International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences
Vol-10, Issue-3; May-Jun, 2025

Peer-Reviewed Journal
Journal Home Page Available: https://ijels.com/
Journal DOI: 10.22161/ijels

Impact of Technology on Teaching Intonation to Indian Learners Through Digital Learning

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Received: 19 May 2025; Received in revised form: 16 Jun 2025; Accepted: 20 Jun 2025; Available online: 25 Jun 2025
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Abstract— *Intonation is an important aspect of English Phonetics that helps learners to enhance the Pronunciation skills in English Language. Basically, it changes the pitch of the voice while articulating any words. Generally, the learners of the professional courses in the universities as well as colleges in India cannot make proper intonation in their communication for which the accuracy of pronunciation is not developed among the learners. The present study highlights the impact of technology on teaching Intonation to Indian learners who are learning communicative English, particularly the student of Engineering and Management stream. Specifically, the researcher has adopted the Praat Software in this context. In order to prove whether this technology is effective in teaching Intonation or not, the researcher has collected data from one of the colleges where students are randomly selected from BBA and BCA courses. The samples of the study were based on experimental group (use of Praat software) and control group (following the traditional method). The data were collected through the method of pre-test and post-test for both groups. The findings of the study were really very practical and positive for the students. It means teaching intonation through Praat software is highly effective for the students.*

Keywords— ***intonation, pronunciation, technology, professional, communication, teaching***

I. INTRODUCTION

Technology plays an essential role in education, simplifying and streamlining the learning process. In the area of language learning, technology proves to be especially beneficial, particularly for those studying English. Currently, numerous computer applications exist to cater to all levels of language education. Nowadays, the integration of technology, computer applications, and software is crucial in teaching languages effectively. Utilizing technology as an educational tool enhances classroom engagement and encourages students to develop their language skills using computers. The primary aim of incorporating technology and computer applications in education is to facilitate advancements in language learning and instruction. Computer applications and software provide both teachers and learners with access to genuine target language materials across various domains. English teachers and learners tend to focus significantly on pronunciation due to its essential role in speech recognition and perception. Beyond language skills, intonation has also been stressed in the curriculum. Traditionally, English language instructors teach intonation through a method known as the lecture method, which often results in students struggling to achieve proper pronunciation with appropriate falling and rising intonation. Consequently, the most effective approach to enhance intonation among students in professional courses is through digital learning that incorporates various computer software, especially the Praat software. Researchers have indicated that employing technology in teaching pronunciation and intonation has consistently had a positive effect on students.

1.1. Statement of the problems:

It is observed that using technology to learn a language is often engaging and accessible for students. Generally, engineering and management colleges heavily emphasize technology in teaching the English language. Despite utilizing various technologies and programs, students still struggle with word pronunciation accuracy. When it comes

to English pronunciation, several aspects come into play, such as intonation, stress, and proper speech sound articulation. In this context, the researcher has concentrated on the intonation challenges faced by students in engineering colleges. Therefore, this study aims to assess the influence of Praat software on enhancing intonation teaching among students in professional courses. However, it has been noted that these students experience significant challenges with intonation. They tend to spend an extensive amount of time on learning and practicing intonation. Thus, incorporating Praat software technology in this area is expected to be both engaging and motivating.

1.2. Objectives:

• To investigate the effect of the Praat Software method on teaching intonation to students in professional courses.

• To understand students' responses to using Praat software to enhance their voice pitch.

• To evaluate the effectiveness of teaching intonation using either experimental or traditional methods.

1.3. Research Questions:

• Is there a distinction between the Experimental group and the Control group in their study of intonation among engineering students?

• Does the Praat software technology positively affect students?

• What are students' reactions to using Praat Software for teaching intonation?

1.4. Hypothesis:

Students will respond positively to using Praat technology. Based on the defined objectives and research questions, the following hypotheses are proposed:

• According to prior research conducted by various scholars, it can be inferred that the Experimental group, which utilized Praat software, is significantly more effective than the Control group, which employed traditional methods.

• Clearly, when the teaching-learning process incorporates technology, it consistently benefits the learner. Similarly, using Praat software in intonation instruction has shown a substantial positive effect. **1.5. Significance of the Study:**

This study aims to benefit teachers, students, and the researcher by sharing knowledge and experiences. The primary goal is to assess whether teaching intonation through Praat software is engaging for students. Essentially, the study focuses on engineering students in the state of Odisha. Based on the status of the research, the sample was gathered from a technical institution, specifically Udayanath (Auto) College of Science and Technology, located in Adaspur, Cuttack.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Theoretical Background (Praat Software)

Praat software emphasizes acoustic phonetic analysis instead of supplying learners with pre-recorded native speaker examples for emulation. It can aid learners in refining their pronunciation by enabling them to examine the visual representations of their speech and identify discrepancies compared to the target pronunciation. Simultaneously, teachers can utilize the software to assess their students' speech patterns for evaluation or diagnostic reasons. Furthermore, Praat can analyze the speech of anyone equipped with a computer and a microphone. It achieves this by graphically displaying the acoustic characteristics of speech sounds through visual formats. The primary aim of Praat Software is to foster independent learning among students in English language education by offering feedback without relying on native speakers' assessments (Wilson, 2008). These assessments by native speakers often demand that teachers verbally clarify to students whether their pronunciation aligns with the desired target. Such explanations can be limited, particularly when lacking visual or additional cues. It assists learners in comparing their voices to the pre-recorded models provided by native speakers. However, there are some constraints in how teachers can utilize Praat software. For example, Setter and Jenkins (2005), in their comprehensive review of pronunciation instruction, noted that accurately interpreting formant plots on a Praat diagram, which depict the resonance of an individual's voice, necessitates "a sophisticated level of understanding" from both the teacher and the learner (as cited in Wilson, 2008). Nevertheless, Praat can be employed in ways that do not require phonetic training. For instance, with minimal guidance from the teacher, students can easily interpret intonation using the pitch display from Praat. The representation of the pitch display is straightforward: Praat creates an intonation contour that corresponds to the pitch variations within the given speech sample. In play-back mode, students can hear the sounds while observing the cursor navigate along the pitch contour. They can also visualize the duration of speech sounds and pinpoint which words are emphasized or exhibit higher pitches and intensity, while additionally measuring the overall intonation curve of a spoken utterance.

2.2 Intonation

Intonation involves the musical tones that aid in the pronunciation of speech syllables and is closely linked with sentence stress. Generally, the stressed syllable in a sentence is pronounced at a higher pitch than the unstressed syllable, making intonation a component of stress. By representing sentences in a manner similar to musical notation, we can observe their intonation. Intonation refers to the rise and fall

in voice on specific words within a sentence. Voice tones can be categorized into four types: normal, high, extra-high, and low. These tones can be illustrated by drawing lines at four distinct levels above or below a sentence. A line drawn at the baseline of a word indicates it is spoken in a normal tone, while a line positioned above the word signifies an extra-high tone, which is rarely used unless conveying strong emotions like fear or surprise. The general pattern of pitch variations in a spoken phrase is commonly known as speech melody, consisting of an ongoing sequence of pitch changes. The pitch, or fundamental frequency (F0), is the most significant prosodic feature related to intonation. From a physiological standpoint, pitch is produced by the vibrations of vocal cords during voiced speech segments. It mainly derives from muscle tension and air pressure within and surrounding the glottis, depending on the rate of vocal fold vibrations. This vibration rate is captured in acoustic measurements of fundamental frequency, reflected in Hertz (Hz)—the unit of frequency that counts how many times the glottis opens and closes in one second. Various factors affect how quickly the vocal folds vibrate, including purely physiological aspects such as the elasticity, length, and mass of the vocal cords. Pitch variations predominantly result from changes in the length and tension of these cords, regulated by the intrinsic laryngeal muscles. Consequently, gender differences in pitch occur due to body size variations. For example, the F0 range for males generally lies between approximately 80 and 200 Hz, while for females, it spans about 180 to 400 Hz. In young children, this frequency range may be even higher. Another physiological consideration, the air pressure below the larynx, is often regarded as a secondary factor impacting the vibration rate. By managing muscle tension and subglottal air pressure, speakers can significantly affect their fundamental frequency (F0) (refer to Borden & Harris 1984: 74ff.). For instance, they can create pitch variations and modulate their speech between high and low tones. On the other hand, certain physiological aspects remain beyond the speaker's conscious control, including specific supralaryngeal articulatory movements, which may result from unintentional vocalization effects. For instance, high vowels like /u/ and /i/ typically possess a higher intrinsic pitch than low vowels like /a/ (see Lehiste & Peterson, 1961; Ladd & Silverman, 1984). Moreover, the speech melody of a preceding voiceless obstruent leads to an increased F0 at the beginning of a vowel (refer to Kingston, 1991; Gussenhoven 2004). These unintentional factors in speech create slight variations in the F0-pattern melody. However, while these variations complicate the identification of the "original" speech melody, they do not impact listeners' perception of the intonation contour (see Silverman 1987) and are termed 'microprosody.'

The general pattern of pitch variation is described as the melodic contour of spoken language, while a particular pitch variation associated with stressed syllables within that contour is usually called accent. Overall, both concepts demonstrate the relative weight that can be assigned to specific syllables within a word or to particular words within a phrase or sentence. Historically, the terms 'stress' and 'accent' have been used in overlapping ways and in various contexts that can lead to confusion. Sometimes, they have been used to refer to prominence at the level of the word, while in other instances, they have been applied to prominence at the utterance level. What both concepts have in common is that the features related to stress and accent are grounded in the physiological and physical attributes of the speech organs. The table below (largely adapted from Baumann, 2006:12 & Uhmann 1991: 109) presents the phonetic parameters that characterize prominence in 'stress accent languages' like German and English, along with their correlates at the relevant levels of description.

Table 1: phonetic parameters that generate accents and their correlates at different levels of description:

Perception	Production	Acoustics
Pitch (High-Low)	quasi-periodic vibrations of the vocal folds	fundamental frequency (F0) in Hertz (Hz)
Loudness (loud-soft)	articulatory effort (e.g., air pressure)	Intensity in decibel (db
Length (long-short)	articulation process	Duration in milliseconds (ms)
Vowel quality (full-reduced)	vocal tract configuration	spectral characteristics

Syllables that are relatively more emphasized than others, making them stand out, are known as stressed and accented. The particular syllable that receives emphasis within a word is determined by specific regulations for word stress, which vary by language. In languages like English and German, the location of emphasis is often difficult to predict. This unpredictability highlights the difference between stressed and unstressed syllables in these languages; for example, in German, changing the stress placement can change a word's meaning (‘UMfahren’ - to knock down vs. ‘umFAHRen’ - to drive around). The same phenomenon is evident in English, exemplified by ‘IMport’ (noun) and ‘imPORT’ (verb). Therefore, the prominence achieved through 'stress' is a crucial aspect of the phonological structure of a word.

At the utterance level, certain types of words typically appear less prominent, such as auxiliary verbs, pronouns, and shorter prepositions or conjunctions. In contrast, nouns and main verbs are more frequently articulated with prominence. According to Cruttenden (1986), there are four distinct levels of prominence in English, based on the effort involved in their articulation. 'Unstressed syllables' have no prominence at all. 'Tertiary stress' is marked by prominence primarily through length and/or loudness. 'Secondary stress' includes additional pitch prominence as a secondary characteristic. 'Primary stress' designates the most prominent syllable by providing the main pitch prominence. In Cruttenden's framework, stress and accent are viewed as related to varying levels of exertion. This exertion is evident in the air pressure generated in the lungs (which supports vocal-fold vibrations) for producing a tertiary stressed syllable, and in the articulatory movements of the vocal tract for the primary stressed or accented syllable, as shown in Table 1. The effects of stress on production produce several audible differences: a stressed syllable that displays pitch prominence sets itself apart from unstressed syllables. A heavily stressed syllable will appear even higher in pitch when adjacent to unstressed or lower-pitched syllables (known as 'emphasis for contrast', see Thorsen, 1979a). Another effect of prominence is that stressed syllables generally have a longer duration and greater loudness than unstressed syllables; however, research (e.g., Fry 1955, 1958; Isačenko & Schädlich, 1966) shows that loudness differences alone often go unnoticed by most listeners. Consequently, Kohler (1977) and Beckman (1986) asserted that in both German and English, the acoustic characteristics of accentuation involve not only intensified stress but also a complex mixture of F0 variation, prolonged syllable and word durations, along with increased intensity due to heightened subglottal pressure. Sluijter (1995) highlights a clearer distinction between stress and accent. He argues that stress is a structural linguistic feature of a word that determines its strongest syllable. In contrast, accent serves a focus-driven function, influenced by the speaker's communicative objectives. Thus, while stress complies with phonological word rules, accent is conveyed through the informational structure intended by the speaker. In summary, prosody facilitates the emphasis of individual words, known as meaning stress or lexical stress, as well as entire utterances, referred to as accentuation. Unlike an unstressed syllable, a stressed syllable is typically louder, longer, and articulated with more clarity. A stressed syllable that incorporates further pitch movement should be understood as pitch accent or, when it occurs as the final pitch accent in an Intonation Phrase, as the nuclear pitch accent. In this thesis, I will define "stress" specifically in terms of lexical stress and "accentuation" (which encompasses accent and pitch accent as synonymous terms) to refer to prominence at the level of utterance.

Table 2: Description of the phonetic correlates of stress and accent used in this study, adopted from Baumann (2006:11):

No stress/accent	
Stress	syllable is louder, longer and more strongly articulated than an unaccented syllable.
Pitch accent	additional tonal movement on or in the direct vicinity of a stressed syllable
Nuclear pitch accent	last pitch accent in an intonation unit

2.3 Experimental background

Here the researcher has presented the previous experimental background on the role of technology in teaching and learning Intonation.

According to Simoes (1996) the impact of technology is highly beneficial for the learners in learning intonation. The findings of the study he had conducted was really very helpful for both the teachers and students.

Besides Verdugo (2006) conducted research on ASR software for teaching Intonation. He had to carry out this research with two groups such as: experimental group and control group. But as per the findings the learners did well those who were under experimental group whereas the learners of control group did not have good performance in Intonation.

Hinks and Edlund (2009) investigated how ASR-based visual feedback affects pitch improvement. Their findings indicated that the experimental group utilizing ASR technology demonstrated greater pitch enhancement compared to the control group that did not use it. Gorgian, Hayati, and Pourkhoni (2013) researched the influence of computer software on acquiring prosodic features of pronunciation. The study involved two groups: one that received traditional teaching methods as the control group, and the other that benefited from a CALL approach as the experimental group. The results revealed that the group practicing stress and intonation through CALL outperformed those taught through conventional methods. Wilson (2005) conducted a study using Praat software to enhance the instruction of segmental and suprasegmental features such as vowels and consonants. According to the research, teachers were initially trained to utilize Praat software for teaching English sounds, after which students recorded and analyzed their own pronunciation. The

experiment involved 14 participants, who recorded a sentence and then measured the duration of vowels and prosodic characteristics, comparing their results with a sample from a native English speaker. This study aimed to demonstrate the effectiveness and potential feedback that this program offers in teaching pronunciation aspects like stress, intonation, pause, and comprehensibility. Based on the above reviews regarding the use technology in teaching English from various aspects is highly effective in general. But the present study highlights the impact of Praat software on both teachers and students in the technical colleges particularly in learning intonation.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Subjects

In order to conduct this study, the researcher has collected data from two different sources such as the primary source and the secondary source. The primary data includes the students of two professional courses such as BBA and BCA from one of the technical colleges of Odisha i.e. U.N (Auto) college of Science and Technology, Adaspur, Cuttack. The total number of participants is 10 in which 5 from BBA and 5 from BCA those who are taught communicative English in their course. All of them belong to Odia background. Though they are very poor in speaking skill in English language. Still, some of them speak very normal English. This particular course is Communicative English that contains seven different sections such as: Listening skills, speaking skills, reading skills and writing skills, pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar

The following table gives information about the background of ten participants:

Table 1: Summary of participants' background.

participants	Age	Gender	Course name	Duration of the course	Proficiency level
Participant 1	20	Female	BBA	Three years	Low intermediate
Participant 2	19	Female	BBA	Three years	Low intermediate
Participant 3	19	Female	BBA	Three years	Low intermediate
Participant 4	20	Male	BBA	Three years	Low intermediate
Participant 5	19	Male	BBA	Three years	Low intermediate
Participant 6	19	Male	BCA	Three years	Low intermediate
Participant 7	19	Female	BCA	Three years	Low intermediate
Participant 8	20	Female	BCA	Three years	Low intermediate
Participant 9	19	Female	BCA	Three years	Low intermediate
Participant 10	19	Male	BCA	Three years	Low intermediate

It is strictly observed that almost all of them are much below in proper pronunciation in English language. Though they do not have so

much problems in reading and writing. They only face a lot problems in English Pronunciation and Intonation. As it is clearly understood that the intonation of their mother is different in comparison to English language.

3.2 Instrument

The study was conducted with a set of tests which was prepared for the students by the researcher. To assess the improvement in intonation after utilizing Praat software, both a pre-test and a post-test were conducted. The pre-test consisted of intonation patterns derived from selected words and sentences found in the listening materials of the requested textbook, "Phonetics and Phonology: A Practical Course" (Roach, 1983). In contrast, the post-test comprised words and sentences that the two groups (the control group and the experimental group) listened to while following two distinct teaching methods (the traditional approach versus the use of Praat software).

3.3 Research Design and Analysis

This is an experimental method of research for BBA and BCA students who are studying communicative English in the U.N (Auto) college of science and technology in the academic year of 2024-2025. The study is followed by independent variable with two levels such as: the first one is teaching intonation with the help of Praat software whereas the second one is the use of traditional method in teaching intonation. The study also included a dependent variable in which it shows students' achievement in both

recognition and production of intonation. The study also conducted t-tests to know the quality of the two groups as well as to evaluate the gain scores of both groups on the post test.

3.4 Procedure

According to the research procedure, the researcher conducted the experiment over a period of two weeks. Two assessments were administered: a pre-test and a post-test. The pre-test took place before the experiment to assess the students' prior knowledge. Participants were divided into two groups: the experimental group and the control group. The experimental group practiced the pronunciation and intonation of specific words and sentences using the Praat program on computers. In contrast, the control group received instruction on the same words and sentences through traditional teaching methods, where the teacher served as a model. At the end of the two-week period, all students underwent testing again, and the averages of the post-test scores were calculated.

IV. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The study explores the use of Praat software as a significant tool for improving intonation in the communication among the students of professional courses basically, BBA and BCA students. It also aims to evaluate the rate of accuracy in the pitch of the voice as English language is concerned. This research demonstrates that students instructed with Praat software achieve higher levels of recognition and production compared to those who received traditional instruction. Data were gathered using a pre-test and post-test framework for comparable groups. The analysis of the study was conducted using a significance level of α=0.05. Consequently, table (1) displays the descriptive statistics for both the experimental and control groups.

Table No-(1) Means and standard deviation of the achievement of the control group on the pre-test and post-test. In order to make statistics analysis, the researcher has followed the SPSS software. As per the table:

Control group: Means and standard deviation on two tests

Mean	7.00	13.20
Standard deviation	3.127	3.584
Subject	Pre-test	Post-test
Total	10	10

Table No: 1: Experimental group: Means and standard deviation on two tests.

Subject	Pre-test	Post-test
Mean	6.10	7.00
Standard deviation	2.846	3.127
Total	10	10

In order to find out the statistical difference between the two groups on the tests, the researcher has adopted the t-test analysis method.

As per the table No-2, it gives information about the results of the t-test of the means of achievement of the two groups on the pre-test.

Groups	Total	Means	SD	T	Df	sig
Control	10	6.10	2.846	-		
Experimental	10	7.00	3.127	-2.586	9	029

Based on the data of table No-2, it can be assumed that there is no such statistically difference at α=0.05 between the two groups on the pre-test in terms of achievement. Therefore, the performance of students in the two group is almost equal level over the matter of pre-test. Whereas it can be observed whether there is any statistically difference between the achievement of two groups on the post-test. That's why another t-test was conducted by the researcher in this respect.

Table 3: Results of the t-test of the means of achievement of the two groups on the post- test:

Groups	Total	Means	SD	T	df	Sig.
Control	10	7.00	3.127	-		
Experimental	10	13.20	3.584	-7.154	9	000

As per the table No-3, it can be assumed that the performance of the students in the two groups seems to have developed because on the basis of means value there is some significant difference statistically between two groups. Students who were taken for experiment in teaching intonation through the Praat software were able to score well that means their performance level has been increased by the use of technology. Hence the hypothesis matched which was made in this research. It can be recommended that Experimental group in which the study was conducted through Praat software is highly effective and better than the Control group in which the study was conducted through traditional method. However, the technology Praat software has always positive impact on the learner.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion it can be stated that Praat software is the most powerful tool which can help the students positively in developing the intonation in the speech. As per the research questions: is there any difference between Experimental group and control group on the study of Intonation for the students of Engineering course? Does Praat software technology has positive impact on students? How do students respond to the technology of Praat Software in the context of teaching Intonation? Definitely Praat software is the only way to create motivation among the students of professional courses in learning intonation. They can also find out their drawback and decide about the use of various types of intonation whether it is falling or rising intonation. This study had some limitations. The primary limitation was its very small sample size, as only six intermediate English language learners were examined. Additional research should be carried out with a larger cohort of students at various proficiency levels to gain a clearer understanding of how Praat software impacts students' pronunciation. Moreover, further investigation is required regarding language learners' perceptions of Praat to determine whether students find the software appealing or if it encourages them to focus on pronunciation more effectively than other tools. Educators could also look into how students' pronunciation of questions differs when practiced in isolation compared to within structured or authentic conversations.

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Appendix – 1(Pre-test)

Reading questions for pointing out position of Intonation in the speech

Number	Sentence	Rising or falling?
01	What's your name?	
02	Where did you grow up?	
03	Where are you living now?	
04	What's your job?	
05	What do you do each day?	
06	Why do you like your job?	
07	What do you not like about your job?	
08	Why is your job important to you?	
09	What do you like to do in your free time?	
10	Do you have any pets?	
11	Do you have a car?	
12	Are you a morning person?	

13	Do you eat meat?	
14	Are you a vegan?	
15	What does that mean?	
16	Why are you vegan?	
17	Do you have any pets?	
18	Do you have any brothers or sisters?	
19	Do you have a car?	
20	Are you a morning person?	

Appendix – 2 (post-test)

Task 1: You will record your answers. Please read the questions below aloud, and try to pronounce

them clearly and naturally.

Session A

Did you call James?

Do you have a table for four?

Is that okay?

Session B

1. Where would you like to sit?

2. What would you like to drink?

3. When will you need it?

Task 2: You will record your answers. With your partner, please read the dialogue below aloud, and

try to pronounce the words clearly and naturally. One of you will be the Waiter and Customer 2. The

other student will be Customer 1.

(One customer comes to a cafe. He is talking to a waiter while waiting for his friends …)

Waiter: Good evening!

Customer 1: Good evening!

Customer 1: Do you have a table for four?

Waiter: Yes, sir. Where would you like to sit?

Customer 1: Inside please?

Waiter: We have a table inside by the window. Is that okay?

Customer 1: That's great. Thank you.

Waiter: What would you like to drink?

Customer 1: Just water with lemon, please.

Waiter: OK.

Customer 1: Today is my friend's birthday. Do you have a birthday cake?

Waiter: Yes, sir. When will you need it?

Customer 1: After the meal, please.

Waiter: Yes, sir. I'll be right back.

Customer 1: Hi Jack, how are you doing?

Customer 2: Good! How are you?

Customer 1: I'm enjoying myself! Hey, did you call James?

Customer 2: Yes, I did. Will Sally be here, too?