The Melody of English: Research and Resources for Teaching the Pragmatic Functions of Intonation

Summary

Intonation plays important but often overlooked roles in how speakers and listeners convey and interpret implied meaning. Studies suggest learners think intonation is merely ‘decorative’ (Gilbert 2014, p. 125) and learners who perceive neutral English intonation as exaggerated may be insensitive to the communicative and pragmatic functions of intonation to convey speaker intent.

If learners are not aware that intonation “has the power to reinforce, mitigate, or even undermine the words spoken” (Wichmann, 2005, p. 229), they may be missing out on the implied meaning their proficient English speaking peers have comprehended. In this webinar, the speakers suggest practical, engaging activities for seamlessly integrating intonation instruction into lessons to assist learners to be able to understand what is meant by what is said.

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