

The Intonation of English Televised Discourse with Reference to Arabic

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Abstract

Intonation is a universal phenomenon and can be regarded as a verbal punctuation to any spoken language. It helps in comprehending beyond what mere words can convey. This suprasegmental feature has been studied formally and functionally up to date.

The aim of this paper is: firstly, to show the role of intonation in English televised discourse with reference to that in Arabic; and secondly, to show the intonation patterns and the connotations they may convey in both languages.

The data for English discourse are taken from BBC World News TV Channel, specifically, from the program called 'HARDtalk'; whereas the Arabic data are taken from Al-Jazeera TV Channel, specifically, the program called 'Al-Sharee'a Wal Hayat'. These data have been analyzed auditorily and perceptually according to the theoretical approach of Roach (1991).

This paper focuses primarily on the discourse and attitudinal functions of intonation. Furthermore, there is an illustration which goes counter to Brazil's view with regard to the tonic syllable placement according to 'givenness' i.e., old and new items in a discourse and supports Roach's view that the tonic syllable placement is determined by the assessment of some items in discourse to focus attention, irrespective of their givenness while speaking. However, it is hoped that this paper will come up with acceptable findings with respect to English and Arabic televised discourse.

1.1 Preliminary

Intonation is an integral part of every utterance. O'Connor (1980: 108) states that "every language has melody in it; no language is spoken on the same musical note all the time". Thus, there is no human speech to be spoken in a monotone.

(*)As far as the definition of intonation is concerned, Roach (1992: 56) points out that the term has "... Two rather differed meanings:

In a restricted sense, the variation in the pitch of a speaker's voice used to convey or alter meaning.

1- In a broader and more popular sense, equivalent to prosody, where variation in such things as voice quality, tempo, and loudness are included" in addition to variation in pitch.

However, intonation varies somewhat from an individual to another, and noticeably from a district to district, each part of a country mostly has its distinctive speech melody (See: Ward, 1972: 169).

1.2 Literature Review

There are numerous English works on intonation. Here is a list of the most prominent ones as far as the British and American approaches are concerned.

Sweet (1906), Palmer (1922), Armstrong & Ward (1926), Jassem (1952), Halliday (1967) and (1970), Crystal (1969), Jones (1960), Gimson (1970), O'Connor and Arnold

(1973), Brazil et al., (1980), Brown et al., (1980), Roach (1991), Cruttenden (1997), Bloomfield (1933), Pike (1945), Bolinger (1949) and (1958), to cite but a few.

It is worth pointing out here that the American approach of intonation focuses more on the form of intonation than its function, whereas the other way round is true with respect to the British approach.

The following works are concerned with televised interviews exclusively:

Wehner (2000) tackled the evasiveness of a politician and non-politician in televised interviews.

Redeker (2006) handled the gendered interactional strategies in public debates. She concluded, for instance, that continuers such as (m) hm, aha, etc. can have various functions depending mainly on intonation and non-verbal accompaniment.

Smith (2007) illustrated the role of intonation in televised interviews showing primarily the demarcation between tone-units (information distribution) and the placement of the tonic syllable (information focus).

Interest in Arabic intonation has recently gained much ground. However, Arabic intonation is primarily tackled through unpublished dissertations, most of which focus primarily on the grammatical function of it, whereas discourse intonation has not gained a great deal of investigation.

1.3 Functions of Intonation

According to Roach (1991), there are four functions of intonation: grammatical, attitudinal, accentual and discourse.

1.3.1 The Discourse Function of Intonation

The discourse intonation system was developed by David Brazil (1985, 1997) who has worked with others like: Coulthard & Montgomery (1981); Sinclair & Brazil (1982); Hewings (1990); and Cauldwell (2002).

Attention focusing is one of two essential facets of how intonation may be related to discourse in terms of Roach (1991: 177 ff). The second facet is turn-taking regulation. In other words "Knowing when its one's turn to speak" (Fromkin et al., 2003: 214).

1.3.2 The Attitudinal Function of Intonation

This function makes the speaker capable of expressing his/her emotions toward the topic under discussion and toward the listener. With this regard, Pike (1945: 21) points out that the hearer reacts more violently to the intonational meanings than to the lexical ones because they add the speaker's attitude to the intrinsic lexical meaning.

Malmberg ,1963: 83) states "It is thanks to melodic differences, or intonation, that we can express all sorts of mental states or feelings (Satisfaction, discontent, surprise, contempt, disappointment, hatred, etc.).

The thorny matter, which is ill-defined, but important, is ascribing a particular tone pattern for each attitude or emotion (for similar views See: Crystal, 1969: 286; Bolinger, 1978: 475; Vandepitte, 1989: 280; and Roach, 1991: 164 ff).

1.3.3 The Grammatical Function of Intonation

By this function, one can differentiate, for example, between a statement and question as follows:

i) Ali is Coming.(Statement)

ii) Ali is Coming?(Questioning)

1.3.4 The Accentual Function of Intonation

Here, one can notice which part of the message or text must be accented because of its importance in any purposeful communication to focus attention. For example:-

- i) John sold a car. (It is John and not Smith for instance).
- ii) John sold a car. (Not the process of buying).
- iii) John sold a car. (Not a bicycle for instance).

1.4 The Intonation of English Televised Discourse with Reference to Arabic

If we reflect on this televised dialogue:-

A: || 'Let's 'start in here and now | be'fore we 'go back in time || 'How would you describe | your 'mental 'health today ||.

B: || I'm 'very ^normal || and that ^certainly is | a positive statement | for me || con'sidering the history | I have ex^perienced || I have a family || I have 'two children | 'two 'grand children | and a 'great grand son || So | I have a good life ||.

One can conclude that the falling intonation would not only refer to the meaning of closure or finality, but also would refer to non-finality of the discourse as it is the case in rising intonation. One can also notice that when the speaker uses a rising intonation, it means that he doesn't wish to be interrupted. In addition, the rising tone indicates that the turn is not completed; or that more is to come. What is worth pointing out here is that the illustration mentioned so far is also mostly applicable to Arabic televised discourse as follows:

A: || fa'd i:latu duct du:r | 'ya'ni: || 'kayfa 'yumkin lilfuqaha:? | ?ay'yushimu: fi: 'wad' ?il ?isla:m | fi: su:ra | 'laysat su:ra şida:^miyya | ma' al sa:lam || ?al? a:n | rub'bamal 'ba' d yuşawwir | ?al?is'la:m fi: mawqi ? | wal' sa:lam fi: 'mawqi ? a:xar | fi: ha:la taşa:dumiyya || 'kayfa 'yumkin lilfa'qi:h | ?ayyu'sa:him fi: ?i'za:lat ha:ð ih ssum a ||.

B: || | ?in'nahu: di:n | da'wa | bil'h ikmati wal'maw ' ðatil hasana || 'di:nul hi'wa:r walji da:l | bil'lati: 'hiya ahsan || 'ha:ð a: huwa | ?is'la:munal ? a^ði:m || 'kama: ?an'zalahul la:h | wa'kama: 'da'a: ?i'layhi ra'su: lul la:h | 'şallal 'la:hu 'a'layhi waşallam ||.

In the Arabic and English televised discourse above, one can observe that the prominence reflects the speaker's assessment of the relative information load carried by particular elements in the discourse. Clearly, the content words are more informative than the function words. Accordingly, they are given high prominence by the speakers.

Furthermore, Halliday (1967), and Brazil (1997) suggest strongly that the tonic syllable placement is determined by 'givenness', that is to say, speakers deaccent expressions that refer to entities that are currently talked about and accent expressions that refer to entities that are new. But in the English and Arabic televised discourse, putting the high prominence in terms of 'givenness' is not always applicable. The tonic syllable is mostly placed on the last item of a tone-unit. There is a number of items in English and Arabic discourse which are presupposed to be known by speaker and hearer, i.e., given items, nevertheless, they may have a high prominence as to the other items in the tone-unit (e.g., life, alʕa:lam). Rather, the tonic syllable is rightly put according to the assessment of some items of a tone-unit to focus attention.

1.5 Types and Meanings of Tones in English with Reference to Arabic

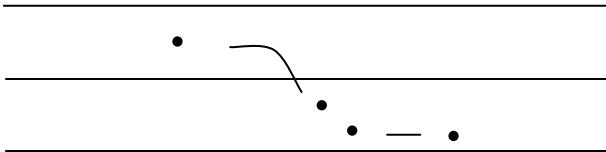
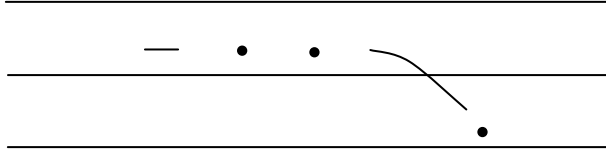
This paper identifies primarily the types of simple tones (i.e., falling and rising except the level ones).

1.5.1 Simple Tones

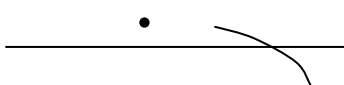
These tones usually have a single tonic syllable with a single pitch movement in one direction.

1.5.1.1 The Falling Tone

This tone is characterized by a downward pitch movement. The pitch of the tonic syllable descends from a relatively high pitch to a low one. This tone embodies various meanings and linguistic functions, for instance, statement, definiteness, assertiveness, positiveness, and finality (See: Gimson, 1970; Crystal, 1969; Ward, 1972; Ladefoged, 1975; Roach, 1991; Cruttenden, 1997) among others. The following examples are taken from the data:

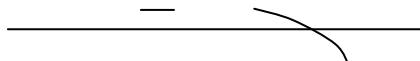
- 1) || a positive 'statement ||
- 
- (Statement)
- 2) || 'Welcome to hardtalk ||
- 
- (Definiteness)

3) || For me ||



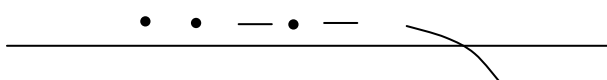
(Assertiveness)

4) || That's right ||



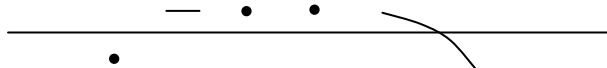
(Full agreement)

5) || As a 'very 'young child ||



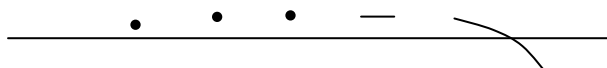
(Business-like manner)

6) || It's 'good to be here ||



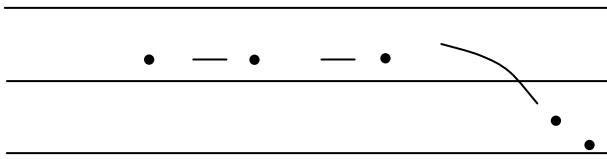
(Courtesy)

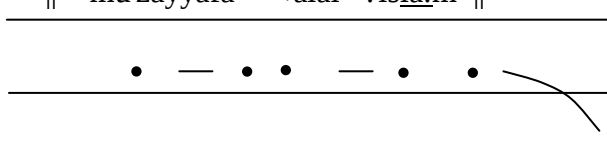
7) || I have a 'good life ||

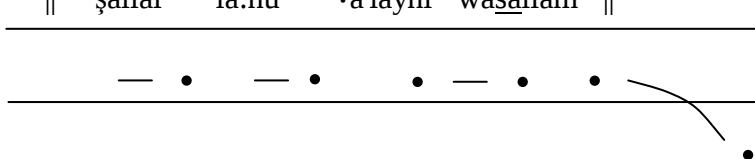


(Self-Satisfaction or Finality)

Also, in Arabic televised discourse, the falling tone has many connotations and linguistic functions as follows:

- 1) || was'ʔalul ˈla:hal ʔa:fiyya ||
- 
- (Ask Allah for good health)
(Statement)

- 2) || mu'zayyafa ˈʔalal ʔisla:m ||
- 
- (A false view of Islam)
(Assertiveness)

- 3) || ʔsallal ˈla:hu ʔa'layhi wasallam ||
- 
- (Peace and blessings be upon him)
(Finality)

1.5.1.2 The Rising Tone

This tone is characterized by an ascending pitch movement, i.e., the pitch moves up from a low position to a relatively higher one. This tone occurs in English televised discourse expressing various connotations and linguistic functions, for example: politeness, questioning, criticism, resentment, encouraging, hesitation or non-finality (See: Gimson, 1970; Crystal, 1969; Ward, 1972; Ladefoged, 1975; Roach, 1991; Cruttenden, 1997), among others. Examples:

1) || 'Chris 'Costner Sizemore ||

(Addressing with interest)

2) || 'Two 'years old ? ||

(A statement used as question)

3) || and ... ||

(Hesitation)

4) || 'Explain to people ||

(Request)

5) || Was that the 'only trauma ||

(Doubt or Enquiring)

- 6) || Physically | and emotionally ||
-
- (Non-Finality)

Also in Arabic televised discourse, this tone has many connotations and linguistic functions as follows:

- 1) || fa'd i:latu dukt ɔ:r ||
-
- (Your honor doctor)
(Polite request)

- 2) || 'Kayfa 'yumkin ,lilfuqaha: ? ||
-
- (How can the jurists)
(A question asked with interest)

- 3) || ? a l? a:n ||
-
- (Now)
(More to follow)

4) || fa θ but u: ||

(Be patients)
(Encouraging)

There is no characterization of the level tones with regard to the data under study.

1.5.2 Complex Tones

These tones have a bi-directional pitch movement.

1.5.2.1 The Falling-Rising Tone

The bi-directional movement of this tone is characterized by a descending pitch followed by an ascending one. This tone has many connotations and linguistic functions, for instance, reservation, doubt, uncertainty, non-finality, correction etc. (See: Gimson, 1970; Crystal, 1969, Ladefoged, 1975; Roach, 1991; Cruttenden, 1997; Finch, 2000; Collins & Mees (2003), among others. The following examples are taken from the data:

1) || Be'cause you're in a ˘sense ||

(Uncertainty)

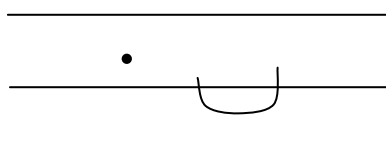
2) || and 'thank ˘God ||

(Limited agreement)

3) || ˘But ||

(Reservation)

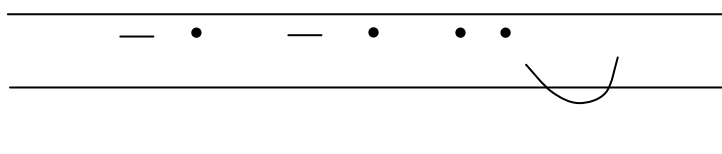
4) || It ˘took ... ||



(Non-Finality or Hesitation)

In likewise manner, this tone is used in Arabic televised discourse with similar connotations as follows:

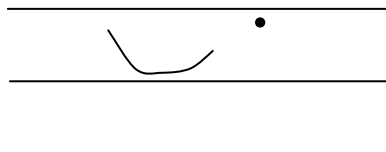
1) || 'Kayfa 'yumkin lil fa˘qi:h ||



(How can the jurist)

(Illustrative Question)

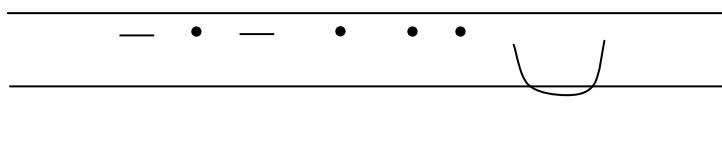
2) || ˘ya ʔ ni: ||



(Means)

(Hesitation)

3) || 'di:nu ˘h arbin waʃi˘d a: m ||



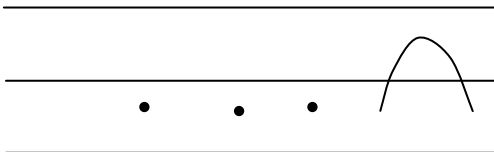
(Religion of war and confrontation ?)

(Reservation)

1.5.2.2 The Rising-Falling Tone

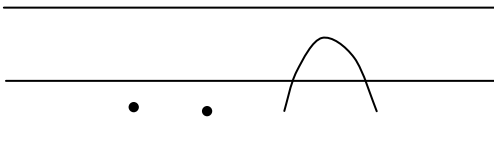
It is identified by a relatively prominent rising in pitch followed by a less prominent falling in pitch in a single tone-unit. This tone may embody assertiveness, impatience, possibility sarcasm, approval, disapproval, surprise, confidence, self-satisfaction, or challenging (See: Crystal, 1969; Ladefoged, 1975; Roach, 1991; Cruttenden, 1997) among others. The following examples are taken from the data:

1) || That it was ^me ||



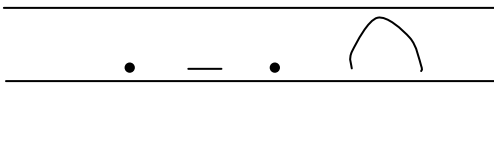
(Assertiveness)

2) || or is ^dying ||



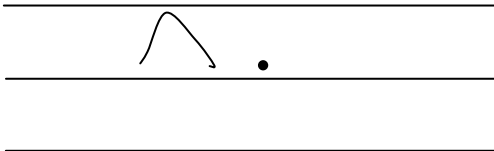
(Disapproval)

3) || To 'get my ^father ||



(Surprise)

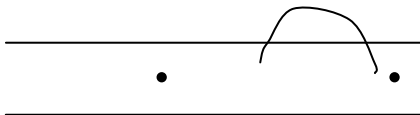
4) || ^Stop it ||



(Impatience)

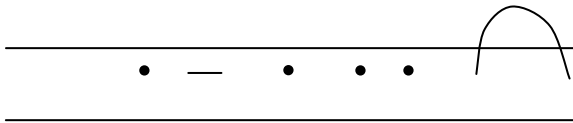
Similarly, in Arabic televised discourse this tone occurs with different connotations as follows:

1) || ?ad ^da: ? iya ||



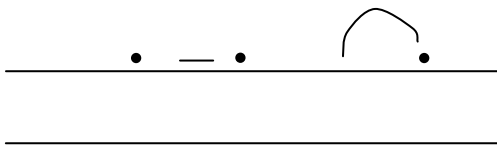
(The Preacher)
(Surprise)

2) || ? is 'la: munal ? a^Ǿ i:m ||



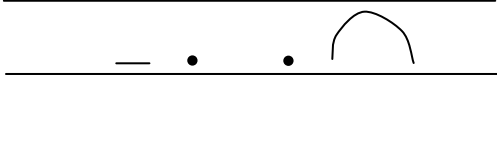
(Our great Islam)
(Approval)

3) || la:'Kinna ^ha: Ǿ a ||



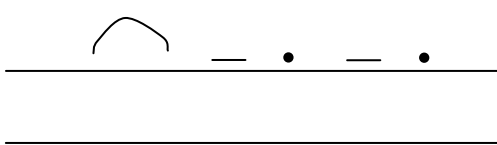
(But this ...)
(Non - Finality)

4) || 'di:nu sa^la: m ||



(Religion of peace)
(Confidence and self-satisfaction)

5) || ma: 'qultu 'ha: Ǿ a ||



(I did not say this)
(Impatience)

1.6 Summary and Findings

We can conclude that there is no one particular attitude dedicated to a specific intonation pattern exclusively. For instance, the assertive style of speech has been used with falling, rising, and rising-falling tones. However, the overlap in the meanings of tones is inevitable in both languages. One can also notice the repeated existence of simple tones i.e., falling and rising tones (except the level ones) in English and Arabic televised discourse with

different connotations and linguistic functions. It is noticed also that the complex tones are less frequently used than the simple ones.

The tonic syllable placement in terms of new and given information in a discourse is not always rightly applicable. Rather, the analysis reinforces Roach's view that the tonic syllable is rightly put according to the assessment of some items of the tone-unit to focus attention, irrespective of their givenness in the discourse. Moreover, one can notice that the tonic syllable is mostly (but not always) put on the last item of the tone-unit in English and Arabic spontaneous speech.

Appendix

The English Text

Date: 25/3/2009

Channel: BBC World News

Program: HARDtalk

A: The Interviewer

B: The Guest

A: || 'Chris 'Costner Sizemore | Welcome to Hardtalk ||.

B: || Thank you | it's 'good to be here ||.

A: || 'Let's 'start in here and now | be'fore we 'go back in time || 'How would you describe | your 'mental 'health today ||.

B: || I'm 'very ^normal || and that ^certainly is | a positive 'statement | for me ||
con'sidering the history | I have ex^perienced || I have a family || I have 'two
children | 'two 'grand children | and a 'great grand son || so | I have a 'good
life ||.

A: || And 'do you ever | 'suffer relapses | of the | disorder | that we're 'going to 'talk
a'bout today ||.

B: || I haven't had any | in 'over 'thirty years | now | and so || I 'feel that | I'm a
'well person ||and that I can say so ||.

A: || So 'let's 'talk about the ^past || and 'thank God | it is the past || Ex'plain to
people | 'how you 'first became aware | as a 'very 'young child | that were sort
of | more than one ^you | if I can 'put if that way ||.

B: || Well | I could see | little | people | 'just going around || doing the 'things I was
su'pposed to do || and they 'look just like me || the 'first time | I can
re'member this happening | I 'stuck my 'head under the pillow | be'cuase my

mother had 'cut her arm | 'very badly || and I 'saw 'this little 'red head girl |
'go out of the house | to 'get my father || that's the 'first time | I can
re'member seeing | a personality | and 'going do something ||.

A: || 'But that 'little 'red head girl | physically | must have been you | it is only you
| could 'get the help ||.

B: || That's right | It was me | 'but || physically | and emotionally | I was 'seeing
'somebody else | do it || It 'took | 'twenty five or 'thirty years || to re'member
that and 'know | that it was me ||.

A: || 'How 'old are you | when that ex'perience happened ||.

B: || 'Two years old ||.

A: || 'Two 'years old ||.

B: || yes ||.

A: || and ... || 'people who have 'studied you | be'cause you're in a 'sense | the
'guinea pig || they reckon | that this sort of | 'mental phenomenon is 'kept of
by trauma || was that the only trauma | in your 'young life | 'seeing your
mother | 'badly hurt ||.

B: || No | I 'saw a man | in a 'dirt tube | 'apparently had 'drowned | and... | the men
'taking him out || and I 'heard the word death | and then | I be'gin to
i'dentify anybody | that was sick | or is dying || ...

The Arabic Text

Date: 19/4/2009

Channel: Al-Jazeera

Program: Al-Sharee'a Wal-Hayyat

A: The Interviewer

B: The Guest

أ: فضيلة الدكتور، يعني كيف يمكن للفقهاء، أن يساهموا في وضع الإسلام في
صورة، ليست صورة صدامية مع العالم. الآن ربما البعض يصور، الإسلام في موقع، والعالم في
موقع آخر، في حالة تصادمية. كيف يمكن للفقهاء، أن يساهموا في إزالة هذه السمعة؟
ب: هذه مهمة الفقيه ومهمة الداعية ومهمة الإعلامي؛ الجميع عليهم أنت يبرزوا الإسلام في صورته
الحقيقية. لا نريد أن نختار صورة مزيفة على الإسلام، الإسلام في حقيقته

فعلا دين سلام. ودين يعني ... يمد يده إلى العالم؛ يسالم من سالمه ويحارب من حاربه. فالرسول (ﷺ) يقول: "لا تتمنوا لقاء العدو وسلوا الله العافية، فإذا لقيتموهم فثبتوا، وأعلموا أن الجنة تحت ظلال السيوف". فالقتال لتوفير الحرية للناس؛ لكن هذا؟ دين حرب وصادم؟ إنه دين دعوى بالحكمة والموعظة الحسنة؛ دين الحوار والجدال بالتواضع هي أحسن. هذا هو، إسلامنا العظيم، كما أنزله الله، وكما دعا إليه رسول الله (ﷺ).
أ: أشكركم فضيلة شيخنا العلامة، الدكتور يوسف القرضاوي. كما أشكركم مشاهدينا الكرام على حسن المتابعة.

A: || faḍ i:latu duct ٣: r | ٧aʕni: || kayfa 'yumkin lilfuqaha:ʔ | ʔay'yushimu: fi: waḍ ʔil
ʔisla:m | fi: ʃu:ra | 'laysat 'ʃu:ra sidam^miyya | maʕal ʔa:lam || ʔal ʔa:n |
rub'bamal baʕaḍ yu ʃawwir | ʔalʔisla:m fi: mawqiʕ | wal ʔa:lam fi: 'mawqiʕ
ʔa:xar | fi: ḥa:la tasa:du^miyya || 'kayfa 'yumkin lilfaʔq i:h | ʔay yusa:him fi:
ʔi'za:lat ha:Ḍ ihi ssumʕa ||.

B: || 'ha:Ḍ ihi: muhimmat ʔal faʔqi:h || wamuhimmat ʔad^da: ʔiyya wamuhimmat |ʔal
ʔiʕʔla:mi||ʔaljami:ʕ ʔalay him |ʔay'ybrizul ʔisla:m | fi: ʃ u:ratihil ḥaʔqi: qiyya || la:
nuri:d | ʔannaxtariʕ | ʃu:ra | mu'zayyafa ʔalal ʔisla:m || ʔalʔis'la:m fi: ḥaʔqi:'qatihi:
fiʕlan | 'di:nu saʔla:m || 'wadi:nun ٧aʕni: | ya'mudu 'yadahu: ʔilal ʔa:lam ||
yu'sa:lim man sa:lamahu | wayuḥ a:rib | man ḥ a:rabahu || farrasu:l ' ʃallal 'la:hu
ʔalayhi waʕallam yaqu:l | la: tata'manu: liqa:ʔal ʔadu: | wasʔalul 'la:hal ʔa:fiyya |
faʔiḌ a: laqi:tumu:hum | faḌbutu: || ,waʕʕlamu: ʔannal janna | 'taḥta Ḍ ila:li
ssuyu:f || falyuqa:til | litawfril ḥu'riyya linna:s || la:'kinna ḥa:Ḍ a: | 'di:nu ḥ arbin
wasiʔda:m || ʔin'nahu: di:n | daʕwa | bilḥ ikmati walmawʕiḌ atil ḥ asana | di:nul
ḥiwar waljida:l | bil'lati: hiyya ʔaḥsan || 'ha:Ḍ a: huwa | ʔis'la:munal ʔaḌ i:m |
kama: ʔan'zalahul la:h | wa'kama: 'daʕa: ʔi'layhi ra'su:lul la:h | ʔallal 'la:hu ʔalayhi
waʕallam ||.

References

- (*) Those who adopt the intonation as only a variation in pitch are like: Allen (1954: 39); Kingdon (1958: 1); Jones (1960: 275); Roach (1991: 133); Cruttenden (1997: 7); Finch (2000: 50); Crystal (2003: 241); Collins and Mees (2003: 221); among others. Whereas those who adopt the broader sense of it are like: Brown (1977: 84); Crystal (1969: 155); and Ladd (1996: 6).
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الخلاصة:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى بيان دور التنغيم في الخطاب المتلفز باللغة الإنكليزية وما يقابله في اللغة العربية. ولتحقيق ذلك تمّ تحليل مقتطفات من الخطاب المتلفز من قناة BBC الفضائية لأخبار العالم ومقتطفات من الخطاب المتلفز باللغة العربية من قناة الجزيرة الفضائية. جرى تحليل هذه المقتطفات من الناحية السمعية والإدراكية وحسب المنهج الذي اقترحه العالم اللغوي البريطاني بيتر روج (١٩٩١).

ومن بين وظائف التنغيم المختلفة تمّ التركيز في هذه الدراسة على وظيفة التنغيم في الخطاب ووظيفة الموقف الشخصي التعبيري. ولقد أيدت نتائج التحليل رأي اللغوي روج من أن وضع النبر الرئيسي على مقاطع اللفظة يحدده بعض الكلمات في تلك اللفظة في السياق وليس كون الكلمة قديمة أو جديدة في معناها.