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MODELS FOR THE ASSIGNMENT AND INTERPRETATION OF PROSODY IN SWEDISH

Two models will be presented, one showing how the speaker assigns the prosodic features of quantity, stress and tonal accent in accordance to the grammatical structure of the utterance, the other how the listener uses these prosodic features for the identification of the grammatical structure.

The Grammar of Prosody

The repertoire of grammatical features communicated by prosody is a small one. It consists of the following categories with opposing features: stem and suffix morphemes, compound words and idioms (as opposed to unmarked syntagms), content words (vs. function words and particles), rheme and theme function (topicalization), and emphasis. This restricted number of categories is, moreover, communicated only incompletely: not consistently, often optionally and always in a allusive manner. Prosody has a subsidiary communicative function; the overwhelming part of the contents is channelled by the sequences of segments.

Scandinavian Particularities

Essential for the understanding of the communicative function of prosody in Swedish (as well as in several other Nordic languages of Germanic origin) are the facts that (1) tonal accent signals a syntactic relation to the subsequent elements of the sentence (stem-to-suffix relationship, compounding) while (2) stress signals a syntactic relation to the preceding elements of the sentence (particle-to-content-word relationship or idiomatization).

The Models for Speaking and Listening

The models are represented as flow parts. They can be regarded as algorithms for the language users with choices, decisions and processes. The computer reference is, however, purely metaphorical. These models can be traced by hand. They can serve as basis for more comprehensive models (e.g. including sentence intonation) or, after an elaboration of details, hypothetical models for experiments. They may also be starting-points for a discussion on a terminological and conceptual integration of the numerous, partly analogous systems for prosodic description of Swedish which are the results of the research during the last years.

