

CALL-CONTOURS

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In this paper I wish to describe as briefly as I can the intonational patterns of the expressions used in calls by English-speaking people and the 'academic' significance they have. In some of the works so far published, I have referred to what I consider to be the major intonational patterns used in calls. E.g., *Eigo Intonation no Kenkyu* (*A Study of English Intonation*, Kenkyusha Publishing Co., Fujimicho, Chiyodaku, Tokyo, 1958). This article is an enlargement and, in several points, I hope, an improvement on my initial findings about call-contours.

The major call-contours are as follows :

Type I: High-downglide, suspended

Type II: Uplide, suspended

Type III: Simple fall

Type IV: Simple rise

I define "high-downglide" as a pattern that involves a very high pitch of voice and a lower one that follows it. This lower pitch, however, is, so to speak, suspended in mid-air; it never comes down to the bottom of the speaker's range as does the ordinary declarative utterance. For example, when you speak or rather shout to a person named Johnny who you think is a certain distance away from you or who is out of sight, you start by raising your voice quite high on the first syllable *John*, prolonging it for a while, then you pronounce the second syllable *ny* on a lower level, sustaining it on a level pitch for a long while again, with or without slight terminal rise.

When the speaker uses "uplide" he starts, this time, on a lower level and raises his voice on the last syllable which is kept level as is Type I.

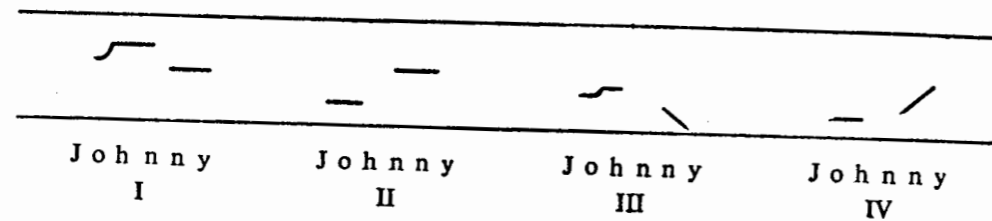
When the speaker uses "simple fall" his voice comes down as it moves from the first syllable to the second, with the second syllable ending in a completely falling tone.

When he uses "simple rise" his voice goes up as it moves from the first syllable to the second, with the second syllable ending in a rising tone.

The following are the schematic diagrams of the four types mentioned above: Calls may come under two categories: (1) a *single* call and (2) a *reiterated* call.

A single call is a call which is not repeated. Examples of "single calls" follow :

Type I: *John!|Patrick!* (fr. BBC's *Calling All Beginners*).



Type II: *Cinderella!* (fr. movie sound track. The last syllable is kept high and level.)

Type III: *Patrick* (hurry up.) (again fr. *Calling.*) *Peter!* (fr. E. T. Anderson's *The Intonation of American English*, § 64, p. 82 of this writer's Japanese translation, Kenkyusha, Tokyo, 1958).

Type IV: *Officer!* (*Twenty-first Precinct* program).

It may safely be assumed that basically Types III and IV are not calls proper as we shall see anon. In calls, you assume that the person being called is a certain distance away from you (even if he or she is actually very close to you). When you are "addressing" a person (or persons), the other party is usually quite near you or at least within easy speaking distance, and you do not have to speak at the top of your voice as you sometimes do in calling. In other words, recognition of and by both parties is already established, and distance is considered of but minor importance. In calls, on the other hand, distance between the person calling and the person being called is, no matter whether this distance is a real thing or an imagined one, a vital factor for prescribing a mid-suspended tone without which it would be hard for the speaker's voice to carry far.

A very good description of the type of call-contour I define as Type I has already been made by K. L. Pike (see his *Intonation of American English*) and by Dwight L. Bolinger. I quote a passage from Bolinger's *Melody of Language* (*Modern Language Forum*, June 1955).

"If the person is nearby, we whistle two brief taps, the first high and the second lower but still high; if he is some distance away we whistle first an upgliding tone that is held a moment at the top pitch, and then whistle the lower one at a level pitch, prolonging it (dogs are called with the same tune, though usually without the lower pitch). If I were pronouncing the name *Daddy* with the purpose of attracting attention, we would use the same two tunes."

Now we shall attempt an analysis of the second variety of calls: i.e. a *reiterated* call.

A reiterated call is characterized by the employment of the identical expression more than once in calling. It presents a very interesting problem because it concerns the way the tonetic pattern begins to be modified of otherwise one and the same phonetic structure when it occurs in succession. As a starting point, below is shown a very minute observation made by Herbert Spencer in his work, *Literary Style and Music*. (The following quotation is from *The Origin and Function of Music*, Philosophical Library, Inc., 1951).

"...if, supposing her maid to be in an adjoining room, the mistress of the house calls "Mary", the two syllables of the name will be spoken in an ascending interval of a third. If Mary does not reply, the call will be repeated probably in a descending fifth, implying the slightest shade of annoyance at Mary's inattention. Should Mary still make no answer, the increasing annoyance will show itself by the use of a descending octave on the next repetition of the call. And supposing the silence to continue, the lady, if not of a very even temper, will show her irritation at Mary's seemingly intentional negligence by finally calling her in tones still more widely contrasted - the first syllable being higher and the last lower than before. Now, these and analogous facts, which the reader will readily accumulate, clearly conform to the law laid down. For to make large intervals requires more muscular action than to make small ones. But not only is the *extent* of vocal intervals thus explicable as due to the relation between nervous and muscular excitement, but also in some degree their *direction*, as ascending or descending. The middle notes being those which demand no appreciable effort of muscular adjustment, and the effort becoming greater as we either ascend or descend, it follows that a departure from the middle notes in either direction will mark increasing emotion, while a return towards the middle notes will mark decreasing emotion."

In my own terminology, the call-contours used by the mistress of the house are (in the order of their employment) Type IV, Type III, Type III and Type III (the last three in increasing intervals of pitch). Spencer's analysis is quite correct, as far as the current usage goes; that is, reiterated calls begin with a pattern *not* ending in a low tone and they show a tendency to be succeeded, finally or otherwise, by a pattern ending in a completely falling tone. In other words, the norm of reiterated calls would be characterized by Type I or Type II or Type IV (if the person is thought to be nearby) followed by Type III.

Below are some of the specimens taken from my own collection which I hope will point to this tendency.

A LADY'S VOICE (calling from some distant part of the inn) Giuseppe! (The voice is very musical, and the two final notes make an ascending interval).

NAPOLEON (startled) Who's that?

GIUSEPPE The Lady, excellently.

THE LADY'S VOICE (the two final notes now making a peremptory descending interval) Giuseppe!

(G. B. Shaw, *The Man of Destiny*)

The first *Giuseppe* is Type I; the second Type III.

Nora! (Type I) Nora! (Type II) (normative simple call repeated with modification) (BBC, *Meet the Parkers* record).

Mr. Gayley! (Type I, where *Mr.* starts on a rather low pitch; *Gay* is high; *ley* is mid-suspended) Mr. Gayley! (Type III, where *Mr.* is low, and *Gayley* draws a

picture of a sweeping downslide) (Valentine Davies, *Miracle on 34th Street*, radio program).

Mr. Archer: Corliss! (Type I) Corliss! (Type III).

Mrs. Archer: No, Harry, it's no use getting excited. You won't get Corliss to rake the lawn any faster by shouting.

Mr. Archer: Janet, I'm not trying to get it raked faster. I'm just trying to get it raked. Corliss! (Type II) (Here Mr. Archer begins his call first by the normative Type I, then utilizes the irritable Type III. When he calls a third time, he reverts to Type II, presumably taking 'distance' into consideration) (*Meet Corliss Archer*, radio program).

My last example is from a television version of one of the ghost stories written by Henry James—*The Turn of the Screw*. A young governess, newly employed at a big mansion, is looking for one of the wards, a young lady called Flora, and failing to discover her where she is sure to be found, the governess begins to call her: "Flora...Flora...Flora...Flora...Flora...Flora..." The name is repeated six times with long pauses and music in between the calls. The contour-sequences are: Type IV, Type III, Type III (more rasping than the immediately preceding one), Type IV (starting on a comparatively low level and then rising), Type IV (again starting low) and Type IV (replica of the immediately preceding *Flora*).

And when the child finally makes her appearance, the governess attempts the customary interrogation: "Flora (Type III followed by a slight pause)... Flora (Type III again), where have you been?" Here it may be noted that the governess's calls start with the normative rise followed by the falling contours (used twice) to symptomize mounting tension and anxiety, pressing the unseen presence nearby for immediate response. The last two calls (the 7th and the 8th one) are, by definition, no longer calls proper. They are address-contours.

From the illustration given above, it will become evident that the genuine call invariably ends in a mid-suspended tone whenever and wherever distance matters. This long, level stretch of tone is admittedly an effective means to carry one's voice far or to ring it above other types of sound — e.g. noise — even in case the person being called is within easy touching distance. Type I would seem to lack what may be defined as "categoricalness" — a shade of meaning attached to an utterance with terminal fall. Type II, on the other hand, would seem to retain the meaning of mild activation or energization. What is relevant here is the type of tonetic manifestation that detests abrupt detention or stimulation. Type IV might be regarded as an allotone of Type II. The idea of 'distance' fades away in the speaker's mind more distinctly as he shifts from Type II to Type IV. In fact, Type IV would appear to stand between the weakened call-contour proper and the address-contour. Type III has a very clear-cut shade of meaning. As Spencer wisely put it, this contour implies "annoyance" or whatever feeling is akin to it. Be it noted that Spencer was not the only scholar to adhere to this view. K. L. Pike, for example, says:

"Dr. Eugene A. Nida... suggests that if Tommy is in sight, the pitch tends to fall

to low, in his usage. For my speech the application, following this lead, is a bit different: if the hearer were in an unknown place, or distant so that he could not hear readily (even if he were in sight), I would likely to arrest the fall of pitch at level three. If, however, the hearer were in a place where he could understand me, and I knew he could hear, then, if I became insistent because he had not responded to earlier call, I would usually allow the pitch to fall to level four, but accompanying it with extra-strong stress, normal quantity, and lack of a chanting type — in other words, the situation would in that case follow the regular rules of attention and emphasis, instead of utilizing a chant." (*op. cit.*, Note 115).

And again Anderson (Mrs. H. J. Uldall) holds that calls with rising unstressed syllable are more imperative or reproving (*op. cit.*, § 66). I.e. *Peter!* (where *Pe* is high; *ter* is unstressed but the beginning portion of this syllable starts still higher and *ter* ends in a completely falling tone.) A similar observation is made by Margaret Schlauch in her book, *The Gift of Tongues*.

The aesthetic effect of Types I and II is a sort of lyrical quality — a chant. Henry L. Smith states that "if the person is not visible *singing* is used with overloudness. *Johnny, are you home yet? Here Johnny* is accompanied by a kind of drawling." (The Communication Situation, FSI). This songlike quality, peculiar to the normative call, is characteristically absent in Types III and IV, which are more symptomatic of normal speech. In Types I and II, the speaker seems to be struggling, so to speak, with distance, physical and/or mental, whereas in Types III and IV, he is struggling with the other party.

The examples of call-sequences here cited do not, of course, exhaust all possible combinations of call-contours. Different speakers might have used different types for an identical passage. What concerns us here is the way reiterated and variegated calls arrange themselves, and it deserves — and awaits — our further investigation.

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