AN ANALYSIS OF THE INTONATION OF 'SABRINA' BY D. BOLINGER'S PROFILES (1)

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As early as 1951 Dwight L. Bolinger presented an idea to the effect that configurations rather than levels should be used as the basic units of intonation. Such units of intonation are later referred to as 'profiles', which are accent-centered and are "determined by how the pitch jump cuing the accent is realized."

The purpose of this paper is to show how the intonation analysis in terms of D. Bolinger's profiles proves to be efficient in dealing with any intonational materials that we may try to analyze, revealing subtle semantic differences accurately. In this paper, we will try to transcribe the intonation of sample dialogues from the 1954 American movie 'Sabrina' using the 'squibble notation' devised by D. Bolinger, and try to see how the "rich, almost endlessly varied, potpourri of examples and elegantly sensitive semantic readings" that Bolinger describes in *Intonation and its Parts* and *Intonation and its Uses*⁴ work successfully when applied to other materials we may want to analyze.

The dialogue begins with David Larrabee who comes across a most sophisticated woman as he goes cruising in his car, stops his car, and talks to her. But he does not quite recognize her as Sabrina Fairchild, his chauffeur's daughter, who is waiting for her father to pick her up in front of the Glen Cove Station after two years' study at a cooking school in Paris:

Let us analyze the forms of this dialogue first, and then examine their meanings. The first part of utterance (1) may be analyzed as B+B. "In Profile B the accent is jumped up to." But since taxi is accented and "the accented syllable is initial, there is nothing to mark

the upward jump except the fact that the accent is at a fairly high pitch: there is an 'up to' in the speaker's range. There are various treatments of the syllables following the accented syllable of a B. The end of a B, from the accented syllable on, could be rising, level, or falling." With *Taxi*, *Miss?* it is rising. With the second part of utterance (1), *Cheapest rates in Glen Cove*, which may be analyzed as B+ B+ A, the ends of the three B's are all falling, with *cheap-*, *rates*, *Glen* and *Cove* each taking an accent.

There may or may not be an additional B on *Miss* in utterance (1). "Without an abrupt change such as might signal an additional accent, or without the dropback after the first B [*Taxi*, *Miss*? is neither of these], a succession of two B's is apt to be heard as a single B," with accent on *tax*- and everything following that syllable, including *Miss*, merely part of the tail—this would be appropriate if the vocative has already been introduced.⁸

The upness in pitch of Profile B as we see on *Taxi*, *Miss?* represents 'keyed-upness' which may be interpreted as merely the curiosity that goes with having a question to ask. "Profile A with its terminal fall is a coming-to-rest. The fall conveys notions related to termination. The most important is the cutoff: I'm through with speaking, now it's your turn," It may also convey 'finality' in a modal sense: I'm sure of myself, that's that. We see this use of Profile A at the end of the B + B + A contour on *Cheapest rates in Glen Cove*.

Each of the two parts of utterance (2) has an A, with accents on -lo and are, respectively. But the first A for Hello! is more high-pitched than the second A for How are you? and the extraordinarily high pitch of the first A shows that the speaker is highly aroused or excited. It is a hello that carries such a degree of familiarity and excitement that may be used only to an old acquaintance or close friend that one meets unexpectedly with pleasant surprise.

(3) David:
$$W^{e_1}_{1}$$
, Γm n_{e} . How are u ?

And I $might$ add ar_{e} y_{o} u ?

$$am$$

(4) Sabrina: Who I^{-1} ?

The first sentence of (3) may be analyzed as CA+A, with accents on *well* and *fine*, respectively. The CA profile on *Well* fits in with the following description by Bolinger: "The CA profile... represents a sort of breaking free of prior restraint, embodied in the initial low

followed by the quick upward jump, plus a reimposition of control in the immediately following return to a low pitch." Here David is first taken aback by Sabrina's excessive familiarity usually not expected from a person that one meets for the first time, and thus feels sort of perplexed and exercises restraint. But then he breaks free of this restraint taking advantage of this fortunate situation for him, who really wants to be acquainted with her. He behaves as if this excessive familiarity was a natural thing, and assumes calmness regaining control of himself.

Profile A is used for *How are you?* of (2) and (3), but in (2) *are* is made to to stand out while in (3) *you* is, in accordance with the usual exchange of greetings. In (3) *are* is already an introduced item, and the accent shifts to *you*, which is a new item as it refers to a different person from the *you* of (2). The third sentence of utterance (3) has the contour AC+ A. This sentence has a kind of preliminary remark: *And I might add*—, which takes an AC. This AC could be eliminated so that the sentence would be just a single A on *who are you?* Or it could be B + A, with a B on the preliminary remark. Compared with these possibilities, an AC, as is used here, is separate pointing¹³ and draws attention to the preliminary remark on the addition of another WH question *who are you?*, which without this preliminary remark with an AC would sound a bit too rude or abrupt. One could use a B here, but that would not "make a point" of this important preliminary remark, ¹⁴ and that would seem to be dismissing the matter as of little importance. ¹⁵

The second WH question in (3) who are you? takes an A, with the accent on who, which is the only newly introduced item since are and you are already introduced— 'I already questioned you as to how, and now I'd like to question you as to how.'

The WH question *Who am I?* of utterance (4) is an echo question and it takes AC with an accent on am. One could use CAC for the extra emphasis in echo questions, which are often incredulous. ¹⁶ But "disbelief mixed with surprise would favor a contour with a final C or AC." One could also use CB +C for an echo question asked in meditative surprise. Our analysis would then be a CB profile on *Who am: who* would receive the accent and *am* would be the highest syllable in the sentence; and a C would be on I which is the lowest syllable in the sentence. The CB +C contour would be used when the speaker wants to tone down his surprise. ¹⁸

Utterance (5) may be analyzed as B + B, with an accent on *-posed* and *know*. The tail is level and slightly rising for the first and second B, respectively. "The place where B is most conspicuous . . . is its sentential use in utterance-final position, where because of the fact that there is no cutoff (in the form of a drop in pitch) and the pitch usually remains high, the effect is that of 'something unfinished.' Here we find the prototypical instances of noninformativeness, namely yes-no questions." "Noninformativeness is of a kind with imcompletion: the information comes in the answer, which completes the conversational exchange."

Thus in utterance (6) the information comes with B+A on no, you're not supposed to know. Before this B+A contour comes a sort of preliminary remark: Come to think of it-, which takes an A, since it is a separte piece of information Sabrina wants to convey.

- (7) David: stránded?
 Are you
- (8) Sabrina: $\begin{array}{c} & \text{fa} \\ \text{My} & \text{ther was supposed to pick me up,} \end{array}$

something must have hap but
$${}^{p}e_{n}$$

Utterance (7) is another example of the sentential use of B in utterance-final position. As we saw in (5) and (1), the upness in pitch of B signifies 'keyed-upness' which in these examples may be merely the curiosity that goes with having a question to ask.²¹

The first part of utterance (8) is A, which "in contrast with B, can be used in the middle of an utterance to assert an independent fact."²²

The second part of utterance (8) is B+A. One feature of B+A contrasted with A +A is "a tight union between profiles." Compared with A +A, B+A does not single out individual items for attention and aims at total effect rather than analytical significance. Utterances (1) and (5) obviously make use of the B+A for such effect by "having the B higher than the start of the A" that "produces . . . a kind of synthesizing effect." Utterance (8) also makes use of the B+A for such effect. If A +A were used, individual items would be singled out for attention and the utterance would sound more serious: the speaker is very much concerned about her father; she is afraid something serious must have happened to her father. But with the contour B +A as is used in utterance (8), the speaker sounds less worried. Concerning such use of B +A, Bolinger also states: "A further phrasal syntactic use is to express a kind of casual observation—we might say that it *comments* rather than *tells*

... as if to imply 'no great need to tell you this'—the speaker may be downplaying it or may feel that it is too obvious to view as a matter of information."²⁶

In the first sentence of utterance (9), $B + \tilde{A}$ (= lower-pitched A) is used consecutively three times. B+A is used when "feeling, rather than fact, is uppermost," and embraces a wide range of emotive utterance, including imperiousness (often referred to as a "lofty" tone, which accords with the sustained high pitch of the B—the speaker is "on his high horse"). In utterance (9), one may feel imperiousness or at least an insistent attitude of the speaker. To quote Bolinger: "Clearly no one emotion governs these uses of B+A. Broadly, they seem to be a form of self-expression, speaker-dominant, leading not to answers that appeal for acceptance but to *comments* that the audience is expected to take at face value."

The second sentence of utterance (9) takes A + A. "Where the B + A family represents a tight union between profiles, the A + A family represents a loose one. The drop in pitch that marks the A signifies separation of some kind when it precedes another A... The separation may be for sense or for power.... When a speaker wants to make the usually B + A *Now take it easy!* especially forceful, he uses A + A." In utterance (9) the normally unaccented *that* takes an extra accent to make the conditional meaning more forceful: 'Only if I can give you a lift.'

The first sentence of utterance (10) also makes use of the A+A for the basic meanings of assertiveness and separate attention. The first A profile could be eliminated altogether for less force, but in this dialogue two A profiles are used. And the contour is in the form of $A+\tilde{A}(=$ higher-pitched A). Concerning the relative height of A profiles, Bolinger says that "we could of course say . . . with the first peak higher than the second [i.e. we could use $A+\tilde{A}$], but that might risk offence" and that "the former shape [i.e. $A+\tilde{A}$] is the

normal one to answer questions."³¹ The second sentence of utterance (10) uses $B+\hat{A}$ as Bolinger states: "the A could start higher than the tail of the B, with a corresponding increase in tension."³² The total effect of these contours in utterance (10) may be 'a positive attitude' that Sabrina shows in accepting David's offer for a ride in his car.

(II) David:
$$\begin{array}{c} G_0 \\ o \\ d. \\ I'll \\ get \\ you^r \\ bag_s. \\ Whe^{re} \\ do you \\ v \\ er \\ \end{array}$$

The first sentence of utterance (II) *Good* has an A with its usual certainty or finality meaning. The second sentence *I'll get your bags* takes the contour C+A, with accents on *get* and *bags*, respectively. Bolinger states: "In the C + A subfamily of contours the principal effect is due to the immediate succession of C and A, which represent extremes of restraint and its opposite." "33"... To get at the underlying meaning one must look at the tension-relaxation effects of C followed by A. The C is for restraint... and the speaker starts by holding himself back... A bit of restraint, or the pretense of it, is socially desirable. But the ultimate effect is that of the A: the speaker starts out with restraint but his feelings get the better of him and he explodes an A." The third sentence of utterance (II)), *Where do you live?* may be analyzed as A + A. The drop from *where* here is realized by the following syllables *do you*, while *where* itself is glided up, expressing 'urgency.' Utterance (II) takes A+C. "Profile C can be used, as A is, to bring in new information, but usually not *as* new information. That is, it suggests familiarity of some sort or other. The place name is new to the context but the speaker suggests 'You might know...' or 'I thought you knew, so why do you ask?'37

(13) David: Do ris
$$n_e$$
-e? $-a_y$, Re_{all_y} ?

(14) Sabrina:

The first sentence of utterance (13) Dosoris Lane? is a 'reflex question,' which repeats

preceding non-question for confirmation, 38 and it takes A+AC exactly in accordance with Bolinger's description: "Disbelief mixed with surprise would favor a contour with a final C or AC." The second sentence of (13) is A +A +A with the usual meanings of A profiles, the words Say, that's and I being highlighted.

Utterance (14) is a B profile. The first syllable *real*-takes the accent at a fairly high pitch, as it is the main feature of Profile B. "The terminal rise," however, "... is not part of the definition of Profile B, and one may have a terminal level or a downtilt with the same... implication. The difference [in implication] is along another dimension: the rise is prodding, the level and downtilt suggest boredom or pointlessness." Sabrina knows that David lives in Dosoris Lane, and his bringing up this information is actually 'pointless.'

(15) David:
$$S^{u^-u}r = We \qquad neigh \\ must be \qquad bo_{r_{s!}}$$

$$One \quad thing \quad I \quad be_{li} \\ ev_e \quad in,$$

$$it's \qquad th_y \quad n_{eigh} \\ bo_r. \\ Oh - h,$$

$$Oh - h,$$

$$So \quad do \quad I \\ -I \\ -I \\ -I. \qquad Come \\ on, \quad David.$$

The first sentence of utterance (15) is an A, or a CA which has 'similarities to A.'⁴¹ Even if we distinguish CA from A as a separate profile, "it is necessary to recognize that the border between the two is uncertain. If the accent in A is approached from below, there may be enough upglide to give the impression of an intended lower pitch before the peak."⁴² One then gets a graded series: A, a form midway between A and CA, and CA.⁴³ The first sentence of utterance (15) may be the middle form, and is midway also in its implications between A and CA. CA is more emphatic than A, and "CA generally means 'the truth should have dawned on *you*'; A generally means 'the truth now dawns on me.'⁴⁴

The second sentence of utterance (15) is A+A, with accents on we and $neigh^-$, respectively, and with the usual implications of finality and assurance. The third sentence may be analyzed as consisting of a B+B+A contour for the first half and the same contour for the second half. Accents are on one, thing and -lieve, and on love, thy and $neigh^-$ for the first and second half, respectively. Concerning the use of the B+B+A contour, Bolinger states:

". . . relative height is a factor in suiting the B profile to certain more or less stereotyped situations and contexts. Having the B higher than the start of the A produces . . . a kind of synthesizing effect. This makes it suitable for routine combinations," which include frozen expressions, compounds, phrases with a high degree of fusion, and probably aphorisms like 'Love Thy Neighbor,' especially when they make a part of someone's utterance and when they are not independently cited, although aphorisms like *It's never too late to mend*, *Old soldiers never die*, *Pretty is as pretty does* readily take the contour B + B +C (i.e., the final A profile is replaced by a C profile) and these profiles tend to make terraced monotones. 47

The interjection Oh at the beginning of utterance (16) takes a B and suggests "enhancement, including emphasis and intensification." 48 "Oh also heightens enthusiasm, which is further augmented . . . by prolonging the interjection," 49 as it is done here with Sabrina's utterance. ". . . The normal intonation contour for these enhancing uses of oh is $B+\tilde{A}$, sometimes $B+\tilde{A}$, with oh a relatively high-pitched B. For greater emphasis A+A is common enough" 50 But Oh, so do I of utterance (16) takes the normal $B+\tilde{A}$ (the phrase so do I takes a B+A of its own, "but the tightly connected B+A segments can be viewed, in effect, as single A's" 51). At the same time, the sociability component of oh, which can be seen in the kind of affirming that it does: it does not assert, it agrees, 52 may be present. The speaker's impulse to be agreeable rather than to assert comes to the fore in the way oh collocates well, given a B+A contour, when affirmation is by way of reassuring the hearer. 53 So much for the use of oh and its collocation with what follows. Next, we will examine the contour used on the phrase so do I.

The phrase *so do I* takes B +A with accents on *so* and *I*, respectively. "B is most in evidence where things are predictable, where there is no need to single them out for separate attention. It may be that an expression is predictable . . . because some part or all of it has been previously introduced," ⁵⁴ as *do so* here has been previously introduced in David's utterance referring to believing in 'Love Thy Neighbor'. The second sentence *Come on*, *David* is addressed to Sabrina's dog, and it has the contour A+C, the C being applied to the vocative. ⁵⁵

NOTES

- 1. Dwight L. Bolinger, 'Intonation; Levels Versus Configurations' *Word*, Vol.7, No.3, Part 1 (1951) pp.199-210.
- 2. Dwight L. Bolinger, Intonation and its Parts (Stanford U.P., 1986), p.139.
 - The material quoted is enclosed in quotation marks only when it is a strictly direct quotation. When some modification of the original description is necessary due to its application to the material presently discussed, or when some interpretation of the original description by the present writer becomes necessary, the material referred to is not enclosed in quotation marks but only shown by a referential index, to distinguish it from a strictly direct quotation.
- 3. Robert P. Stockwell, 'Obituary Dwight L. Bolinger' Language, 69 (1993) p. 105.
- 4. Dwight L. Bolinger, Intonation and its Uses, 1989, Stanford U.P.
- 5. Bolinger, Intonation and its Parts, p. 152.

- 6. Ibid, p. 152.
- 7. Ibid., pp.152-53.
- 8.Ibid.
- 9. Ibid., p.341.
- 10.Ibid.
- 11. Ibid.
- 12. *Ibid*.,p.244.
- 13. *Ibid*., p.177.
- 14. Ibid., p.177.
- 15. *Ibid*., p. 182.
- 16. Ibid., p.162.
- 17. Bolinger, Intonation and its Uses, p. 134.
- 18. Ibid., p. 135.
- 19. Bolinger, Intonation and its Parts, p. 175.
- 20. Ibid., pp. 175-76.
- 21. Ibid., p.341.
- 22.Ibid.
- 23. Ibid., p.292.
- 24. Ibid., p.284.
- 25. Ibid., p.280.
- 26. *Ibid*., pp.173-74. Bolinger (1989 p.270), in discussing sentences that begin with the interjection *oh*, compares A+A and B+A expressing the most appropriate degree of concern versus lightheartedness.
- 27. Ibid., p.284.
- 28. Ibid., p.286.
- 29. Ibid., p.287.
- 30. *Ibid*., p.292.
- 31. Ibid., p.59.
- 32. Ibid., p.284.
- 33. Ibid., p.297.
- 34. Ibid., pp. 301-2.
- 35. Ibid., p.293, p.149, p.225.
- 36. Ibid., p.179.
- 37 . *Ibid* .
- 38. Bolinger, Intonation and its Uses, p.133.
- 39. Ibid., p.134.
- 40. Bolinger, Intonation and its Parts, p. 177.
- 41. Ibid., p.156.
- 42 . Ibid .
- $43.\,Ibid\ .$
- 44. Ibid., p.157.
- 45. Ibid., p.280.
- 46. *Ibid* .

- 47. Ibid., p.229.
- 48. Bolinger, Intonation and its Uses, p.269.
- 49. *Ibid*., p. 271.
- 50. *Ibid.*, p.272.
- 51. Bolinger, Intonation and its Parts, p.293.
- 52. Bolinger, Intonation and its Uses, p.272.
- 53. *Ibid*., pp. 272-73.
- 54. Bolinger, Intonation and its Parts, pp.166-67.
- $55.\mathit{Ibid}., pp.268ff.$