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## The Role of Prosodic Features in Conversational Interaction : Hard Talk a Case Study

**A B S T R A C T**

This study aims to look into the relationships between prosodic features from phonological perspective and interactional relationships and sequence organization from conversation analysis (CA) view. There are specific prosodic cues that speakers employ to signal to one another when it is their turn to talk in any speech situation. These cues serve as signs to let other people know when it is the speaker's turn to talk. It is important to demonstrate that some prosodic patterns indicate the end or continuation of a turn.

Prosodic orientation, such as intonation and tone patterns, are hypothesized to reveal information about participants' matching and non-matching of a prior turn. The consistent use of the same pitch height indicates that there is agreement among the participants on a specific situation.

PRAAT, a computer program is used for doing acoustic analysis to conduct the prosodic analysis following Ladefoged's model. It is supposed that when the speaker makes a low pitch, he is no more interested in the topic raised or no more excited, but when there is a high pitch that means there is more to be added and some significant issues can be shown. However, prosodic orientation is obviously used in political interviews in a manner similar to that of ordinary speech. As well as Political interviews commonly employ pauses, interrupted speech, and reasoning, some of which show a particular orientation to the preceding turns. © 2023 JTUH, College of Education for Human Sciences, Tikrit University

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دور السمات العامة في التفاعل الخطابى : الحديث الجاد , دراسة حالة

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**الخلاصة:**

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى النظر في العلاقات بين السمات العامة ( العروض ) من المنظور الصوتي والعلاقات التفاعلية والتنظيم التسلسلي من وجهة نظر تحليل الحوار. فهناك إشارات محددة للعروض يستخدمها المتحدثون للإشارة إلى بعضهم البعض عندما يحين دورهم للتحدث في أي موقف كلامي. حيث تعمل هذه الإشارات كعلامات لإعلام الآخرين متى يحين دور المتحدث في التحدث.

يفترض أن أوجه العروض، مثل أنماط التنغيم ، تكشف عن معلومات حول مطابقة المشاركين وعدم مطابقتهم للأسبقية في الحديث. فإن الاستخدام المتسق لنفس ارتفاع طبقة الصوت يشير إلى وجود اتفاق بين المشاركين على موقف معين.

لقد تم توظيف برنامج برات ، وهو برنامج حاسوبي للتحليل الصوتي، لإجراء تحليل أوجه العروض وذلك باتباع نموذج Ladefoged. حيث من المفترض أنه عندما يتحدث المتحدث بطبقة صوت منخفضة، فإنه غير مهتم بالموضوع المطروح، وغير متحمس للاستمرار في الحديث عن الموضوع؛ ولكن عندما يكون هناك طبقة صوت عالية، فهذا يعني أن هناك المزيد لإضافته ويمكن عرض بعض القضايا الهامة.

خلصت الدراسة إلى أن بعض عناصر العروض تكشف عن مواقف المشاركين في الحوار، كالاتفاق أو الاختلاف. بالإضافة الى ذلك، فإن أوجه العروض تستخدم في المقابلات السياسية بطريقة مماثلة لتلك الخاصة بالحوار اليومي، حيث تستخدم فترات توقف، والكلام المنقطع، والتعليل بشكل شائع، وبعضها يظهر توجهها معينا للأدوار السابقة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** السمات العرضية ، العبارة اللغوية (المنغمة)، المقطع اللفظي (البارز)، تحليل المحادثة، الأزواج المجاورة

## 1.Introduction

A conversation requires interaction between one or more speakers and listeners. The focus of conversation analysis (CA) is on spoken interaction. Conversation is one of the most common applications of human language. All humans involved in conversational interaction, as well as human society, rely on conversation to communicate. Different linguists have defined it differently. Conversation, according to Liddicoat (2007:1), is an activity in which people socialize, develop, and maintain their relationships with one another. Conversation, according to Levinson (1983:284), is a verbal and nonverbal stretch of continuous interaction realized by reciprocal behavior between at least two people who have a mutual

intention to communicate freely. Sacks defines conversation as at least two turns (coulthord,1985:156).

According to Goodwin and Heritage (1990:289), conversation is the primary site of language use in the natural world and the primary medium for human socialization. Thus, ordinary conversation serves as a springboard for more specialized communicative contexts (for example, the legal process, the educational system, and the medical encounter), which can be analyzed as embodying systematic variations from conversational procedures.

In CA, the sequencing of conversational events is important, as is the reaction of each speaker to the previous one in the developing context. Conversation analysts employ empirical methodology: rather than speculating about a speaker's intention in an utterance, a conversation analyst would examine the recipient's actual reaction, deriving an interpretation directly from the details of the conversation.

It's not surprising that prosody is a major focus of the microanalysis that has traditionally been associated with CA. In the foreword to a significant anthology on CA and prosody Selting and Couper- Kuhlen (1996:1) emphasize the importance of prosody in interaction.

## 2. Prosody and Spoken Discourse

Beyond the sentence level, Ann(2001:3) demonstrates that prosody plays a critical role in the coherence of discourse in spoken English. Consider this brief exchange from a conversation about weight gain and loss. The participants are a group of friends who have been talking about how one of them has recently recovered from an illness that caused him to lose a lot of weight. Now that he is feeling better, he is eating more than usual in order to regain his weight. A female member of the group makes the following observation:

1) God how WONDERFUL to be so SKINNY you could just STUF yourself ((pause)) (

And WANNA GAIN-WEIGHT ((pause))

Another rejoins:

2) But how TERRIBLE to be SICK to GET that way

In a brief comment on the role of prosody in this exchange, intonation reinforces the juxtaposition of the words wonderful and terrible. This occurs across turns—use C's of a contrastive pitch is in response to a concept introduced by M. M's low pitch on gain weight adds to the cohesion, indicating that the topic of-eight gain is already being discussed. M associates a contrastive pitch with want to in the same utterance. The notion that one does not normally want to gain weight, conveyed in this intonation, may be of interest to an ethnographer studying modern American culture. The turn-taking between these conversant is also influenced by their prosody. All three utterances end with a low pitch followed by a pause, which can be used to transition to a new speaker's turn.

## 2.1 Prosody in Interaction

### 2.1.1 What is Prosody?

Crystal's and Firth's definitions are currently the most relevant for research on prosody in interaction.

'Prosody' is understood in the West European research tradition following Crystal (1969) to encompass all (suprasegmental) phenomena produced by the interplay of pitch, loudness, and duration in syllable-sized or larger segments and that are realized in a "essentially variable relationship to the words selected" (ibid.: 5). While this definition implies that lexically determined word stress is not a part of prosody, it does include the following phenomena and parameters:

-primary (linguistic) prosodic systems: pitch direction, pitch, range, pause, loudness, tempo, rhythmically.

-secondary (paralinguistic) phenomena-voice qualifiers' (for example whisper, breathiness, huskiness, creak, etc.) and voice qualifications (such as laughter, giggle, tremolo, sobbing or crying).

-with tension (for instance lax, tense, slurred or precise voice) belonging to both prosodic as well as paralinguistic systems (Crystal 1969: 131, cf. also Auer and Selting 2001: 112).

### 2.1.2 Intonation

Intonation is the change in pitch that occurs during an utterance, where pitch is determined by the rate of vibration of a speaker's vocal folds. Pitch can have a lexical function in tone-based languages such as Mandarin Chinese. This is not true in English, where pitch can be used independently of lexical meaning.

The location and direction of pitch movement is both important in terms of meaning. Laver (1994), citing Halliday (1963, 1967, 1970), suggests limiting analysis to the five pitch patterns listed below:

| Name of tone | Pitch pattern | Contour name      |
|--------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Tone 1       | \             | fall              |
| Tone 2       | / \           | rise or fall rise |
| Tone 3       | —/            | rise              |
| Tone 4       | / \           | rise-fall-rise    |
| Tone 5       | \ \           | fall-rise-fall    |

(Laver, 1994: 495)

Several researchers have attempted to interpret pitch movements. The fact that pitch is relative means that pitch level or movement is only meaningful in relation to listener perception of adjacent pitch levels.

### 2.1.3 Intonational Phrase (IP)

The "intonational phrase" is designated by Pierrehumbert (1980), the "tone unit" by Halliday (1967a) and Brazil (1985), and the "intonation unit" by Chafe (1994). All of these terms refer to a pitch contour that is more or less continuous and contains, at a minimum, an initial key, a number of pitch accents, and a pitch boundary. The intonational phrase, in theory, can be thought of as the intonation unit at which cognition, syntax, physics, phonetics, and phonology of speech

converge. Body movements also tend to correspond with these units (Acton, 1998; Erickson, 1992).

The size of the intonational phrase, according to Chafe (1994), is optimal for occupying "echoic" memory, an immediate, short-term recall system that allows a listener to process each unit of speech as a whole (p. 55). This is consistent with Halliday's (1967b) claim that the tone unit and the "information unit" are the same. Similarly, Levelt (1989) discusses the preplanning, slightly before speech, of short linguistic units, each of which is to be articulated as a single intonational phrase.

## 2.2 Conversation Analysis

One of the most common usages of human language is conversation. Conversation is used to communicate by all humans involved in conversational interaction, as well as by human society as a whole.

It has been defined differently by different linguists. According to Liddicoat (2007:1), conversation is an activity in which people socialize, develop, and maintain relationships with one another. Levinson (1983:284) defines conversation as a verbal and nonverbal stretch of continuous interaction realized through reciprocal behaviour between at least two people who have a mutual desire to communicate freely. Conversation, according to Sacks, consists of at least two turns (Coulthord,1985:156).

### 2.2.1 Turn Taking

Turn-taking is one of the most noticeable aspects of conversation. Turns in conversation are structurally different stretches of language.

Turn-taking behaviour is socially constructed because it is a normative process that participants must complete.

According to Coulthord (1985:59), one of the most fundamental facts about conversation is that the roles of the speaker and listener change with remarkably little overlap and few silences.

### **3.Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Data Selection and Description**

Since this study is concerned with finding out the role of prosodic features like (intonation(intonational phrase) ,tonic syllable and tone pattern for each intonational phrase ) in the Hard Talk program and its effect on the hearer on TV interviews , the collected data are two interviews from the former president David Cameron and the latter president Boris Johnson in different subjects .

#### **3.2 Research Method and Procedures**

This study was created after several stages of data collection:

1-Downloading the transcript of the interviews from the internet in the website or in the link <https://youtu.be/u8iLrfOYyIk> which is related to the first interview and <https://youtu.be/3rm45jiPrdw> which is related to the second interview.

2- listening to understand the words used in depth, read the entire discussion and watch the interviews many times.

3-Using Selting(1998) model, Ladefoged and Johnson (2015) in analyzing the selected data for prosodic analysis.

4-Selecting several face- to face scenes of conversation between The interviewer and the interviewee in BBC Hard Talk.

5- The selected utterances are analyzed using PRAAT software programme.

6-Acoustic values related to intonation(frequency and intensity) are signaled and documented in numbers.

7- Each sentence that consists of one or more than one intonational phrase for each of them there is one tonic syllable ,gave the value to the tone pattern through if it is Rise or low or contour one( Rise-low),(low-Rise).

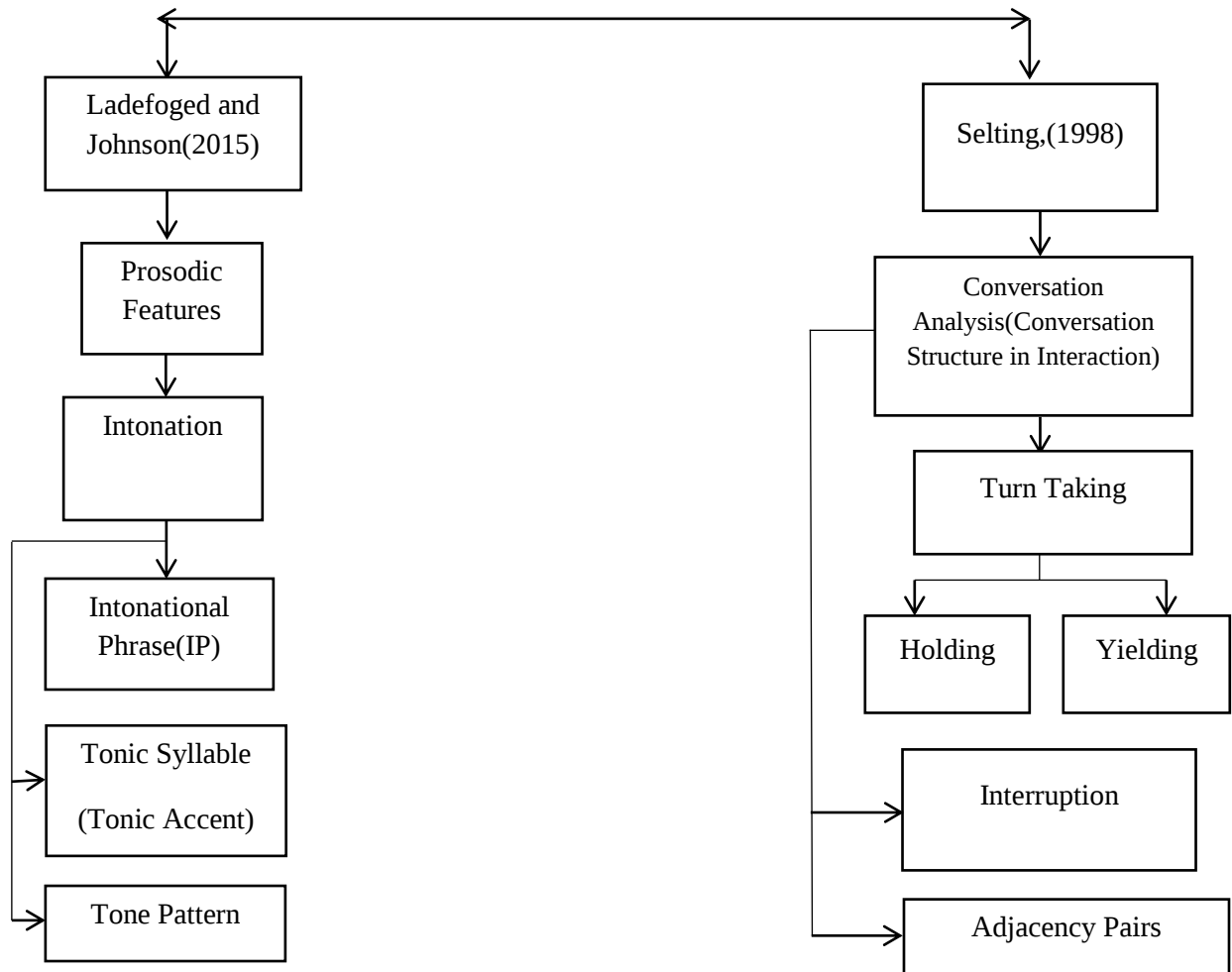
8-Each tonic syllable in every intonational phrase is written in caption to be highlighted.

### 3.3 Model of Analysis

Generally, this study is carried out under the Umbrella of prosodic features as a main method. How the role of prosodic features affects the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee .There are many models that adopted to create a complete study that's related to the current study ,these models are:

Firstly, Ladefoged and Johnson,(2015). This model explains each type of prosodic features starting from intonation ( intonational phrase , Tonic Syllable and Tone pattern (Rising, Falling and Contour tone(Rising-Falling ,Falling-Rising)).

Secondly, Selting,(1998).This model investigates the structure of conversation in interaction (conversation analysis),starting from turn taking ,how the speakers hold or yield their turns, then Interruption that will happen inside the interaction between the two interlocutors and lastly adjacency pairs .



## **Model of Analysis**

### **4. DATA ANALYSIS**

This section presents a detailed analysis of data which are composed of eight sentences. Four from the former British president (David Cameron) interview and four from the latter British Prime Minister (Boris Johnson) interview. Sentences are arranged according to sentence type, and the analysis is made in two phases based on the model developed in section three , phonological analysis is made based on PRAAT programme and the interactional analysis is made based on the area of conversation analysis .

#### **4.1 Data Analysis of Cameron's Interview**

This section present an analysis of the first interview that happened in 2015 with the interviewee British Prime Minister (David Cameron) with the interviewer Ed Miliband. They have participated in the primary election's first broadcast set piece event. In the combined Sky News/Channel 4 broadcast, Jeremy Paxman and the studio audience grilled the duo. " The Battle for Number 10".

##### **4.1.1. Discussion of Cameron's Interview**

This section presents an analysis of the first interview that happened in 2015 with the interviewee British Prime Minister (David Cameron) with the interviewer Ed Miliband. They have participated in the primary election's first broadcast set piece event. In the combined Sky News/Channel 4 broadcast, Jeremy Paxman and the studio audience. "The Battle for Number 10.

Three excerpts are selected from Cameron's speech who is the interviewee British Prime Minister and the object of primary election. These excerpts include 5 tone units with their boundaries. Utterances number 1,2 and 3 shows in Figures 1, 2 and 3 show the three selected samples of the PRAAT analysis of the TUs in Excerpts 1, 2 and 3.

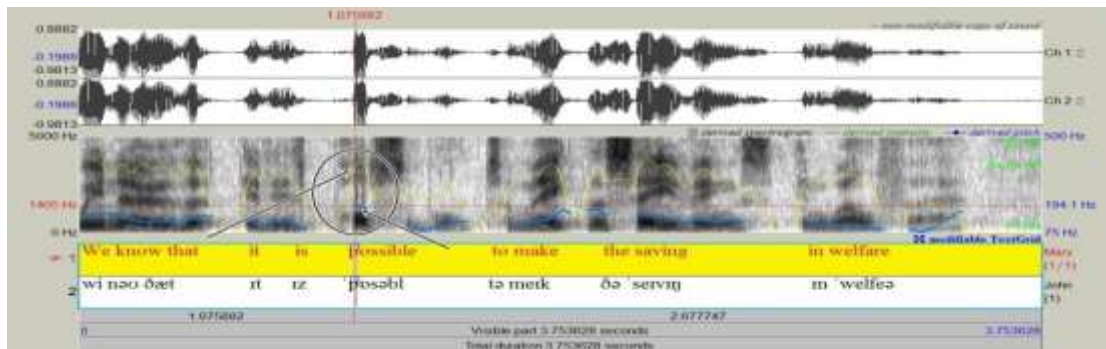


Figure (1): The PRAAT Analysis of The TU in Interview 1

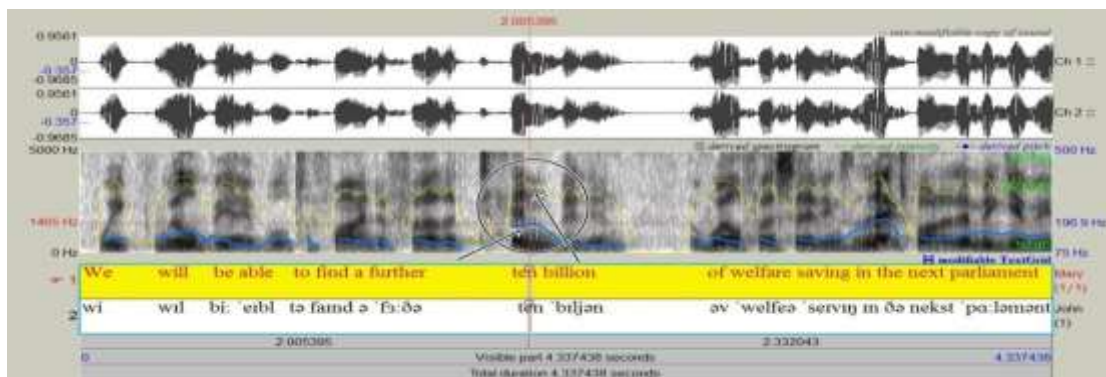


Figure (2): The PRAAT Analysis of The TU in Interview 1

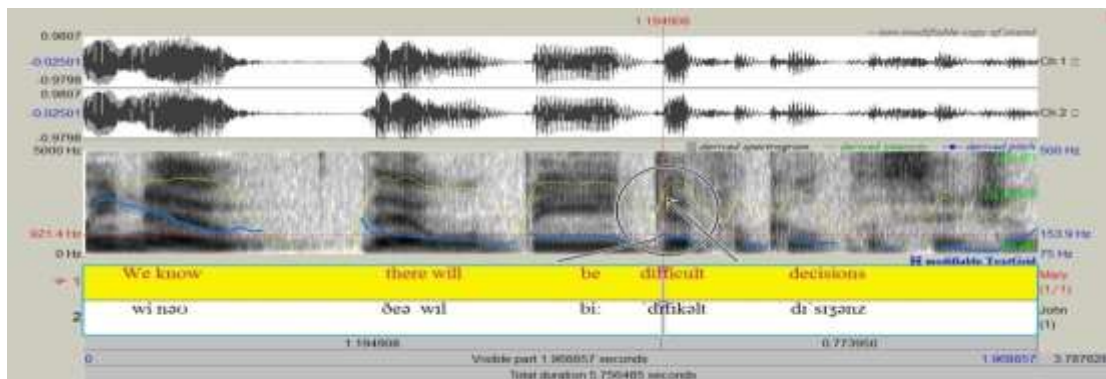


Figure (3): The PRAAT Analysis of The TU in Interview 1

As indicated in the first excerpt in fig. 1, fig. 2 & fig. 3 above, it is interesting to shed light on some significant points. In the first interview, British Prime Minister (David Cameron) is as interviewee and the interviewer is Ed Miliband. It is shown that the atmosphere is very calm and the interviewer gives much opportunity to the interviewee to answer, argue, and even to interrupt in specific contexts. However it

is characterized by pauses used as a tool may be to retrieve information. Tonic syllable lengthening and strong or accented syllable are clearly presented. As such, Interaction requires cooperation among interviewers that sort of cooperation is clearly carried out by prosodic features which help the interviewers to reveal their purposes and reactions, as it can be seen in the telling and accepting via pair adjacency of conversational analysis of interactional features in the following utterance intonational Phrase;

**"We know that it is possible to make the saving in welfare."**

Cameron is frequently trying to keep his turn and try to direct the interaction by focusing on the issues from his perspective. The rhythmic pattern is prevalently shows stressed tonic syllables which are indicative of high pitch accent, as in the expression '**possible**' with (194.1) Hz.

In fact, the use of prosodic features carries variation. David Cameron in his speech used commonly a referring tone (**rise-fall**) particularly in the third utterance with a **low** termination. Here, Cameron reflected his imprison towards the audience that he is telling the truth in which he may make the saving in welfare. He used a low termination to reproduce his continuity in his speech talking about his ability with his responsibility as being the next president. He has experienced a good job in his career but all that has come to display his ability when he used the **tonic syllable** in the terms "**possibility, know, difficult, part, ten**" which indicates his desire in being the next president, though there is a lot of difficulties that does not fit there anymore, so; he finds satisfaction with his audiences in stating that;

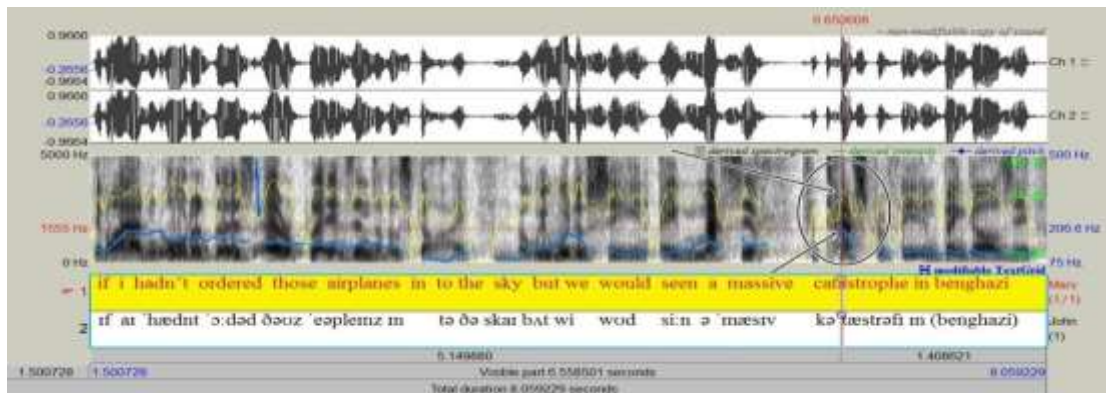
**We know there will be difficult decisions.**

The fall tone is also used to increase the audiences' knowledge on how he tried to find out answers about what happened to his difficult decisions that they should take together. In the other utterance, Cameron is used a proclaiming tone (**rise-fall**) to make his speech more emphatic and assertive as he talked about his suggestion on going together to find solutions to the difficulties. So, some prosodic features display the interviewers' attitudes, agreement or disagreement. Cameron attracts the attention of his audiences when he ends his speech with a proclaiming tone (**rise-fall**) to add unexpected information about these projects since they seem very

usual to him; he is really convinced that he will be able to find a further ten billion of welfare saving in the next parliament\_as in his assertive utterance;

**We will be able to find a further ten billion of welfare saving in the next parliament.**

Certain pattern of intonation contour (**high-high**), (**low-low**) display mutual perspectives between interviewers, e.g. matched turns in the previous lines of the interviews. That shows an agreement between them upon specific issues. Political interviews require informative as well as argumentative impressions to be drawn by the interviewer who always seeks information from the interviewee. So, if a turn requires further speculation he may rephrase his question again for the benefit of the interaction. Thus, continual and prolonged turns are sometimes interrupted by the interviewer, but, with these utterances intonational phrases there is no interruption which seems that there is an agreement between the interviewers.



**Figure (4): The PRAAT Analysis of The TU in Interview 1**

As indicated in the fig. 4 above, Cameron in his speech used commonly a referring tone (**fall-rise**) particularly in this excerpt with a low termination, and the (TS) is **catastrophe** with intensity 81 and frequency 206.6 as in;

**If I hadn't ordered those airplanes in to the sky, but we would see a massive catastrophe in Benghazi.**

Here, Cameron wants to give an excuse for his order to fight Banghazi as to reflect his goals. Thus, he declared that it was right to stand with France and

America to stop Colonel Gaddafi when he was going to butcher his own people there. Because, if he had not stopped them, we might see a massive catastrophe in Benghazi of people butchered.

## 4.2 Data Analysis of Johnson's Interview

The Second interview that happened in 2020 with the interviewee British Prime Minister (Boris Johnson) with the interviewer Laura Kuennsberg. Speaking to the political editor of the BBC, the prime minister discusses the coronavirus pandemic. In the interview, Boris Johnson acknowledged that the government "could have done differently" in its treatment of the virus during the "initial few weeks and months" of the pandemic when it came to coronavirus.

Three excerpts are selected from Johnson's speech, who is the interviewee British President and the object of coronavirus pandemic. These excerpts include 5 tone units with their boundaries. Figures 5, 6 and 7 show the three selected samples of the PRAAT analysis of the TUs in Excerpts 5, 6 and 7

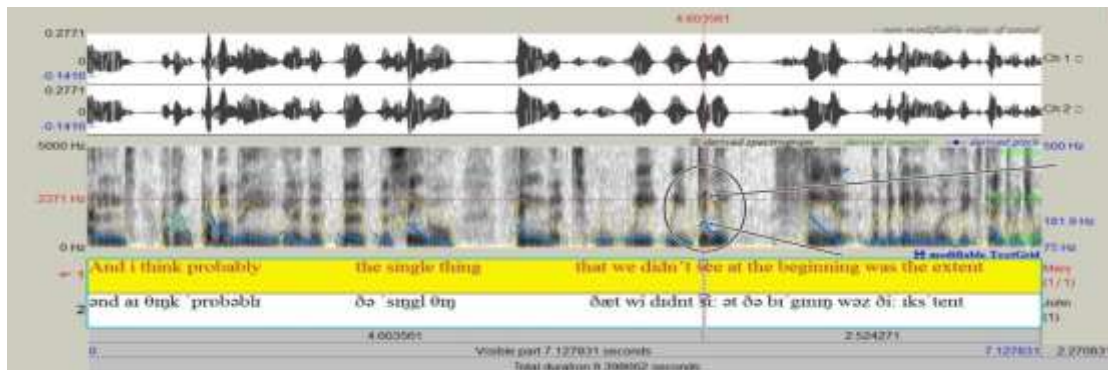


Figure (5): The PRAAT Analysis of The TU in Interview 2

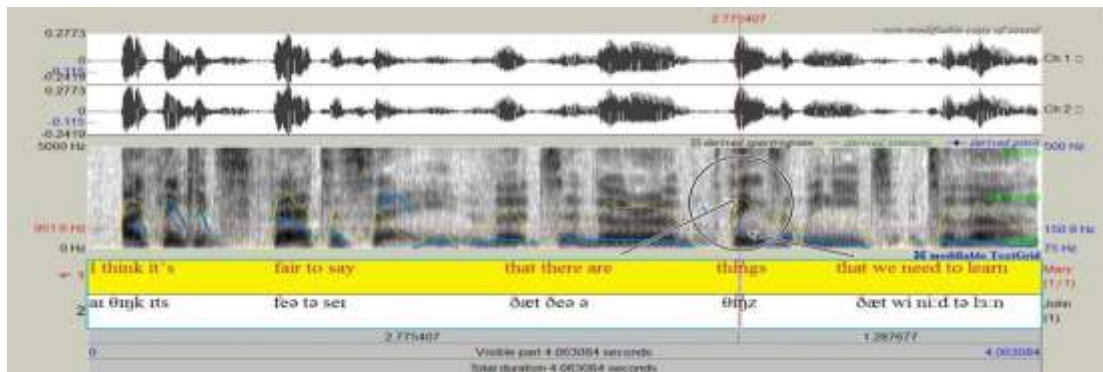


Figure (6): The PRAAT Analysis of The TU in Interview 2

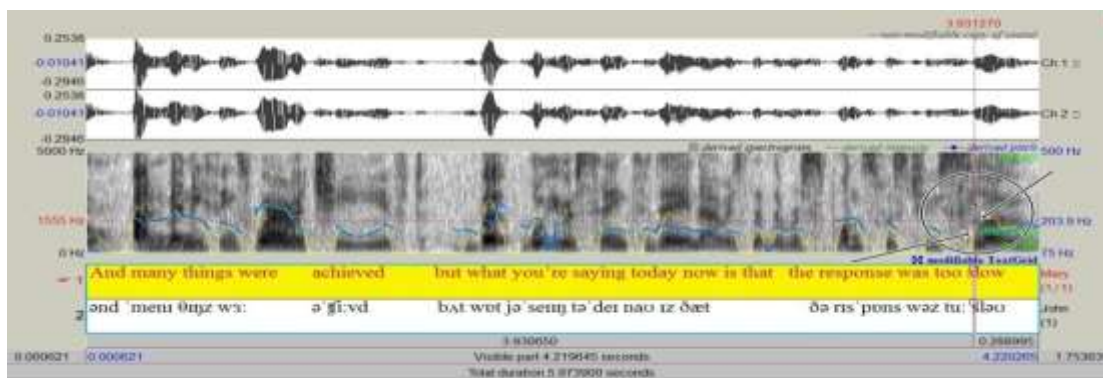


Figure (7): The PRAAT Analysis of The TU in Interview 2

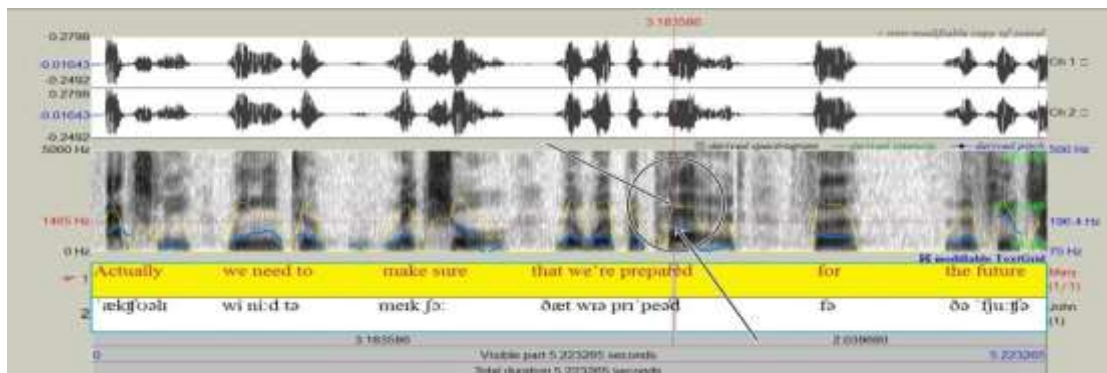
As showed in the second Interview in fig. 5, 6 & 7 above, it is stimulating to lean on some important points. In the second interview, British Prime Minister (Boris Johnson) is as interviewee and the interviewer is Laura Kuenssberg. It is revealed that the atmosphere is not very quiet and the interviewer cooperates with the interviewee to answer, argue, and even to disturb in particular contexts. However, it is described by referring tone with a high termination is used to capture the attention of audiences to his terms that was used in such utterances;

**"And I think probably the single thing that we didn't see at the beginning was the extent",**

**"I think it's fair to say that there are things", and**

**" And many things were achieved but what your saying today now is that the response was too slow"**

The proclaiming tone is used when Johnson describes corona virus and its extent at the beginning. The topic has clearly left him feeling worried, and he even expresses his absurd belief in using such expressions (see , things, and slow). In fact, Covid-19 has been the toughest stress test for political institutions, public policies, and public administrations in post-war history, in real time. In many countries, political institutions failed; others crumbled but withstood the pressure. According to Johnson's point of view is that his country has achieved many things but in a very slow way. As such utilizing these terms (see, things, and slow) with intensity (73.72, 74.52, and 60.16) and frequency of (181.9, 150.9, and 203.9), he tries to show that being to the right class is the best according to his consideration.



**Figure (8): The PRAAT Analysis of The TU in Interview 2**

In this excerpt, Johnson starts his speech with a referring tone as he started with the word “prepared” with a( **fall-rise**) tone to justify the reason about getting ready for any sophisticated circumstances about corona virus. So, he uses this utterance;

**"Actually we need to make sure that we're prepared for the future"**

## 9. Conclusions

The present study is based on Ladefoged's model of prosodic features like (intonation )and its components like Intonational phrase ,tonic syllable and other feature like tone pattern in investigating the intended meaning in political speech. And Selting's model about the interactional features (CA) like Turn Taking ,interruption and adjacency pairs . It shows, particularly, the role of prosodic features in Ladefoged's model successfully illustrate how these features play a role

to make an interaction between the participants in Cameron's and Johnson's interviews .The major conclusions of the study are as follows:

1-Prosodic orientations clearly carry out the collaboration that is necessary for interaction by assisting participants in revealing their purposes and reactions.

2- A certain intonation contour pattern, such as matched turns (high-high),(low-low) of both interviews, shows mutual perspectives between participants. That demonstrates their shared understanding of a certain issues.

3-Some prosodic elements reveal the attitudes of the participants, such as agreement or disagreement. However, prosodic orientation is obviously used in political interviews in a manner similar to that of ordinary speech. Political interviews commonly employ pauses, interrupted speech, and reasoning, some of which show a particular orientation to the preceding turns.

4-Political interviews require for the interviewer, who offers direct information from the interviewee, to form argumentative as well as informative impressions. In order to improve the conversation, he may rephrase his question if a turn calls for further speculation. Thus, repeated and extended turns are occasionally shortened by the interviewer, but the interviewee typically tries to maintain his turn and lead the conversation by highlighting the problems from his perspective.

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