

THE PREDICTABILITY OF SWEDISH WORD
STRESS (AND WORD ACCENT)

4,000 multisyllabic Swedish words taken in unbroken sequence from a Swedish-English school dictionary were assigned stress patterns by means of a supralinguistic technique in which

- rules and units are primarily based on man and only in the second place on language,
- two main rules, each with one by-rule, oppose one another up to the point where production of a well-formed immediate sub-unit is feasible,
- rules are basic and causative as well as descriptive,
- immediate sub-units connect with rules in a cause-and-effect pattern,
- immediate sub-units are organized in matrices,
- the features in such isu matrices represent every level concerned.

Word-stress assignment is based on the stress-carrier isu. This unit is defined as a syllable with initial and final boundaries based on the judgment of the listener (perceptual safety margin). Misleading communication is blocked by a Formative Rule (main rule II), while main rule I, the Maximum Contrast Rule, tends to assign the word stress that will yield a maximum of word-internal contrast between stresses.

The stress-carrier matrix contains the following features relevant to stress assignment:

- associated meaning (semantic and/or functional),
- stress bandwidth (outside which one or more other features will change),
- segment sequence (variable within perceptual safety limits),
- segment quality (paradigmatic dimension including vowel quality).

In the Stockholm dialect and at the slower rate of speech employed during the development of a word, an internal active- \emptyset stress carrier appears in +grave words. This accounts for the strong sentence-type stresses present in such words.

In this investigation, the impractical 4-degree stress scale was replaced by a fully operational 6 + \emptyset scale.

Predictability for word-stress pattern was found to be 98 %. Exceptions were status loan words and words subjected to historical interference.