

Albert Lange Fliflet

ABOUT THE RELATIONS BETWEEN CONSONANT LENGTH
AND WORD STRUCTURE IN NORWEGIAN AND SWEDISH

Fundamental statements

Hearing and kinesthetics, confirmed by acoustic measurements, make clear that in N(orwegian) as well as in S(wedish) Standard Pronunciation, single voiceless stops and fricatives, and sporadically voiced stops too, may be articulated with striking length and intensity. This applies to the position after a long vowel (/V:/), after a diphthong, and after a short vowel (/V/) + a liquid or a nasal, in stressed syllables. After a /V:/ my lists provide examples of greater, in part much greater, consonantal than vocalic length. In S this /V:/ may sometimes even be heard as having only the duration - though not the lax tension - of a /V/: "flyta" > "flytta", "visa" > "vissa". This I have not observed in N. - After a sonorant consonant I have found a N occurrence of a stop (t) as much as 2 1/2 times as long as the sonorant (n).

Restrictions

1. The phenomenon described applies - to the extent mentioned - only to simple words, not to compounds. This implies that the place of the "syllable boundary" sounds far more clearly marked in e.g. "på-tår", "an-tal(1)" than in "våte, våta", "kante, kanta".
2. The geographically conditioned variations are remarkable; many N and S dialect areas lack the phenomenon. For instance, two N areas (one Southern and one Midland) of the three that have preserved the ancient quantity in one of the two combinatory types /V̥C/ and /V:C/ before a vowel, seem to exhibit no morphologically conditioned pronunciation diversity of the kind discussed here; both types, e.g. "åte" and "påtår", manifest themselves as more or less identical with the corresponding Standard N compound type.

Conclusions

1. The phonemically unsatisfactory popular S and N rule "short consonant after a long vowel" is not adequate phonetically either.
2. The traditional S and N assumption that the first of two consonants succeeding a short stressed vowel is longer than the second, and primarily stretchable, has no general validity. In fact, the length relations of the consonants involved are determined by their phonetic qualities.