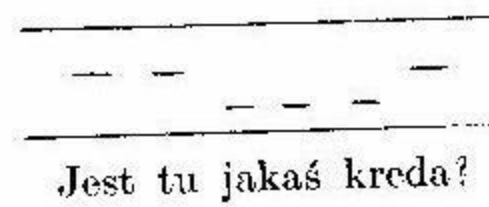
There are six basic tunes characteristic of Polish intonation: low rise, high rise, low fall, high fall, low level and high level. Low rise is the most common tune used in questions in Polish:



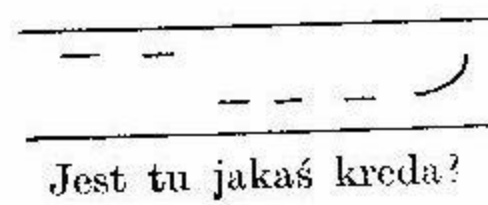
The final rise is usually more strongly articulated and the syllable pronounced with greater strength. The low rise starts with the low tone. The beginning of this basic tune is at the same time its lowest point.

All the falling and rising tunes may have optional variants when there are two or more syllables in an utterance, e.g. in a two syllable utterance pronounced with the rising tunes both the syllables may have

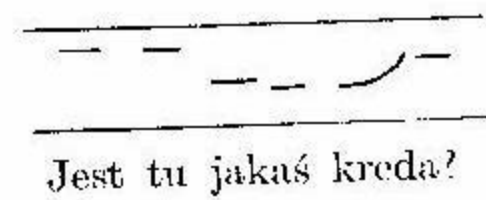
a) the low level tone, as in:



or b) the first one the level and the second one the rising intonation, as in:



or c) the first the rising and the second the level intonation, as in:

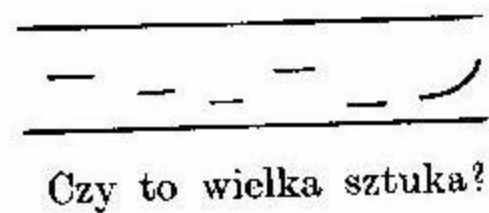


It may happen that two patterns of tunes may have a common variant. This, however, will not lead to ambiguity since when the tune is uttered and perceived, its phonetic value counts, too, and thus helps to decide which of the patterns is realized even if the melody itself is ambiguous.

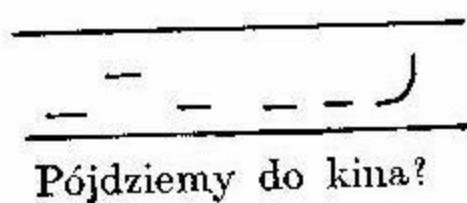
For our purpose of discussing the non-accentual function of intonation we shall divide the questions in Polish into six groups.

#### General questions.

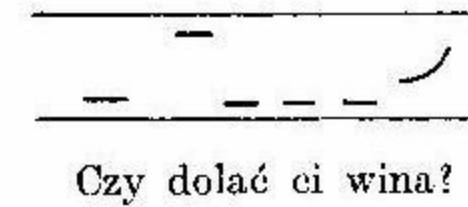
General questions in Polish usually end in a rise. These are normal, neutral and polite questions:



interest

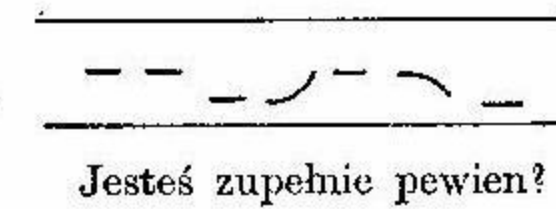


suggestion, interest

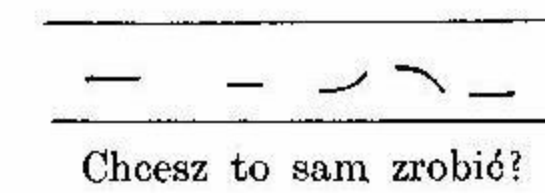


polite inquiry

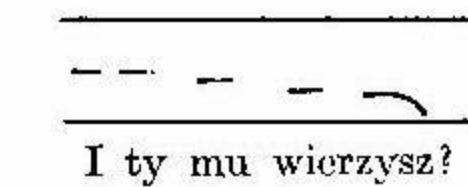
They may, however, end in a fall when the attitude is mocking, ironical or insistent:



mocking, ironical



insistent

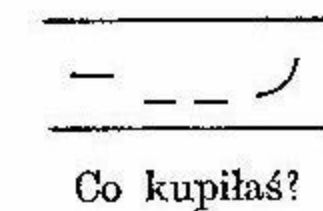


mocking, ironical

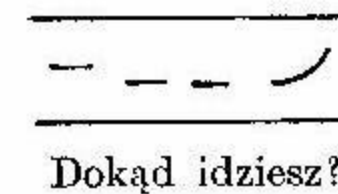
As can be seen from the above examples, normal and neutral questions have a somewhat diversified pitch pattern, and mocking, ironical or insistent follow the pattern: *low level, rise and fall*.

#### Special questions.

If they express interest or curiosity, they usually end in a rise:

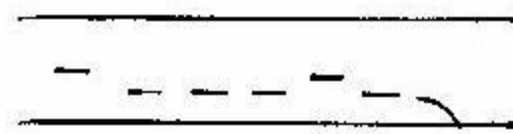


curiosity, interest



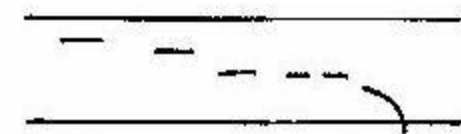
curiosity, interest

They end with a fall when the speaker wants to express a reproach:



Dlaczego to zrobiłeś?

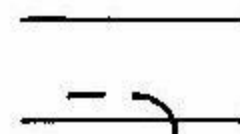
reproach



Kto za to zapłaci?

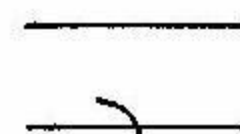
concern, reproach

If the attitude is hostile, the low fall is used:



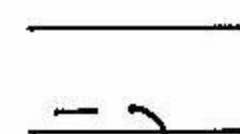
Ile?

hostility



Gdzie?

impoliteness

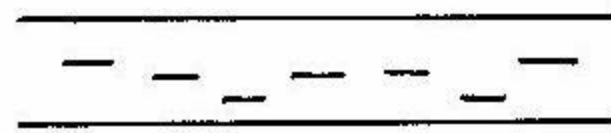


Po co?

impatience

#### Alternative questions.

They are based structurally on the general-question type but the last pair of alternatives, or sometimes the only pair of alternatives, are separated by the conjunction *czy* which helps to identify this type of questions. Alternative questions always have fall-rise at the end:



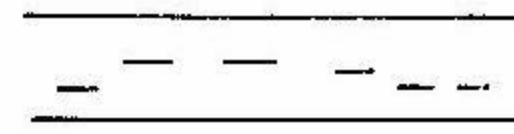
Wolisz ciastka czy lody?



Mleko, kakao, herbata czy kawa?

#### Interrogative repetitions.

Interrogative repetitions end in a fall if we want to confirm the information we have got:



Wyszli przed godziną?



Nie ma go od wczoraj?

If we want, however, to express a great deal of surprise upon hearing a piece of news, our repetition will end in a rise:



Wrócił do żony?

incredulous, impressed

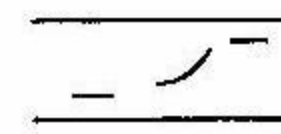


Ukradli jej całą pensję?

impressed, concerned

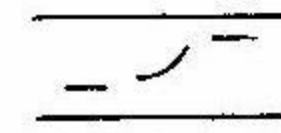
#### Echo questions.

These questions in Polish do not differ in form from interrogative repetitions but they follow a different intonation pattern. They express a greater emotional attitude of the speaker than in the previous type. They are characterized by a high rise:



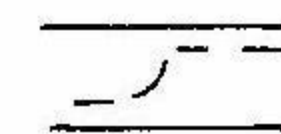
Nie wróci?

surprise, horror



Pieniądze?

incredulity

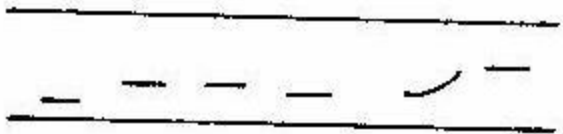
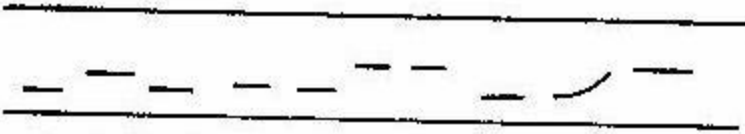
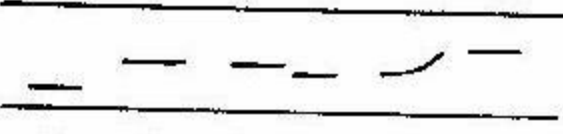



Zrobiłeś to?

horror

*Question tags.*

Any statement ending with a word *prawda*, *nieprawdaż* equivalent to English question tags corresponds to English question tag sentence type. The intonation of any interest to us is contained in the word *prawda* or *nieprawdaż* — the whole rest of the sentence, that is, the part preceding the tag has nothing to do with the intonation characteristic for questions. It is the tune of the tag which is important for our purposes. The attitude expressed may vary:

	hope, interest, expectation for agreement, confirmation
Odwiedzisz nas, prawda?	
	accusation insistence
A jednak to zrobisz, nieprawdaż?	
	mocking, ironic
Ty wiesz lepiej, prawda?	
	demanding agreement
Nie wiesz, prawda?	

Questions in English that will be discussed in the paper are also divided into six groups.

*General questions.*

## Low falling nucleus.

\Are you , coming? impatient

\Are you \going? impatient

\Have you , got the \tickets? uninvolved

## High falling nucleus.

\Can we , have it ^now?

## Rising falling nucleus.

\Can you be ^sure?

^Is he?

mocking, suspicious

mocking, incredulous

^Doesn't he?

Low rising nucleus.

\Are they coming?

\Is he?

\Can you , come?

\Can you , come , next week?

insistent

doubtful, indifferent

polite, interested

bored, uninterested

High rising nucleus.

This tune is essentially associated with questions.

\Coffee?

\Like it?

eagerness, brightness

enthusiasm or asking for repetition

\Monday?

\John?

\Can you ^come?

\Can we af^ford it?

eager expectancy

concern, apprehension

Multi-nuclear patterns.

Falling nucleus + fall.

\Can she^ do the^ work?

Falling nucleus + rise.

Are^ sure that^ George and ^Mary, know?

Rising nucleus + fall.

\Can you ex^pect them to , do it a^ lone?

impatience

Rising nucleus + rise.

\Will you be , coming to , see us on , Monday?

menthusiastic

*Special questions.*

Low falling nucleus.

\When?

\What do you ^ want to \do?

curt

blunt to strangers

unemotional to intimates

bored

\What are we , going to \do?

High falling nucleus.

\Why?

\How can she?

surprise, indignation

Rising falling nucleus.

\What does his ^ father , do?

suspicious, indignant

Low rising nucleus.

\How did you , do it?

insistence; the lower, the start of a rise, the greater insistence

What's the time?	polite inquiry
What have you been doing?	unsympathetic, threatening cross-examination
High rising nucleus.	
The tune associated with questions:	
When?	asking for repetition, incredulity
Multinuclear patterns.	
Falling nucleus + fall.	
What do you think we can do?	
Falling nucleus + rise.	
How many seats were you able to get?	
Rising nucleus + fall.	
What on earth do you think you are doing?	impatience
Rising nucleus + rise.	
When were you thinking of paying it back?	patronizing, sarcastic

*Alternative questions.*

There are three patterns of intonation of alternative questions.

High rise + high fall.

Will you have this or that one?	insistence on choosing one or the other
Do you prefer plums or apples or pears or cherries?	no other fruit available
High rise.	
Would you like this or that?	or anything else
Can I show you any socks or ties or handkerchiefs?	or anything else you want to see (the list of alternatives is not full)

Level + high rise.

Can I show you any socks or ties or handkerchiefs?	(in rapid speech)
--	-------------------

*Interrogative repetitions.*

Level + high rise.

Has Henry seen them?  
Are they in the hall?  
Who took the silk shirt?

The speaker wants to confirm his impression.

Has Henry seen them?  
Are they in the hall?  
Who took the silk shirt?

Doubt about some word.

Has Henry seen them? shock, surprise

Level + low rise.

Are they in the hall? shock, surprise  
Who took the silk shirt?

*Echo questions.*

High rising nucleus associated with questions.

It is?  
You did? surprise, incredulity  
You actually saw him? indignation, horror, surprise

*Question tags.*

Low rising nucleus.

He's got one, hasn't he? doubtful, asking for information

Low falling nucleus.

He does, doesn't he? calmly presupposing agreement

High falling nucleus.

She doesn't, does she? demanding agreement

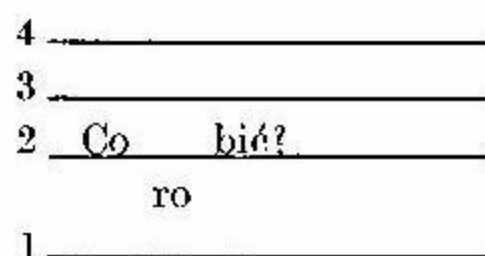
As we can see from the above discussion the intonation of questions in English and Polish has some certain common features. The accentual function of intonation may be quoted as the example, since there are certain common rules, one of which may be the change of pitch on the stressed syllable. English intonation, however, in its non-accentual function is to a certain degree fixed. Polish intonation depends largely on the speaker's emotional attitude and sometimes on his origin.

According to Gimson (1962 : 256ff), there is a special tune characteristic for English questions. This is the high rising tune, e.g. When? John? Coffee? According to Hall, (1964 : 114 ff) however, a rising pitch at the end can scarcely be described as the question signal. Opinions vary here, this is probably due to the important role of the attitudinal function of intonation. Many questions end in a fall. The changes may affect even the traditional division into:

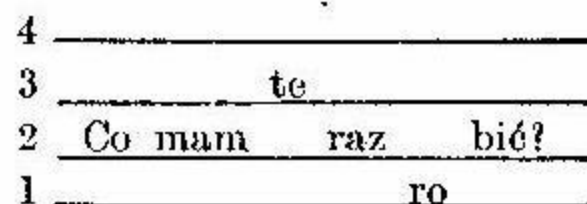
general questions — falling intonation

versus special questions — rising intonation (examples on the preceding pages).

In Polish all the types of questions which usually end in a rise may end in a fall when there is a great emotional load, and vice versa those usually ending in a fall may end in a rise when the speaker wants to express his feelings fully. The low rising tune most characteristic for the majority of neutral questions is rather monotonous. For four levels possible:



only two are used. It may exceptionally happen that the third level is used when the speaker wants to give a word some extra meaning. Then, the accented syllable of this word may reach the third level:



The pattern of intonation depends to a great extent on the emotional attitude of the speaker, on the circumstances in which the phrase is uttered and also on the context. Neutral intonation used by one speaker in a given situation may become offensive when used by another, or when the utterance is directed to another hearer, e.g. quoted above: What do you want to do?

There are various means for signalling the attitude of the speaker. The speed at which the sequence is uttered, all sorts of unarticulated sounds accompanying the utterance, various sorts of pauses and junctions and sighs may add some extra meaning to what the speaker wants to convey. There may also be extreme high and low ranges of intonation, and continuous level intonation which in both the languages may change the meaning of an utterance.

It should be stated here that the aim of the paper was to make some preliminary remarks concerning the intonation of Polish, rather than to discuss the problem in detail, since the research in this area is in its first stage.

The information concerning the accentual and non-accentual function of intonation in English has been based on O'Connor and Arnold (1961: 7 ff) and Gimson (1962: 256 ff), and the part on the accentual function of intonation in Polish on Jassem (1962: 58 ff).

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