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Intonatıon in Azerbaıjanı Lıterary Language (Based on the Poetry of Narıman Hesenzade)

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ABSTRACT : The article investigates the functional and stylistic features of intonation in the Azerbaijani literary language. Intonation, as a primary prosodic component of speech, operates through the interplay of elements such as melody, stress, rhythm, tempo, and pause, contributing not only to the semantic structure of literary texts but also to their emotional-expressive and aesthetic impact. The study substantiates that intonation, beyond being a phonetic phenomenon, functions as an essential linguistic tool with communicative-pragmatic significance. In this respect, intonation serves to reveal the deeper layers of literary meaning, express the author's perspective, and convey the inner world of characters. The empirical basis of the study is the poetic language of the People's Poet Nariman HesenZade. His poems demonstrate various manifestations of intonation, including interrogative, exclamatory, declarative, and emotional rising-falling patterns. It is determined that the poet enriches the rhythmic structure of the poetic text, enhances the semantic weight of words, and establishes an emotional connection with the reader through intonation. Based on the analysis of HesenZade's poetry, it is confirmed that intonation acts as one of the principal means of stylistic individuality in poetic discourse and plays a crucial role in the recognition of the author's style. The findings indicate that intonation in the Azerbaijani literary language is not limited to the phonetic level; rather, it represents one of the primary mechanisms for meaning-making. It plays a significant role in the structural-semantic organization of literary texts, the determination of emotional tone, and the enhancement of aesthetic effect. This underscores the importance of further in-depth studies of intonation from a functional-pragmatic perspective in contemporary linguistics.

KEYWORDS: intonation, Azerbaijani literary language, stylistic features, pragmatic function, expressiveness, semantic structure.

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary linguistics, intonation is regarded as a complex linguistic phenomenon studied at the intersection of phonetics, stylistics, and poetics. Azerbaijani literary language, in turn, constitutes a rich source in which intonation manifests itself in particularly diverse and varied forms.

In literary texts, intonation performs not only an informative function but also carries an emotional and expressive load, conveying the author's aesthetic intention and ideological content to the reader. While in prose intonation is more closely associated with syntactic structure and narration, in poetry it is closely intertwined with rhythm and rhyme. The aim of this study is to identify the principal features, functions, and means of expression of intonation in Azerbaijani literary language based on the poetry of Nariman Hesenzade.

METHODOLOGY

The study employs a comprehensive and multifaceted methodological approach to investigate the functional and stylistic features of intonation in Azerbaijani literary language. The research is based on a synthesis of qualitative and, to a certain extent, quantitative methods of analysis. Selected poems by the People's Poet Nariman Hesenzade constitute the primary material of the study, with particular attention given to the frequency of intonational units, their contextual functions, and their stylistic load.

The descriptive method was used to explain the functional characteristics of intonation within poetic texts. Structural-semantic analysis was employed to examine the influence of intonation on the overall semantic structure of the text, while pragmatic analysis was used to determine its role in expressing communicative intentions. In addition, contextual analysis made it possible to reveal how intonational patterns vary across different poetic situations and produce distinct emotional nuances. The comparative method was applied to identify the stylistically distinctive features of intonation across different poems, as well as the features through which the poet's individual style is expressed. This methodological framework allows intonation to be examined not merely as a phonetic phenomenon, but as a complex linguistic unit that also performs semantic and aesthetic functions.

RESULTS

The analysis yielded the following findings:

1. Intonation plays a central role in shaping semantic and emotional meaning in literary texts.

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2. In poetry, intonation functions in close interaction with rhythmic structure.
3. Intonation serves as an important means of expressing the author's perspective.
4. The aesthetic impact of literary language is largely achieved through intonation.

Intonation in Contemporary Linguistic Research

Intonation has become one of the major areas of inquiry in contemporary linguistic research, particularly in phonetics, pragmatics, and psycholinguistics. Recent international studies demonstrate the multifaceted role of intonation in structuring meaning, expressing emotions, and shaping discourse.

One of the principal approaches in contemporary research views intonation as a meaning-bearing system. Pilar Prieto (2015) notes that intonation operates at the interface of prosody, semantics, and pragmatics, encoding layers of meaning that extend beyond lexical content. This approach is also supported by Daniel Goodhue (2018), who demonstrates that intonation significantly affects interpretation in communication and makes it possible to distinguish meanings such as affirmation, negation, and uncertainty.

From phonetic and cognitive perspectives, intonation is closely associated with speech comprehension and memory. Carlos Tang and colleagues (2017) demonstrate that tonal variations in intonation are actively encoded in the human brain, confirming the important role of prosodic features in language perception. Yi Xu (2005) notes that intonation plays an important role in marking specific information.

Recent studies have also extensively examined the pragmatic and discourse functions of intonation. Francisco Bermúdez (2023) demonstrates that intonation functions as an indicator of changes in pitch and of the speaker's stance. These findings are consistent with the views advanced by Bassiouney (2016), who argues that intonation is essential for the accurate interpretation of the speaker's intention and communicative acts.

Another important area of research on intonation concerns its social and stylistic dimensions. Nicholas Henriksen (2013) demonstrates that variation in intonation may reflect national and cultural identity as well as the context of speech. This indicates that intonation is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but also a sociolinguistic manifestation. Overall, existing research confirms that speech style has a significant influence on intonational patterns.

In recent years, comprehensive approaches integrating linguistics (phonetics and pragmatics), psychology (speech perception), sociology (the social functions of speech), and literary studies (literary style) have further broadened the scope of intonation research. For example, a study published in *PNAS* (Bögels & Torreira, 2025) demonstrates that multiple prosodic meanings may coexist simultaneously within the same intonational unit, revealing the complexity of prosodic encoding. Research in computational linguistics conducted by Zhou and Li (2025) demonstrates that prosodic features are also manifested in digital communication and contribute to the expression of emotion and discourse structure.

Experimental and corpus-based studies of intonation (Anum et al., 2024) confirm that intonation plays an important role in both speech perception and production and is significant for language acquisition. These findings are consistent with the theoretical approaches of scholars such as D. Robert Ladd (2008), who conceptualizes intonation as a structured phonological system. S. Hasanova (2025), who has investigated the intonational features of Azerbaijani poetic language, notes that communication is shaped not only by the lexical meanings of words but also, to a considerable extent, by the way they are articulated—that is, by their intonation—which affects both meaning and emotional nuance. Overall, research on intonation demonstrates that it is a complex and multifunctional phenomenon. It functions not only as a phonetic feature but also as a semantic, pragmatic, cognitive, and social resource. Contemporary studies confirm that intonation is essential to the construction and interpretation of meaning in both spoken and written discourse.

An analysis of international scholarly research demonstrates that intonation occupies a central position in contemporary linguistics. Its functions are not limited to acoustic features but extend to such important domains as meaning construction, emotional expression, the organization of speech, and social identity. From this perspective, further research into intonation, particularly in Azerbaijani literary language, represents both a promising and necessary direction for future scholarly inquiry.

The Role of Intonation in Nariman Hesenzade's Poetry

In Azerbaijani literary language, intonational elements perform both communicative and aesthetic functions.

Intonation is closely associated with melody, rhythm, stress, tempo, and pause and constitutes a higher-level phonetic dimension of language. This dimension extends beyond the boundaries of individual words and sentences, shaping the emotional and semantic structure of the text as a whole. The semantic function of intonation serves to clarify the meaning of a sentence:

Where are my dreams now, and where am I?
If I speak of memories... they form a heap.
If I ever reach my dream, I will be unhappy;
perhaps my happiness lies in never reaching it.
(Hesenzade, 2022, p. 7)

The emotional function of intonation conveys the speaker's feelings and emotional state:

My years have remained behind,
bloodshed and suffering remained behind.
I sowed, I reaped—what remained belongs to others;
my native lands—oh, hear my cry!
(Hesenzade, 2022, p. 5)

The enumerative intonation and emotionally heightened tone in these lines draw attention to the central idea. "Although intonation is primarily a matter of variation in pitch, it should be borne in mind that the functions attributed to intonation—for example, the expression of attitudes and emotions or the highlighting of aspects of grammatical structure—almost always involve accompanying variation in other prosodic features" (Feyzullayeva, 2023, p. 211).

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The stylistic function of intonation creates rhythmic and melodic effects in literary discourse. Melody is characterized by the rising and falling of the voice in speech. In Azerbaijani literary language, such rising and falling pitch patterns play a particularly important role in dialogues and emotionally charged descriptions. For example, changes in tone in sentences expressing questions or surprise clearly reveal differences in meaning:

I know they have hurt your feelings,
Forget it—for my sake, come here awhile.
Whatever they said to you at work, let them say it;
Now you are home—talk awhile, smile awhile.
(https://share.google/uxCpIx7psglBHlgU6)

Another intonational component that attracts particular attention in Nariman Hesenzade's language is stress. Examples from the poet's work demonstrate that, in literary texts, stress identifies the semantic center and directs the reader's attention toward the principal idea. Although stress in Azerbaijani generally falls on the final syllable, literary language may deviate from this pattern to create expressiveness. Moreover, a shift in the position of logical stress may violate the usual pattern whereby stress falls on the word immediately preceding the predicate and instead place emphasis on another sentence constituent—for example, on the predicate itself, as in the poem above—thereby making the author's intention more explicit.

Ancient history, be silent no longer—the nation has risen to its feet,
It has sworn an oath upon the land where our forefathers lived.
I record these days upon the page within my breast:
No longer "refugee," no longer "displaced"—O Homeland, never again!
(Hesenzade, 2022, p. 262)

Here, in the first line, the first word of the form of address expressed by a Type I attributive construction, and in the final line, the first word associated with the coordinated predicates attract logical stress, thereby lending greater clarity to the author's thought.

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It is well known that rhythm is one of the principal means of creating musicality in literary language. In poetry in particular, rhythm is closely connected with intonation and intensifies the emotional impact of the text. The rhythmic structure of Nariman Hesenzade's poems written in syllabic meter is complemented by intonation:

When I loved you, it was the season of spring,
What can I do? Let fate be struck blind.
My life was a bird's nest in your hands—
You yourself built it; you yourself brought it down.
(Hesenzade, 2010, p. 27)

Nariman Hesenzade creates poetic effect through rhythmic and melodic structure, directing the reader's attention to the aesthetic elements of the text. As a result, intonation not only expands the expressive potential of language but also conveys the author's tone of voice to the reader, making the text more vivid and impactful. In the poet's works, changes in tempo reflect the dynamics of events. A slow tempo is characteristic of works expressing sorrow, contemplation, and lyricism.

I loved you so that you would walk beside me
along life's hardest, narrowest roads.
I never said that, in the end, you should become a stone
in an ancient graveyard, by the roadside.
(Hesenzade, 2010, p. 27)

Nariman Hesenzade skillfully employs variations in tone to enhance the psychological depth and emotional richness of his ideas. A faster tempo can be observed in the poet's works expressing excitement, tension, and dramatic intensity:

My eyes were still upon the page,
my mind was caught up in all the sounds around me,
your voice seemed a little far away
when you called me (Hesenzade, 2022, p. 275).

The selected poetic texts confirm that emotions such as joy, sorrow, anger, and surprise are expressed more effectively through intonation. The same poetic line may convey different meanings when uttered with different intonational patterns. This feature creates multiple layers of meaning in a literary text.

Since intonation determines the emotional and expressive tone of a text, it plays an important role in shaping the author's style. Nariman Hesenzade's use of stress, pause, rhythm, and melody in his sentences evokes particular emotional responses in the reader. For example, short, abrupt sentences create a sense of tension and rapidity, whereas longer, rhythmic sentences produce a calmer and more contemplative atmosphere:

How many ignorant souls this world contains!
May neither grief nor sorrow dwell within your heart.
Even in the earth, precious gems are scarce:
a little gold, a little diamond, a little ruby. (https://share.google/uxCpIx7psglBHlgU6).

Based on examples from Nariman Hesenzade's poetry, intonation can be regarded as a stylistic device that expresses the author's aesthetic worldview in literary texts. Intonation contributes to the segmentation of the text and shapes its logical structure. It adds an individual quality to the poet's style and distinguishes it from that of other authors. For example, the intonation employed by two poets describing the same event may create entirely different impressions on the reader. Such differences are evident both in the way the language sounds and in the placement of semantic emphasis. Thus, intonation is not merely a structural element of language but also functions as a stylistic feature reflecting the author's artistic individuality and distinctive modes of feeling and thought. Intonation often plays a crucial role in revealing implicit meanings. Stylistic devices such as irony, sarcasm, and insinuation cannot be fully understood without intonation.

DISCUSSION

The study demonstrates that intonation performs multifaceted functions in Azerbaijani literary language and operates at different levels. First, intonation contributes to the formation of semantic structure. The same syntactic construction can convey different meanings through different intonational patterns. This feature allows for multiple interpretations of a literary text. Second, intonation functions as an emotional-expressive device. Nariman Hesenzade employs different intonational patterns to convey feelings and emotions more effectively. Third, intonation performs a pragmatic function by expressing the speaker's intention, attitude, and evaluation. This plays an important role in creating vivid and dynamic literary discourse. Accordingly, contemporary approaches regard intonation not merely as a phonetic phenomenon but as a complex communicative system. From this perspective, the study of intonation in Azerbaijani literary language based on the works of Nariman Hesenzade is of both theoretical and practical significance.

CONCLUSION

In Azerbaijani literary language, intonation is one of the most important means of linguistic expression and functions as a complex system integrating the semantic, emotional, and aesthetic dimensions of language. Through intonation, Nariman Hesenzade's poetry acquires greater vividness, establishes an emotional connection with the reader, and conveys the author's ideas more effectively.

Thus, the study of intonation in literary language constitutes an important area of Azerbaijani linguistics and opens up further possibilities for future research.

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