AN EXPLORATION OF INTONATION USED BY TEACHERS AND ITS AFFECT ON STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT.

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INTRODUCTION
The impact of the voice and intonation has been widely studied (Perry, Schonwetter and Struther, 1993; Peretz, 2009; and Frenzel and Weidenbecher, 2011) across a variety of subject areas, including theatre, music, business, education and politics. Intonation used in the correct manner can engage the listener into what is being said, provoking thoughts, opinions, emotions, feelings and interest. The importance of this skill as a teacher is vital, as it will help the students stay engaged in the subject. Previous studies have shown that student’s engagement is a key component to academic achievements, and that disengaged students become disruptive and are less likely to aspire to higher educational goals (Kaplan, Peck and Kaplan, 1967). There are several factors which could affect a student’s engagement, including their personal motivation, home life, health and other aspects of education. However positive teaching behaviours could have an effect on student engagement and achievement.

This piece of work aims to explore how the use of intonation by teachers can affect student’s engagement and achievement in education.

LITERATURE REVIEW
There are several definitions of intonation in English language teaching. (Levis, 1999), suggests two in his paper on intonation in theory and practice. The first by Allen, (1971) who states intonation includes rhythm and melody, which is produced by tonal height and depth with stress, volume and length of pauses. However Ladd, (1996) suggests intonation is a suprasegmental feature of language, referring to syllables that are accentuated or not accentuated. This research found the term intonation was used in the literature, which was a low or high pitch voice over a medium pitched voice. However a low pitch voice was rated more positively.

Critics of the two studies are that they used audio equipment to manipulate the speakers voice to give the pitch required, to produce a continuous monotone voice. This could impact the study as the results may not show the same finding if they were to use speakers in their normal voice. Despite this the studies have shown how the use of intonation could have a affect upon their students.

Allen’s, (1971) definition of intonation complies more significantly with teaching, which share similarities with public speaking or stage performance, where the speaker puts on a front; 1939 to engage their audience. Moreover the use of intonation in many studies is placed under the terms teacher/ instructor expressiveness or behaviour (Perry and Magnusson, 1987; Perry, Schonwetter and Struther, 1993; Frenzel et al, 2009) and this research the teacher’s use of eye contact, hand and arm gestures, humour and facial expression under these titles.

Perry and Magnusson, (1987) researched the effects of expressive and unexpressive and instruction and how it affects student’s perceived control and success (control being toward work and educational demands, and success related to academic achievement). The results of both studies show that more expressive instruction does enhance student’s control and success. Moreover, Perry, (2010), (2010), (2010) and Kaplan, (1997) investigated this concept further by looking at four different groups of students (Figure.1) and how expressive and unexpressive instruction affected each group. Their findings show that high perceived control and success students achieved the best under both instructional styles. An interesting finding was that under both conditions low perceived control and success students out performed the perceived high success/ low control, and the perceived low success/ high control students. They also had higher achievement under the expressive instruction condition although this was not significant.

A limitation of these studies is the lack of clarity of which part of the teaching behaviour is having the most significant impact on the student’s academic achievement or engagement between the two conditions. Whereas in Holub, (2010) and Frenzel and Weidenbecher, (2011) studies it was clear intonation was causing an effect.

The definition set out by Allen, (1971), incorporates the everyday use of intonation. People naturally change pitch level to show if it is a statement, question or emotions they are feeling. People also naturally increase pause length for volume to cause effect. When teaching it is a powerful tool allowing the teacher to express enthusiasm, excitement or the new idea. Holub and Weidenbecher (2007) study of the monotone interpretation received a negative assessment on performance by the students.

DISCUSSION
The interest in this subject area came about during the placement year whilst observing the engagement of second year students on a BTEC Adventure Education course. Prior knowledge of the students academic achievements from it’s first year was obtained. A few students were in line for top grades and the rest for at least a Merit Merit in the BTEC grading system. During their first year they had an enthusiastic and expressive teacher (Teacher A), and during the second year a seemingly less enthusiastic and expressive teacher (Teacher B).

A comparison of the six students on the course has been made to Perry, Schonwetter and Struther, (1993) model (Figure.1). Two of the students related to the perceived high control and success group, two to the intermediate group, and two students more with the perceived high control and low success group. The academic achievement and engagement of the students did in general also relate to their findings, with it being higher during more expressive teaching than non-expressive. However a difference was that one of the students in the perceived high control and success group had a significant drop in engagement and academic achievement by the end of the second year, as their attendance and grades fell.

The aim of this study was to see how use of intonation by teachers can affect student’s engagement and achievement. In education, it shows that intonation does have a positive effect on student’s academic achievement and engagement, and also their retention of information. However Perry and Magnusson (1987) and Perry, Schonwetter and Struther, (1993) studies also suggest that other teaching behaviours affect students.

The study also highlights the importance of intonation and the impact it can have, not only on teachers teaching students, but on anyone who is speaking in front of a group. For instructors in the adventure setting the choice of intonation used can enhance the message that is trying to be delivered. This could be raising voice volume to warn of danger, increase pause length when telling a story about a mythological beast that lives in the mountains or changing pitch variation when giving a safety brief.

REFERENCES