

Ebba Selenius

STUDIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE 2-ACCENT SYSTEM IN FINLAND-SWEDISH

Problem

What traces of Sweden's 2-accent system are left in the Finland-Swedish of coastal areas between Stockholm and Helsinki (Helsingfors)?

Methods

The same methods of testing were used in Stockholm, East Åboland (Kimito), West Nyland and Helsinki. Informants were partly allowed to talk freely, partly asked to give one-word answers to questions unknown to them beforehand. One-word accentuation (the same words for all informants) was specially investigated instrumentally and with groups of listeners.

Results

In West Nyland the 2-accent system is intact and phonematic. Pitch contours are of the same type found in Central Swedish: one-peaked accent 1, two-peaked accent 2, and the distribution of accent is the same in all essentials. Resemblances between word- and phrase-contours, use of a fixed accent pattern in phrases, word-groups, compounds, simple di- and trisyllables (particularly with accent 2) were striking.

In East Åboland the same pitch contours appear as in West Nyland, but are confused by speakers. Acc. 2 has become generalized at the expense of acc. 1, and the contour of acc. 2 is often distorted: dominant second pitch-peak, often not until the last segment, even in compounds.

In Helsinki there is only one word-accent, which I confirmed by Kloster Jensen's self-testing method. The single pitch-peak (followed by a marked fall and a low trailing pitch) is placed earlier than in any other Swedish-speaking area (a generalized acc. 2 contour which has lost its second peak?) The unusually unstable accentuation, speakers' attitudes, emotions and complexes, are of socio- and psycholinguistic interest.