THE FUNCTIONS OF INTONATION (WELLS, 2006:11)

a) **The attitudinal** function: The most obvious role of intonation is to express our attitudes and emotions – to show shock or surprise, pleasure or anger, interest or boredom, seriousness or sarcasm, and many others. We do this by **tone**.

b) **The grammatical** function: Intonation helps identify grammatical structures in speech, rather as punctuation does in writing. We use intonation to mark the beginning and end of grammatical units such as clause and sentence (the **demarcative** function). We do this by **tonality**. We also use intonation to distinguish clause types, such as question vs. statement, and to disambiguate various grammatically ambiguous structures (the **syntactic** function). We do this mainly by **tone**.

c) **The focusing** (also called **accentual** or **informational**) function: intonation helps to show what information in an utterance is new and what is already known. We use it to bring some parts of the message into focus, and leave other parts out of focus; to emphasize or highlight some parts and not others. We do this by **tonicity** and by the placement of other accents. This is one of the most important functions of English intonation, and perhaps the function most readily taught in the EFL classroom. We combine accentuation with the choice of tone to present some longer stretches of the message as constituting the foreground of the picture we paint, while leaving other stretches as background. These are **pragmatic** functions.

d) The **discourse** (or **cohesive**) function: Intonation signals how sequences of clauses and sentences go together in spoken discourse, to contrast or to cohere. It functions like the division of written text into sentences and paragraphs. It enables us to signal whether or not we have come to the end of the point we are making; whether we want to keep talking or are ready to give another speaker a turn.

e) The **psychological** function: Intonation helps us to organize speech into units that are easy to perceive, memorize and perform. We can all repeat an arbitrary string of three, four or five members, but not a string of ten – unless we split them into two units of five. This is why we need **tonality**.

f) The **indexical** function: Just as with other pronunciation features, intonation may act as a marker of personal or social identity. What makes mothers sound like mothers, lovers sound like lovers, lawyers sound like lawyers, clergymen sound like clergymen, newsreaders sound like newsreaders, officials sound like officials? Partly, their characteristic intonation.