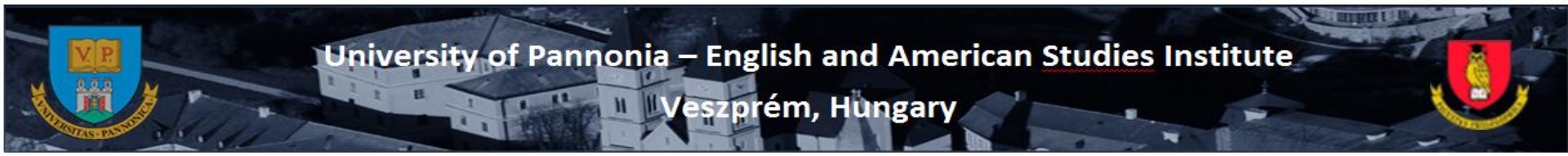
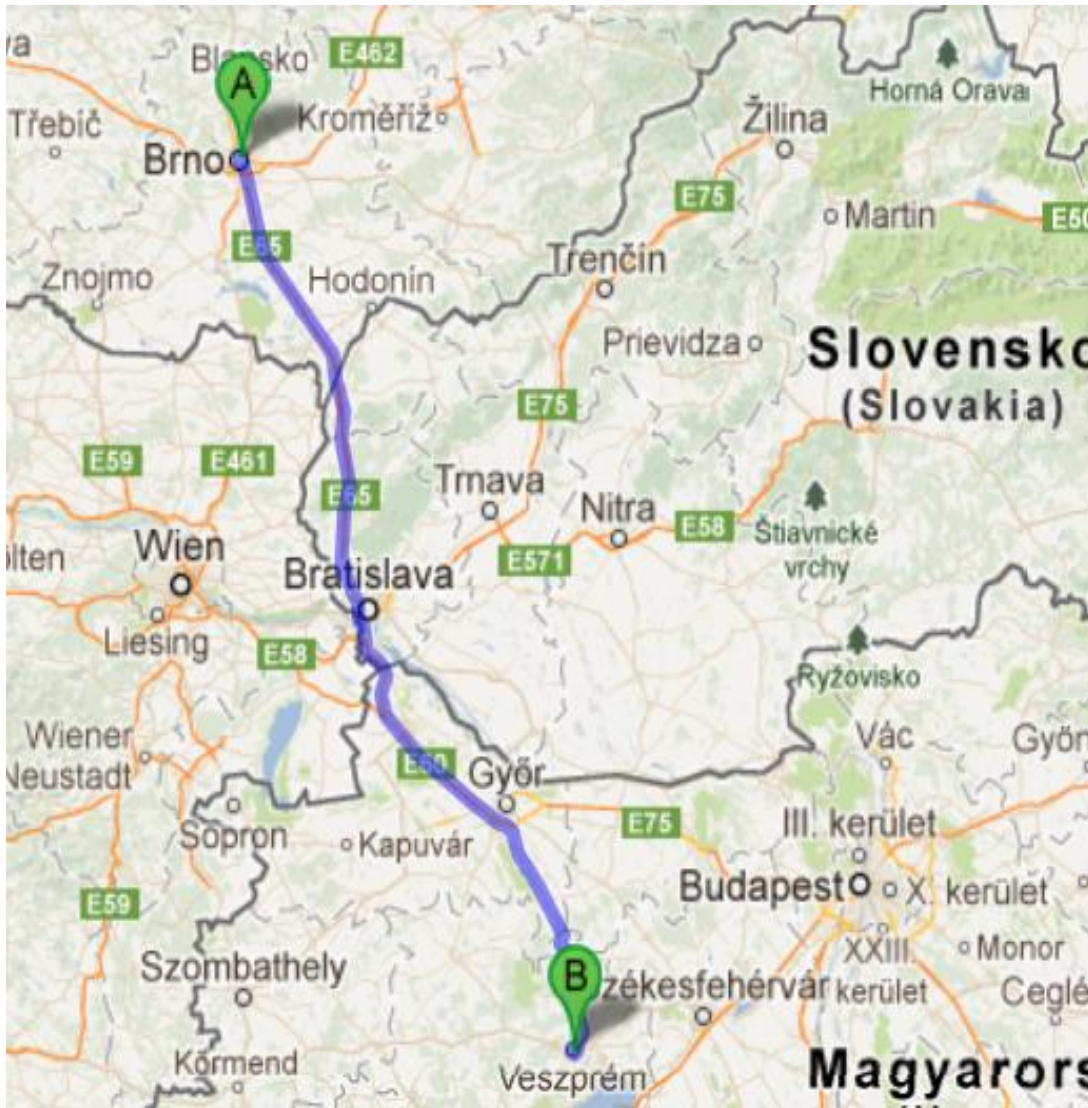


Sentence stress and intonation

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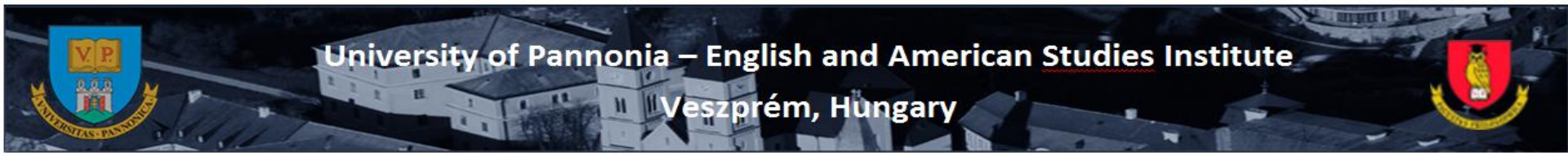
Veszprém (65,000)

- County seat 10 miles north of Lake Balaton, an hour's drive southwest of Budapest;

University of Pannonia (10,000)

- Faculties of
 - Engineering
 - Information Technology
 - Agriculture
 - Business and Economy
 - Modern Philologies and Social Sciences

English B.A., English M.A., TEFL MA, joint American Studies M.A. with Nazareth College (Rochester, N.Y.)



University of Pannonia – English and American Studies Institute
Veszprém, Hungary

Phonological demonstration to the name problem:

/'sɪlɑːrd 'sɛntʃɔːrʃi/

/t/, a coronal consonant drops out between two consonants

'sɪlɑːrd 'sɛɲʃɔːrʃi

the alvolar nasal /n/ assimilates in place of articulation to the following palatal stop /ʃ/ resulting in /ɲ/

['sɪlɑːrd 'sɛɲʃɔːrʃi]

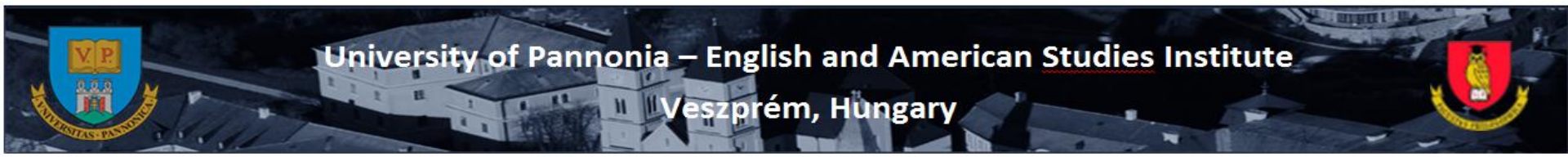
'Constantine of Saint George'



The topic of today's talk is sentence stress and intonation in English. However, we must always bear in mind that:

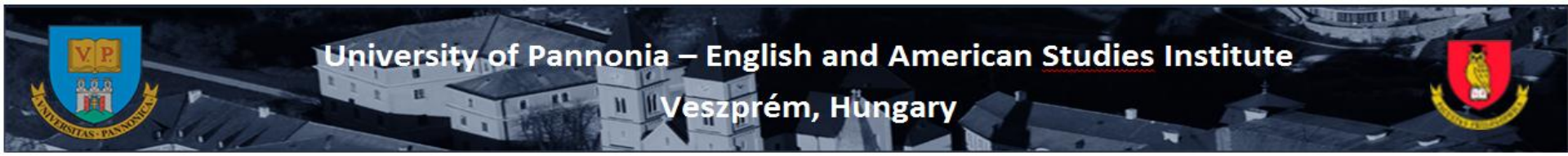
- there is always dialectal variation;
- there is always individual, idiolectal (inter-speaker) variation;
- there may even be intra-speaker variation, i.e. the same speaker might use different pronunciation on different occasions.

The variety described: RP, BBC English, Queen's English...



• Overview

- Basic notions of sentence stress
- Rhythmic stress deletion
- Tonic placement
- Basic notions of intonation
- Basic tones and sentence types
 - fall
 - low rise
 - high rise
 - fall-rise



1. Basic notions of sentence stress

Stress at sentence level:

- In isolation, every word has a primary stressed syllable. In a sentence, many words will have no stressed syllable at all, i.e., they occur in their weak forms, e.g., **can** is realized as /kən/ instead of /kæn/.
- Stressed syllables follow one another in equal distances creating a typical iambic rhythm – as English is a stressed-timed language.

This is the car that I bought /'ðɪs ɪz ðə 'kɑ: ðət aɪ 'bɔ:t/.



- **Lexical/content words vs. function words.**

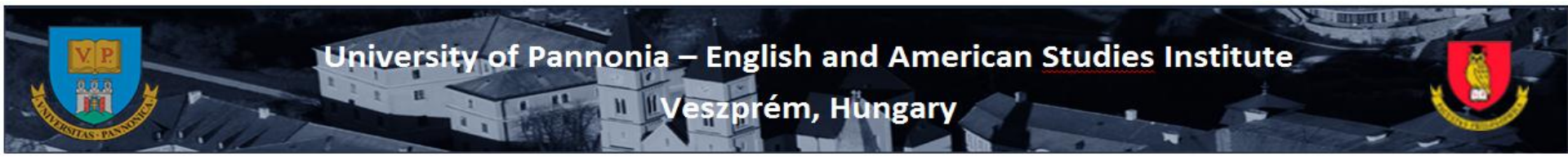
The former include the four basic categories (N, V, Adj, Adv) while the latter include the rest of the categories, (e.g. Prep, Pron, Aux, Conj).

- **Word-level stress vs. Sentence-level stress**

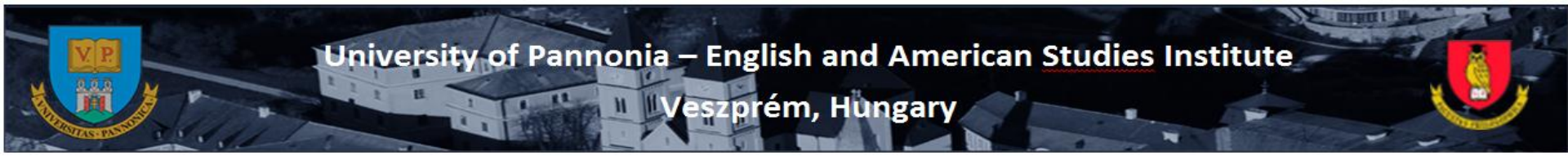
In English words, it is always the last major (i.e. primary or secondary) stress that is the strongest – a principle dubbed *Prominence of the Right Edge*.

dècontàminátion – stress pattern: 202010

Àppalàchicóla



- In phrases and sentences it is also the last stress that is the strongest – see **compounds** vs **phrases**:
black bird vs **blackbird** - 2 1 vs 1 3
big head vs **bighead**
- That is, the strongest stress of a sentence falls on the last stressed syllable - the **tonic** (also: **accent**, **nucleus** or **sentence stress**) indicated by underlining.
- **Intonation** = a falling or rising melody starting on the tonic.



- Speech is divided into **tone-units** – or **tone groups** or **intonation phrases** –, which are parts of connected speech **ending in a tonic**.
- Tone-unit: starts after a tonic and ends in a tonic – it is normally a clause or a longer phrase.

|She 'wanted to 'face the 'problems on 'Tuesday.|

|He 'felt un'easy| but the 'others were en'joying them'selves.|

|I 'didn't really 'want to 'come| but 'here I 'am.|

!'No 'way!|

|At 'five o''clock.|

!'No,| 'only at the 'meeting.|

- **Parts of the tone unit**

- **tail** – the unstressed syllables following the tonic;
- **pre-head** – the unstressed syllables before the first stress;
- **head** – starting with the first stressed syllable and ending with the last unstressed syllable before the tonic.

|She 'wanted to 'face the 'problems on 'Tues day.|



Pre-head

Head

Tonic Tail

- The tone unit may also be divided into **feet** playing a very important role in determining the rhythm of the sentence.
- Foot: the sequence of a stressed syllable and all the unstressed syllables following it up to the next stress.

She 'wanted to 'face the 'problems on 'Tuesday.

foot⁰

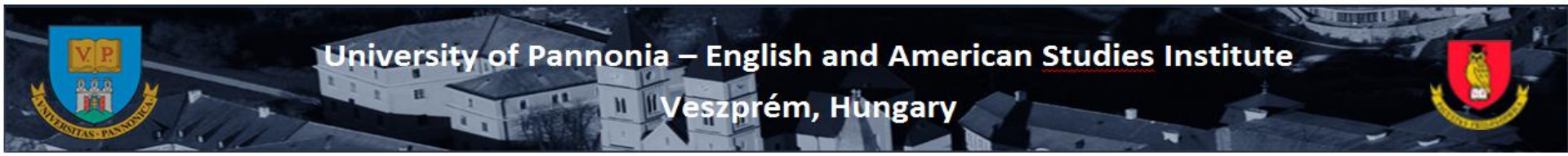
foot¹

foot²

foot³

foot⁴

- *Foot⁰* is an incomplete foot as it only contains unstressed syllables – a pre-head is always an incomplete foot.



2. Rhythmic Stress Deletion

Three stressed syllables with zero or one unstressed syllable between them - the rhythm would become jerky, staccato-like.

To avoid such stress clusters the middle one of the three stresses is deleted and the syllable is pronounced as unstressed.

'good 'old 'days → 'good old 'days

'very 'brave 'soldier → 'very brave 'soldier



Stress Shift – the *Thirteen Men* Rule

- When a word with a secondary and a primary stress (e.g., *thirtéen*) forms a phrase with another one (e.g., *mén*), the following should happen:
 - the final stress should be the strongest,
 - all the others are expected to reduce their stress degree by one
 - something like *thirtèen mén*, with a 321 stress pattern should be produced.
- Instead, the stress levels switch positions in the first element of the phrase:
thirteen mén
- Stress degrees are shifted to move rhythmic beats away from each other and thus facilitate the iambic rhythm of the phrase. It occurs automatically in all phrases where the first element has at least one secondary stress, e.g.

àfternoon téa, Jàpanese language, Tènnesse Válley, the Bèrlin Wáll



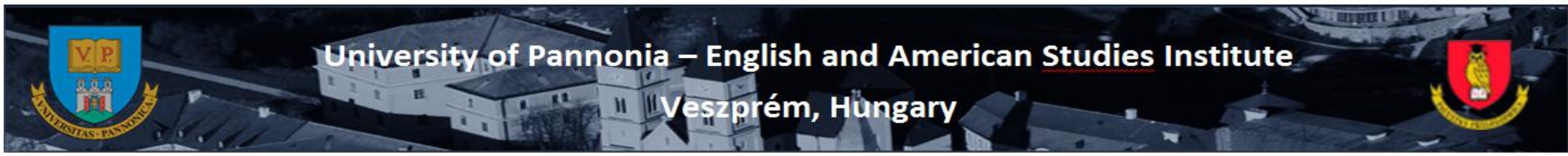
3. Tonic placement.

- **Neutral tonic placement / neutral tonicity**
The neutral, unmarked or default type: it does not express emphasis or contrast.
- The neutral tonic is normally placed on the last content word but in some exceptional cases it may fall on an earlier content word or on a function word.

Tonic on last content word:

|We 'didn't 'want to 'talk about the 'details.|

|He was 'finally ad'mitted to uni'versity.|



- **Tonic on an earlier content word**

- No tonic on 2nd part of initially stressed compound.

|He 'bought a 'new 'mountain bike.|

- No tonic on afterthoughts, appended remarks.

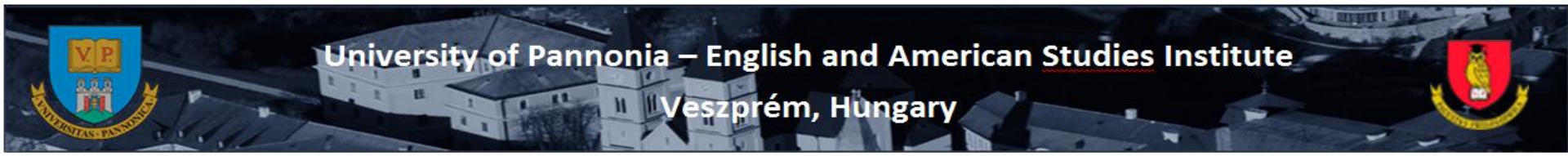
|It was 'nice, I *think*.|

- No tonic on common adverbs.

|We'll just 'stay here.|

- No tonic on "obvious predicates".

!'That's what the 'book says.|



- **Tonic on a function-word**

- Tonic on an auxiliary if no other stressable word.

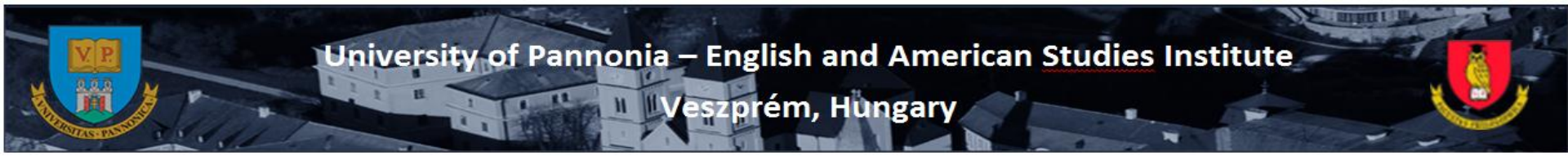
- |'No, you 'can't.|

- Tonic on Prep in short sentences without main verb.

- |'Where are you 'from?|

- Tonic on possessive pronoun.

- |'This is 'mine|



- **Dislocated tonic:** the speaker wishes to emphasize some part of the utterance, contrast a part with something else or focus on some new information, which may be achieved by placing the tonic at a different place from where it would normally appear.

|'Jim was 'there.|

vs.

|'Jim was 'there.|



- **Contrast**

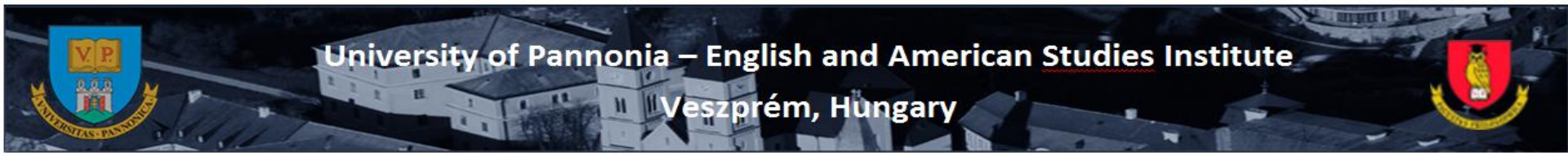
Tonic is placed on an earlier content word to express contrast between what has been said and the word/expression bearing the tonic.

| I 'gave 'JACK a 'book on 'history 'yesterday. | (... and not somebody else).

| We 'visited a lot of MU'SEUMS in 'London. | (... and not night-clubs).

| I 'HAVE 'seen the 'film 'earlier. | (... contrary to what you think/claim).

| I 'DID 'pass the 'test. | (... although that's not what you expected).



- **New information**

If the end of the sentence contains information the speaker thinks is known by the listener as old information, then the words describing this old information will be de-stressed and stress (and the tonic) will be shifted leftwards to a word thought to carry new information.

It most typically happens in answering questions repeating some words from the question – the old information skipped by tonic assignment is italicized.

Is the book interesting?

|It is 'very *interesting*.|

Do you want to have lunch?

|But I 'already 'had *lunch*.|

I'm from the Czech Republic.

|Oh, my fi'ancée is 'Czech, 'too.|

4. Basic notions of intonation

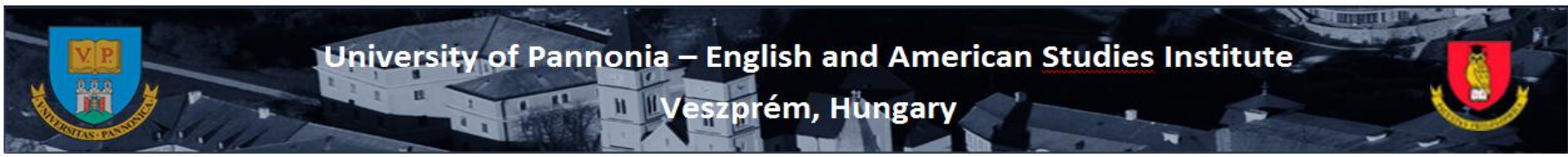
- The intonation or melody of a sentence is the varying voice-height, or **pitch**.
- Pitch depends on:
 - what kind of intonation is used in a particular sentence;
 - age;
 - sex;
 - the emotional state of the speaker.
- **Pitch range:** upper and lower limits one's voice – dependent on speaker but it does not influence the understandability of their speech: it is not the absolute but the relative pitch height that matters.



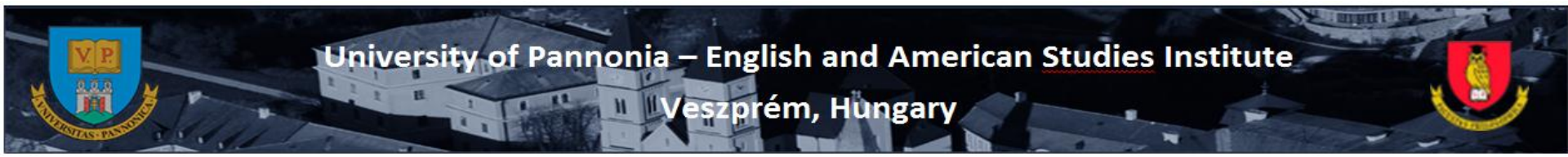
- Pitch differences do not only occur between speakers but also between languages.
 - Hungarians are said to have a much narrower pitch range in general than English speakers; that is, the highest pitch of an average native English speaker is higher than that of an average native Hungarian speaker, while the lowest pitch of an English speaker is generally lower than that of a Hungarian speaker.
 - This is even noticed by the untrained ear. Hungarian speakers often report that they find English speech too emotional, excited and affected;
 - English speakers find the speech of the average Hungarian too flat, monotonous or boring.



- Intonation is the way the pitch changes in the tone-unit.
This change always takes place on the tonic, i.e. the speakers' voice will either rise or fall on the tonic syllable.
- This change associated with the tonic syllable is the **tone**. The melody of the tone is always continued in the tail of the tone-unit.
- **Tune / intonation pattern:** the pitch changes occurring throughout the whole tone-unit.

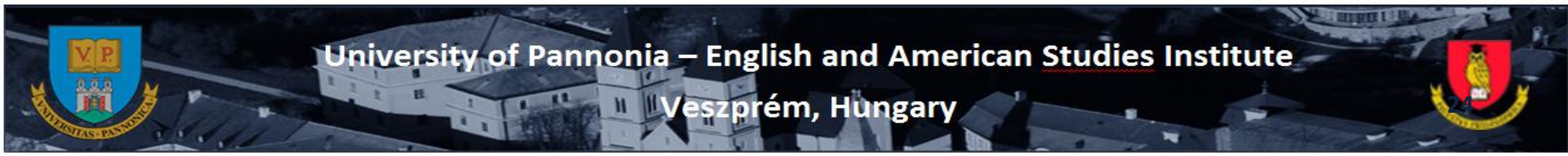


- **Pre-head:** normally starts at a relatively low pitch which normally jumps high up on the first stressed syllable, i.e. on the beginning of the head.
- **Head:** the pitch usually gradually falls throughout the head, called **downdrift**. It does not count as falling intonation, it is just a natural consequence of the fact that speakers are normally running out of air – the velocity of the outflowing air drops, which results in a lower pitch.
- **Tail:** normally a simple continuation of the pitch change of the tonic.



He be'lieved that they had 'seen the 'movie ↘ earlier.

'Have you 'seen this ↗ movie?




5. Basic tones

Type of tone	Name of tone	Tone contour	Function, meaning
Falling	Fall	\	neutral, definiteness, finality
Rising	Low rise	/	indifference, encouragement
	High rise	/	Yes/No questions, inquiry
	Fall-rise	/	old information, implication


- **The falling tone**

- the most common, neutral tone used in English, suggesting that the speaker is simply conveying information.
- often used in plain statements and real, serious commands
 - as it expresses finality and definiteness –, in exclamations
 - expressing that the speakers are sure of what they are saying –, and in Wh-questions, i.e., questions starting with a question word (*who, what, where, why, how*, etc.).






I 'think we 'haven't met.




'This is the 'house where I grew up.



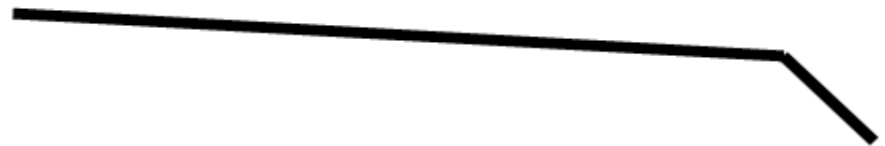
'Leave all the 'books on the desk!



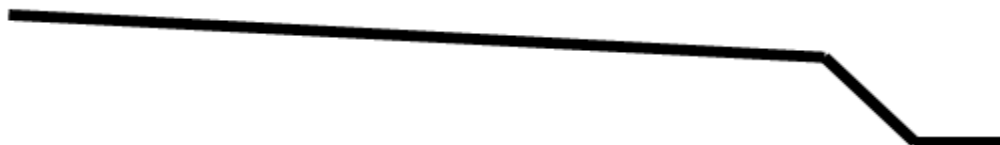
'Put the 'gun on the ground!




'What a 'truly 'beautiful day!



How 'absolutely 'fabulous an idea!



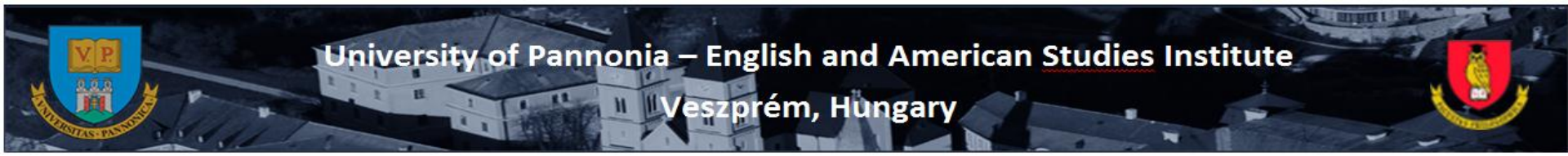
'How did you 'know he was my brother?



'What are you working on?

- **The low rising tone**

Always used to respond to something that somebody said, it often expresses indifference – an "I-don't-care attitude" –, it is used in apologies, greetings and when saying thanks, and also in cases of expressing encouragement.



(How was the film?)

It was all right. (Not too bad, not too good.)

(Where shall we go tonight?)

'We may 'go to the cinema. (I don't care.)

Thank you

EXcuse me.

Bye-bye.

You're welcome.

'Don't you worry!

It 'doesn't matter.

It will be all right.

- **The high rising tone**

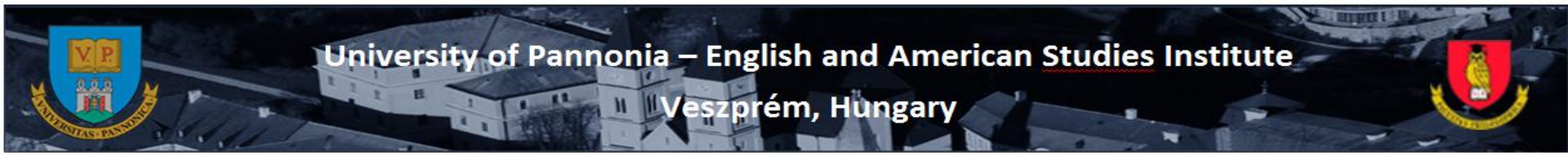
The high rising tone is

- either a high rise on the tonic, if there is no tail, or
- it is accomplished on the tonic and the tail, if there is one.

If there is no tail, i.e., the whole high rise is realized on the tonic syllable, then language learners tend to have serious problems with the height: the high rise produced by a foreigner may simply not be high enough for an English speaker; instead, it will sound as a low rise, and will consequently express indifference or boredom.



- If there is a tail, then the high rise continues from the tonic throughout the tail and is evenly distributed over the syllables of the tonic and the tail.
- This is also a serious difficulty, for language learners as such tonic+tail combinations may not be pronounced with a steady high rise in other languages.
- The high rise is most often used in Yes/No questions, which do not start with a question word. If something is said with a high rising intonation, it is always a real question.



Have you 'ever been to ↗England?

Did you 'do your ↗homework?

'Was it your ↗grandmother?

'Is 'Johnny 'coming to the ↗party?

↙Where?

You 'met him at ↗which station?

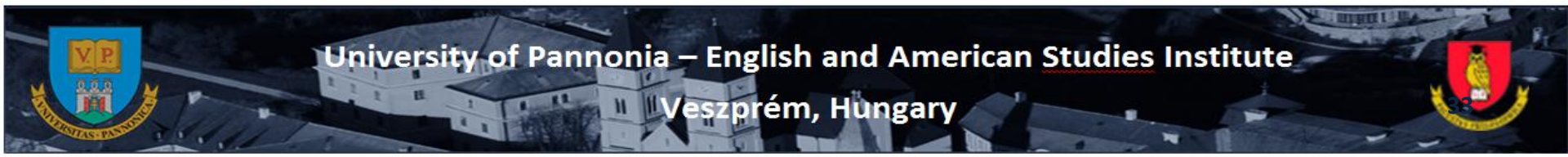
- **The fall-rise tone**

The fall-rise is a combination of a fall from high or mid tone to low followed by a low rise, i.e., a rise from low to mid.

It is often identified as one of the tones that make English speech sound too theatrical or affected for the foreigner.

A fall-rise is used to indicate:

- that the speaker is not telling everything, but a part of the message is only implied, the listener has to find it out from the context;
- or it is used to indicate the end of old information and the beginning of new information within the sentence.



I've 'never 'seen your ↘ ↗ flat. (Invite me to see it.)

In our 'old ↘ ↗ car | there was 'enough 'room for 'six ↘ people.

Thank you very much for your attention!

Questions and comments are welcome both here and now
and at the address below.

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