CALL-CONTOURS

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In this paper I wish to describe as briefly as I can the intonational patterns of the expressions used in calls by English-speaking people and the ‘academic’ significance they have. In some of the works so far published, I have referred to what I consider to be the major intonational patterns used in calls. E.g., *Eigo Intonation no Kenkyu* (*A Study of English Intonation*, Kenkyusha Publishing Co., Fujimicho, Chiyodaku, Tokyo, 1958). This article is an enlargement and, in several points, I hope, an improvement on my initial findings about call-contours.

The major call-contours are as follows:
- Type I: High-downglide, suspended
- Type II: Upglide, suspended
- Type III: Simple fall
- Type IV: Simple rise

I define “high-downglide” as a pattern that involves a very high pitch of voice and a lower one that follows it. This lower pitch, however, is, so to speak, suspended in mid-air; it never comes down to the bottom of the speaker’s range as does the ordinary declarative utterence. For example, when you speak or rather shout to a person named Johnny who you think is a certain distance away from you or who is out of sight, you start by raising your voice quite high on the first syllable John, prolonging it for a while, then you pronounce the second syllable ny on a lower level, sustaining it on a level pitch for a long while again, with or without slight terminal rise.

When the speaker uses “upglide” he starts, this time, on a lower level and raises his voice on the last syllable which is kept level as is Type I.

When the speaker uses “simple fall” his voice comes down as it moves from the first syllable to the second, with the second syllable ending in a completely falling tone.

When he uses “simple rise” his voice goes up as it moves from the first syllable to the second, with the second syllable ending in a rising tone.

The following are the schematic diagrams of the four types mentioned above:

Calls may come under two categories: (1) a single call and (2) a reiterated call.

A single call is a call which is not repeated. Examples of “single calls” follow:
- Type I: *John! Patrick!* (fr. BBC’s *Calling All Beginners*).
Type II: Cinderella! (fr. movie sound track. The fast syllable is kept high and level).


Type IV: Officer! (Twenty-first Precinct program).

It may safely be assumed that basically Types III and IV are not calls proper as we shall see anon. In calls, you assume that the person being called is a certain distance away from you (even if he or she is actually very close to you). When you are "addressing" a person (or persons), the other party is usually quite near you or at least within easy speaking distance, and you do not have to speak at the top of your voice as you sometimes do in calling. In other words, recognition of and by both parties is already established, and distance is considered of but minor importance. In calls, on the other hand, distance between the person calling and the person being called is no matter whether this distance is a real thing or an imagined one, a vital factor for prescribing a mid-suspended tone without which it would be hard for the speaker's voice to carry far.

A very good description of the type of call-contour I define as Type I has already been made by K. L. Pike (see his Innovation of American English) and by Dwight L. Bolinger. I quote a passage from Bolinger's Melody of Language (Modern Language Forum, June 1955).

"If the person is nearby, we whistle two brief taps, the first high and the second lower but still high; if he is some distance away we whistle first an empty tone that is held a moment at the top pitch, and then whistle the lower one at a level pitch, prolonging it (dogs are called with the same tune, though usually without the lower one). If I were pronouncing the name Daddy with the purpose of attracting attention, we would use the same two tunes."

Now we shall attempt an analysis of the second variety of calls: i.e., a reiterated call.

A reiterated call is characterized by the employment of the identical expression more than once in calling. It presents a very interesting problem because it concerns the way the tonic pattern begins to be modified of otherwise one and the same phonetic structure when it occurs in succession. As a starting point, below is shown a very minute observation made by Herbert Spencer in his work, Literary Style and Music. (The following quotation is from The Origin and Function of Music, Philosophical Library, Inc., 1931).

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III

Johnny Johnny Johnny Johnny

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picture of a sweeping downslope) (Valentine Davies, Miracle on 34th Street, radio program).

Mr. Archer: Corliss! (Type I) Corliss! (Type III).

Mrs. Archer: No, Harry, it's no use getting excited. You won't get Corliss to rake the lawn any faster by shouting.

Mr. Archer: Janet, I'm not trying to get it raked faster. I'm just trying to get it raked. Corliss! (Type II) (Here Mr. Archer begins his call for the normative Type I, then utilizes the irritable Type III. When he calls a third time, he reverts to Type II, presumably taking 'distance' into consideration) (Meet Corliss Archer, radio program).

My last example is from a television version of one of the ghost stories written by Henry James—The Turn of the Screw. A young governess, newly employed at a big mansion, is looking for one of the wards, a young lady called Flora, and failing to discover her where she is sure to be found, the governess begins to call her: "Flora...Flora...Flora...Flora...Flora...Flora..." The name is repeated six times with long pauses and music in between the calls. The contour-sequences are: Type IV, Type III, Type III (more than the immediately preceding one), Type IV (starting on a comparatively low level and then rising), Type IV (again starting low) and Type IV (replica of the immediately preceding Flora).

And when the child finally makes her appearance, the governess attempts the customary interrogation: "Flora (Type III (allowed by a slight pause)...Flora (Type III again), where have you been?" Here it may be noted that the governess's calls start with the normative rise followed by the falling contours (used twice) to symptomatic mounting tension and anxiety, pressing the unseen presence nearby for immediate response. The last two calls (the 7th and the 8th one) are, by definition, no longer calls proper. They are address-contours.

From the illustration given above, it will become evident that the genuine call invariably ends in a mid-suspended tone whenever and wherever distance matters. This long, level stretch of tone is admittedly an effective means to carry one's voice to far or to ring it above other types of sound—e.g. noise—even in case the person being called is within easy touching distance. Type I would seem to lack what may be defined as "categoricalness"—a shade of meaning attached to carry one's voice far or to ring it above other types of sound—e.g. noise—even in case the person being called is within easy touching distance. Type II would seem to retain the meaning of mild annoyance or whatever feeling is akin to it. Be it noted that Spencer was not the only scholar to adhere to this view. K. L. Pike, for example, says: "Dr. Eugene A. Nida...suggests that if Tommy is in sight, the pitch tends to fall to low, in his usage. For my speech the application, following this lead, is a bit different: if the hearer were in an unknown place, or distant so that he could not hear readily (even if he were in sight), I would likely to arrest the fall of pitch at level three. If, however, the hearer were in a place where he could understand me, and I knew he could hear, then, if I became insistent because he had not responded to earlier call, I would usually allow the pitch to fall to level four, but accompanying it with extra-strong stress, normal quantity, and lack of achanting type—in other words, the situation would in that case follow the regular rules of attention and emphasis, instead of utilizing a chant." (op. cit., Note 115).

And again Anderson (Mrs. H. J. Udall) holds that calls with rising unstressed syllable are more imperative or reproving (op. cit., § 56). I.e. Peter! (where Pe is high; ter is unstressed but the beginning portion of this syllable starts still higher and ter ends in a completely falling tone.) A similar observation is made by Margaret Schlauch in her book, The Gift of Tongues.

The aesthetic effect of Types I and II is a sort of lyrical quality—a chant. Henry L. Smith states that "If the person is not visible singing is used with overloudness. Johnny, are you home yet? Here Johnny is accompanied by a kind of drawling." (The Communication Situation, FSI). This songlike quality, peculiar to the normative call, is characteristically absent in Types III and IV, which are more symptomatic of normal speech. In Types I and II, the speaker seems to be struggling, so to speak, with distance, physical and/or mental, whereas in Types III and IV, he is struggling with the other party.

The examples of call-sequences here cited do not, of course, exhaust all possible combinations of call-contours. Different speakers might have used different types for an identical passage. What concerns us here is the way reiterated and variegated calls arrange themselves, and it deserves— and awaits—our further investigation.