

A Study of Discourse Intonation in a Selected Interview of Mohammed Ali Clay: A Phono-Pragmatic Analysis

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This study investigates the role of discourse intonation in a religious interview of Mohammad Ali Clay with a young Muslim based on Brazil's model of discourse intonation (1997). This paper specifically focuses on determining the intonational meanings regarding the key and termination meanings and the role of dominance and non-dominance of the speaker in the discourse. Most previous research has focused on investigating the role of discourse intonation in the classroom, particularly the pedagogical issues ignoring the linguistic issues. Therefore, this study bridges the gap in the literature as it investigates a religious text, which shows how the intended meaning and its function, specifically in Clay's interview, clarifies using the components of Brazil's model of discourse intonation. This study has mainly concluded that the equative meaning is the most common meaning used in Clay's interview, which reflects that the young Muslim and Clay interact in their speech with each other and each one of them expects information which they try to convey during the discourse. Besides, non-dominance is the most common role in their speech. This reveals that the speaking style of both the characters of Clay and the young Muslim is simple style with a very low tone, particularly Clay, who reflects his modesty in talking about Islam, his beliefs in Allah, and how this religion is different from all other religions, specifically Christianity.

Key words: *Discourse intonation, Mohammad Ali Clay, religious text, proclaiming & referring information tones, dominance & non-dominance.*

Introduction

Intonation and prosody are important features of the spoken language, which are mainly relevant to the analysis of any conversational context (Selting, 1987). The present study is based on the model of Brazil's discourse intonation (1997) to reveal the role of intonation in clarifying the context, particularly Mohammad Ali Clay's speech in his interview with a young Muslim to identify their interactive context in the discourse.

Theoretical Background

Previous Research

Previous studies (Prator, 1971; McNerney & Mendelsohn 1992; Derwing & Wiebe, 1998) assert that intonation has an influence on the comprehensibility and intelligibility of communication between non-native and native speakers. Other studies applied Brazil's discourse intonation in investigating the intonation features of non-native speakers in comparison with native speakers (Hewings 1995, 1993; Goh, 2001, 2000; Pickering 2001; Rui, 2007; Mat Nayan & Setter, 2016). The main results of these studies revealed that the intonation features of the native speakers are different from other speakers, for example, Pickering (2001) finds out that Chinese learners applied the tone choice differently from native speakers. Most of the previous research focused on the communicative value of intonation in the classroom to overcome the problems of EFL learners in understanding intonation, which helps in improving their listening competency since it has 'an indispensable component of language and communication' (Chun, 1998; Ranalli, 2002). These studies find out that teachers and learners are required to improve their listening skills; even discourse intonation contributed to reducing the problems of EFL learners since intonation can cause a problem of pronunciation teaching. Komar (2009) points out that entertainment or dramatised texts play an important role in clarifying the pragmatic value of speech, which is based on the context and understanding of intonation, lexis, and grammar. Only a few studies focused on the role of intonation in clarifying the hidden or intended meaning in the context like advertisements, BBC shows and radio interviews (Selting, 1987; Herczeg-Deli, 2012; Miyauchi, 2014; Odeyemi, 2017). The main findings asserted the importance of the discourse intonation role in illustrating the interaction context between the characters. However, there is a lack of investigation on identifying the pragmatic function of intonation in a religious context. Therefore, this study aims at investigating the context interaction in Mohammad Ali Clay's interview by applying the components of Brazil's discourse intonation model.

Brazil's Discourse Intonation Model

The model of Brazil's discourse intonation has been characterised as "a comprehensive and workable description of many pitch phenomena, which is based on sound and explicit

principles” (Coulthard & Brazil, 1992). The model started in the formal descriptions of Halliday, then it was developed to a complete theory by Brazil (Coulthard, 2014). On the one hand, it focuses on the relation between the speaker and the message and between the interlocutors on the other hand (Komar, 2009). The major component of Brazil’s model is the tone unit that includes a single complete pitch pattern and it is composed of proclitic, tonic, and enclitic segments (Ranalli, 2002). Mat Nayan and Setter (2016) state that the proclitic and enclitic segments are optional, and the tone unit can include only the tonic syllable, which is the focus of discourse intonation. Besides, the proclitic segment includes all the unstressed syllables, which occur before the tonic segment while the enclitic segment includes all the unstressed syllables, which occur after the tonic segment. Table (1) illustrates several examples of the three segments of the tone units (Brazil, 1997).

Table 1: The tone unit

Proclitic Segment	Tonic Segment	Enclitic Segment
He was	GOING to <u>Go</u>	
That’s a	VERY TALL <u>STO</u>	Ry
It was A	WED	Nesday

Source: (Brazil, 1997)

The system of Brazil’s model is based on four major components: prominence, key, termination, and tone. Beaken (2009) states that prominence refers to the first prominent syllable in the tone unit, which is the onset and it is called the key. The key has three levels, including high, mid, and low levels. The final prominent syllable in the tone unit is the tonic syllable, which is called the termination. The termination has three levels of the pitch, including high, mid, and low levels. According to Brazil (1997), the word that represents the key is capitalised and the word that represents the termination is capitalised and underlined in which both the key and termination are enclosed by a pair of slashes. Table (2) illustrates the meanings of the key with examples and their symbols (Brazil, 1997: 172).

Table 2: The key system

Pitch Level	Meaning	Example
High Key ↑	Contrastive	//p she BOUGHT// p and VANISH <u>ed</u> // (contrary to expectations; i.e. there is an interaction-bound opposition between the two)
Mid Key →	Additive	//p she BOUGH// p and VANISH <u>ed</u> // (she did both)
Low Key ↓	Equative	//p she BOUGHT// p and VANISH <u>ed</u> // (as you would expect, i.e. there is an interaction-bound equivalence between them)

Source: (Brazil, 1997)

Moreover, Brazil (1997) distinguished between two types of tones called the proclaiming and referring tones. The first type of tones includes two tones (fall and rise-fall), while the second type of tones includes the (fall-rise and rise) tones. Generally, proclaiming tones refer to new information that is not shared yet, while the referring tones refer to information that is already known and knowledge is shared with the listener (Kumaki, 2003). Brazil (1997) distinguished the tones further according to whether they are dominance (rise-fall & rise) and non-dominance (fall & fall-rise). The dominant speaker is the speaker, who plays the controlling role in the discourse and s/he can use either the proclaiming tone (rise-fall) or the referring plus tone (rise) to be the controller of the discourse. By contrast, the non-dominant speaker is the speaker, who does not play the controlling role and s/he can use either the proclaiming tone (fall) or the referring tone (fall-rise). The third tone is called the level tone. This tone is not commonly used, which refers to routine and formulaic situations (Hitotuzi, 2007). The types of the three tones are summarised in Table (3) along with their meanings and symbols.

Table 3: The types of tones with their meanings and symbols

Type of Tone	Symbol	Meaning	Speaker's Role
Proclaiming (p)	fall ∨	Unshared information (separateness)	Non-dominant
Proclaiming plus tone (p+)	rise-fall ↗∨		dominant
Referring (r)	fall-rise ∨↗	Shared information (togetherness)	Non-dominant
Referring plus tone (r+)	rise ↗		dominant
Level tone	o	formulaic (routine) hesitation	

Below are phatic questions examples to show the difference between unshared and shared knowledge in which the first one expresses the falling tone, which signals speaker-hearer separateness, whereas the second one expresses the fall-rise tone, which refers to the concurrence or 'togetherness' of the speaker-hearer (Brazil, 1997):

// ↗ DO you eat RICE // (Am I right in thinking you do?)
// ∨ DO you eat RICE // (I don't know the answer, please tell me)

Moreover, Brazil (1997) clarifies the difference between the dominant (rise & fall-rise) and non-dominant tones (rise-fall, fall) by giving examples below. The examples are questions, which can be dominant direct demands for information in the first one or more polite requests in the second one:

// ↗ got a LIGHT //
// ↗∨ got a LIGHT //

Table (4) clarifies the interaction between the meanings of the key with the termination system using several examples. The symbols are placed before the key and termination, which represent their level of the pitch (Sinclair & Brazil, 1982).

Table 4: The termination system

Key Level	Termination Level	Meaning	Example
High	High	The expectation on the part of the speaker of a contrastive answer: yes/ no	T://p do you ↑ THINK this one's ↑ <u>BIGGer</u> // P://p <u>YES</u> //
	Mid	Pressure from the speaker for a favourable response by the other interlocutors	T://p do you ↑ THINK this one's → <u>BIGGer</u> // P://p <u>YES</u> //
Mid	High	The expectation on the part of the speaker of a contrastive answer: yes/ no	T://p do you → THINK this one's ↑ <u>BIGGer</u> // P://p <u>YES</u> //
	Mid	Pressure from the speaker for a favourable response by the other interlocutors	T://p do you → THINK this one's → <u>BIGGer</u> // P://p <u>YES</u> //
	Low	The speaker enforces little or no constraint on the next "turn taker"	T://r and the → <u>QUEST</u> ion I want to <u>PL</u> ACE for you// r+ <u>IS</u> //p DO we <u>NEED</u> // p an <u>IN</u> come ↓ <u>POL</u> icy//
Low	Mid	Pressure from the speaker for a favourable response by the other interlocutors	T://p do you ↓ THINK this one's → <u>BIGGer</u> // P://p <u>YES</u> //
	Low	The speaker enforces little or no constraint on the next "turn taker"	T://r and the ↓ <u>QUEST</u> ion I want to ↓ <u>PL</u> ACE for you// r+ <u>IS</u> //p DO we ↓ <u>NEED</u> //p an ↓ <u>IN</u> come ↓ <u>POL</u> icy //

Research Questions

The following two research questions are addressed in order to achieve the objectives of the study:

1. What are the intonational meanings that are used in Clay's interview about the key and termination meanings?
2. What is the role of dominance and non-dominance in Clay's interview?

Methodology

Data Collection

This study mainly uses qualitative data, which is analysed in terms of Brazil's discourse intonation model. The source of the data is an authentic YouTube interview collected online <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x7YF58ygric>. The data includes a religion interview of Mohammad Ali Clay with a young Muslim. The interview took place in England in 1977 and it lasted for approximately 10 minutes. The main topic of this interview involves Clay's being converted to Islam and the reasons behind changing his Christian beliefs to those of the Islam religion.

Data Analysis

In this study, fifty-seven excerpts were collected from Clay's interview. These excerpts were analysed using the mixed-method approach. However, this study is mainly qualitative as it aims to acoustically analyse the selected excerpts of the interview between the young Muslim and Clay in accordance with Brazil's model of discourse intonation. The types of information tones with regard to the key and termination levels with their meanings (i.e., contrastive, additive, equative) and the role of the speaker whether he/she is dominant or non-dominant in the discourse are investigated in the study. First, the selected excerpts were analysed acoustically using the Praat program, which is a well-known speech analysis software. It can be downloaded free at <http://www.praat.org> (Boersma, 2014). This program was developed by Boersma and Weenink (2004) from the Institute of Phonetic Sciences of the University of Amsterdam. The Praat program was used to obtain the pitch values of the prominent syllables in the key and termination of each excerpt. Besides, it was used to automatically align the transcriptions and create Praat text grids with separate word and phoneme tiers. Moreover, two raters, who are specialists in phonetics and phonology, checked the acoustic analysis of each excerpt in this study. The confidence in the rater's reliability and the percentage of agreement obtained between the two judges was established by selecting 82% of the items (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Then, the selected excerpts were analysed using Brazil's model of discourse intonation. Furthermore, this study is quantitative as it aims to obtain the frequencies of the aforementioned components of Brazil's model of discourse intonation to provide a clear understanding of the whole interview and to verify the qualitative results, which supported the findings of the study. Below is a selected authentic excerpt from the interview between the young Muslim and Mohammad Ali Clay, which is acoustically analysed based on Brazil's model of discourse intonation.

Figure 1. Praat analysis of the selected extract in Clay’s interview

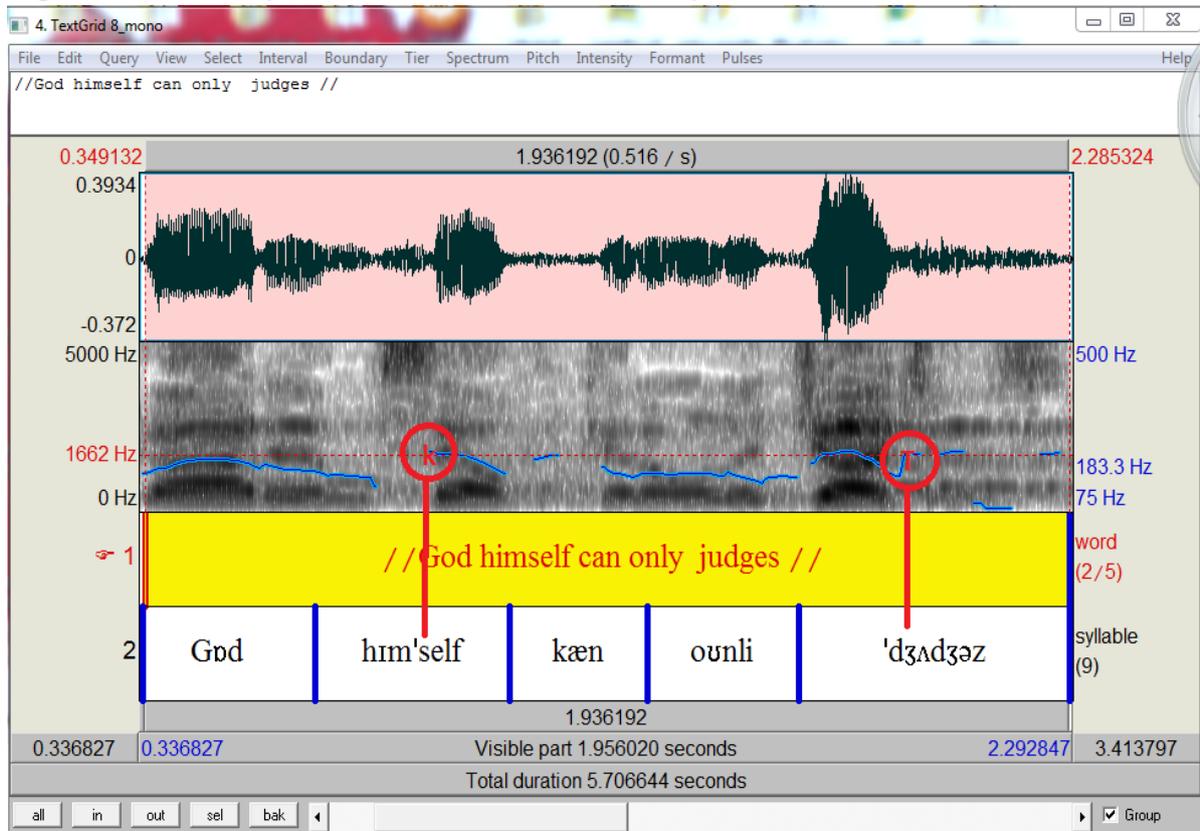


Table 5: Selected interview extracts between the young Muslim and Clay that are analysed based on Brazil's discourse intonation model

TU	DI Analysis	Function & its Type of Tone	Role of the Speaker
Young Muslim's question			
1	// I'M mus <u>LIM</u> mohammed ali//	P ⁺ Rise-fall	Dominant
2	//and I would LIKE <u>TO</u> ask you//	r fall-rise	Non-dominant
3	//what MADE you <u>CHANGE</u> to the Islamic faith//	r fall-rise	Non-dominant
4	//And Do you KEEP <u>STRICT</u> ly to the laws of Islam//	r fall-rise	Non-dominant
5	//And ARE you as a <u>GOOD</u> muslim as you're a boxer //	r fall-rise	Non-dominant
Clay's response			
6	// well it's NOT <u>FOR</u> me//	P fall	Non-dominant
7	// you know the word MUSlim mean one is the myths and <u>TA</u> lent of the will of god//	P fall	Non-dominant
8	// SO <u>I</u> //	r fall-rise	Non-dominant
9	// I <u>DON'T</u> know//	r ⁺ rise	
10	// I cannot be the <u>JUDGE</u> on how much//	r fall-rise	Non-dominant
11	//i subMIT en <u>TIRE</u> ly the will of god//	P ⁺ Rise-fall	Dominant
12	//god HIMself can only <u>JUDGE</u> //	r fall-rise	Non-dominant
13	// so I CAN'T <u>SEE</u> //	r fall-rise	Non-dominant
14	// HOW <u>GOOD</u> I am//	P ⁺ Rise-fall	Dominant
15	//and no TRUE <u>MUS</u> lim will brag//	P ⁺ Rise-fall	Dominant
16	// on SAYing he's <u>GOOD</u> //	r ⁺ rise	Dominant
17	//his HALFway good or <u>NOT</u> //	r fall-rise	Non-dominant
18	// its UP to <u>ALL</u> ah god to be the judge//	P ⁺ Rise-fall	Dominant
19	// I'm NOT gonna say one thing a <u>BOUT</u> //	r ⁺ rise	Dominant

Accordingly, Table (5) illustrates the selected extracts of the interview between the young Muslim and Clay, which are analysed in terms of Brazil's model of discourse intonation. This extract includes (19) tone units starting from the young Muslim's speech (from 1 to 5) and Clay's speech (from 6 to 19).

As indicated above, Table 5 shows the tone units of the young Muslim's question and Clay's response, which are analysed in terms of Brazil's model discourse intonation. As shown in Table 1, the young Muslim's question starts from TU1 to TU5 and Clay's response starts

from TU6 to TU19. According to Brazil's model of discourse intonation, the key (onset) and termination (tonic syllable) are regarded as the most two prominent stressed syllables in each tone unit. The Praat program is used to analyse each tone unit acoustically to indicate the pitch values of both the key and termination. As for the young Muslim's speech, it is composed of five-tone units (1-5), where the pitch levels of the key and termination in TU1 are low and high with a proclaiming plus tone in order to attract the attention of Clay to add more information, starting with a question in the next tone unit. Therefore, the young Muslim used a very low tone with a referring tone in both TU3 and TU4 to ask politely about information, which is already known by everybody. She asked Clay the reason behind changing his faith to Islam and whether he is restricted to the laws of Islam and if he is a good Muslim as he is a boxer.

As for Clay's response, it is composed of seventeen tone units (6-22), where he starts with a proclaiming tone (fall) in TU6 and TU7 to add new information in order to explain exactly the meaning of the word 'Muslim' for him. Then, Clay changed his tone from fall to rise in TUs (8, 9, and 10) in order to increase the pressure on the listener and continue in his explanation about his faith in Islam. Accordingly, a rise-fall tone is used in TU11 to continue his speech and assert the controlling role of the discourse. In TU12 and TU 13, Clay used a referring rise tone to add important information that Allah is the only one who can judge his faith. Then, he changed to a proclaiming plus tone (rise-fall) in TU14 and TU15 as he answered the second question about how he is good in Islam because he cannot judge whether he is a good Muslim. Clay continued his speech to assert and attract the attention of the listener in the rest of the tone units (from 16 to 22) as he used a rise (referring or referring plus) tone in order to confirm his accurate response that he cannot decide whether he is good or not because this judgment is up to Allah.

Regarding the dominance/non-dominance role, the young Muslim took a non-dominant role in all the tone units except for TU1 in which she took the role of the dominant speaker. During her speech, it seems that she took the controlling role at the beginning of her speech to emphasise the information that she is a Muslim and to attract the attention of the listener. Then, she used a very low tone, which indicates that she is not dominant in her speech when she tried to ask politely her questions because she expects that Clay will answer and interact with her questions. As for Clay's speech, it is noticed that he took the non-dominant role in the discourse, particularly in TUs (6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 17, 20, 21, and 22), while he took the controlling role in TUs (9, 11, 14, 15, 16, and 19). It seems that Clay took his non-dominant role in most of his speech when he emphasised his adequate response that Allah is the only one who can judge his faith in Islam.

Results and Discussion

Two important results were obtained to achieve the objectives of this study:

1. The intonational meanings about the key and termination levels and meanings:

The percentages of the type of information tones in relation to the key and termination levels with their meanings in the young Muslim's speech are summarized in Table (6).

Table 6: Types of information tones in relation to the key and termination meaning in the young Muslim's speech

Key & Termination Meaning	No. of Tone Units	Type of Information Tone (%)			Total (%)
		Proclaiming	Referring	Level	
contrastive	5	20	0	0	6.66
additive		0	0	0	0
equative		20	80	0	33.33

As indicated in Table 6, the results showed that there are only two information tones that were used in the young's Muslim's speech, which are the proclaiming and referring tones. On the one hand, it is noticed that the proclaiming tone includes only a contrastive meaning with a percentage of 20%, while the incidence of the equative meaning in the referring tone is higher than in the proclaiming tone with a percentage of (80%) in the former, and a percentage of 20% in the latter. This means that the young Muslim used a low tone when she asked about information, which is already known by everyone compared with new information.

Accordingly, the occurrence of the contrastive and additive meanings in the proclaiming tone is the same since the percentage is 20%, while the additive meaning has not been used in the proclaiming tone since the percentage is 0 %. The equative meaning in the referring tone is higher than the contrastive and additive meaning since the percentage is 80% in the former, while it is 0% in the latter. It seems that the additive meaning, which has a mid-tone, has not been used in the young Muslim's speech at all since the percentage is 0%. Generally, the results showed that the equative meaning in the young Muslim's speech is higher than the contrastive and additive meaning since the percentage of the former is 33.33% and in the latter, it is 6.66, 0%, respectively. This means that the young Muslim uses a low tone to expect interaction from Clay to respond to her questions and she imposes little or no restriction on Clay when she asks her questions. In other words, the low tone indicates that the young Muslim expects that the questions she was trying to ask were just what Clay expected.

Table 7 illustrates the percentages of the types of information tones in relation to the key and termination levels with their meanings in Clay's speech.

Table 7: Types of information tones in relation to the key and termination meaning in Clay's speech

Key & Termination Meaning	No. of Tone Units	Type of Information Tone (%)			Total (%)
		Proclaiming	Referring	Level	
contrastive	52	23.07	19.23	0	14.1
additive		0	0	0	0
equative		28.84	30.76	0	19.86

As indicated in Table 7, the results showed that there are only two information tones that were used in Clay's speech, which are the proclaiming and referring tones. The contrastive and equative meanings were used in the proclaiming and referring tones since the percentages in the former are 23.07%, 28.84%, 19.23% and 30.76%, respectively. On the one hand, the contrastive meaning in the proclaiming tone is higher than in the referring tone as the percentage in the former is 23.07%, while in the latter, it is 19.23%. This means that Clay used a high tone in providing new information concerning his faith in Islam to emphasise and capture the attention of the audience. On the other hand, the equative meaning of the referring tone type is higher than the proclaiming tone type as the percentage in the former is 30.76% and in the latter, it is 28.84%. This shows that Clay used a low tone when he talked about information, which is already known by everyone. The additive meaning, which has a mid-tone, has not been used in Clay's speech at all. Generally, it seems that the equative meaning in Clay's speech is higher than the contrastive and additive meanings as the percentage of the former is 19.86% and in the latter, it is 14.1% and 0%, respectively. This means that Clay has used a low tone to interact with the audience in his answers, particularly with the young Muslim.

2. Types of information tones in relation to the dominance and non-dominance factor

The percentages of the types of information tones in relation to the dominance and non-dominance factor in the young Muslim's and Clay's speech are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8: Types of information tones in relation to the dominance and non-dominance factor in the young Muslim's and Clay's speech

Type of Information Tone		Young Muslim's speech (5 TUs) %	Clay's speech (52 TUs) %	Total %	Dominance & Non-dominance %
Dominance	Proclaiming plus (rise-fall)	20	38.46	29.23	19.42
	Referring plus (rise)	0	19.23	9.61	
Non-dominance	Proclaiming (fall)	0	9.61	4.80	30.09
	Referring (fall-rise)	80	30.76	55.38	

Table 8 illustrates that dominance includes only the types of proclaiming plus tones (rise-fall), while non-dominance has only the type of referring tone (fall-rise) in the Young Muslim's speech. The occurrence of the dominance factor in proclaiming plus tone is higher than in the referring plus tone since the percentage of the dominance in proclaiming the plus tone is 20% and in the latter, it is 0%. This shows that the young Muslim took a dominant role when she talked about new information. As for the non-dominance factor, its occurrence in the referring tone (fall-rise) is higher than in the proclaiming tone (fall). Generally, non-dominance in the referring tone is higher than dominance in the proclaiming plus tone since the percentage in the former is 80% and in the latter, it is 20%. This indicates that the young Muslim did not take a controlling role in most of her speech, particularly when she asked about information, which was already known to everyone.

In Clay's speech, the dominance factor occurred in both types of the proclaiming and referring plus tones (rise-fall & rise) in which the former is higher than the latter as the percentage of dominance in the proclaiming plus tone is 38.46% and in the latter, it is 19.23%. This reflects that Clay took the dominant role when he talked about information, which was not known and new to the audience or everyone, particularly when he talked about the reasons behind changing his faith and converted to Islam. As for non-dominance, its occurrence in the referring tone is higher than in the proclaiming tone as the percentage in the former is 30.76% and in the latter, it is 9.61%. This is because Clay did not control the discourse when he talked about information, which was already known by the audience.

Generally, the results showed that both the young Muslim and Clay were non-dominant or did not control their speech in most of their discourse because the percentages' values of non-dominance are 30.09%, which are higher than the percentages' values of dominance 19.42%. This reflects that both the young Muslim and Clay interacted in their speech with each other and each one expected information as they tried to convey during the discourse. In addition, non-dominance showed the characters of the young Muslim and Clay as they talked with a simple style of speaking and a very low tone, particularly Clay who reflected his humility in talking about his religion and beliefs in Allah and how it is different from other religions, specifically Christianity.

Conclusion

After discussing the results, the major conclusions are summarised as follows:

- 1) This study shows how the meanings with their functions in Mohammad Ali Clay's interview are successfully clarified using the components in Brazil's model of discourse intonation, i.e., the type of information tones regarding the key and termination levels with their meanings (contrastive, additive, and equative), as well as the dominance and non-dominance factor.
- 2) Two types of information tones are used in the young Muslim and Clay's speech. They are the proclaiming and referring tones. It is noticed that the most commonly used meaning in the young Muslim's and Clay's speech is the equative meaning with a low tone, which is used to talk about known information by the audience and everyone. Besides, the equative meaning reflects that both the young Muslim and Clay interacted in their speech with each other, and each one of them expected information as they tried to convey during the discourse.
- 3) The contrastive meaning, which has a high tone, is used in Clay's speech to provide new information in order to emphasise and capture the attention of the audience about the reasons behind changing his faith from Christianity to Islam. In addition, the additive meaning with a mid-tone has not been used in the young Muslim's and Clay's speech.
- 4) As far as dominance and non-dominance are concerned, both the young Muslim and Clay controlled their role when they talked about new information. However, they did not take the non-dominant roles when they talked about known information by the audience. Generally, the non-dominance role is the most common role in the discourse of both of them, which revealed the characters of the young Muslim and Clay as they talked with a simple style of speaking and a very low tone, particularly Clay who reflected modesty in talking about his religion and beliefs in Allah and how Islam is different from other religions, specifically Christianity. Besides, their interaction helped in providing clear and known information for the audience.



This, in turn, indicates that the young Muslim took a controlling role in most of her speech, particularly when she asked about information that is already known to everyone as when Clay changed his faith to Islam. This is because Clay did not control the discourse when he talked about information, which is already known by the audience. This also reflects that both the young Muslim and Clay interacted in their speech and each one of them expected information as they tried to convey this during the discourse. In addition, non-dominance revealed the characters of the young Muslim and Clay as they talked with a simple style of speaking and a very low tone, particularly Clay who reflected humility in talking about his religion and beliefs in Allah and how Islam is different from other religions, specifically Christianity.

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