

The Use of Information Tones in Obama's Speech: A Phono-Pragmatic Analysis

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Abstract

Intonation plays an important role in understanding the intended meaning of speech since neglecting the study of intonation in the discourse leads to a misunderstanding of some pragmatic meaning. This study attempts to answer these two questions: what is the pragmatic function of the information tone types that are employed in Obama's speech concerning the termination component? and what are the pragmatic function of the proclaiming and referring tones that are employed in Obama's speech concerning the dominance and non-dominance factor?. It aims to investigate the types of information tones in Obama's speech concerning the termination component and dominance/non-dominance factor based on Brazil's model (1997) of discourse intonation. This study confines itself to the American political interview and it is a qualitative study. The findings show that all the information tone types (proclaiming, referring, and level) are used in Obama's speech and the high termination is most common level, which is used by Obama in his speech in order to emphasize the information and capture the attention of the interviewer. Generally, it was found that the dominance factor was higher than the non-dominance factor, which reflects that Obama took his status as the controller of the discourse during his speech with the interviewer and most of his speech carries contrastive information, which contradicts the interview's expectation. This study is beneficial for foreign learners and those who are specialists in phonology and pragmatics since it can clarify the function of intonation through the interaction of participants in context.

Keywords: discourse intonation, dominance/non-dominance, pitch level, proclaiming tone, praat program, referring tone

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