The Minor Third Pattern - Summary Sheet

Prosodic Properties

1. A sharp pitch drop,
2. Between two syllables,
3. Each syllable flat in pitch,
4. Each syllable loud, clear, and lengthened,
5. Not too ending too low in pitch.

General Meaning

- Indicate to the interlocutor that he should pay attention, and respond right away

Context of use

- When there is a social norm that licenses you to invoke a specific response

Common use scenarios

- In games, to initiate a response sequence (knock-knock, nyah-nyah ...)
- In greetings and partings, to cue a symmetric response (hello, bye-bye ...)
- When you have the turn, to cue the other person to wait while you do something (hold on, just a sec....)
- When someone else is speaking, to make them stop (excuse me ...)
- When you need to catch someone’s attention (hey there, over here, excuse me, Johnny ...)
- When you need someone to move a little so you can pass (excuse me ...)
- etc.

References

- The Prosodic Patterns of English Conversation website: http://www.cs.utep.edu/nigel/patterns/
- The Minor-Third Pattern video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XndORkgACuc

Acknowledgements

- Ricky A. Garcia, The University of Texas at El Paso

The Prosodic Patterns of English Conversation, Pattern #1

Nigel G. Ward, February 2014