The Intonation of Listing in English: With Some Implications for Teaching English to Japanese Elementary School Students[1]

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1．Introduction

Yuzawa (2022a, 2022b, 2022c) discussed problematic intonation patterns found in the accompanying audio materials for the English textbooks for Japan's elementary school students, which had been approved by the Ministry of Education (MEXT). One of these patterns was the intonation pattern for listing. Some of these textbooks include a visual description of this pattern using arrows. All the arrows are directed upwards until the last item, whose arrow is directed downwards. This final downward direction gives a sense of finality. However, it was found that quite a few examples of this kind do not conform to this rule.

When teaching spoken English to learners who are learning English as a foreign language, it is natural for prescriptive rules to be important, as these learners may not have the opportunity to use English in everyday communication. Presenting uncontrolled varieties in class can confuse them. However, it is also important to observe how native speakers of English actually speak the language and assess the appropriateness of these rules.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the intonation pattern actually used by native speakers of English when listing items, and to assess how well the rule explained in these textbooks reflects this reality. Furthermore, it aims to discuss the implications for teaching spoken English to Japanese elementary school students.

2. Data

The following 50 examples of listed items were collected from video clips on YouTube. To collect these examples, a useful guiding phrase, 'such as', was used. In some cases, these items appeared within the sentence. Due to this syntactic variation, the last item was not always spoken with a fall. These examples were not arbitrarily chosen. All 50 examples selected in this paper end with a fall:

1. such as coughing, bending over, or light and sound
2. such as "like," "well" or "you know"
3. such as "truck" and "pear"
4. such as Amazon advertising, and review copy generation
5. such as anxiety and depression
6. such as astronomy, botany, and mathematics
7. such as boat rides, swimming, water sports and scenic walks
8. such as bright sunlight and good visibility
9. such as California and New York
10. such as carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide
11. such as cochlear implants and devices to treat hearing loss
12. such as color, design and log and brand awareness
13. such as crime, terrorism and foreign affairs
14. such as electronic funds, EFT, and wire transfer
15. such as Expressionism, Surrealism, Abstraction and more
16. such as forensic linguistics and speech and language therapy
17. such as gym memberships, health services or insurances etc.
18. such as heavy rainfall, snow and ice
19. such as honey or liquor
20. such as in the fight against HIV and AIDS, polio, Ebola, and Covid-19
21. such as intense fear and anxiety and flashbacks of the traumatic event
22. such as Japan, the Philippines and Vietnam
23. such as Kevlar or aluminium oxide
24. such as Kuta and Nusa Dua

25. such as mind attraction, energetic connection, overlapping interests and values

26. such as misfiring neurons or excess electrical activity

27. such as nausea, headaches, fatigue and shortness of breath

28. such as new research, or publishing a paper

29. such as Passover, Easter, Eid, and Vaisakhi

30. such as politics, economics and law, and professionally orientated training in business, education and public policy

31. such as Preen, Suno, and Antonio Marras

32. such as programming languages, systems and platforms

33. such as public office, academia, tech, investing, entrepreneurship, media

34. such as SARS and Ebola

35. such as Sincerely, Regards, or Best regards

36. such as straw and corn husks

37. such as the Palm House, the Elephant House and the 100-year-old heritage merry-go-round

38. such as the police and the courts

39. such as the Royal Exchange Manchester, the Liverpool Everyman and the Donmar Warehouse in London

40. such as the UX research team, the design team or the content team

41. such as the Zocalo, National Museum of Anthropology, and the huge Revolution Monument

42. such as Tokyo, London or New York

43. such as torture, genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes

44. such as traffic or air conditioning

45. such as waking up, turning off your alarm or brushing your teeth

46. such as warmer water temperatures and excessive nutrients

47. such as Waypoint, Follow Me, and Point of Interest

48. such as worms, amoebae, bacteria, or viruses

49. such as Wyoming, Utah, and Washington

50. such as yellows, reds and black

3. Results

It was discovered that only the following 10 examples (20% of all examples) conform to the intonation rule for listing:

1. | such as /coughing, | bending /over, | or light and \sound |

2. | such as /honey or \liquor |

3. | such as /mind attraction, | energetic co/nnection, | overlapping /interests | and \values |

4. | such as /Preen, | /Suno, | and Antonio \Marras |

5. | such as /Waypoint, | Follow /Me, | and Point of \Interest |

6. | such as "/like," | "/well" | or "you \know" |

7. | such as carbon di/oxide, | /methane | and nitrous \oxide |

8. | such as electronic /funds, | EF/T, | and \wire transfer |

9. | such as misfiring /neurons | or excess electrical ac\tivity |

10. | such as the po/lice | and the \courts |

The remaining 40 examples, which account for 80%, do not adhere to the rule.

11. | such as "\truck" | and "\pear" |

12. | such as \boat rides, | >swimming, | >water sports | and scenic \walks |

13. | such as \gym memberships, | /health services | or in\surances etc. |

14. | such as \nausea, | \headaches, | fa\tigue | and shortness of \breath |

15. | such as \politics, | eco'nomics and >law, | and professionally orientated training in \business, | edu'cation and public \policy

16. | such as 'SARS and E\bola |

17. | such as Sin/cerely, | Re>gards, | or Best re\gards |

18. | such as \straw | and \corn husks |

19. | such as \Tokyo, | \London | or New \York |

20. | such as \torture, | \genocide, | crimes against hu\manity, | \war crimes |

21. | such as \worms, | a\moebae, | bac\teria, | or \viruses |

22. | such as Wy/oming, | \Utah, | and \Washington |

23. | such as >color, | de>sign | and \/log | and brand a\wareness |

24. | such as >crime, | \terrorism | and foreign a\ffairs |

25. | such as >Kevlar | or aluminium \oxide |

26. | such as >Kuta | and Nusa \Dua |

27. | such as >Passover, | >Easter, | >Eid, | and Vai\sakhi |

28. | such as >traffic | or \air conditioning |

29. | such as >yellows, | ˈreds and \black |

30. | such as Amazon \advertising, | and review copy
gene\ration |

31. | such as anˈxiety and de\pression |

32. | such as astro/nomy, | \botany, | and mathe\matics |

33. | such as bright \sunlight | and good visi\bility |

34. | such as Caliˈfornia and New \York |

35. | such as cochlear >implants | and devices to treat
\hearing loss |

36. | such as Ex/pressionism, | Su\rrealism, | Ab\straction |
and \more |

37. | such as forensic \linguistics | and speech and
language \therapy |

38. | such as heavy \rainfall, | \snow | and \ice |

39. | such as in the ˈfight against "HIV and \AIDS, |
>polio, | E/bola, | and Covid-\19² |

40. | such as intense /fear | and an>xiety | and flashbacks
of the traumatic e\vent |

41. | such as Ja\pan, | the \Philippines | and Viet\nam |

42. | such as new \research, | or publishing a \paper |

43. | such as programming >languages, | >systems | and
\platforms |

44. | such as public \office, | aca\demia, | \tech, |
in\vesting, | entrepre\neurship, | \media |

45. such as the \Palm House, | the \Elephant House | and
the 100-year-old heritage merry-go-\round |

46. | such as the Royal Exchange Man/chester, | the
Liverpool >Everyman | and the Donmar Warehouse in
\London |

47. | such as the UX >research team, | the de>sign team |
or the \content team |

48. | such as the Zo\calo, | National Museum of
Anthro>pology, | and the huge Revo\lution Monument |

49. | such as waking /up, | turning off your a>larm | or
brushing your \teeth |

50. | such as warmer water \temperatures | and excessive
\nutrients |

This result will be discussed in the section below.

4. Discussion

Before examining these 50 examples, let us check how intonation for listing is explained in some books and online resources. Regarding books, the Ministry of Education (2017) states that a rise is often seen in listing and provides an example: '| I like /English, | Japa/nese, | and \math |'[3]. Roach (2009) gives the example: '| /Red, | /brown, | /yellow, | or \blue |'. Two such examples shown in Wells (2006) are: '| /One, | /two, | /three, | /four, | \five |' and '| We've been to /Manchester, | /Edinburgh | and \London |'[4]. Regarding online resources, Triple A English (2017) introduces the following examples:

I like /birds,	/cats	and \dogs.
Today will be /nice	and \sunny.
The test was /long,	/scary	and \difficult.
Do you want /blue	or \red?
Where are /Tom,	/Sally	and \Jenny?
Did you eat /beef,	/pork	or \chicken?

One interesting feature is found in the fourth and sixth examples, in which the intonation rule for listing clashes with the intonation rule for yes-no questions, causing the last item to be spoken with a fall, prioritising the former over the latter.[5] Other similar online resources are found in English Pronunciation with JenniferESL (2017), ConfidentSpeech (2016), ElementalEnglish (2014) and Learn English Today (2020). The explanation of English intonation for listing remains consistent across all these sources, as they all acknowledge the use of a rising intonation until the final item in a list.

Let us examine how this rule is observed in the 50 examples. As mentioned above, the last item is spoken with a fall in all of these examples. Therefore, in analysing what intonation pattern is used in them, attention is paid only to the non-final items. A close analysis of these examples reveals that they can be classified into two main types: those spoken in the same way as the rule (10 examples) and those spoken differently (40 examples). The former is referred to as Type 1, while the latter is referred to as Type 2. Type 2 can be further divided into two subtypes: Type 2a (3 examples), which has a head only (no additional nuclear tone), and Type 2b (37 examples), which consists of
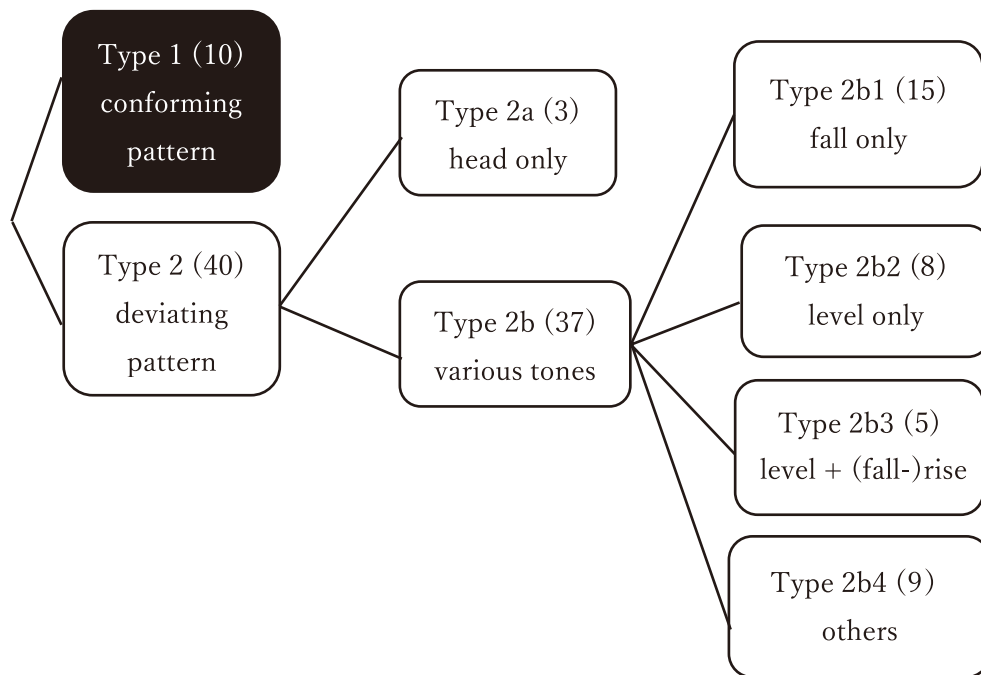
Figure 1 First Illustration of Types of Intonation for Listing

various tones. Type 2b can be further subdivided into four subtypes: Type 2b1 (15 examples) with a fall only, Type 2b2 (8 examples) with a level only, Type 2b3 (5 examples) with a level and a (fall-)rise, and Type 2b4 (9 examples) with other tones. This is schematised as shown in Figure 1.

Type 1 is the one that exactly matches the intonation rule. To visually highlight this, a reverse display is applied, with the box marked in black and the words inside marked in white. One surprising fact is that Type 1 is not used very frequently. Only 10 out of the 50 examples, which account for 20%, adhere to the prescribed rule. If this result, which is obtained from this small sample size, successfully represents the general tendency, it may help explain why textbook narrators do not always follow the intonation rule for listing. They might have perceived the rule as less strict compared to the one explained in school textbooks, books, and online resources.

Type 2a can also be regarded as not contradicting the rule because it is possible to give the non-final items head accents, as Wells (2006) states, with examples such as '| 'One, 'two, 'three, 'four, \five |' and '| We've been to 'Manchester, 'Edinburgh and \London |'. There is no additional tone before the final item. Regarding Types 2b2 and 2b3, in which a level and a fall-rise are also used, these two tones are fundamentally different in both form and

function. However, in the context of listing, it appears that they can be somehow equated. One illustrative example is found in British Council (an undated source), where a fall-rise is used in an environment where a rise is the basic tone.

SK: Can I help you?
C: | I'd like a \chocolate ice-cream. |
SK: | One \/chocolate ice-cream. | Anything else?
C: | One \strawberry ice-cream. |
SK: | One \/chocolate, | one \/strawberry. | Anything else?
C: Yes. | One \/chocolate, | one \/strawberry, | and one va\nilla. |[6]

This use of a fall-rise instead of a rise in listing can be understood from the fact that both tones end with a rise. Additionally, the following example shown by Tench (2005) is also worth considering:

| He's been to >Canada | and the US>A | he's been to Singa>pore | and Au>stralia |

Tench explains that this level tone helps convey routineness. Although a level does not end in the same direction as a rise, it does not give an attitude of finality,
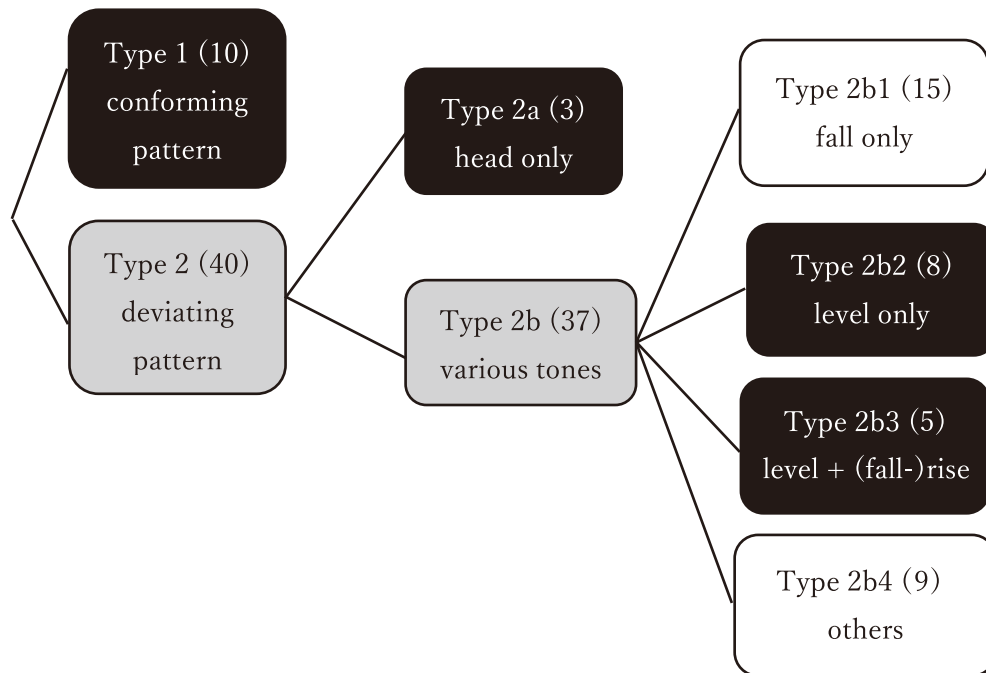
Figure 2 Second Illustration of Types of Intonation for Listing

which is one of the important functions in a fall[7], as the pitch does not descend like a fall. In ToBI, a level is transcribed as H* H-L%[8], where the boundary tone is marked as L, but the phrase tone is marked as H. This H is important as the pitch does not immediately descend after the pitch accent. These two examples provide strong evidence that a rise in listing can be replaced with a fall-rise and a level.

Based on the discussion above, it can be reasonably concluded that not only Type 1 but also Type 2a, Type 2b2, and Type 2b3 can be included within the rule category of listing in English. This suggests that out of the 50 examples, 26 (10 + 3 + 8 + 5), which constitute 52%, adhere to the prescribed rule. This is illustrated in Figure 2. The reverse display of the box, with the box itself marked in black and the words inside marked in white, shows all logically possible forms of intonation for listing. The grey display indicates that a subset of these forms is included.

A question arises as to why a fall is used in the intonation of listing. The author could not find any references to explain this, but there may be two possible reasons. One reason is the speech setting. All 50 examples collected in this paper are of the lecture type, which involves monologue. There is no other participant in the speech besides the speaker. Therefore, there is no need for

turn-taking strategies or any risk of sudden interruptions from the listener. The speaker can freely and safely express their thoughts, holding the floor. The second reason is the speech style. As these examples belong to the lecture type, they need to be persuasive. Using a fall in intonation can enhance persuasiveness by conveying a sense of definiteness in meaning and attitude. In other words, if examples involving interaction between speakers had been collected, the distribution of types may have been different.

Given the use of intonation forms for listing in the 50 examples collected on YouTube, as well as the probable reasons for deviations from the rule, let us discuss the implications for teaching English intonation for listing to elementary school students in Japan. If these students were to live in an English-speaking country, they would encounter various intonation patterns for listing in their daily communication and understand the nuanced differences each pattern conveys depending on the situation. However, in artificial language learning environments, it is logical to present carefully selected and prescribed patterns as an important initial step in learning English as a foreign language. The first two years of learning English as a subject in school, currently in Grades 5 and 6, are a crucial period that lays the foundation for English learning continuing up to university in Japan. This

careful selection of intonation patterns will minimise the unnecessary burden on these elementary school students in their English language learning. Therefore, when teaching intonation for listing, only a rise should be used for the non-final items. This approach is educationally significant as it helps them establish a solid foundation in English intonation. Even if textbook narrators use other types of intonation for listing, a fall should never be used unless there is a special reason for doing so. In Grades 5 and 6, dialogues and conversations should be emphasised over monologues because interactive communication is a desired form of classroom activity, especially at their age. In such cases, a fall is much less suitable for the intonation of non-final items in a listing context.

When creating English textbooks for Japanese elementary school students, all examples should be carefully chosen, not only in terms of words and sentences but also in pronunciation and prosody. The key objective is to effectively establish a solid foundation of English in their minds. Their learning environment is limited as they do not have daily exposure to English. This is why they should be provided with the best possible examples. It is true that teaching various varieties of English is important, considering the role of English as an international language or a lingua franca, but this aspect should be introduced at least during junior high school. The current recording data used in the MEXT-approved elementary school textbooks in Japan do not sufficiently control intonation for listing. There should be better control in this regard.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the intonation pattern for listing by analysing 50 examples collected from YouTube and comparing them with the prescribed rule outlined in the MEXT-approved textbooks for elementary school students in Japan. The findings revealed that only 20% of the examples adhered to the prescriptive rule. When including instances where non-final items were spoken as a head or with a fall-rise or a level, the percentage increased to 52%. However, this ratio alone may not be sufficient to validate the rule, suggesting a need for reconsideration.

Despite this reality, it remains crucial to provide Japanese elementary school students with essential rules for English intonation to establish a solid foundation in spoken English. Drawing a parallel with tennis, beginners are encouraged to repetitively practise swinging a racket without hitting a ball until their body movements become proficient enough for actual matches. Similarly, learning a foreign language entails gradual development through practice.

Therefore, it is recommended that the fundamental rules described in the school textbooks for Grades 5 and 6 be taught as written, with all recorded examples adhering strictly to these rules. Introducing careful restrictions on the variety of intonation patterns used and implementing attentive monitoring during recording sessions can ensure the presentation of rule-governed examples. As students progress in their English language learning journey, they can gradually acquire and incorporate various intonation patterns for listing.

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[1] This research is supported by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Scientific Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (C) 21K00672.

[2] This should be written as 'nineteen', but 'Covid-19' is an established form and kept as it is.

[3] The intonation transcription is modified from the original to conform to the use in this paper. The examples cited after this example also follow this method of transcription.

[4] There is also an explanation in semantic differences between '| /Chicken | or \beef? |' and '| /Chicken | or /beef? |'.

[5] It is also a fact that yes-no questions are not always spoken with a rise.

[6] Only the tones marked on the website are marked here.

[7] See Roach (2009) for more details.

[8] See Beňuš (2021) for more details.

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The Intonation of Listing in English: With Some Implications for Teaching English to Japanese Elementary School Students

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Abstract

One of the English intonation patterns taught at elementary schools in Japan is the pattern for listing items. Some textbooks authorised by the Ministry of Education show an illustration of this intonation using arrows, where non-final items are spoken with a rise. However, quite a few recorded examples do not conform to this rule. To understand the reality and explore the reasons for this nonobservance, this paper examines the intonation used by native speakers of English when listing items in natural settings. The data was collected from video clips on YouTube. It was found that only 20% of the examples adhered to this prescriptive rule. The implications of teaching English are also discussed in light of these findings.