The rise tone in the English and Malay intonations of Malay learners of English

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Abstract
English is a widely spoken language around the world and its intonation may vary significantly across its varieties. Miscommunication is possible given that intonation may function differently in different varieties. Given this context, this study sets out to describe functions of the rise tone in the English and Malay intonations of Malay learners, and to determine the influence of their L1 on the use of the rise tone in Malaysian English. Sixty ESL learners were asked to narrate a short story individually according to a series of pictures presented to them. Eight of them were also asked to narrate their stories in Malay. Their narrations were analysed acoustically using *Praat* and the tone functions were identified using Brazil's Discourse Intonation model. Findings show that the learners used the rise tone in both languages mainly to: (i) convey new and shared information, (ii) continue speaking, and (iii) present items in a list. Findings may contribute details to Malaysian English phonology and shed some light on intonation usage among Malaysian English speakers.

Keywords
Discourse intonation, rise tone, Malaysian English, Malay intonation, ESL learners

Introduction
Tone and intonation are distinct, but they are closely linked and can overlap. When a speaker says *"I'm going to Paris,"* and the first syllable of *"Paris"* is assigned

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a fall tone, the whole tone unit is said to have been uttered using a fall intonation. Because it is the tonic syllable that carries the tone, the speaker can be considered to have uttered the first syllable of *"Paris"* with the fall tone. In this research, tone refers to the pitch change that begins in the tonic syllable of a tone unit, whereas the term intonation refers to the pitch variation over the whole tone unit. The two concepts are similar to the definitions by Setter, who states that a tone is conveyed by a tonic syllable and an intonation by a whole tone unit. Intonation is an important feature in speech because no language is spoken in a monotone (O' Connor and Arnold 11). Speakers of all languages vary their intonation to create various meanings in their speech. Intonation, however, is produced differently in English because the language is spoken worldwide as a first, second or foreign language (Jacob 60). The differences are due to a wide range of factors including influence from the first language (Noor Mat Nayan and Setter 34; Puga et al. 686). Additionally, the differences could also be the features of intonation that are unique to a particular variety of English which is in contact with other languages. Due to such differences, an unfamiliar intonation may result in miscommunication when speakers from different backgrounds speak to each other (Ernie Adnan et al 1; Noor Mat Nayan and Setter 12).

Given the above background, the present study was conducted to investigate the intonation of Malaysian English so that its tone forms and functions in tone units can be described. Moreover, Malaysian English has evolved into a nativised and unique variety which has its own linguistic features (Platt and Weber 9; Morais 33; Baskaran 278) and past research on the topic is scarce (Noor Mat Nayan and Setter 12; Ernie Adnan et al. 2). The present study may also contribute additional information to the suprasegmental features of Malay, which also has been under-investigated (Noor Mat Nayan 18; Noor Mat Nayan and Setter 14). Moreover, intonation warrants further investigation because so much about its functions is still unknown (Burgess 1), especially when different varieties of English are involved (Arvaniti and Garding 548; Gut and Milde 368). Because there has been no universal agreement on the forms and functions of English intonation, more research is also needed (Jacob 57). Given such differences, it is important that these features are studied and understood to minimise the risk of miscommunication.

Using the Discourse Intonation approach introduced by Brazil, the present study was conducted to investigate the tone forms and functions produced by the Malay ESL learners narrating their short stories in Malaysian English and in Malay, and to find out if there were similar intonation patterns in the two languages. Comparisons were also made with the functions of the rise tone in British English and other varieties of world Englishes so that their similarities and differences with the Malaysian variety could be understood.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the tone forms produced by the Malay ESL learners narrating their short stories in Malaysian English and Malay?
2. What are the functions of the rise tone produced in Malaysian English and Malay short story narrations?

Discourse intonation

The discourse intonation model has been proposed by Brazil based on earlier work such as Brazil et al., Sinclair and Brazil, and Sinclair and Coulthard. It is applied to investigate the functions of intonation in discourse (Chun 44). Brazil (21) adds that a speaker makes choices of intonation according to their perceptions of the context of interaction that are changing or evolving as they speak with their interlocutor. What makes appropriate intonation is language users' understanding of how to employ crucial elements of intonation such as prominence and tones, as well as awareness of what is new (divergence) and what is shared (convergence) in a constantly changing context of interaction.

The model was chosen because it has been applied to study the intonation of native speakers (especially British and American English speakers) and non-native English speakers. The model is also based on the intonation in Standard British English, the variety generally regarded as the standard model in Malaysia. Additionally, it comprises finite elements like prominence, tone, key (which is also the head or onset), and termination (which is the tonic syllable) operating within a tone unit. In the present study, only the rise tone and its functions in the speech of Malay ESL learners were investigated.

Rise tone

There are five tones in British English intonation patterns which are fall (p), fall-rise (r), rise (r+), rise-fall (p+), and level (o). The rising tones (r and r+) are referring tones used to convey shared information (Brazil 58). Referring or rise tones suggest *'I take it for granted that this is part of our shared experience.'* Apart from conveying shared information, a rising tone is used to ask questions that require Yes/No responses (Smith and Clark 27). The tone, according to Bolinger (43), is also used when a speaker lacks conviction in what they are conveying since the tone is associated with "unfinished business." Additionally, the syllable in *price* belonging to a statement in English that is uttered with the fall tone (e.g., *The price is going up*) can be turned into a question when the same syllable is uttered with the rise tone (e.g*., The price is going up?*) (Roach 155). Additionally, as stated in Roach (156), the rise tone is also used in tag questions, especially when a speaker is really unsure of the answers to the questions. It is also assigned to *Leeds* and *York* to express non-final items in a list, as exemplified by Roach (128) "*The train is for Leeds, York and Hull*" and in encouragement (as in HURT), as exemplified by Roach (147) below:

(r+) It won't HURT.

The rise tone in Malaysian English

The rise tone was found to be used in all questions by Malaysian English speakers, including wh-questions which are normally assigned falling tones by native speakers of British English (Gut and Pillai 51; Yap and Pillai 192). Additionally, there is rising nuclei (tone) in single-word and yes-no questions with inversion. There is also falling nuclei in wh-questions containing initial *wh*. Interestingly, there is rising nuclei in wh-questions whose *wh* was in final position. The pattern is similar to Malay as wh-questions with wh-words in final position in the language are always assigned the rise tone, according to Gut and Pillai (64).

The number of studies pertaining to Malaysian English speech has been increasing in recent years but is limited to segmental features like vowel duration and contrasts as the ones by Pillai et al.; Wan Aslynn; and Tan and Low. Therefore, more research related to the suprasegmental features of Malaysian English is needed. Studies such as Gill (15), Nair-Venugopal (207), and Goh (12) acknowledge the presence of ethnic variation and possibility of first language influencing the suprasegmental features of Malaysian English. Given the possibility of L1 influence in the speech of L2 learners, this study was conducted to find out the Malay intonation features that are used in Malaysian English, which is a second language for the Malay participants in this study.

Methodology

The participants, tasks, instrument, and methods of analysis are explained in this section. 30 male and 30 female Malay learners undergoing a Foundation in Teaching of English as a Second Language course were the participants of the study. The Malays were the participants as they are the biggest ethnic group in peninsular Malaysia and understanding the intonation of this group of speakers can pave the way to a better understanding of the intonation of Malaysian English as a whole. They were nineteen years old and bilingual in Malay and English.

The participants were asked to narrate a short story in English based on one of the four series of pictures shown to them. These picture series, which were cartoon-illustrated narratives containing six to eight pictures, were obtained online. The pictures had no accompanying text and the learners had to tell what they saw in the pictures. Eight of them, four males and four females, also voluntarily agreed to narrate the same story in Malay so that comparisons could be made in terms of functions of the rise tone in both languages. The task was spontaneous because they were given five minutes to study and choose one of the four serial pictures to narrate in between two and three minutes. A Behringer B-2 Pro 2 Diaphragm Condenser Cardiod microphone was connected to a laptop and a mixer to record them using Audacity 2.1.2. All recordings were saved in wav format before being transferred to *Praat* 6.0.28 (Boersma and Weenink) for

acoustic analysis. To ensure smooth pitch tracks, the recordings were sampled at 16 bits with the pitch value set at the lowest rate of 50 Hz and 100Hz for the males and females respectively and the highest pitch value set at 500Hz for both genders. For this study, the prominent syllable and tone in a tone unit were determined by measuring and noting the pitch (in Hz), intensity (in dB), and duration (in seconds) of each syllable and its whole tone unit. To identify the prominent syllables in *Praat*, the average amplitude of a whole tone unit, which may coincide with a phrase, clause or sentence, was measured first. To identify the components in a tone unit, the average amplitude of the following tone unit *"are planting a tree"* was first determined and it was 67.78 dB, as indicated in Figure 1.
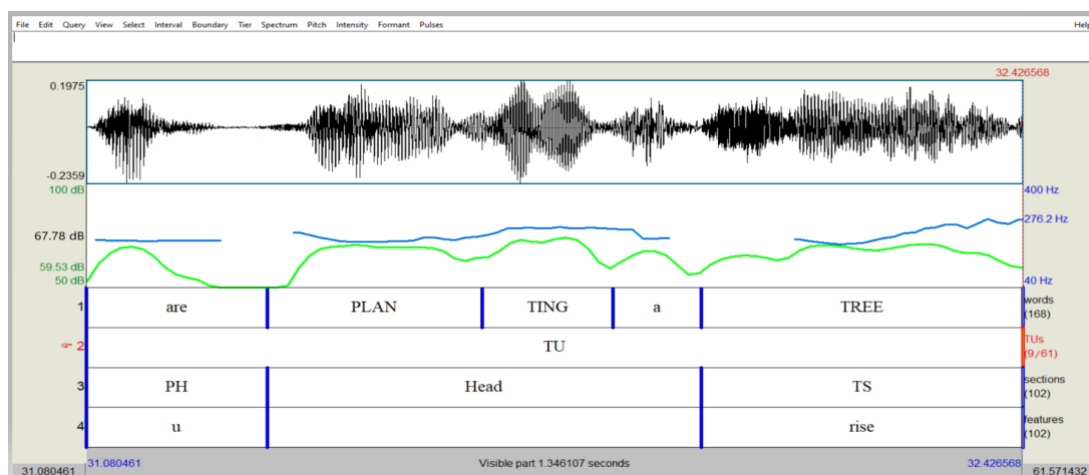

Figure 1 The Average Amplitude Value Shown on Praat

Then, the amplitude for each of the syllables in the tone unit was measured. The syllables that had an amplitude higher than or equivalent to the average amplitude for the tone unit were considered prominent ones and labelled using capital letters following Brazil's convention. As indicated in Figure 2, the amplitude for *'plan'* in the tone unit *"are planting a tree"* was 67.91 dB. Hence, the syllable was considered prominent because its amplitude was higher than the average amplitude of the tone unit (67.78dB). The same procedure was also repeated on the other syllables with *'ting'* and *'tree'* also marked as prominent because they had amplitude readings of 71.14 dB and 67.8 dB respectively. The other syllables *'are'* and *'a'* that had amplitude values of 63.43 dB and 64.64 dB were marked non-prominent and labelled in small letters. Therefore, *'are'* was labelled as the pre-head because it occurred before the first stressed syllable *'plan'* while *'ting'* and *'a'* were part of the head or onset.
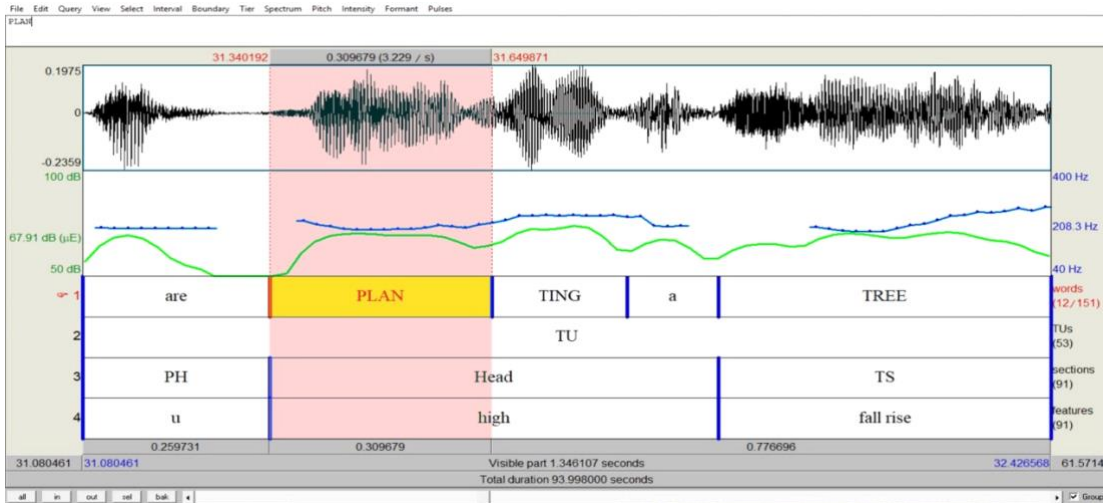
Figure 2 The Amplitude Value for *'Plan'* Shown on Praat

Once all the prominent syllables were identified, the tonic one was determined. As discovered and stated before, *'tree'* is one of the prominent syllables apart from *'plan'* and *'ting'*. However, *'tree'* was identified as the tonic syllable for the tone unit because, firstly, its syllable was stressed or made prominent, as indicated in its amplitude reading, and secondly, or more importantly, there was a change in its pitch levels resulting in a rise tone. Although it can be argued that the other syllables in the tone unit also do contain a tone, they are not as prominent as the rise tone assigned to *'tree'* since they are uttered with almost the same pitch levels resulting in a monotone. Therefore, listeners are not attracted to them as they are perceptually less prominent. Moreover, the syllable that always becomes the tonic syllable is the syllable in the final content word in a tone unit, as clarified by Roach (153).

To identify the functions of the rise tones, recordings of the narration were first transcribed. Functions of the tones were identified by analysing the context in which a rise tone was used in the narration, using Brazil as a framework. Additional functions were added as the learners were found to use rise tones for other functions not described by Brazil. In other words, the tone functions were contextually-dependent as they were determined based on the context of the sentences in the stories. Twelve (i.e., 20%) of the transcripts of the same recordings and the function of the rise tones were cross-checked independently by another coder. Then, the total of rise tone functions in agreement was obtained. Next, the total of agreed functions was divided by the total number of the tone units uttered with the rise tone to get the proportion of each of the rise tone functions to all the tone units uttered with the rise tone, which was later converted to a percentage. The transcribers' agreement for the rise tone functions was 88%. Later, all transcripts were transferred into Excel spreadsheets for the calculation

of frequency and percentage of the rise tone functions used by the learners. 12 of the 60 recordings were also re-analysed by a trained and experienced user of Praat who rigorously rechecked the prominent syllables and tone marking made earlier. Following the same inter-rater agreement formula for the rise tone functions, the inter-rater reliability scores for prominent syllables and tone marking were 90% and 95% respectively.

Findings
Table 1 presents the frequency of the tone forms produced by the Malay ESL learners when narrating their short stories in Malaysian English and Malay.

Table 1
The Frequency of the Tone Forms in Malaysian English and Malay

N	Level (o)	Rise (r+)	Fall (p)	Fall-rise (r)	Rise-Fall (p+)	TOTAL
English (60)	2022 (67.7%)	674 (22.6%)	275 (9.2%)	16 (0.5%)	0	2987
Malay (8)	315 (45%)	240 (34%)	148 (21%)	0	0	703

It can be seen from Table 1 that the level tone is the most frequently used tone in English and Malay speech of the learners. The rise tone is the next frequently used one in both languages and it is followed by the fall tone. The fall-rise tone was used sparingly in English but was never utilised in Malay. They also did not produce any rise-fall tones in either language.

The frequency of the rise tone functions produced by the Malay ESL learners when narrating their stories in Malaysian English and Malay is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2
The Frequency of the Rise Tone Functions in Malaysian English and Malay

English			Malay		
Functions	Frequency	%	Functions	Frequency	%
New information	283	42	New information	123	51.3
Continue speaking	258	38.3	Continue speaking	62	25.8
Shared information	126	18.7	Shared information	40	16.7
List	6	0.9	Hesitation	13	5.4
Language	1	0.1	List	2	0.8
TOTAL	674	100		240	100

Based on Table 2, 674 and 240 rise tones were produced by the learners narrating their stories in English and Malay respectively. This tone was used most frequently in English to convey new information, as it was used 283 times (42%)

for this function. It was also frequently used in English to signal intention to continue speaking (258 times - 38.3%). Conveying shared information was also a frequent function (126 times - 18.7%). Only on six occasions (0.9%) was this tone used to list non-final items and once (0.1%) to provide focus on the language used. In comparison, this tone was used the most in Malay to convey new information (123 times - 51.3%). It was also produced to signal desire to continue speaking in Malay (62 times - 25.8%). The learners also used the same tone in Malay to convey shared information (40 times - 16.7%). Only in thirteen instances (5.4%) was this tone used when they hesitated. Occasionally, the rise tone was used in Malay for listing (twice - 0.8%).

The following excerpt shows one of the Malay learners, F20, using the rise tone to convey new information in Malaysian English.

1. // ➡ IN second picTURE there's TWO // [0.4s] // ↗ PERSON // [0.3s]
2. // ➡ WEARING a BLANket // [0.17s] //➡ SORT OF // [0.36s]
3. // ➡ a WHITE blanKET //
4. // ➡ and ONE of them were laughING // [0.56s]
5. // ➡ and ANOTHER ONE WAS umm checkING //
6. // ↗ the surROUNDING // [1.7s] //➡ THIRD PICTURE //
7. // ↗ there is a GENtleMAN // [0.6s] // ➡ UHM //
8. //➡ WEARING a HAT // [0.29s] // ➡ AND : : // [0.36s]
9. // ↗ was walKING // [0.65s] // ↗ HE looks kind of hapPY // [1.4s]
10. // ➡ AND : : // [0.6s]……

Exc. 1. Use of Rise Tone to Convey New Information in Malaysian English

There are sixteen complete tone units in this excerpt. Eleven are assigned level tones while the other five are assigned rise tones. All the rise tones are used to convey new information. For example, in the second tone unit in the first line, after pausing for 0.4s, the speaker used a rise tone on the second syllable of *person*. The information conveyed is new because that is the first time she indicated whom she had seen wearing a white blanket. Then, in the first tone unit in line 6, she again utilised a rise tone on the final syllable of *surrounding* before pausing for 1.7s, to show that she had finished conveying her idea. As in the first line, then, she used another rise tone on the final syllable of *gentleman* in the first tone unit in line 7, to indicate whom she had seen wearing a hat. Finally, in both tone units in line 9, she also used rise tones on the second syllable of *walking* and *happy* respectively, to describe the gentleman before pausing for 1.4s to indicate she had finished conveying new ideas.

A similar intonation pattern can also be seen in the speech of one of the participants speaking in Malay in Excerpt 2.

1. ↗ ada DUA beLAS GAMBAR DI depan saYA (1s)
2. ↗ YANG MENUNJUKKAN satu tragedi yang berlaKU (0.1s)
3. → disaTU KAWASAN (0.5s) → UH : : (0.1s)
4. ↗ tebuKA (0.5s) ↘ diMANA (0.5s)
5. → UH : : (0.8s) ↗ seORANG lelaKI ↗ seDANG beJALAN (0.16s)
6. → DAN TEseREMPAK dengan seoRANG pemPUAN (0.25s)
7. → YANG berSAMA deNGAN : : (0.25s) ↗ HAIWAN peLIHAraanNYA
8. ↗ IAitu seEKOR anJING (0.6s)

Exc. 2. Use of Rise Tone to Convey New Information in Malay

As can be seen in Excerpt 2, there are thirteen complete tone units and seven of them are assigned the rise tone to convey new information. For example, in the first line, the learner said *"there are twelve pictures in front of me"* with a rise tone assigned to the final syllables in the tone unit before pausing for one second. Similarly, in the second, third and fourth lines, the learner again assigns a rise tone to both tone units when saying that the pictures *"show a tragedy that has happened"* and it happened in *"an open area."* The same tone is again used when conveying new information as can be seen in line 5 when the learner says that he can see that *"a man is walking"* and that the same man then *"stumbled upon a woman who was walking with her pet which was a dog"* in lines 6, 7 and 8.

Excerpt 3 shows how one of the learners, F19, used the rise tone to continue speaking.

1. // → THERE are TWO friends at THE // [0.3s]
2. // ↗ graveYARD // [1.1s] // → THEY are pulLING // [0.3s]
3. // → PRANK : : // [0.34s] // → a PRANK on A : : // [0.12s]
4. // ↗ visiTOR // [0.2s] // → who visits THE : : // [0.12s]
5. // ↗ graveYARD // [1.3s] // ↗ SO // [0.4s] // → WHEN : : // [0.65s]
6. // ↗ a visiTOR came IN // [0.12s] // → UHH : : //
7. // → CAME // [0.7s] // ↗ THEN // [2.8s] // → THEY : : //
8. // acted // // → AS : : //// ↗ GHOSTS // [1.3s]

Exc. 3. Use of Rise Tone to Continue Speaking in Malaysian English

There are seventeen complete tone units in this extract with ten of them assigned level tones while the other seven, rise tones. Two of the rise tones are used on discourse markers. For example, in the second tone unit in line 5, the learner uses a rise tone on *so* before pausing for 0.4s. *So* is uttered to continue telling what happened (result) when the visitor came to the graveyard, where a rise tone is used. Similarly, another rise tone is used on *then*, in the second tone unit in line 7. *Then*, also a discourse marker, is uttered to show sequence of events. A 2.8s pause is made probably because the learner is hesitant and needs some time to think of what to say. Another rise tone is also seen assigned to the last syllable in "(when) a visitor came in," located at the beginning of line 6 to indicate that the learner has more to say.

Excerpt 4 shows the rise tone being used by one of the learners to continue speaking in Malay:

1. ↘ laki TERSEbut TIdak ↗ maRAH (0.5s) ↘ TIdak (0.7s)
2. → RASA : : (1s) ↘ TAKUT atau seBAGAINYA (0.2s)
3. ↗ teTAPI (0.2s) → DIA : : (0.4s) ↘ MELAKUkan (0.3s)
4. ↗ perKARA YANG saMA (0.5s) ↗ KALI INI (0.16s)
5. ↗ DILAkuKAN dengan caRA (0.1s) ↘ meminTA DIri (0.4s)
6. ↗ deNGAN meNGANGKAT toPINYA
7. ↘ meNUNJUKKAN DIA MAU meminTA diRI (0.7s)
8. ↗ seBAIK saJA DIA meminta DIRI (0.14s) ↘ DIA bepuSING
9. → DAN beJALAN (0.4s) ↘ peLAN peLAhan (0.9s)
10. ↘ BAGAIKAN MAU meningGALkan tempat tersebut (2s)
11. ↘ TETAPI (0.35s) ↗ diDALAM satu deTIK (0.4s)
12. ↗ dia meNOLEH ke belaKANG (1s) ↘ dan berpuSING

Exc. 4. Use of Rise Tones to Continue Speaking in Malay

In the above examples, there are twenty-four complete tone units identified. Four are assigned a rise tone to signal intention to continue speaking. For example, in the first tone unit in line 3, a rise tone is used on 'but' as the learner wants to show contrast in her point. Similarly, in line 4, another rise tone is used on the second tone unit 'this time/now'. In line 8, the first tone unit is also assigned a rise tone. The utterance, which means *"As soon as he indicated he was leaving"* is assigned a rise tone because the tone unit is a dependent clause and needs to be combined with an independent clause *"he turned and walked slowly"* which, in turn, is assigned a fall tone to signal idea completion. Similarly, in the second tone unit in line 11, another rise tone is used on the utterance which means *"at one moment"* because the expression is part of another utterance which means *"and (he) turned"*, which completes it.

Excerpt 5 illustrates how conveying shared information is accomplished with the use of the rise tone:

1. // ↗ AND THE two <u>BOYS</u> // [0.14s] // → <u>UHM</u> // [1.8s]

2. // → <u>THEY</u> : : // [1s] // → <u>UHH</u> : : //

3. // ↗ be<u>COME</u> <u>GHOSTS</u> // [0.34s]…..….. // → <u>THEY</u> : : //

4. // ↗ <u>HIDE</u> // [0.76s] // ↗ BEHIND the <u>GRAVE</u> // [1s]

5. // → WHEN sud<u>DENLY</u> : : // // ↗ his FRIEND <u>COME</u> // [0.69s]

6. // → <u>WALKED</u> // [0.32s] // → passed <u>THE</u> : : // [0.38s]

7. // ↗ <u>GRAVE</u> // [1.2s] // ↗ his FRIEND WAS sur<u>PRISED</u> // [0.79s]

8. // ↗ to see the two <u>GHOSTS</u> // [0.26s]

9. // ↘ AND he RUN a<u>WAY</u> // [1.4s] // ↗ THE boy <u>RUN</u> //

10. // ↘ because of THE <u>ZOMBIE</u> // [0.6s] // → not <u>THE</u> : : //

11. // ↗ two <u>BOYS</u> // [0.49s] // ↗ BUT the two <u>BOYS</u> // [0.21s]

12. // ↘ <u>didN'T</u> notice a<u>BOUT</u> that // [3.6s]…..…

Exc. 5. Use of Rise Tone to Convey Shared Information in Malaysian English

There are twenty-two complete tone units in the sample speech by a female learner, F21, above. Eight are assigned level tones while another 11 and three are assigned rise and fall tones respectively. Of the eight rise tones, six are made to convey shared information. For example, in the first tone unit in the first line, a rise tone is applied on *boys*, who have already been introduced by the learner in her previous speech. Similarly, in the second tone unit in line 4, another rise tone is used on *grave*, which the learner has already mentioned in her speech. In the first tone unit in line 7 and in the only tone unit in line 8, another two rise tones are assigned on *grave* and *ghosts* respectively, as she is referring to the same information she has offered before. Finally, the other rise tone is used on *boys* located in the first tone unit in line 11, referring to the same individuals mentioned previously. In all the highlighted instances, the rise tone is clearly used to convey shared information.

For comparison, the following excerpt shows the rise tone being used by a learner to convey shared information in Malay:

1. ➡ terdaPAT DUA ORANG : : (0.15s) ➡ kanak KANAK
2. ↗ seORANG LAki DAN seorang peremPUAN (0.4s)
3. ↗ daLAM gamBAR INI ➡ MEreKA seDANG : :
4. ↘ meNAnam poKOK (1.6s)
5. ↗ pemPUAN TU seDANG meNYIRAM pokok terseBUT
6. ↗ DAN lelaki iTU (0.5s) ➡ mungKIN : :
7. ➡ seDANG mengGUnaKAN : : (2.5s) ➡ penyoDOK (0.5s)

Exc. 6. Use of Rise Tone to Convey Shared Information in Malay

In the excerpt above, there are two tone units that are assigned a rise tone to convey shared information. The first is used on the only tone unit in line 5 when the learner says *"the woman is watering the plant"* to refer to the plant, mentioned in line 4. Secondly, the same tone is used on the first tone unit in line 6 when the learner says *"and that man"* to refer to the same man previously mentioned in line 2.

Discussion

The initial findings show that the learners have the same intonation patterns when speaking in both English and Malay. Not only did they use the level and rise tones the most in the present study, conforming to the intonation patterns observed previously in studies on Malaysian and Singapore English speakers (Goh), Hong Kong English speakers (Setter et al.,), and Malaysian English speakers (Noor Mat Nayan and Setter), they tended to use the rise tone to communicate new information, signal intention to continue speaking and also convey shared information in both languages.

As can be seen from both the English and Malay speeches in Excerpts 1 and 2, the learners tended to use the rise tone to express new information. This might be because they were having difficulties expressing themselves in English, which may be a factor as it is their second language but the same cannot be said for Malay which is their first language. Furthermore, the same story was narrated twice by some learners; after narrating it in English, retelling it in Malay should have been less challenging. Hence, the nature of the task was a likely factor because they were asked to narrate their stories spontaneously. This may also explain why the level tone was produced almost as frequently as the rise tone. Although the lack of English proficiency may be a contributing factor to the ubiquity of the level and rise tones in Malaysian English (Goh 33), both were also the most frequent tones used by the speakers in Noor Mat Nayan and Setter's study involving ten very fluent speakers of Malay and English who were English teachers. Therefore, lack of proficiency cannot be the main factor. From the

excerpts, there are plenty of evidences to suggest that the learners had applied their Malay intonation to their speech in English when they were conveying new information. In other words, the way that intonation was used by the learners in English could be influenced by the way they used intonation in Malay because, firstly, almost all the syllables assigned the rise tone in both English and Malay were located at the end regardless of whether the syllables belonged to words that carried important information or not. Secondly, given that statements in Malay always end in a rise tone (Checketts 21), it is easy to understand why new information in both English and Malay was assigned the rise tone by the learners. Interestingly, the utilisation of the rise tone to convey new information by the learners is systematic because it was always found assigned to the final syllable of a final word after a series of level tones and incomplete expressions, as a result of hesitation, as shown in the structure below:

// hesitation (level tone / silent pause / fillers / vowel lengthening) rise tone //

The rise tone was always assigned to the end of the utterance after a series of hesitations as if to attract the attention of their listeners by finally saying *"this is what I have been thinking of saying."* Nonetheless, based on the discourse intonation model, the inclination to convey new information in Malaysian English with a rise tone is different from the practice of British English speakers as the fall tone is reserved for this. Therefore, by using the rise tone to convey new information, Malaysian English speakers may probably be perceived as lacking conviction as the rise tone is used to express uncertainty (Lai 140). This is highly possible considering that its opposite tone, the fall tone, is used to express definiteness (Roach 121).

Based on Excerpts 3 and 4 in which the rise tones were made to signify intention to continue speaking in both English and Malay, it can be argued that the learners used the rise tones according to the discourse intonation model. This is because the syllables assigned the rise tone were mostly discourse markers and often located at the beginning of an utterance. Moreover, the use of the rise tone is known to be related to grammar or syntax (Roach 147). In Excerpt 4, if the utterance *"As soon as he indicated he was leaving, he turned and walked slowly"* is rephrased as *"He turned and walked slowly as soon as he indicated he was leaving,"* then *"as soon as he indicated he was leaving"* in the second example could have been uttered with a fall instead of a rise tone. This shows that, due to their initial locations in utterances, they were assigned the rise tone to indicate that the learner had more to say. The use of the rise tone on discourse markers to signal intention to continue speaking was also observed by Noor Mat Nayan and Setter, who found the repetitions of *"OK"* (315) and *"and then"* (316) being used with a rise tone by ten very fluent Malaysian English speakers. In comparison with the Malay learners of English, the Hong Kong English learners, whose L1 was Cantonese, in the

study by Hudson et al., had the tendency to use the fall and the level tones to signify their intentions to continue speaking while there was no clear single preference seen in the speech of the native British English speakers in the similar study who used the fall, fall-rise, and level tones for the same function (52).

Similarly, the use of the rise tone to convey shared information by the Malay learners as in Excerpts 5 and 6 is in conformity with the discourse intonation model. The same tone was also used for the same function by the Malaysian English speakers in the study by Noor Mat Nayan. However, the speakers in the study by Noor Mat Nayan were not required to speak in Malay so there was no evidence if the speakers would have used the same tone for the same function in Malay. However, there were plenty of evidences in this study to suggest that the rise tone functions used by the learners in Malay and Malaysian English were similar, insinuating that, to a certain extent, the learners had used their L1 intonation to communicate in Malaysian English, as consistently suggested but not previously studied before by researchers studying Malaysian English bilingual speakers such as Goh, and Noor Mat Nayan and Setter.

Conclusion

The rise tone was found to be used by the learners to convey new and shared information and to continue speaking in Malaysian English. It was also used to perform exactly the same functions in Malay. Therefore, the findings in the present study support the claim, which hitherto, has been largely under-investigated, that suprasegmental features of a first language may influence the way intonation is used in a second language (e.g., Noor Mat Nayan and Setter 34; Puga et al. 686). Since the Malay learners were only required to narrate their stories individually based on the serial pictures shown to them, the other functions usually related to the rise tone like asking Yes-No response questions, asking questions from statements, asking tag questions, making polite requests, and expressing encouragement were not used as these functions are more often found in conversation.

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