

Abstract

Format: Workshop

Time: 45 minutes

Title: “Fun with Prosody: Creative Explorations of Intonation in English”

Target Students: Low-intermediate to advanced, any age group

Much of our communication involves the successful interpretation of intonation. Often, a listener who is a non-native speaker may understand every word of an utterance, but still misunderstands it because of a lack of understanding of the target language’s prosodic patterns of intonation. Such “tone contour” can add stress to syllables, words or phrases as a means of expressing conversation or discourse cohesion and reference to shared knowledge.

For example, when a teacher asks a student, “Have you finished your homework?” and the student answers, “Yes, I finished *my* homework” (with stress on the word “my”), the student is communicating something very different than he would be if he had placed the stress differently.

I argue that this is an essential aspect of English and that our students should have the opportunity to learn and practice prosody in our classroom. In this workshop, I will discuss various forms of prosodic intonation and offer arguments for their inclusion in our lessons. Then, I will share several approaches and activities to teaching this skill to our students so that they can begin to grasp the potentially very complex system of intonation in English.