

Gösta Bruce and Eva Gårding  
A PROSODIC TYPOLOGY FOR SWEDISH DIALECTS

Background

A typology for dialectal manifestations of Swedish accents based on Meyer's classical collection of bisyllabics in statement intonation (1937) was proposed by Gårding (1970). Four categories were singled out depending on the number and location of pitch peaks. Later, in a new prosodically more complex material, covering the four dialect categories, it was shown how the pitch patterns could be generated by a set of rules representing both word and sentence prosody (Gårding and Lindblad 1973). This model was modified and elaborated by Bruce (1977) who made systematic use of the notion of focus (sentence accent) in an analysis of Stockholm Swedish.

Goal

In this paper (a report of work sponsored by the Humanistic Research Council) we compare pitch contours of speakers representing the four dialect types in a material in which the following variables have been controlled: word accents, sentence accent and sentence intonation (statement / question). The dialects will be called East (2A, prototype Stockholm), West (2B, prototype Göteborg), South (1A, prototype Malmö) and Central (1B, prototype Dalarna). The labels 1A etc. refer to Gårding's original classification and map (1973). In a somewhat abstract form our results are as follows. (At present only the statements have been analysed.)

Results

Word accents. All accents can be described as High Lows with a difference in timing between accent I and accent II. In all four dialects the High of accent I precedes that of accent II, but the absolute timing of the accents varies according to dialect. East has an early timing for both accents closely followed by West. South comes later and Central latest.

Sentence accent. The so-called double-peaked accent II of East and West is the result of a High manifesting sentence accent and separated from the word accent. For East the High is independent of position, for West the High has a separate manifestation only in sentence final position. In other positions it is superimposed on the first accent High following after focus. In Central the sentence accent gives mainly an Extra High and in South an Extra Low to the word accent.

Model. In its present state the generative model for the tonal prosody of our dialects looks as follows. Sentence intonation is accounted for by a baseline-topline construction common to all the dialects. The topline is a straight line connecting successive maxima of a phrase. The baseline connecting successive minima is determined correspondingly. The word and sentence accent commands insert Highs and Lows with reference to the baseline-topline. From our results follows that observed pitch contours typical of statements in the four dialect areas, can be generated by one common sentence intonation command, similar accent commands with different timings of the Highs and different sentence accent commands. In this way, the well known dialectal variation in Swedish intonation can be described as resulting primarily from a difference in sentence accent distribution and manifestation.