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Master Thesis

Uptalk and Its Implementation in Teaching English

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this master thesis is completely my own work and that no sources were used in the preparation of the thesis other than those listed on the works cited page.

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Prague, June 2013   Jana Blahušová

ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with the current phenomenon of uptalk. The theoretical part provides a brief overview of the phenomenon, including its characteristics in terms of phonetics and phonology, geographical and linguistic origin, occurrence in contemporary English, relation to gender and functions the pattern fulfils in interactions. The practical part focuses on the implementation of uptalk in teaching English. It aims at producing a lesson plan on the phenomenon and its subsequent application in class. Furthermore, it provides findings of a questionnaire survey conducted among the participants of the implementation project in order to get their feedback on the lesson plan.

KEYWORDS

uptalk, intonation, teaching pronunciation, lesson plan

ABSTRAKT

Tato práce se zabývá aktuálním tématem stoupavé intonace v anglických oznamovacích větách, tzn. *uptalkem*. Teoretická část práce poskytuje stručný přehled o zmíněném jevu, včetně jeho popisu z hlediska fonetiky a fonologie, geografického a lingvistického původu, výskytu v současné angličtině i ve vztahu k pohlaví mluvčího a také funkcemi tohoto intonačního rysu v interakci. Praktická část práce se týká implementace uptalku do výuky anglického jazyka. Jejím cílem je vytvoření plánu hodiny se zaměřením na tento jev a jeho následná aplikace ve vyučování. Tato část dále přináší výsledky dotazníkového šetření realizovaného mezi účastníky samotné implementace za účelem získání jejich zpětné vazby na plán hodiny.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

stoupavá intonace v oznamovacích větách, intonace, výuka výslovnosti, plán hodiny

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Can you say something without turning it into a question?

Hank Davis

Introduction

In recent years, many phoneticians, sociolinguists, journalists, comedians and also ordinary people have been involved in a lively discussion on the phenomenon of uptalk. *Uptalk* is a linguistic term that refers to the use of a rising tone in making statements. Traditionally, English statements in most varietal accents tend to be pronounced with a falling tone. For this reason, uptalk is widely believed to be a linguistic innovation in contemporary English. However, it is not only the supposed recency of the pattern that stirred up the discussion, but also the high frequency of its use at present. Whereas researchers examine the shape of the contour, its origins, distribution in speech and various meanings it conveys, journalists and ordinary people seem to comment mostly on their own attitude towards uptalk, its increased frequency and what consequences the current situation might have in the future.

The attitudes of people towards uptalk and their interpretation of the pattern were two of the key questions on which my previous survey on uptalk was based. The survey was conducted among approximately 50 native speakers of British English and its findings were presented in my bachelor thesis "Uptalk and Its Use in Contemporary English" (2010). One of the aims of the thesis was to analyse authentic data obtained from a questionnaire with reference to several hypotheses concerning the occurrence of uptalk stated in the article "Upspeak in British English" (1997) by Barbara Bradford. My questionnaire study provided several interesting results. First, the data showed that all of the respondents had noticed the pattern in the speech of other people in the UK and that they were aware of its existence in British English. Second, about one half of the informants considered uptalk to be a common feature of speech, especially among younger females. Third, as far as the reasons behind the use of uptalk are concerned, the majority of the respondents regarded the use of the contour as an uptalker's imitation of the speech of characters from American and Australian TV series. Last but not least, none of the informants perceived uptalk in a positive way. The vast majority found the use of the pattern either annoying or irritating. There was only a small group of speakers in the sample who did not mind the use of uptalk in interactions. In sum, the findings appeared to support the hypothesis that the intonational contour in question

is commonly viewed as an unwelcome influence on British English that threatens to disrupt the traditional patterns of English intonation.

Given these findings, it was not surprising to find a negative comment on uptalk in a work of contemporary British literature. I came across this brief remark while reading the novel *Enduring Love* (1997) by Ian McEwan. One of the protagonists in the novel, a bothersome young man, is presented as an uptalker and his speech in the book includes several instances of the intonational contour. The narrator disapproves of this way of speaking and finds it extremely irritating, which corresponds to the generally held assumption that a great many native speakers of English dislike the use of the pattern. Moreover, he provides the readers with a short explanation of the phenomenon, in which he touches upon its origins, its meaning and the age of people who tend to produce uptalk most frequently.

It is always interesting to find a literary work that reflects some current linguistic phenomenon whose use is considered to be a passing fashion by many people. However, there is something else about the novel that captured my attention, namely the reason why McEwan included uptalk in his work. I dare to suggest that there is a close link between the use of the pattern by the protagonist and his negative perception by the readers. In other words, the writer employs the device of uptalk in order to indicate that the protagonist is an extremely annoying person. It is this fascinating combination of a linguistic phenomenon and the characterization of a literary character that piqued my interest and led to my decision to continue focusing on uptalk also in the present thesis.

As opposed to my bachelor thesis, this paper relates to the field of methodology. Its main aim is to bring uptalk into the classroom. As far as I know, Czech learners of English are usually not aware of its existence at all. Nevertheless, a great many learners might have already encountered the phenomenon outside the classroom, for instance in the speech of characters in some American sitcoms or on YouTube. Uptalk is a striking pattern that is easy to notice in speech. Yet even though some learners have probably come across the pattern, they are likely to lack the basic information concerning the occurrence of uptalk in current English and, more importantly, the possible meanings the contour might convey.

The situation does not seem to be different among Czech teachers of English. For this reason, the theoretical part of the thesis aims at familiarising the teachers with the

target pattern. It gives a brief overview of several aspects of the phenomenon. The first section presents the general characteristics of the contour in terms of phonetics and phonology. Another section touches upon the occurrence of uptalk in English at present. Special focus is put on uptalk in contemporary British and American English. Besides, some assumptions concerning the geographical and linguistic origins of the intonational contour are mentioned as well since the pattern appears to be spreading throughout various English varieties and its origin is therefore a frequently discussed question. Furthermore, a separate section discusses the phenomenon in relation to gender. Finally, the theoretical part contains a relatively complex overview of the various meanings and functions of uptalk in interactions.

The practical part of the paper deals with the implementation of uptalk in teaching English. In fact, it comprises three main issues. First, it presents an original lesson plan on uptalk that was designed in order to provide the teachers of English with some ready-to-use teaching materials. Second, the practical part includes a section that reports on the implementation of this particular lesson plan in English classes. Three groups of learners were chosen to participate in the implementation of the lesson plan. The third issue relates to a questionnaire survey. This survey was conducted among the learners who took part in the implementation project. The aim of the survey was to obtain feedback from the learners on the lesson plan as a whole and also on its individual stages. The findings of the survey are discussed in the last section of the thesis.

There is one final important point to mention, namely the question as to why a teacher might wish to include a lesson on uptalk in his or her teaching. Clearly, it is not possible to enumerate here all the possible reasons since each teacher might have his or her own motivation to do this. I dare to suggest a couple of my own reasons for why I think that such a lesson cen be beneficial. First, the learners are likely to encounter the pattern in the speech of a native English speaker sooner or later since the intonational contour is frequently used today, especially by younger people. It is therefore advisable to make the learners aware of the existence of this phenomenon. Naturally, there is no need to encourage them to include the contour in their own speech. Yet I believe that it works to the learner's benefit when he or she is able to correctly interpret the meaning of uptalk when it occurs in the speech of somebody else. Second, the awareness of

uptalk helps the learners to gain a better insight into the foreign language. It broadens their knowledge about how the language works. Certainly, this has a positive effect on the learning process. Finally, uptalk is an interesting topic to touch upon. In spite of its increased frequency in current English, a great many Czech learners are not yet familiar with the pattern. For this reason, uptalk can easily capture their attention and arouse their interest not only in the particular contour but possibly also in English as such.

THEORETICAL PART

1. The contour of uptalk

The intonational contour of uptalk refers to the use of a rising tone in English statements, in which, from the traditional perspective, the definite fall is considered the default tone. Apart from the term *uptalk*, the phenomenon in question has often been called *high rising terminal* (*HRT*), *upspeak* (Wells, *Intonation* 37), *rising intonation* or *talking in questions* (Cameron 112) in scholarly literature.

However, the interchangeability of these terms, especially of *uptalk* and *HRT*, continues to be a matter of dispute among linguists. The key issue under discussion is the actual shape of the contour. In general, the pattern has been defined as a steep rise occurring on the stressed syllable in the final word of a declarative (Allan 52). Some researchers, including Barbara Bradford, the author of a pioneering work on uptalk in British English, claim that the contour involves a fall-rise rather than a simple rising tone. As Bradford puts it, uptalk is characterised by "a fall-rise contour which begins on the tonic syllable and continues to fall over the rest of the tone unit [...] until the accented syllable of the last word, where a reversal in direction to a rise is made" (32-33). Whichever of the two contours is claimed by a particular scholar, this basic definition seems to be widely agreed upon by the linguistic community. It is the beginning point of the pitch movement that has been disputed. Mark Libermann states that "uptalk often starts low, at the bottom of the speaker's range", whereas the contour of HRT is usually produced with a high pitch onset (Libermann). This is why he advocates making a clear distinction between high rising terminals and the instances of uptalk and regarding them as different phenomena. In opposition to Libermann, Alan Cruttenden classifies uptalk as a rising tone starting high and uses both terms, i.e. *uptalk* and *HRT*, to refer to the same intonational pattern (129).

Moreover, there is a number of linguists whose findings contradict the claim that a high pitch onset is typical of declarative HRTs. For instance, Fletcher and Harrington's observations concerning the use of high rises in Australian English show that declarative HRTs are usually produced with a low pitch onset (215). To complicate matters further, McGregor and Palethorpe believe that the speaker's choice of a high or

low pitch onset in declarative HRTs is determined by the communicative function of the utterance. The contour is likely to start high in the speaker's pitch range when he or she is introducing a new piece of information to the addressee, while the low pitch accent onset appears to be associated with communicating information that is already part of their common ground (190).

As outlined above, there is no consensus on what actually occurs both in uptalk and statement high rising terminals in terms of phonetics and phonology, nor do researchers agree on whether it is accurate to interchange these terms. For the purposes of this paper, the intonation contours discussed above will be considered more or less identical, irrespective of any possible differences there might be, and henceforth referred to as *uptalk*.

In defining the uptalk pattern, there is at least one more crucial aspect to touch upon, namely its relation to high rising yes/no questions and declarative questions. Declarative questions have the form of a declarative, such as 'You like this novel?'. Phonetically, uptalk is often assumed to be similar to the tunes appearing in yes/no and declarative questions (Britain 78), yet some research evidence suggests that high rises in statements (that is to say, the contour produced in uptalk) and high rises in questions are realised in different ways. As mentioned above, a study conducted by Fletcher and Harrington shows that the pitch movement in statement high rises usually begins low, whereas question high rises are typically produced with a high pitch onset (215). Nonetheless, this hypothesis does not appear to be widely supported and has yet to be demonstrated more convincingly. Be that as it may, there is one essential feature of uptalk that enables the hearers to distinguish it from question rises. In terms of semantics, "statement HRTs do not question the propositional content of the utterance" (McGregor and Palethorpe 174), which is obviously not the case with questions. McGregor and Palethorpe argue that questions refer either to something that has been mentioned in the previous discourse, or, more generally, to something that the hearer is expected to know. In contrast, the use of uptalk is basically associated with presenting a new piece of information with which the addressee is not yet familiar (173). Thus, even if one assumes that there is no clear difference between the phonetics of uptalk and question high rises, it is predominantly the context that helps the interlocutors to recognise whether the speaker's intention is to make a statement or ask a question.

In sum, irrespective of the actual shape of its contour in phonetic terms, uptalk is an English intonational pattern characterised by a final steep rise on statements. Since the tune does not seem to be distinctly different from question high rises, the context and the semantics of a particular utterance play a crucial role in its recognition and interpretation. Still, it is widely believed that the pattern might be somewhat confusing for hearers who are not accustomed to it because they tend to associate a rising tone primarily with the standard contour of interrogative intonational phrases.

2. Origins

To begin, there has been a great deal of speculation as to whether uptalk originated in one particular geographical area, or whether the pattern is to be recognised as an independent linguistic development in each variety of English in which it occurs. It would seem that so far there is no clear evidence to support either of these hypotheses. As for the former, uptalk is commonly held to have originated in New Zealand. However, this is not the only area suggested in scholarly literature. Apart from New Zealand, John Wells includes "Australia, California and British regional accents" (*Intonation* 37) in the list of possible sources.

It cannot be wondered at that Australian and New Zealand English immediately come to mind when searching for a variety in which the phenomenon might have arisen. Australian English, showing a high use of rises in spoken discourse, is commonly referred to as "a rising variety of English" (Fletcher and Loakes 1). In other words, Australian speakers often produce a rising tune in utterances where a fall would typically be pronounced in other varieties (Fletcher and Loakes 1). A similar situation prevails in New Zealand English. As Paul Warren and David Britain point out, the occurrence of high rises in non-interrogative structures is "a particularly salient and sometimes stigmatised feature of NZE[1]"(153). Allowing for this fact, the preoccupation of many uptalk researchers with these two varieties appears to be perfectly justified in this respect, as does the assumption that associates the origin of the phenomenon with the British Isles, particularly with certain regional accents in which the rising intonation

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[1] the abbreviation of NZE stands for New Zealand English in the cited text

is extensively used.[2] Last but not least, California is often suggested due to the so-called *Valley Girl Talk* that is believed to have originated among young women living in the area of San Fernando Valley in the 1980s. In fact, the term refers to a sociolect in the US whose characteristic features include a frequent use of statement rises. Its prototypical speakers, according to Deborah Cameron, are "affluent white girls who are or present themselves as shallow and unintelligent" (112). However, it should be emphasized that none of the aforementioned sources has left the realm of speculation yet.

As for uptalk's linguistic origin, there are essentially two competing theories. First, uptalk may have resulted from shifting the original question rising contour onto statements. Simultaneously, the process might have brought about a change regarding the function of the tune, such that it was no longer interpreted as indicating a question. Paul Tench describes this phonetic development as a blending process when a rising tone (peculiar to a question) and a high pitch level are fused into a contour that is then applied to a statement (224). To simplify, the view of uptalk in this case is that it is a kind of secondary use of a question rise. On the other hand, the second prevalent theory suggests that the pattern may have originated independently of question rising tunes and that "perhaps uptalk has been in the inventory of declarative contours as long as falling contours" (Shokeir 22). From this perspective, uptalk is not an innovative use of a rising tone but rather a phenomenon that has existed in the intonational system of English for a long period of time.

3. Occurrence

In recent decades, uptalk has been observed in a large part of the English speaking world. Reports have come from Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom (Bradford 29), Ireland and the Falkland Islands (Shokeir 23). The phenomenon is commonly believed to be on the increase and rapidly spreading among speakers of different varietal accents. Due to its extensive use at present uptalk has become the subject of discussion not only in scholarly sources but also in the media. In fact, the term *uptalk* itself, coined by a journalist James Gorman, was first introduced in

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[2] see section 3.1.1 for a more detailed account of the extensive use of rises in some accents of British English

his newspaper article "Like, Uptalk?" (1993). Since then, the term has appeared in a great many newspaper and magazine articles. Their main concern often seems to be the increasing use of the pattern in everyday speech. Expressions such as "[the uptalk] epidemic" (Marsh), "the infection" (Davis) and "conversational anthrax" (qtd. in Shokeir 16) clearly illustrate the view that the contour is becoming more frequent. Furthermore, they reflect a rather negative attitude on the part of the commentators towards uptalk. It is believed that this attitude is shared by a great many native speakers across the English speaking countries. There is a wide range of possible reasons for this attitude. One, which is commonly presented by linguists, relates to the misinterpretation that may result from the pattern. As Wells points out, "to older people who do not use it the uptalk pattern sounds like a pardon-question rise" (*Intonation* 37), but since the speaker is not asking a question, "to non-uptalkers it feels like an inappropriate choice of tone" (37). This is why especially older people may find this way of talking annoying, "intensely irritating" (Roach 166) or even consider uptalk "as a sign of unstoppable decay in modern English" (Foulkes and Docherty 69).

According to the popular belief, uptalk is a fairly recent phenomenon occurring with a rising frequency. Several studies have been conducted to investigate this claim. The earliest reports on the pattern date back to the 1970s (Cruttenden 130). However, this does not exclude the possibility that it might have been present in English prior to that time. Some evidence suggests its existence before the first research findings were published. For instance, Shokeir mentions that uptalk was commonly used by speakers from the southern part of the United States in the 1950s (22). Cruttenden provides a piece of anecdotal evidence that goes back as far as the end of the 18th century, referring to a letter written by an English headmaster in 1789 who complains about the use of the contour by a Scottish pupil (qtd. in Shokeir 22). Such findings seem to belie the belief that uptalk is an exclusively recent tune in speech. On the other hand, even if uptalk had existed in English a long time before the 1970s, it may have been a rather marginal phenomenon in comparison with the current situation.

Yet, even though there is no doubt about its widespread occurrence at present, it is still disputed whether uptalk has been on the rise. So far, the research in this field is inconclusive. To illustrate this, a survey on the pattern in New Zealand English conducted by David Britain in 1992 indicates that a linguistic change favouring uptalk

might be in progress in the variety. As Britain points out, younger informants in his study were likely to use statement rises much more often than older ones. Based on this finding, coupled with the lack of evidence for uptalk in New Zealand English prior to the 1960s, he suggests that the phenomenon may represent a linguistic change. However, as Britain himself emphasises, researchers still need more real-time data to be able to prove that what is occurring is really a change and not just an age-graded phenomenon (97). Meanwhile, Vanessa Shokeir holds an opposing view. Her study on the contour in Southern Ontario indicates that the frequency of uptalk use does not vary with age. She finds that young speakers produce the pattern approximately as much as the older informants. Thus, the study appears to provide some evidence that uptalk is not on the increase but that its use is stable within the speech community (22). Nevertheless, it should be stressed that there is still a need for more studies to evaluate this claim and, more importantly, to examine the phenomenon in a single speech community to ensure the comparability of findings.

The following subsections briefly address the occurrence of uptalk in British and American English. The choice is motivated by the fact that these two varieties are generally considered a model in English classes in the Czech Republic and are therefore familiar to most teachers and learners there.

3.1. Uptalk in British English

In 1997, Barbara Bradford published her article "Upspeak in British English", held to be a pioneering study on uptalk in the given variety. She refers to the pattern as "a novel UK rising tone" (29) and asssumes that it has existed in British English at least since the late 1960s (36).

There have arisen two major theories concerning the influences that may have had an impact on the increased use of uptalk in the UK. According to the first theory, the innovation developed under the influence of some British regional accents that show a high frequency of rising tones[3]. According to the latter theory, which seems to be favoured in linguistic literature, the phenomenon came to the UK either from the US or from Australia where it is a well established feature of speech. In the words of Peter

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[3] see section 3.1.1

Roach, "it is widely believed that this style of intonation arose from copying young actors in Australian and American soap operas" (166). Some of the TV programmes which are suggested to have brought about the change are the Australian soap operas *Neighbours* and *Home Away* (Bradford 33) as well as the American *Friends* and *Clueless* (Seaton). However, many linguists, including Cruttenden, remain very sceptical about this claim. Cruttenden points out that no study has in fact proven the prevalent use of the contour in the above mentioned TV programmes so far (130). Moreover, it appears problematic to assume that a phonological change would happen via media without any conversation taking place (Newbrook, qtd. in Seaton).

Regardless of its true origin, uptalk seems to be spreading across the British Isles. The pattern is to be found most commonly, although not exclusively, in the speech of young people in their teens, twenties and thirties. Furthermore, women tend to use the contour more frequently than men (Bradford 29, 35), and Cruttenden claims that many uptalkers come from the working class. Nevertheless, referring to the usage of the pattern in London, Cruttenden touches upon an interesting fact that in the UK capital uptalk appears to be typically associated with the so-called 'New Yuppies'[4] (130). To conclude, even though the intonational pattern prevails among younger females, it is commonly assumed to have crossed both gender as well as age boundaries and to occur more frequently in the conversation of British speakers today.

3.1.1. Statement rises in British regional accents

As stated above, an extensive use of rising tones (including statement rises) is one of the noticeable features of some regional accents within British English. Speakers of these accents characteristically produce a rise even where an RP speaker is expected to use a fall. This phenomenon has been reported to occur in Northern Ireland, Wales, Norfolk, Bristol, Liverpool (Bradford 33), Birmingham, Glasgow and Tyneside (Cruttenden 133). In short, it is typical of accents spoken in several urban areas in the north and west of the country. The accents of other areas in the British Isles, at least as far as intonation contours are concerned, do not significantly differ from RP (Cruttenden 136).

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[4] 'New Yuppies' is a term used to describe "young affluent workers who really like to live in the city and enjoy the city" (Geoghegan)

Nevertheless, it is rather imprecise to identify all of these tones as rises. In fact, one might distinguish four different varieties of tones. Cruttenden classifies them as a 'rise', 'rise-plateau', 'rise-plateau-slump' and 'rise-fall'. From the phonological point of view, he describes the 'rise' as "a rising glide on the nuclear syllable or a jump-up between the nuclear syllable and the following unaccented syllable" (133). The varieties of 'rise-plateau' and 'rise-plateau-slump' are fairly similar in phonological terms in that both involve a jump-up occurring on the syllable coming after the nucleus and the maintenance of the level over the following unstressed syllables. The only difference between them is a slight pitch drop on the last one or two syllables in the contour of 'rise-plateau-slump'. As for the 'rise-fall', the pitch rises at first but then it moves downward and reaches the baseline of the pitch range (133).

Cruttenden further claims that although the phenomenon exists in all of the above listed accents, each of them seems to prefer one (or possibly more) of the tone varieties. To illustrate this point, the English spoken in Glasgow is associated with the 'rise' tone. The 'rise-plateau' and 'rise-plateau-slump' are the tones typical, for instance, of the varieties spoken in Belfast, Liverpool, Tyneside and Birmingham, while Welsh English exhibits preferential use of the 'rise-fall' (133). John Wells comments on the use of this tone in Wales that it "gives the impression of throwing into inexplicable prominence the syllable after the one bearing the intonation nucleus" (*Accents* 392). Similarly, a rise-fall contour predominates in Ulster English[5]. According to Raymond Hickey, the statement rise-fall is one of the suprasegmental features that clearly distinguish Ulster from the southern part of Ireland. The intonational pattern is striking mainly in words including a stressed high front vowel, such as *sticky*, in which the fall is accompanied by the vowel lowering (118).

At this point a problem arises as to whether it is possible to count the statement rises in these accents as uptalk. There does not seem to be any agreement on this issue among scholars. However, comparing the phonological characteristics of the regional rises (as described by Cruttenden) with those of uptalk (as described by Bradford[6]), one may tentatively suggest that the phenomena are not exactly identical. The reason

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[5] Hickey uses this term to refer to English spoken in the province of Ulster excluding Ulster Scots and Irish varieties.
[6] see section 1

behind this claim is that the typical fall-rise contour of uptalk appears to be non-existent in the four regional tone varieties. Moreover, Bradford underlines another difference that should be taken into account, namely the distribution of the rises in speech. She points out that whereas the rises in the regional accents tend to occur systematically, the uptalk pattern is produced non-systematically (33). According to Bradford's position, adopted in this paper, additional factors must play a role in governing the use and distribution of uptalk. These factors are closely connected to the functions of the pattern in communication, which will be discussed later.

To conclude, it appears probable that rising tones in statements in several northern and western accents in the UK differ from uptalk at least in several respects. Therefore, in the present thesis, they are regarded as a specific feature of the particular accents and clearly distinguished from the non-systematic phenomenon of uptalk. Yet, this is not to say that there is no connection whatsoever between these phenomena. On the contrary, as mentioned in section 2, the regional accents may well be the source from which the pattern of uptalk is derived.

3.2. Uptalk in American English

The first reports on uptalk in North America come from the late 1970s (Cruttenden 130). Since then, it has become noticeable in the speech of a great many Americans, and the pattern has attracted considerable attention. The media have published a number of articles concerning the occurrence of the phenomenon. It is then little wonder that even the term 'uptalk' itself was coined and first used by an American journalist.

One of the major works on uptalk in the US that provoked the current discussion is "The Pragmatic Interpretation of English Intonation: Sorority Speech" (1991) by Cynthia McLemore. This dissertation analyses the distribution of uptalk in the interactions of young women, members of a sorority, in relation to its semantics. McLemore found that the contour was used mainly to mark the statement proposition "as something the speaker considers important 'new' information for the hearer" (qtd. in Cameron 113). Conversely, a fall in statements was associated with presenting a piece of information that was already shared among the interlocutors. Based on this analysis,

McLemore suggests that uptalk may have a range of linguistic meanings and thereby questions its stereotypical interpretation, which attributes to the pattern the only function of conveying the speaker's uncertainty[7] (qtd. in Cameron 113).

All of the informants in McLemore's research were young females since these are assumed to constitute the largest group among uptalkers in the US. As in the UK, most speakers using the contour are younger women, even though "in the USA [...] where it is well established it has spread through the age groups and is no longer used exclusively by the young" (Bradford 36). As Pratt-Johnson points out, "[uptalk] has been adopted as standard speech by the middle aged and middle class" and is no longer to be perceived as a mere fashion popular only with teenagers (qtd. in Coughlan). However, there is at least one variety within American English in which the situation appears to be significantly different, namely African American English (henceforth AAE). In general, many speakers of this variety are widely believed to deliberately resist the production of uptalk. Pratt-Johnson explains that a possible reason behind their reluctance is the fact that the pattern is often said to be characteristic of speech of white Americans (qtd. in Coughlan). From this perspective, the decision of the AAE speakers intentionally to avoid uptalk is very closely related to identity issues.

Nonetheless, it should be stressed that negative comments on the pattern have been expressed not only by speakers of AAE. Despite (or because of) its increased occurrence in the US, a large number of Americans appear to disapprove of its use. Cameron observes that the phenomenon continues "to attract negative evaluations, and has become the subject of frequent complaints from parents and teachers" (112). For instance, she refers to a controversy that arose over the use of the so-called 'mallspeak'[8] at several US colleges and universitites in 1999. The teachers made an effort to reduce mallspeak, including the use of uptalk, among their students. In their opinion, the persistence in this way of talking would lead to severe difficulties in the students' future professional careers (112). This belief might be used as a perfect example of the prevalent negative atittudes to uptalk at least in one part of American society.

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[7] for further information about the functions of uptalk see section 5

[8] the term 'mallspeak' commonly refers to a way of speaking that includes e.g. uptalk, the overuse of *like*, *you know*, etc.

4. Uptalk and gender

Much research has been done on uptalk in relation to gender. In scholarly literature as well as in the media, the pattern tends to be associated mainly with the speech of women. One of the earliest works that discuss the relationship between human language and gender is Robin Lakoff's *Language and Women's Place*, published in 1975. This highly influential work identifies statement rises as one of the characteristic features of women's speech. Lakoff asserts, thanks to this contour, females give the impression of being hesitant and unsure, since it sounds as though they are asking for the listener's confirmation. In consequence, the intonational pattern is "taken to reflect something real about character and play[s] a part in not taking a woman seriously or trusting her with any real responsibilities" (50). Obviously, women then might be at a disadvantage in comparison to men both in their private as well as professional lives.

Although Lakoff was widely acknowledged for her innovative work at that time, her hypothesis has been rejected by a number of researchers since then. With reference to research findings, linguists prefer a different view on the pattern at present. As David Britain points out, Lakoff's interpretation currently does not correspond to the actual social stratification of the use of uptalk, nor "can it account for [its] occurrence in differing frequencies in a wide variety of discourse text types, such as in descriptions, explanations, and narratives" (78-79). Thus, even though uncertainty may play a role in the use of uptalk in particular speech situations, experts suggest a broader range of communicative functions that the contour might fulfil.[9] In this regard, Lakoff's theory would seem to be somewhat discredited. However, it is necessary to mention that the tune is probably still commonly perceived as an indication of the speaker's uncertainty by the majority of the public.

As for the occurrence, there are considerably more uptalkers to be found among women than men. Bradford notes that the contour "is most prevalent among and first displayed in the speech of young females. It permeates the speech of young males only after becoming well established among females" (35). Naturally, the question arises as to why women are more likely to use the pattern. It should be emphasized that the reasons for this difference are still a matter of dispute. Bradford offers an interesting

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[9] see section 5

explanation, namely that there may be a certain connection between the female psyche and the abundance of uptalk in women's speech. She claims that females, as opposed to males, usually have an inclination to reduce speaker-hearer distance in interactions in order to appear more approachable. From this it follows that, in such cases, uptalk might have the function of an "emotive bonding technique" (35). Bradford concludes that this is a possible reason why the contour is to be commonly found in women's speech, whereas men do not wish to use it with such a high frequency (35).

Several studies also focus on uptalk in connection to gender performance. For instance, in his "Gender in Jeopardy!" (2013), Thomas J. Linneman examines the variation in the use of uptalk by contestants in the quiz show *Jeopardy!*, arguing that the influence of the contestants' success correlates with their propensity or lack thereof to use the pattern, depending on their gender. Whereas successful men tend to produce uptalk with a lower frequency than unsuccessful men, the opposite tendency is observed among women. Referring to previous research in this field, Linneman observes that dominant and successful women are generally perceived as unfeminine (96). For this reason, the use of the uptalk by successful women might be interpreted as a kind of "compensatory strategy in order to perform their gender 'correctly'" (Linneman 96).

5. Functions of uptalk

Apart from the occurrence and gender issues, the reasons why people use uptalk in their interactions appear to be the key question of today's research on this intonational contour. As mentioned above, the most common interpretation of the pattern among lay people is probably the one of the speaker's uncertainty. Nevertheless, scholarly sources offer several other possible interpretations of the meaning that uptalk conveys. Undoubtedly, it would be erroneous to claim that the contour always implies the same thing irrespective of the particular context. In fact, the opposite is true. It is essential to interpret its meaning "by reference to interpersonal factors and the convergence or divergence of conversational distance" (Bradford 36). It seems unlikely that one or more individual would use the pattern to convey the very same meaning in different

speech situations. For this reason, the context in which speakers use uptalk is of great importance and should always be taken into consideration.

The following subsections aim at presenting a brief overview of the various meaning of the pattern that are most commonly discussed by linguists. One should bear in mind that the list is by no means exhaustive and, perhaps even more importantly, that the functions partly overlap and do not exclude but complement one another.

5.1. Negative politeness marker (the popular view)

The early surveys viewed uptalk mostly as a feature of speech implying the speakers' uncertainty, deference and lack of confidence. This is how Lakoff saw the intonational contour in her work on women's language from the mid-1970s. In 1980, O'Barr and Atkins described this way of speaking which includes, apart from uptalk, hedges, question tags and intensifiers as indicators of "powerless language" that is typical not only of women but rather of all people with low social power (qtd. in Innes 228). In other words, the pattern was counted among markers of negative politeness. Recently, this hypothesis has been disproved, and focus has been put on the interactional function of uptalk. However, this is not to say that an attempt to explain its use in terms of negative politeness is out of the question. Research suggests that some instances of its occurrence can be interpreted in this way. To illustrate the point, in her study concerning the use of statement rises in courtrooms, Bronwen Innes examines whether there is any connection between the role of the participants (such as defendants, witnesses, judges, etc.) and the frequency of uptalk in their speech. She hypothesises that people of low power in the hearings, e.g. defendants, as opposed to the powerful ones, tend to produce the contour. Her findings show that even though they do produce it very often, the powerful participants use it as well, but not as frequently. From this she concludes that "although [the instances of uptalk] certainly have some association with power, it is more accurate to describe them in terms of discourse function, role and goals than as a stable social attribute of speakers" (227). This seems to be the key point here. One should always properly consider both the textual and situational contexts in order to be able to explain the function of the pattern (in the particular speech situation) as accurately as possible.

The last point to address in this subsection is the question of why so many people still judge uptalkers as being uncertain, deferential and lacking in confidence, if uptalk does not normally mark any of these attributes. Keith Allan, who calls this misjudgement "the folk myth" (53), observes that what people actually judge in this case is not the speaker but rather the meaning of the contour itself (53). He explains that rising tones, in comparison with falls, are perceived as being oriented towards the listener and thus implying uncertainty and non-finality. Another aspect of the intonational contour is the high pitch, which might be associated with deference for two reasons. First, much effort and energy is required to achieve the high pitch, and a speaker who produces it may be seen as "putting himself out [for the listener] by using high pitch that is conventionally regarded as the prosodic mark of deference" (54). Second, the high pitch is typical of children who are perceived as deferential to adults. As for the deferential implication, the contour further conveys the meaning that the speaker is simultaneously asking the listener whether he or she comprehends the content of the message (54). Taking all of this into account, it turns out that the problem with the stereotypical misjudgement is that it does not include all the conditions of the speech situation, but is based exclusively on the perception of the phonological characteristics of the contour.

5.2. Positive politeness marker

In contrast with the early surveys, recent studies describe uptalk and its functions with reference to positive politeness. To borrow Ainsworth's words, the pattern is currently regarded as "an active, positive, politeness device" (qtd. in Innes 230). In the present paper, 'positive politeness' is understood as an umbrella term comprising various strategies that address the listener's positive face wants. The link between uptalk and two of these strategies is discussed in further detail in the following subsections.

5.2.1. Bonding technique

The first strategy to discuss is what Barbara Bradford calls the "affective function" (34) of uptalk. Due to the rising nature of the tone, uptalkers often give the impression of being friendly, non-authoritative and less assertive conversational partners. Bradford

describes this function as "an emotive bonding technique" (35) whose aim is to reduce the social distance between the interlocutors. To exemplify this point, she draws a parallel with mothers'speech. While talking to their small babies, mothers usually wish to sound non-authoritative. For this reason, their speech usually abounds with rises that produce the wanted effect (35). Bradford further believes that the implication of non-assertiveness may account for the fact that women and young people produce uptalk so often. The pattern makes them sound friendly, conciliatory, approachable (35) and, as Cruttenden puts it, even 'yielding' (130). In contrast with men, who are inclined to retain authority in most of speech situations, a high number of women may wish to appear non-assertive and thereby demonstrate their female identity. Given that uptalk is viewed as a signal of acceptance and solidarity within a group, it cannot be wondered at that young people are most likely to use it, especially among their peers (Bradford 35).

In addition, there is another important dimension of the affective function that is worth mentioning, namely the promotion of solidarity. As David Britain points out, uptalk (thanks to the rise) might be a very useful technique to "reduce the distance between the points of view of the speaker and hearer" (81). This helps to establish common ground and convey the idea of solidarity between them. According to Britain, in this regard, the use of uptalk is similar to the use of *you know* (81), both showing positive politeness towards the listener by emphasizing the speaker's wish to treat him or her as an equal.

5.2.2. Maintaining engagement

Uptalk is apparently produced most frequently in certain text types, especially in narratives, explanations and descriptions. Britain states that it occurs particularly in evaluative points of the story-telling genres (80). To answer the question as to why there are so many instances in these genres, it is necessary to touch, at least very briefly, upon the theory of proclaiming and referring tones. Brazil claims that a proclaiming tone, typically a fall, is normally to be found in tone units presenting a piece of information which is not yet shared among the interlocutors. Contrary to proclaiming tones, the so-called referring tone, e.g. a fall-rise, marks information that is already part of the common ground (70). In accordance with this dichotomy, the tone involved in uptalk, i.e. a fall-rise, falls into the category of referring tones. It therefore appears

entirely plausible that "by presenting 'new' information as if it were part of the 'common ground', a speaker [producing uptalk] indicates that the content of that part of the discourse is perceived to be of intrinsic or assumed mutual interest" (Bradford 35). In other words, uptalk might be regarded as a device that enables the speaker to show what is really worth hearing and to engage the listener in this way. This is of great importance especially in longer narratives, in which it is often difficult to keep the listener's attention. Simply put, uptalk helps to "make a good story" (Britain 80). Citing Brown and Levinson, Britain concludes that the function of uptalk in story-telling genres is to "pull [the hearer] right into the middle of the events being discussed (...) [and] thereby [to increase] their intrinsic interest to [the speaker]" (80), which also adheres to the principles of positive politeness.

5.3. Turn-construction device

Another function of the pattern in question relates to taking turns in conversation. McGregor and Palethorpe put forward the idea of uptalk as a "turn-construction device" (174). It seems to be a useful strategy whenever speakers wish to negotiate longer terms since the intonational contour signalizes that they have not finished yet. Moreover, the research done by Guy et al. suggests that uptalk usually elicits only minimal affirmation from the listener, which is followed by returning the floor to the speaker (qtd. in McGregor and Palethorpe 174). From this perspective, uptalk serves to promote the collaborative nature of conversation and contributes to its successful development.

5.4. Checking device

The function of uptalk that appears to be most commonly suggested at present is that of a checking device. By using it, the speaker is seen as trying to find out whether the listener is involved in the interaction. At the same time, he or she "may wish to obtain feedback about the listener's reaction to an utterance" (Britain 79). From this it is possible to conclude that there are in fact two different dimensions of the function: first, to check whether the listener comprehends and follows the utterance, and second, to seek his or her approval or disapproval of what is being said. Bradford notes that a similar effect might be caused by the use of fillers, such as *OK?*, *yeah?* and *right?* placed at the end of a declarative and pronounced with a steep rise (35).

To conclude, the perception of uptalk and its functions has changed since the 1960s when the earliest reports on the phenomenon were published. Whereas the first studies tended to associate the pattern predominantly with negative politeness, the more recent research suggests a positive role of uptalk. There is a tendency to interpret the use of the target contour either as a marker of positive politeness towards the addressee or as a device to check the listener's comprehension and involvement in the interaction. However, there is a significant difference between the research findings and the view on uptalk held by a great many people today. The popular view on the pattern, which is sometimes aptly referred to as "the folk myth" (Allan 53), regards uptalk as a feature of speech indicating the speaker's uncertainty and lack of confidence, which corresponds, to a certain extent, to the original interpretation of the pattern as a marker of negative politeness.

PRACTICAL PART

6. Aims

As already stated, the main purpose of the practical part of the thesis is to produce a lesson plan on uptalk. Naturally, the crucial question that arises in relation to this aim is whether it could ever be desirable to teach learners the pattern in class. Traditionally, uptalk is still perceived as a contour that diverges from the standard intonation, and a great many native English speakers find its use extremely irritating. From this point of view, any attempts to include the phenomenon in a lesson may appear senseless and even harmful to the English of the learners.

Still, there is the other side of the coin. One might argue that such an idea in fact works to the learner's benefit. The reasons behind this attitude, which is taken also in the present paper, are probably not so difficult to find. To illustrate the point with a couple of examples, in accordance with the current trends in foreign language teaching it is always advisable to raise the learners' awareness of the target language. Language awareness, according to a definition by the ALA[10], means "explicit knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use" that results in developing "a conscious understanding of how languages work" (ALA). Similarly, speaking of teaching intonation, Jeremy Harmer argues for "[raising] the students' awareness of the power of intonation" since it allows them "to understand what messages are being given to them" (260). From this perspective, even though the learners are neither supposed nor encouraged by the teacher to use the contour in their own speech, the awareness of its existence in English might help them to get a better insight into the language and thereby facilitate the learning process.

Second, the uptalk pattern provides a wonderful opportunity to work on developing the learner's skill to be able to distinguish different intonational contours. Scrivener uses the very apt label of "ear-training" (288) to refer to tasks of this kind. In this way, the learner's attention is purposely drawn to the fact that speakers produce different tones in their speech, that their choice is functional and, perhaps most importantly, that the particular tones convey various linguistic meanings.

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[10] the abbreviation of ALA stands for Association for Language Awareness

Third, it is not only the contribution to the learner's language development itself that plays a major role. Many learners might find a lesson on uptalk interesting and enjoyable. Apparently, the pattern does not count among intonational phenomena that are commonly taught in schools. For this reason, it has a potential to surprise the learners and attract their attention. Furthermore, many learners are likely to appreciate the fact that uptalk is a frequently used pattern in current English and not just a piece of language which is hardly ever to be heard in everyday communication. It is also possible that some of them might have already encountered the pattern in TV series and sitcoms produced in English speaking countries. To give an example, the characters in the American TV series *Friends*, which seems to be very popular also among viewers in the Czech Republic, are said to use the contour quite frequently. Although most of the learners are probably unaware of the occurrence of uptalk while watching the series, once they are told about the pattern, they may deliberately start paying attention to it and guessing when and why a character uses it. Thus, to include a lesson focusing on uptalk could possibly be regarded as a highly motivational factor in the process of English learning.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that the production of this kind of a lesson plan does not aim only at enriching the learning experience. It is intended also for teachers who wish to familiarise their learners with the pattern but experience difficulties in searching for appropriate materials. Several years ago, it was virtually impossible to find any ready-to-use teaching materials concerning the phenomenon. Some linguistic works in the fields of phonetics and phonology, e.g. *English Intonation* (1997) by John C. Wells, offer a few recordings containing uptalk that could eventually be used for teaching purposes. Recently, the situation has slightly improved in this respect. For instance, in April 2013, Richard Cauldwell published a textbook *Phonology for Listening*. In this book, a few pairs of recordings are available to teachers, each pair consisting of one recording including uptalk and another recorded without uptalk for the purpose of comparison. Undoubtedly, this is a perfect listening activity to use in class but, if a teacher wishes to prepare a whole lesson on the phenomenon or simply wants to have a variety of options to choose from, there is still the need to seek additional activities elsewhere. In this regard, the production of a lesson plan comprising several different activities might provide the teachers with some help or at

least inspiration. It might also serve as a source of inspiration for all those who occasionally attempt to include some reference to contemporary literature in foreign language teaching. Based almost exclusively on extracts from a contemporary British novel and an American poem, a subsidiary aim of the present lesson plan is to bring these literary texts into the classroom and draw the learners's attention to the fact that a current linguistic phenomenon is also likely to be reflected in literary works.

7. Lesson plan

This section provides a detailed commentary on the specific requirements of the lesson plan, the structure of the lesson, its individual stages and the motives behind their inclusion. Due to its length and the amount of information included, there is also a shortened version of the lesson plan available for the teachers that is attached to the thesis as an appendix[11]. The concise version is produced in a common lesson plan format and contains only the minimum of information necessary for a teacher to be able to use it directly in class.

7.1. Level

The lesson plan is targeted at learners who possess at least a strong intermediate or, ideally, an upper-intermediate level of English. It is not intended for use at lower levels, since most of its components are based on original literary texts written by two contemporary authors. Even though the plan includes only short extracts from the given works, learners at lower levels are likely to have considerable difficulty understanding several vocabulary items appearing in the texts. This could distract their attention and have an overall negative impact on the progress of the lesson.

7.2. Length of the lesson

The lesson plan is designed for one standard lesson, i.e. 45 minutes.

7.3. Lesson objectives

The overall lesson objectives partially correspond to the aims stated above in section 6. The main and most general objective is to make the learners aware of the existence of the uptalk pattern in contemporary English. Having attended the lesson, the

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[11] see appendix A

learners will be able to recognise the use of the intonational contour in speech. Furthermore, they will be able to answer three key questions around which the lesson plan is centered. First, there is the question *what* uptalk in fact is[12]. The second question is expressed by *who* and concerns the prototypical uptalkers[13]. Finally, the third question asks *why* and is related to the functions and meanings of the contour[14].

It should be stressed again at this point that although the lesson plan includes some practice activities, the learners are not instructed to continue using uptalk commonly in their own speech after the lesson is finished. Instead, they might be given a piece of advice similar to that expressed by John Wells, who says, "if you were born [after 1980], you can imitate its use by native speakers: but do not overdo it. Uptalk is never essential" (*Intonation* 38). To conclude, even if the active production is a partial objective of some of the activities, it is not to be counted among the objectives of the lesson as such.

7.4. Teaching aids and materials

Apart from the basic teaching aids of blackboard and CD player, the teacher needs to be in possession of a few recordings and two versions of handouts with the extracts[15]. The recordings and handouts are absolutely necessary for the lesson, since all but one of the activities are based on extracts from the literary texts, which provide the teaching materials. As mentioned above, the extracts are taken from a novel and a poem, namely from *Enduring Love* (1997) by Ian McEwan and "Totally like whatever, you know?" (2005) by Taylor Mali, respectively. The significance of each work in relation to uptalk and the reasons for their inclusion in the lesson plan are briefly discussed in the following two subsections.

7.4.1. Uptalk in *Enduring Love*

Enduring Love is a postmodern novel by a contemporary British writer Ian McEwan, published in 1997. In brief, the main characters of the book are Joe Rose, a middle-aged journalist, and Jed Parry, aged twenty-eight, who suffers from a mental

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[12] see section 1
[13] see section 4
[14] see section 5
[15] The recordings are available on the enclosed CD in mp3 format. As for the two different versions of handouts, see appendices B and C.

disorder known as de Clérambault's syndrome[16]. After witnessing a tragic balloon accident together, Parry becomes obsessed with Rose, who is the object of his delusion, and starts harassing him, leading to severe problems in Joe Rose's personal life.

Interestingly, Parry's speech, especially at the beginning of the novel, abounds with uptalk. It is very easy for a reader to spot the instances of the intonational contour in the text since they are marked with question marks in declaratives. The use of punctuation, in this case question marks, may be regarded as a useful and very common strategy to compensate for the lack of prosody in written texts. Moreover, McEwan deliberately draws the readers' attention to this characteristic feature of Parry's speech. Joe Rose, the narrator in the novel, refers to Jed Parry's way of talking as "his interrogative style" (McEwan 63). He further observes that "Parry had his generation's habit of making a statement on the rising inflection of a question – in humble imitation of Americans, or Australians, or, as I heard one linguist explain, too mired in relative judgements, too hesitant and apologetic to say how things were in the world" (McEwan 24). In this short passage, the author touches upon several commonly held assumptions regarding typical users of uptalk, its geographical origin and its functions. It is also worth noting that the distribution of uptalk in Parry's speech is non-systematic, in line with one of the characteristics of the intonational contour as defined by Bradford.

Another interesting point to examine is the significance of the occurrence of uptalk in the novel. Jed Parry is presented as an extremely annoying and persistent young man, who cannot control his actions and threatens Joe's peace of mind. Considering the fact that uptalk seems to irritate a great many people across the English speaking countries, it seems plausible that the pattern is used to contribute to and emphasize the negative characterization of Parry.

In sum, the novel has great potential for a teacher who wishes to work with the phenomenon in class. Not only does it reflect the style of talking of contemporary young people, but it also shows how intonation can influence the way in which an individual is perceived by others.

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[16] Patients with de Clérambault's syndrome suffer from an obsessive and delusional belief that another person is in love with them.

7.4.2. Uptalk in "Totally like whatever, you know?"

The poem entitled "Totally like whatever, you know?" was written by an American slam poet Taylor Mali in 2005. It is a satirical piece of work in which Mali criticises the overuse of uptalk and the fillers *you know* and *like* in conversation. His explanation of the reasons that people use them so frequently in their everyday speech is similar to that of Ian McEwan above. Both writers suggest that uptalk (and possibly also the fillers mentioned above) indicates the speaker's uncertainty, hesitancy and lack of confidence. Despite the fact that this hypothesis has not been proven by researchers, it remains the popular view on the pattern. Supposing that the teacher intends to communicate this common view to the learners, the poem, written in a humorous tone, appears to be perfect material to work with in class.

7.4.3. Recordings

The lesson plan comprises a few listening activities that are all based on the extracts. The extracts from the novel are recorded by a 30-year-old male computer programmer, who considers himself to be an occasional uptalker, although he generally dislikes the pattern. He is a native speaker of British English who was born in Buckinghamshire and has also spent most of his life there. As for the poetic extract, a recording of Taylor Mali's presenting the whole poem is available online and is also to be used in the lesson.

7.5. Lead-in

Aims: The learners will be better able to distinguish two different intonational contours.
The learners will be able to explain what uptalk is.
Timing: 5 minutes

The lesson starts with a short lead-in designed to arouse curiosity and interest in the learners and enhance their motivation. In addition, it answers the 'what' question mentioned in section 7.3. The activity is developed in accordance with the principles of so-called discovery learning, in which the learners are not presented with rules or definitions concerning some linguistic phenomenon but are encouraged to work them out for themselves from examples. Presupposing no knowledge of uptalk on the part of the learners, the teacher instructs them to listen carefully to two recordings (recording

1a and 1b). Without being given any further information, their task is to discover the difference between the recordings.

The transcript (not available to the learners) of the extract is as follows:

Recording 1a

"What he said was, 'Clarissa's really ↘worried about you. I said I'd come down and see if you're all ↘right.'

My silence was hostile. (…)

'Are you all right?'

I said, 'There's nothing we can do but wait,' and I gestured in the direction of the road, one field away."

(McEwan, 24)

Recording 1b

"What he said was, 'Clarissa's really ↗worried about you? I said I'd come down and see if you're all ↗right?'

My silence was hostile. (…)

'Are you all right?'

I said, 'There's nothing we can do but wait,' and I gestured in the direction of the road, one field away."

(McEwan, 24)

The question marks after *you* and *all right* in recording 1b appear in the original text by McEwan and indicate uptalk in Jed Parry's speech. The syllables on which the rise in uptalk begins are marked with ↗ in the transcript. The tonic syllables in the particular tone units are underlined. Recording 1a does not contain any instances of the pattern; the extract is recorded as though the character pronounced the units with the standard intonational contour, i.e. a fall (marked with ↘).

There are two instances of uptalk occurring in recording 1b as it is suggested in the extract. Having compared the recordings, the learners are supposed to come to the conclusion that they differ in the speaker's use of the tones. The teacher then helps the learners to articulate the difference more precisely and asks about the words carrying the different tones. Afterwards, he or she explains that the rising intonation in statements found in the recording is called *uptalk* and, when necessary, provides the learners with a few other examples of how the pattern is used.

Anticipated problems: The teacher must be aware of the possibility that the learners may find the recordings too difficult to understand, or that they might not be able to find any difference between them. This problem is more likely to arise at the strong intermediate level but cannot be ruled out completely at either of the level. It is therefore advisable to play the recordings more than once to give the learners a chance to spot the difference. It is also useful to prepare some clues in advance to help the learners, if needed, to focus their attention on the key parts of the recordings. For instance, the teacher can instruct the learners to try to concentrate only on the speaker's intonation. If this does not help, he or she could point out the particular words on which the final rise of uptalk occurs and let the learners discover what is striking about these words. Furthermore, some learners, even if they spot the difference, might not be able to articulate it. In this case, the teacher should encourage the learners to describe what is happening in their own words and use concrete examples from the recording to illustrate their claim.

7.6. Listening

Aim: The learners will be able to identify uptalk in speech.

Timing: 5 minutes

The lead-in is followed by a listening task that contributes to raising the learners' receptive awareness of the intonational contour. The reason for running an activity of this kind at the beginning of the lesson is that "receptive awareness comes before productive competence" (Scrivener 288). The recordings intended for this stage of the lesson plan, i.e. recordings 2b a 3b[17], are based on two other extracts from the novel.

Recording 2b

"I looked at my watch. It was fifteen minutes since I had phoned the emergency services. 'You go ahead,' I said. 'Do what you like.'

'It's something we can do to↗gether?' he said as he looked about for a suitable place on the ground. (...) 'What we could do,' he said with a seriousness which warned against mockery, 'is to↗pray together?'" (McEwan, 24-25)

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[17] The listening activity is based on recordings 2b and 3b that contain uptalk. Recordings 2a and 3a are also available on the enclosed CD. These can be used for the purposes of comparison since they are recorded with the standard intonation and do not contain uptalk (see *Anticipated problems* in this subsection).

Recording 3b

"Parry tried to speak reasonably from his diminished height. 'Look, we don't know each other and there's no reason why you should trust me. Except that God has brought us together in this tragedy and we have to, you know, make whatever sense of it we ↗can?'

Then, seeing me make no move, he added, 'I think you have a special↗need for↗ prayer?'

I shrugged and said, 'Sorry. But you go right on ahead.'"

(McEwan, 25)

The question marks in the extracts signal the use of uptalk in the speech of the character. There are two instances of the pattern in recording 2b and three other instances in recording 3b, namely on *together* and *pray* in 2b and on *can, need* and *prayer* in 3b. The transcript of the recordings available to the learners on their handouts is slightly modified in comparison to the original text. For the purpose of the activity, the question marks are replaced with full stops[18].

To set up the activity, the teacher distributes the handouts. There are two versions of them; in pairs, one student gets the version labeled Student A, the other one the version labeled Student B[19]. The versions are identical but for the last activity, which will be presented later. The task of the learners is to listen to the two recordings and underline all instances of uptalk they can hear. After the first time listening to each recording, they compare their findings in pairs. The teacher then plays the recordings once more and asks the group about the answers. In case the majority of the learners do not feel confident about their answers, it seems to be a good idea to play the recordings for a third time after the correct answers have been agreed upon by the group, thereby giving the learners an opportunity to focus on the speaker's use of uptalk while listening to the recording.

Anticipated problems: The recordings contain a few rises, for example in *tragedy* in 3b, that are likely to be mistaken for uptalk. These rises occur utterance-medially and are commonly used at this point of the utterance to imply non-finality. The learners are to be encouraged, if necessary, to try to distinguish the phenomena. On the other hand, it

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[18] see appendices B and C
[19] see appendices B and C

is also possible that some learners will not manage to identify every instance. If this happens, the teacher can make use of recordings 2a and 3a in which the same extracts as those in 2b and 3b are recorded, but this time with the standard intonational contours, i.e. without the use of uptalk. The learners are assumed to find the task easier when given the opportunity of comparison.

7.7. Teacher's presentation – uptalkers

Aim: The learners will be able to explain the occurrence of uptalk in terms of age and sex and also the attitude of most native speakers towards uptalk.

Timing: 3 minutes

The next step is to touch upon the 'who' question. In order to do this, the teacher asks the learners about the age of a typical uptalker. The question that follows concerns the issue of gender. The learners then try to guess whether the pattern is commonly used in everyday English and how it is perceived by the majority of native English speakers, whether they approve or disapprove of its use. If possible, the learners are supposed to guess the answers to all of these questions without the teacher's help.

Once the learners have the correct answers, i.e. that uptalk is used predominantly by younger females, that it is often heard in conversation and that most speakers dislike the pattern, the teacher draws their attention to the novel and provides them with a short description of the two male protagonists. Next, he or she emphasises that it is the character of Jed Parry, the younger of the pair, who produces uptalk, which irritates the older man. Except for the gender of the speaker, the situation described in the novel corresponds to the facts about the characteristic usage of uptalk in reality. The teacher then suggests that the pattern could be understood as a device employed in the novel to increase the negative perception of the character by the reader. Finally, the learners guess how the instances of uptalk are graphically marked in the text of the novel.

Anticipated problems: The learners might be too shy to express their suggestions. It is up to the teacher to encourage the learners, give them clear feedback and respond when their guesses are not correct at first without discouraging them from taking risks in the future. The teacher can also give the learners some clues or ask them a multiple-choice

question, for example 'Are uptalkers mostly young men, young women, older men or older women?

7.8. Brainstorming

Aim: The learners will be able to understand why people use uptalk.

Timing: 3 minutes

This section presents a traditional brainstorming activity that focuses on the last of the three crucial questions of the lesson plan, i.e. the 'why' question. The teacher writes the word *why* on the blackboard, and the task of the learners is to come up with their own ideas and suggestions as to the possible reasons behind the use of uptalk. Whenever a new suggestion is made, it is to be immediately written down on the blackboard.

Anticipated problems: Similar to the previous stage, this activity could also discourage some learners from speaking their mind. This is why it is necessary to keep giving them positive feedback on their suggestions. In addition, some learners might find it too difficult to think of any possible factors that could govern the use of uptalk. In such case, it is always advisable to instruct the learners to try to imagine the situation and then tell the class what they would think of a person producing the target contour.

7.9. Reading and speaking

Aim: The learners will be able to explain what the popular view of uptalk is.

Timing: 10 minutes

The reading comprehension activity is thematically linked to the brainstorming task. It is based on an abridged version of the poem by Taylor Mali. The following extract[20], available to the teacher as well as to the learners, comprises the first three stanzas (out of five) of the original text.

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[20] The extract is a transcript of the recording of Taylor Mali's poem taken from the website of NPR (National Public Radio). This transcript differs slightly from the version available on the website since it has been edited by the author of the present thesis to match the recording.

Totally like whatever, you know?
by Taylor Mali

In case you hadn't realised,
it has somehow become uncool
to sound like you know what you're talking about? you know?
Or believe strongly in what you're, you know, saying?
Invisible question marks and parenthetical you knows? and you know what I'm sayings?
have been attaching themselves to the ends of our sentences?
Even when those sentences aren't, like, you know, questions?

Declarative sentences – so-called
because they used to, like, you know, DECLARE things to be true, ok,
as opposed to other things that are, like, totally, you know, not -
they've been infected by this tragically cool
and totally hip interrogative tone? You know?
As if I'm saying,
don't think I'm a nerd just because I've, like, noticed this; ok, you know
This is just what I've heard?
I have nothing personally invested in my own opinions,
I'm just, like, inviting you to join me on the band wagon of my own uncertainty

What has happened to our conviction?
Where are the limbs out on which we once walked?
Have they been, like, chopped down
with the rest of the rain forest? you know?
Or do we have, like, nothing to say?
Has society just become so filled with these conflicting feelings of 'nugh'
That we've just gotten to the point where it's just, like, totally, you know,
whatever!

The teacher draws the learners' attention to the poem and explains that it comments on the widespread usage of uptalk, *like* and *you know* in today's English. Afterwards, he or she plays the recording. The learners are supposed to listen and follow the text on their handouts. Subsequently, the class is divided into smaller groups, ideally of three learners. Their task is to discuss the poem and try to find out in the text why, according to Mali, people speak in such a way. The poet presents several reasons. First, people think that it sounds "cool". Second, they do not know what to say. Third, even if they do have an opinion, they lack the confidence to express themselves. Last but not least, people seem to have lost their conviction. The textual evidence for this claim is to be found in the first and third stanza. After having discussed the question in the groups, the learners are told to present their suggestions to the whole class. The teacher guides the discussion and helps the learners to discover all the reasons mentioned in the text.

Finally, he or she explains that Mali's view on uptalk agrees with the popular belief as for the meanings the pattern conveys.

Anticipated problems: From the lexical perspective, there is no doubt that the poem is the hardest part of the whole lesson to understand. The teacher should be aware of the fact that the learners, especially the intermediate ones, will probably be unfamiliar with some of the vocabulary items appearing in the extract. In particular, the teacher cannot expect all the learners to know the meanings of *parenthetical*, *declarative*, *to declare*, *hip*, *interrogative*, *nerd*, *band wagon*, *conviction*, *limbs* and *to chop down*. On the one hand, this list may appear rather long. On the other hand, apart from the word *conviction*, none of these is essential in terms of understanding the overall message and finding answers to the given question. All the same, the teacher should be ready to help the learners and provide them with an explanation of the meaning when asked.

7.10. Teacher's presentation – functions

Aim: The learners will be able to explain some of the functions of uptalk.
Timing: 4 minutes

This presentation stage allows the teacher to contrast the popular view concerning the functions of uptalk with the hypotheses supported by current research evidence. The teacher enumerates the most commonly suggested functions of uptalk, writes them on the blackboard and comments very briefly on each of them. The list should include the following functions of the examined contour. First, uptalk might be used as a device to check the listener's comprehension and involvement throughout the interaction. Second, the use of the pattern might signal a part of the utterance that is of great importance and/or interest to the addressee. Third, uptalk might indicate the speaker's intention to appear non-assertive and to show friendliness, empathy and solidarity to the listener.

Anticipated problems: Supposing that the teacher's explanation is appropriate to the learners' level of English, no problems are anticipated.

7.11. Speaking – questions

Aim: The learners will be able to imitate uptalk.

Timing: 8 minutes

The last two activities of the lesson focus on practising the intonational contour. The first task is very simple. It is centered around five questions which are to be found on the handouts. These questions are enumerated here:

A. Where would you like to go on holiday?
B. What kind of music do you like?
C. Who is your favourite actor/actress?
D. How many languages can you speak?
E. What are you going to do tonight?

The questions are designed to be easy both to understand and answer. Moreover, they relate to some of the topics usually discussed at lower levels of English and as such are believed to be familiar to the learners. It is of great importance that they do not struggle with the questions since they are supposed to fully concentrate on the production of the contour itself. In pairs, the learners ask and answer the questions one by one, using the traditional intonational patterns, i.e. a fall. Once they are finished, they ask and answer all of the questions again, this time trying to imitate the use of uptalk in the responses. The teacher monitors and, if necessary, provides some help. Finally, each learner is asked to report back on his or her partner's answer to one of the questions on the list.

Anticipated problems: At first, some learners might find it too difficult to imitate uptalk. The teacher could show them how to do it by imitating the pattern himself or herself. Besides, it is possible to advise them to imagine that they are asking a question instead of answering one and to try to use the same intonation.

7.12. Speaking – dialogue

Aim: The learners will be able to imitate and recognise uptalk.
Timing: 7 minutes

The last activity is based on a dialogue practice. The dialogue comes from the novel *Enduring Love* and contains two instances of uptalk, which are indicated, as in the original text, with question marks in statements. In comparison to the relevant passage in the book, the present extract is abridged, each line is introduced by the name of the character speaking the line and the clauses with uptalk are underlined. The text is available on the learners' handouts in two versions labeled Student A and Student B.

Student A

Joe: What do you want? And who gave you my number?

Parry: <u>That's quite a story Joe?</u> I went to the –

Joe: I don't want your story. I don't want you phoning me.

Parry: We need to talk.

Joe: I don't.

Parry: I think you do. Just see me this once, just once and hear me out and you'll never have to hear from me again.

Joe: Where are you?

Parry: I can come to you.

Joe: No. Tell me where you are.

Parry: <u>I'm in the phone box at the end of your road?</u>

(McEwan, 59-60)

Student B

Joe: What do you want? And who gave you my number?

Parry: That's quite a story Joe. I went to the –

Joe: I don't want your story. I don't want you phoning me.

Parry: <u>We need to talk?</u>

Joe: I don't.

Parry: I think you do. Just see me this once, just once and hear me out and <u>you'll never have to hear from me again?</u>

Joe: Where are you?

Parry: I can come to you.

Joe: No. Tell me where you are.

Parry: I'm in the phone box at the end of your road.

(McEwan, 59-60)

The first version (handout Student A) is identical to the extract above, except for the fact that the clauses with uptalk are underlined. The second version (handout Student B) has the same text but the distribution of uptalk in it is different. Whereas in the first version the contour occurs in the second and last lines, the second version contains the pattern in the fourth and sixth lines. The learners work in pairs. Each of them must have

a different version of the handout. It is important to bear this in mind when distributing the handouts at the beginning of the lesson. One of the learners takes the role of Joe, the other that of Parry. Their task is to read out the dialogue. The learner who plays Parry is instructed to imitate the use of uptalk in the underlined clauses. The task of his or her partner is to recognise these clauses. Having done so, the learners switch their roles and practise the dialogue once more. This time the distribution of uptalk is different since the role of Parry is taken by the other learner having the second version of the handout. Finally, the teacher could choose one or two pairs to read out the dialogue in front of the whole class to check the correct use of the contour.

Anticipated problems: This task could easily confuse the learners since it might seem to be complicated at first sight. It is therefore important to give them clear instructions and check their understanding.

At the very end of the lesson the teacher should give the learners an opportunity to ask additional questions and offer a short explanation in case there is something unclear. The last important point is to emphasise to the learners that they are not supposed to use uptalk in their own speech but that it is useful to be aware of its existence in today's English.

In sum, the above lesson plan comprises a short lead-in and several other activities. The topic of the lesson is introduced to the learners indirectly, by means of a discovery task. The introductory part is followed by a receptive stage, in which the learners search for uptalk in recordings. Afterwards, the teacher gives a mini-lecture on the occurrence of the target pattern in contemporary English and its perception by native speakers. The learners then suggest their own ideas about the functions of uptalk in a brainstorming activity and subsequently seek more information about the popular view on the pattern in a poem. The reading comprehension is followed by another mini-lecture, this time on the functions of uptalk according to the current research evidence. The last stage of the lesson plan focuses on uptalk practice both in answering questions and in a dialogue.

8. Implementation

There is no point in designing a lesson plan without implementing it in class. The lesson plan on uptalk, which was presented in the previous section, has been tested in three groups of learners at secondary schools. Subsequently, a questionnaire survey has been done among the learners to get their feedback on the lesson. Furthermore, several teachers of English at these schools have been asked to fill in a short questionnaire about uptalk and their own teaching of pronunciation.

This section reports on the pre-implementation survey done among teachers and the implementation of the lesson plan in English classes. The feedback survey is the subject of discussion in the following section.

8.1. Pre-implementation survey

Prior to teaching the lesson on uptalk, a small-scale survey was conducted among teachers of English at the schools where the lesson plan was tested. The aim of the survey was to find out whether the teachers are aware of the occurrence of uptalk in English and whether they include intonation in their teaching.

The sample consists of 14 respondents who were asked to fill in the questionnaire[21]. Most of them (9 out of 14) were not aware of the existence of uptalk at all. The other informants (5 out of 14) were familiar with the pattern either from their university classes or from self-study. All the teachers include intonation in their lessons and predominantly use coursebook exercises to teach it. Additionally, a few of them (5 out of 14) work occasionally with other materials, such as pronunciation games and other exercises. Only two respondents, however, put any focus on intonational patterns that are still considered nonstandard. The main reasons for not including these phenomena in teaching appear to be the teacher's unawareness of the patterns and a lack of time.

Clearly, the sample cannot be seen as representative of all the teachers in the Czech Republic. The above findings are not to be applied to the larger population from which the sample was selected. Yet, one may tentatively suggest that, according to the findings, the present lesson plan might be of some use to teachers who wish to

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[21] see appendix D

familiarise their learners with uptalk but either do not have much information about it or do not have appropriate teaching materials.

8.2. Learners

The lessons on uptalk were taught in April 2013 at three different secondary grammar schools, namely at Gymnázium Joachima Barranda in Beroun, Gymnázium Přípotoční in Prague 10 and Malostranské Gymnázium in Prague 1. Three groups of learners were chosen for this purpose, each one from a different school. The first group (Gymnázium Joachima Barranda, sexta) consisted of 13 strong intermediate learners. In the second group (Gymnázium Přípotoční, 3.D), there were 15 learners mostly at the strong intermediate level, though some of them were only intermediate. The third group (Gymnázium Malostranská, septima) consisted of 11 learners, all of them at the upper-intermediate level.

8.3. Lesson No. 1

As mentioned above, there were 13 learners in the first group. Most of them were fairly active, cooperative and curious about the target phenomenon, only a couple of weaker learners did not participate much.

As for the course of the lesson, the lead-in turned out to be a hard nut to crack. It took the learners some time to spot the difference. The teacher had to play the recording three times to give most of them the opportunity to notice what was different between the two. However, once they noticed it, the learners were able to describe the intonational contour in a surprisingly precise way, using terms such as 'intonation' and 'a rising tone'. The next activity, searching for uptalk in the recordings, did not seem to be as demanding for the learners as the first one. They managed to underline all of the instances. As expected, the rises on *do* (in "what we could do", recording 2b) and *tragedy* (recording 3b) were mistaken for the phenomenon in question. In response, the teacher provided the learners with a brief explanation of why a rising tone is used in this case and why these rises are not considered to be instances of uptalk.

The question concerning the typical age and gender of uptalkers did not appear to be hard to answer either. The learners immediately guessed the correct answers to all of the questions, suggesting that uptalkers were mostly younger women, that uptalk was

common and that the attitude towards the phenomenon was 'negative'. The question concerning the way in which the pattern might be graphically marked in the text of a novel seemed to take the learners by surprise. They were not able to think of any possible way of doing this. As far as the brainstorming activity is concerned, there were only four suggestions altogether. The learners came up with the ideas that people use uptalk because they want to attract the listener's attention, because they want to be different or sound cool and that some of the people who produce uptalk are less educated. The following activity, the reading comprehension, seemed to intrigue the learners. It was apparent that they found the style of reading by Taylor Mali amusing. Moreover, the content of the poem stirred up a lively discussion. As for the unknown vocabulary in the text, one learner asked about the meaning of *band wagon*. No other explanation was requested. However, despite the lively discussion, the learners were not able to find more than one reason for the use of uptalk in the poem. The only reason that they discovered by themselves, referred to the supposed lack of self-confidence of uptalkers. This is why the teacher then directed the learners' attention to the textual evidence of the other reasons hidden in the work and asked them to explain Mali's assumptions in their own words.

The uptalk practice was undoubtedly the most enjoyable part of the lesson for the learners. All of them tried hard to imitate the intonational contour but some were not very successful at first. Several learners, who finished earlier, even invented a couple of their own questions and answers to practice uptalk. It is important to mention, however, that this activity was the only task focusing on uptalk practice done during the lesson. Due to the complications at the beginning of the lesson there was no time left for the second practice activity, which was left out of the lesson. At the end of the lesson one learner asked whether uptalk occurred also in Canadian English. No other questions were asked.

8.4. Lesson No. 2

Compared to the first lesson, the learners in the second group were generally less cooperative and some of them appeared to be bored. However, approximately five learners (out of 15 in the group) showed great interest in the examined phenomenon and actively participated throughout the entire lesson.

The lead-in was short this time and took only about three minutes since the learners noticed the difference in the intonation between the recordings during the first listening. When asked to describe what was different, they used several expressions, for example 'rising voice', 'question intonation' and 'go up with voice'. The following search for the intonational contour in the extracts did not seem to be a difficult task for most of the learners. They were successful in finding all the instances of the pattern. Nevertheless, the rise on *do* (in "what we could do", recording 2b) confused some of the learners and had to be explained by the teacher.

As for the 'who' question, the learners correctly guessed the age of the majority of uptalkers but did not guess their gender. They assumed that males and females used the pattern with approximately the same frequency. Furthermore, the learners suggested that people used the pattern very often, and that most native English speakers considered uptalk "rubbish", "bad English" and "a stupid thing". Discussing the graphical record of uptalk in the novel, only one suggestion was made, namely the use of another font. Even though some of the learners appeared to be bored at the beginning of the lesson, the brainstorming activity aroused their interest. In consequence, many ideas were generated during this stage, for example that people use uptalk to imitate their friends, attract someone's attention or annoy other people. Another set of ideas referred to the speaker's nervousness, uncertainty or shyness.

Unlike the brainstorming activity, the reading comprehension did not involve the learners. It was evident that they enjoyed Mali's reading and found the poem witty. Nonetheless, the discussion in small groups regarding the reasons was not very fruitful, although the learners were familar with all of the key words. Finally, the evidence for Mali's suggestion that it is cool to use uptalk these days and that uptalkers might lack conviction were found in the first and the third stanza.

The rest of the lesson focused on practice. In general, the learners were quite good at imitating the pattern and did not need much help from the teacher. Both activities, i.e. answering the questions and the dialogue practice, seemed to appeal to the group. Moreover, they were successful in discovering uptalk in the two different versions of the dialogue on their handouts. At the very end of the lesson, two pairs of learners were asked to read the dialogue aloud to check the answers. There were no additional questions or comments on the lesson from the side of the learners.

8.5. Lesson No. 3

The third group consisted of 11 upper-intermediate learners of English. In spite of the fact that the class was scheduled late on a Friday afternoon, all of the learners were very active, cooperative, curious and evidently accustomed to participating in class discussions.

The discovery activity at the beginning of the lesson did not require much time. Most of the learners noticed the difference during the first recording and referred to it as to "a change in intonation" and "rising intonation". Still, the recording was played once again since some of the learners wanted to check their answers. There was no severe problem with the following task either. All instances of uptalk were marked correctly. The learners considered the rises on *do* (in "what we could do", recording 2b) and *tragedy* (recording 3b) to be uptalk as well, though no other sentences were misidentified as exhibiting the pattern.

The age and gender of uptalkers, as well as the prevalent attitude towards the use of the pattern, were guessed immediately. There was even one guess that agreed precisely with Bradford's claim that uptalkers are mostly people aged between about 13-40. As far as the frequency of use is concerned, the learners found it difficult to believe that uptalk is a common feature of speech at present. The group suggested that the view on uptalk is "very negative" and that people use it because they want to sound cool, be different from their parents, pretend that they are young, draw the listener's attention or highlight a piece of information. The learners came up with two interesting ideas as answers to the question about the graphical record of uptalk in the novel, namely that it is indicated by the use of italics or by a different colour.

The poem turned out to be one of the most enjoyable stages of the lesson plan for the learners, who found Mali's style of reading amusing. As for the unknown vocabulary, one girl asked about the meaning of *a nerd*, though no other explanations were requested. Discussing the poem in groups, the learners agreed on uncertainty, lack of conviction and a desire to sound cool to be the factors governing the use of uptalk.

Several learners experience some difficulties in imitating the pattern, but most managed to do so without any problems. There was sufficient time to practice the

answers as well as the dialogue. At the very end of the lesson, one learner asked about the Czech translation of the term *uptalk*, but no other comments were made.

To sum up, the lesson on uptalk seemed to appeal to the majority of the learners. As for the lead-in, several learners found the task difficult and needed more time to solve it. However, all groups finally managed to discover the difference between the recordings without the teacher's intervention. The listening activity did not appear as demanding as the introductory task. It was easy for the learners to identify the intonational contour in the recordings. Surprisingly, the learners were very good at guessing. When asked a question, they managed to guess the correct answer without any clues. As expected, the uptalk practice involved virtually all the learners. Most of them enjoyed also the poem by Mali, even though they were generally not very successful in seeking the reasons for the use of uptalk hidden in the text.

9. Feedback survey

9.1. Aims

This section reports on the findings of a small-scale survey done among the learners who participated in the lessons in which the lesson plan on uptalk was tested. The aim of this survey was to get feedback on the lesson plan from the participants. The survey was based on an analysis of authentic data obtained from a short questionnaire consisting of five questions[22]. The questionnaire was distributed among the respondents at the very end of the class in order to gather their comments on the lesson as a whole as well as on its individual stages.

9.2. Sample

The sample consists of 39 respondents, of whom 23 were females and 16 males, aged between about 16–18. All of the informants were Czech learners of English in the second or third year of three different secondary grammar schools. They were selected according to the criterion of their level of English (the minimum of strong intermediate level was required). No other criteria were used to select the sample. Further information on the schools, the respondents' level of English and the size of the groups is provided in section 8.2.

9.3. Results

Question 1: Did you hear any English speaker(s) using uptalk before this lesson? If yes, where?

Figure 1. Learners' awareness of the existence of uptalk.
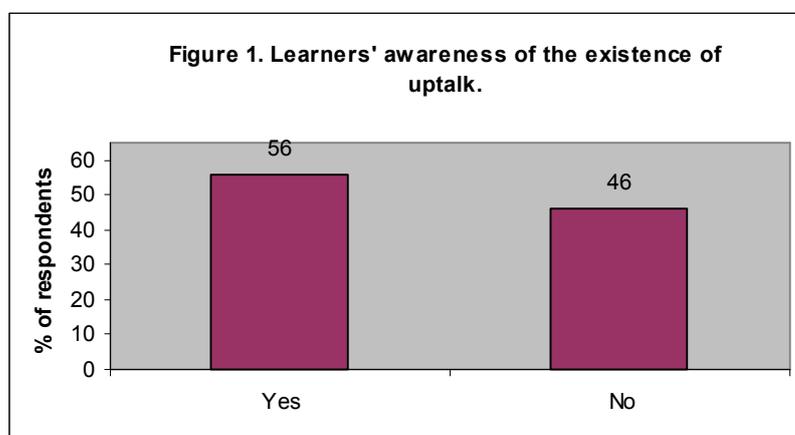
The first question of the questionnaire might seem to yield somewhat surprising results. The data in Figure 1 suggest that approximately one half of the informants (56%) had come across the pattern prior to the lesson, mostly in TV series and in communication with native speakers of English. This contradicts the assumption, on which the lesson plan is based, that the learners had no previous knowledge of uptalk.

However, it is also possible that the respondents came across the pattern some time before the class but were not fully aware of it at that time. It could even have attracted their attention, but they were probably not provided with any further details on the pattern. When asked about their familiarity with the phenomenon at the beginning of the lesson, none of the learners seemed to be aware of its existence. Yet once their attention was drawn to the pattern and they were offered some information, the learners might have recalled its use e.g. in some series that they had seen before. In fact, this is exactly what several informants mentioned in their answers, that they "didn't realise it was uptalk" when they heard the pattern in speech.

Comments of interest

Two respondents believe that uptalk is commonly produced not only in various sitcoms and TV series but also in the speech of some characters appearing in computer games. Unfortunately, neither specified the characters or the names of these computer games. Some other informants claimed that they had noticed the intonational contour in the speech of American tourists in the streets of Prague.

Question 2: Did you find the lesson interesting?

Figure 2. Overall evaluation.
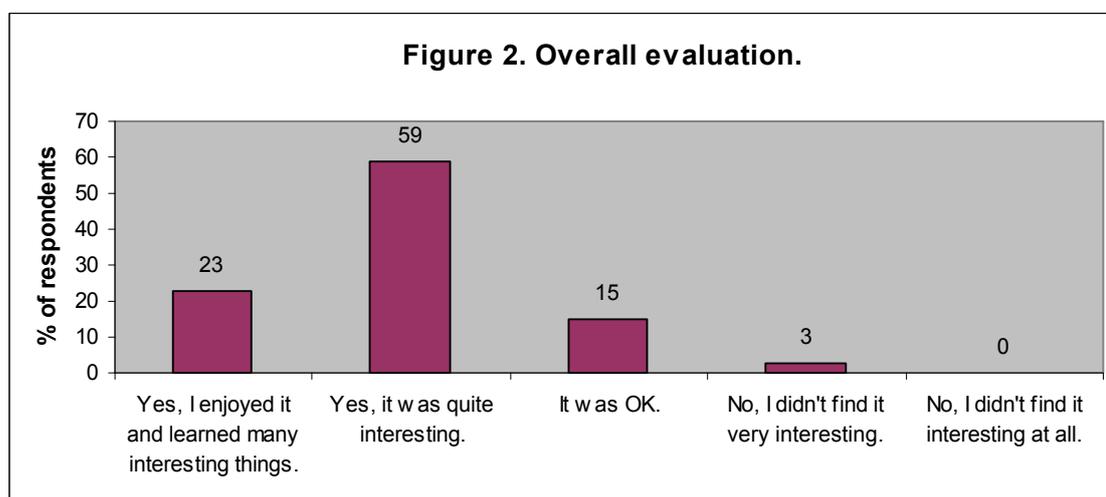
The second question concerns the overall evaluation of the lesson by the informants. As seen in Figure 2, there were six options available to answer the question. The respondents were supposed to choose only one of these options. Most of them (59%) found the lesson 'quite interesting'. The second largest group (23%) selected the option 'I enjoyed it and learned many interesting things'. On the other hand, there were also some learners (3%) who 'didn't find it very interesting'. However, the majority of the informants selected one of the options occurring at the positive end of the evaluation scale, which means that they found the the lesson more or less interesting.

It is of great importance that the lesson has the potential to intrigue the learners and arouse their interest. As such, it helps to enhance the motivation of the learners, which is undoubtedly beneficial to their learning.

Comments of interest

The vast majority of the respondents who selected the first or second option, i.e. who found the lesson interesting, stated that the lesson was attractive to them mainly for three reasons. First, they had not heard much about the phenomenon before, it was something new to them and they were eager to find out what the term *uptalk* referred to. Second, they appreciated the fact that the feature of speech "is used in normal life". Third, the lesson on uptalk was "different then the other lessons"[23].

Naturally, it is not feasible to include a similar topic in English classes on a regular basis. On the other hand, one might argue that it is a good idea to make the learners occasionally aware of such phenomena since the attractiveness and the unfamiliarity of the topic could help to break the monotony in class. Clearly, uptalk is not the only phenomenon that can be used for this purpose. There is a range of related topics that are likely to arouse the learners' curiosity in a similar way and help them to gain a better insight into the language. For instance, the teacher could occasionally give the learners the opportunity to explore various accents that may be familiar to them from TV series, shows, YouTube, etc.

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[23] The cited texts from the questionnaires are reproduced without any corrections.

Question 3: Which activities did you like?

Figure 3. Interesting activities.
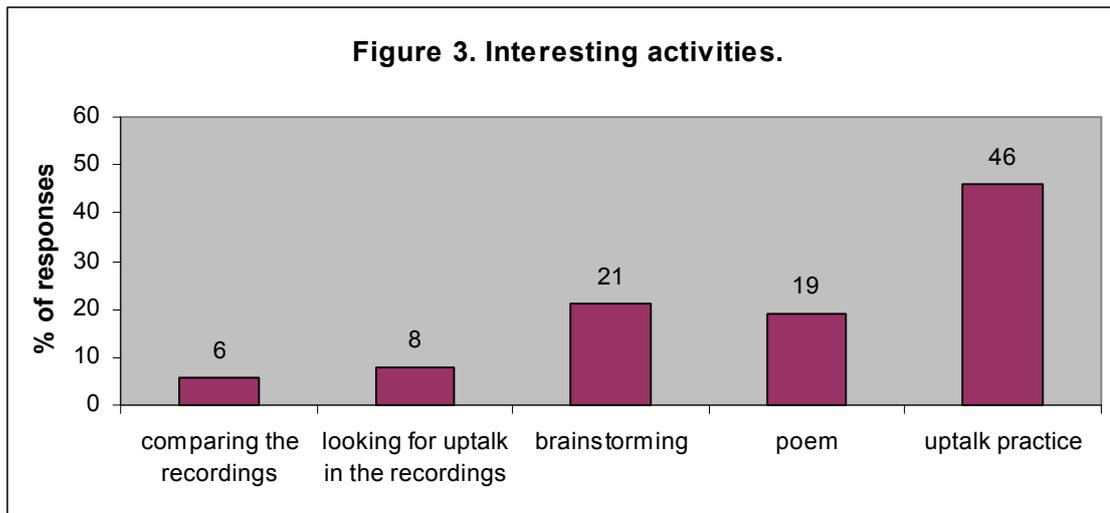
The third question asked for the respondents' preferences for particular activities included in the lesson plan. As opposed to the previous question, there was no limit on the number of options the informants could select. Figure 3 shows that the activities which focused on practising the pattern were the most popular among the learners (almost 50% of all selections). This is an expected result since the two tasks in question are designed to keep the learners engaged in class and to allow them to experience the production (imitation) of uptalk in person. Contrary to expectations, the data in Figure 3 indicate that the respondents also enjoyed the brainstorming and poetry activities. Although the extract from the poem was expected to discourage the learners due to the difficult vocabulary it contains, it turned out to be one of the most appreciated stages of the lesson plan. However, according to the positive reactions on the recording, one might tentatively suggest that what the informants found interesting is in fact not the reading comprehension itself but rather the content of the poem and Taylor Mali's performance style.

Comments of interest

Regardless of the selected option(s), virtually all of the respondents gave the same reasons for explaining why they favoured a particular activity, namely that they found it either "cool" or "funny". Interestingly, the comments contain only two exceptions to this tendency. First, one respondent considered the poem the most interesting activity because he "learned some new words" while working with the text. Second, another

respondent preferred the task of underlining the instances of uptalk in the recordings because "it was not so hard" as the other activities.

Question 4: Which activities were not interesting for you?

Figure 4. Less interesting activities.
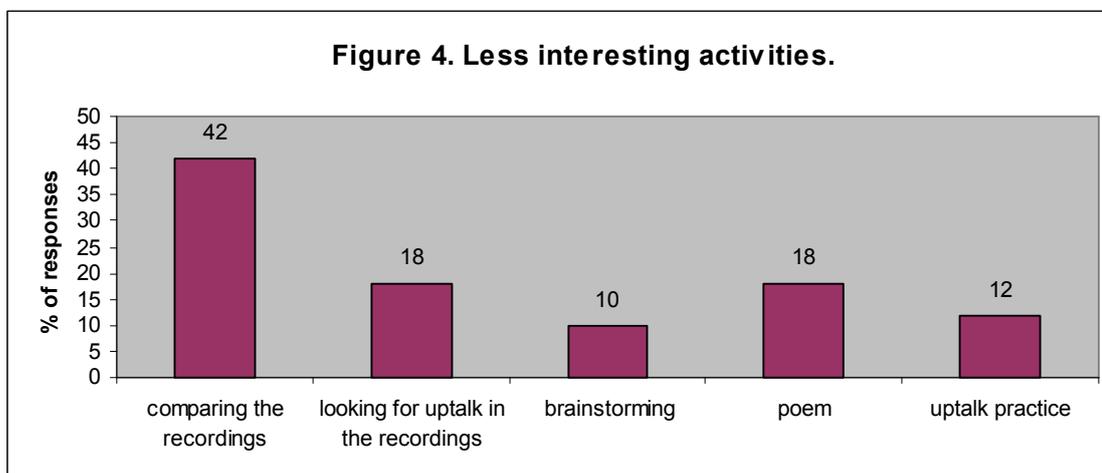
The penultimate question refers to the activities that did not appeal to the learners as much as the others. The informants were again allowed to select more than one of the options. It is clear from Figure 4 that the lead-in was the least popular stage of the lesson among the respondents. One possible explanation for such a result is that it might also be the most difficult and stressful task from the whole lesson plan since the learners are deliberately not told what to expect. Furthermore, they are not provided with any transcript of the recording. Thus, the task might be rather hard, particularly for weaker learners. As a result, this is likely to influence their perception and subsequent evaluation of the activity. This claim is also supported by comments of some of the respondents who were "not sure what to do" and "nervous from find between first and second records" or "didn't understand" the recording as such. Several other respondents selected the option of searching for uptalk in the recordings as the task they did not like much. The most commonly mentioned reason for this selection is that the respondents view the task as boring and too easy.

Comments of interest

One informant, who regarded the speaking activities as the least interesting stage of the lesson plan, gave the reason that "it was a little strange using uptalk". There is also

a large group of learners who did not select any of the options since they "found interesting all of them".

Question 5: What would you change in the lesson plan?

Finally, the questionnaire contains an open question, the aim of which is to gather the informants' suggestions concerning potential changes in the lesson plan. However, approximately 85% suggested no changes. They either claimed that there is no need to change anything since "everything was good" or they did not know what to change. On the other hand, some respondents suggested leaving out a particular activity, usually the one that they did not find interesting.

The sample also contains one fairly interesting and constructive suggestion. One respondent suggested that a video with uptalk might be included in the lesson, for instance a short part of a sitcom or TV programme in which the speakers use the pattern. Certainly, this is one of the possible steps by which the present lesson plan might be improved in the future.

Conclusion

The theoretical part of the present master thesis aims at providing the readers with an overview of several aspects of uptalk. In general, many of these issues are still a matter of dispute among scholars. At the beginning of the thesis it is suggested that there is in fact no agreement on the precise shape of the examined intonational contour. Another issue that is currently under discussion is the terminology. In consequence, several different terms can be found in scholarly literature to refer to the phenomenon in question. Furthermore, the theoretical part shows that uptalk occurs with an increased frequency in many varietal accents of English at present. Special focus was put in this paper on the occurrence of the target contour in British English and American English. In both these varieties the pattern seems to be a well established intonational pattern that is produced predominantly by younger speakers. The last section of the theoretical part summarises the communicative functions of uptalk and suggests that the interpretation of its meaning has changed in several recent decades. The change involves a shift from viewing the pattern as a marker of negative politeness to its interpretation as a positive politeness marker. However, the popular view on uptalk does not appear to reflect the more recent research findings and still tends to associate the contour with negative politeness.

The practical part presented an original lesson plan on the examined phenomenon and commented on its implementation in class, namely in three English classes at three different secondary grammar schools. The learners appeared to enjoy most of the activities included in the lesson plan. Surprisingly, some of the activities that had been expected to somewhat bore the learners, e.g. working with the poem by Taylor Mali, turned out to be interesting and enjoyable to the vast majority of the learners. On the contrary, the lead-in, which was designed as a discovery task, was supposed to intrigue the learners and catch their attention. However, there were several people in the groups who did not seem to be interested in the task at all. Some of them even complained to the teacher that the recordings were too difficult to follow and understand.

The questionnaire survey conducted among the learners showed several interesting results. Most of the learners liked the activities on uptalk and all of them evaluated the lesson in a positive way. None of the respondents expressed any negative comments on

the lesson as a whole. Many informants found the lesson interesting since they learned something new about a phenomenon that is frequently used in contemporary English. The data suggest that a great many learners do appreciate this fact.

As for the individual activities, the practice of uptalk was selected as the most interesting stage of the lesson. This result was expected and is hardly surprising. It seems logical that whenever the learners are given a chance to experience something in person, they get involved in the activity very quickly. The lesson plan gave them the opportunity to try to imitate the production of uptalk by themselves in order to find out how it feels to use the pattern. A large group of learners appreciated also the inclusion of the poem by Taylor Mali in the lesson plan. They found the poem amusing thanks to the author's catching performance style and thanks to the witty content of the poem. Another activity that was also favoured by the respondents was the brainstorming task which allowed the learners to be creative and express their own suggestions and ideas.

The least interesting activity, according to the data, were the two listening tasks, i.e. the lead-in and the following listening activity that was based on the search for uptalk in the two recordings. On one hand, some learners complained that the task was too difficult since they were not able to understand the recordings. On the other hand, the data show that there is another group of learners who disliked both the tasks since they found them extremely easy. It seems probable that there is a link between the level of English of the particular learners and their perception of how easy or difficult the task was.

The last question that the informants were supposed to answer in the questionnaire concerned their suggestions about what to change in the lesson plan. The majority of the respondents suggested no changes at all, claiming that everything was alright and no changes were needed. Other informants suggested to leave out completely one or two activities, usually the listening tasks. However, the data contained also one comment that is really worth considering. The learner who wrote this comment suggested to include in the lesson a short clip for instance from a TV series in which the characters produce uptalk. This is a wonderful idea. Several American sitcoms, e.g. *Friends*, are widely believed to demonstrate the use of uptalk. Many learners of English, at least in the Czech Republic, are familiar with these TV series. Moreover, they seem to be quite popular among the Czech viewers. For this reason, it could be a good idea to

provide the learners also with a video clip either from a popular sitcom or a similar TV programme. This video is likely to attract the learners' attention, entertain them and make them even more interested in the lesson as such as well as in the examined phenomenon.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Stage	Procedure	Interaction	Aims	Time
1 *lead-in*	• Tell learners (Ls) to listen to two recordings and find out the difference. between them. • Play recordings 1a and 1b. • Ask about the difference. • Explain the pattern. → Uptalk/upspeak is the use of a rising tone instead of a falling tone in English statements.	T& Ls	• The learners will be better able to distinguish two different intonational contours. • The learners will be able to explain what uptalk is.	5 minutes
2 *listening*	• Distribute the handouts (Student A, Student B) • Tell Ls to listen to the recordings and underline uptalk in the transcript. • Play recordings 2b and 3b. • Tell Ls to compare the answers in pairs. Play the recordings again. • Check the answers. → uptalk on *together*, *pray* (2b), *can*, *need*, *prayer* (3b)	individual work pair work T& Ls	• The learners will be able to identify uptalk in speech.	5 minutes
3 *T's presentation*	• Ask Ls to guess age & gender of typical uptalkers, whether uptalk is frequent today and attitudes of native speakers towards it. • Give a mini-lecture on the correct answers. → younger females, common feature, negative attitude • Explain uptalk in *Enduring Love*	T& Ls	• The learners will be able to explain the occurrence of uptalk in terms of age and sex and also the attitude of most native speakers towards uptalk.	3 minutes

4 *brainstorming*	• Tell Ls to make suggestions about the functions of uptalk	T& Ls	• The learners will be able to understand why people use uptalk.	3 minutes
5 *reading* *speaking*	• Tell Ls to listen to a recording of a poem • Play recording by Taylor Mali. • Tell Ls to discuss reasons for uptalk mentioned in poem. • Check the answers	group work T& Ls	• The learners will be able to explain what the popular view of uptalk is.	10 minutes
6 *T's* *presentation*	• Give a mini-lecture on the functions of uptalk. → to check the listener's comprehension and involvement, to indicate an important/interesting part of utterance, to be friendly, show solidarity	T& Ls	• The learners will be able to explain some of the functions of uptalk.	4 minutes
7 *speaking*	• Tell Ls to ask and answer the questions (→handouts) in pairs, at first answer without uptalk, then with uptalk. • Ask Ls the questions, they answer with uptalk.	pair work	• The learners will be able to imitate uptalk.	8 minutes
8 *speaking*	• Tell Ls to practice the dialogue (→handouts) in pairs. Student A reads his/her underlined clauses in the dialogue with uptalk,, the other L guesses where uptalk occurs. Ls switch the roles. Student B reads his/her underlined clauses with uptalk, the other L guesses where uptalk occurs. • Choose 2 pairs to read the dialogues aloud to the class.	pair work	• The learners will be able to imitate and recognise uptalk.	7 minutes

Appendix B

1. Listen and <u>underline</u> uptalk.

A.

I looked at my watch. It was fifteen minutes since I had phoned the emergency services.

"You go ahead," I said. "Do what you like."

"It's something we can do together," he said as he looked about for a suitable place on the ground. (...)

"What we could do," he said with a seriousness which warned against mockery, "is to pray together."

B.

Parry tried to speak reasonably from his diminished height. "Look, we don't know each other and there's no reason why you should trust me. Except that God has brought us together in this tragedy and we have to, you know, make whatever sense of it we can."

Then, seeing me make no move, he added, "I think you have a special need for prayer."

I shrugged and said, "Sorry. But you go right on ahead."

(taken from McEwan, Ian. *Enduring Love*. London: Vintage Books, 2004. p.24-25)

2. Why do people use uptalk according to the author? Listen to the poem and discuss the reasons.

Totally like whatever, you know? by Taylor Mali (2005, abridged)

In case you hadn't realised,
it has somehow become uncool
to sound like you know what you're talking about?
Or believe strongly in what you're saying?
Invisible question marks and parenthetical you know's and you know what I'm sayings
have been attaching themselves to the ends of our sentences?
Even when those sentences aren't, like, questions? You know?

Declarative sentences — so-called
because they used to, like, DECLARE things to be true
as opposed to other things that are like, totally, not -
they've been infected by this tragically cool
and totally hip interrogative tone? You know?
As if I'm saying,
don't think I'm a nerd just because I've, like, noticed this; ok
It's like what I've heard?
I have nothing personally invested in my own opinions,
I'm just, like, inviting you to join me on the band wagon of my own uncertainty

What has happened to our conviction?
Where are the limbs out on which we once walked?
Have they been, like, chopped down
with the rest of the rain forest?
Or do we have, like, nothing to say?
Has society just become so filled with these conflicting feelings of 'nugh'
That we've just gotten to the point where it's just, like...
whatever!

3. In pairs, ask and answer the questions. Then ask the questions again and answer with uptalk.

A. Where would you like to go on holiday?
B. What kind of music do you like?
C. Who is your favourite actor/actress?
D. How many languages can you speak?
E. What are you going to do tonight?

4. In pairs, practise the dialogue.

Joe: What do you want? And who gave you my number?
Parry: <u>That's quite a story Joe?</u> I went to the –
Joe: I don't want your story. I don't want you phoning me.
Parry: We need to talk.
Joe: I don't.
Parry: I think you do. Just see me this once, just once and hear me out and you'll never have to hear from me again.
Joe: Where are you?
Parry: I can come to you.
Joe: No. Tell me where you are.
Parry: <u>I'm in the phone box at the end of your road?</u>

(taken from McEwan, Ian. *Enduring Love*. London: Vintage Books, 2004. p.59-60)

Appendix C **Student B**

1. Listen and <u>underline</u> uptalk.
A.
I looked at my watch. It was fifteen minutes since I had phoned the emergency services.
"You go ahead," I said. "Do what you like."
"It's something we can do together," he said as he looked about for a suitable place on the ground. (...)
"What we could do," he said with a seriousness which warned against mockery, "is to pray together."
B.
Parry tried to speak reasonably from his diminished height. "Look, we don't know each other and there's no reason why you should trust me. Except that God has brought us together in this tragedy and we have to, you know, make whatever sense of it we can."
Then, seeing me make no move, he added, "I think you have a special need for prayer."
I shrugged and said, "Sorry. But you go right on ahead."

<div style="text-align:right">(taken from McEwan, Ian. <i>Enduring Love</i>. London: Vintage Books, 2004. p.24-25)</div>

2. Why do people use uptalk according to the author? Listen to the poem and discuss the reasons.

Totally like whatever, you know? by Taylor Mali (2005, abridged)

In case you hadn't realised,
it has somehow become uncool
to sound like you know what you're talking about?
Or believe strongly in what you're saying?
Invisible question marks and parenthetical you know's and you know what I'm sayings
have been attaching themselves to the ends of our sentences?
Even when those sentences aren't, like, questions? You know?

Declarative sentences — so-called
because they used to, like, DECLARE things to be true
as opposed to other things that are like, totally, not -
they've been infected by this tragically cool
and totally hip interrogative tone? You know?
As if I'm saying,
don't think I'm a nerd just because I've, like, noticed this; ok
It's like what I've heard?
I have nothing personally invested in my own opinions,
I'm just, like, inviting you to join me on the band wagon of my own uncertainty

What has happened to our conviction?
Where are the limbs out on which we once walked?
Have they been, like, chopped down
with the rest of the rain forest?
Or do we have, like, nothing to say?
Has society just become so filled with these conflicting feelings of 'nugh'
That we've just gotten to the point where it's just, like...
whatever!

3. In pairs, ask and answer the questions. Then ask the questions again and answer with uptalk.
A.   Where would you like to go on holiday?
B.   What kind of music do you like?
C.   Who is your favourite actor/actress?
D.   How many languages can you speak?
E.   What are you going to do tonight?

4. In pairs, practise the dialogue.
Joe: What do you want? And who gave you my number?
Parry: That's quite a story Joe. I went to the –
Joe: I don't want your story. I don't want you phoning me.
Parry: <u>We need to talk?</u>
Joe: I don't.
Parry: I think you do. Just see me this once, just once and hear me out and <u>you'll never have to hear from me again?</u>
Joe: Where are you?
Parry: I can come to you.
Joe: No. Tell me where you are.
Parry: I'm in the phone box at the end of your road.

<div style="text-align:right">(taken from McEwan, Ian. <i>Enduring Love</i>. London: Vintage Books, 2004. p.59-60)</div>

Appendix D

1. Have you ever heard about the intonational pattern of *uptalk/upspeak* (i.e. the use of a rising tone in statements, instead of a fall, when giving information)?

    a) ☐ Yes

Note: Please specify where:...

    b) ☐ No

2. Do you include teaching intonation in your English lessons?

    a) ☐ Yes

Note: Please specify how often and what materials you use (textbook exercises, additional materials, etc.)..

    b) ☐ No

Note: Please specify your reason(s):...

3. Do you make students aware of any intonational patterns (e.g. *uptalk*) that are still considered nontraditional/nonstandard but are frequently used in everyday English these days?

    a) ☐ Yes

Note: Please specify which patterns and your reason(s):..

    b) ☐ No

Note: Please specify your reason(s):...

4. Other comments:

Appendix E

1. Did you hear any English speaker(s) using uptalk before this lesson? If yes, where?
   a) Yes, ...
   b) No

2. Did you find the lesson interesting?
   a) Yes, I enjoyed it and learned many interesting things.
   b) Yes, it was quite interesting.
   c) It was OK.
   d) No, I didn't find it very interesting.
   e) No, I didn't find it interesting at all.

   Why? ....

3. Which activities did you like?
   a) comparing the recordings
   b) looking for uptalk in the recordings
   c) brainstorming "Why do people use uptalk?"
   d) the poem
   e) uptalk practice in the dialogues

   Why? ....

4. Which activities was/were not interesting for you?
   a) comparing the recordings
   b) looking for uptalk in the recordings
   c) brainstorming "Why do people use uptalk?"
   d) the poem
   e) uptalk practice in the dialogues

   Why? ....

5. What would you change in the lesson plan?

6. Other comments: