Intonation Practice

In this conversation, the tonic syllable in each tone unit has been underlined. The intonation pattern is also given:

↘ falling, ↘ ⾏ fall-rising, ⾏ rising.

EXERCISE - Listen carefully to the recording INT, following the intonation marks given.

PRACTICE - Say the conversation paying close attention to stress and intonation. Ask your teacher to correct you if possible.

A | ↘ ⾏ Phillip’s coming back on Wednesday. |
B | ↘ Is he? | That’s ↘ great, | I haven’t ‘seen him for ↘ ages |
A | ↘ No, | I think the ↘ last time | was ‘New ↘ Year, | ↘ wasn’t it? |
B | Yes, it ↘ must have been | because we went to the ↘ fireworks |
 | on Hampstead ↘ Heath. | do you ↘ remember? |
A | Oh ↘ yes. | ↘ Anyway, | he’s got an ↘ interview | for a ↘ job | in the ↘ city. |
B | ↘ Oh, | so he’s thinking of moving back to ↘ London? |
A | He ↘ must be. |
B | That’d be ↘ great, | ↘ wouldn’t it? |
A | ↘ Yes, | we’ll have to ↘ convince him to come ↘ back. |

Follow-up

Try to answer the following questions, the answers are on the following page.

1. Why is a fall-rise pattern used in ‘Phillip’s coming back on Wednesday’ when the sentence would appear to be new information?
2. Explain why ‘wasn’t it?’ (line 3) uses rising, whereas ‘wouldn’t it?’ (line 9) uses falling intonation.
3. Can you find three compounds in the conversation. Explain the stress in each.
4. In the yes/no questions ‘do you remember?’ and ‘so he’s thinking of moving back to London?’ a falling pattern is used. How would it change the meaning if one of the rising patterns was used instead?
Answers

1. It is an implicational fall-rise. The speaker is showing the listener that there is an implication in what he is saying. We expect that there is more information to come.

2. - | wasn’t it | is a rising tag, it shows uncertainty and requires an answer.

   - | wouldn’t it | is a falling tag, it shows that the speaker is not really asking the listener, it is a statement.

3. ‘fireworks’, ‘New Year’ & ‘Hampstead Heath’ are compounds. ‘Fireworks’ is first element stress, a standard compound. ‘Hampstead Heath’ and ‘New Year’ are both double stressed compounds because they are names.

4. Falling intonation is used to give a feeling of openness. By using rising or fall-rising intonation in ‘do you remember’, the speaker may give the impression that she expects the listener to remember, or that she is surprised that he cannot remember. The same explanation can be given for ‘So he’s thinking of moving back to London?’. Here a rising tone could show surprise or suspicion, whereas a falling tone gives us an open meaning, where no previous knowledge is affecting the speaker’s attitude.