

ON TONAL ACCENT IN HUNGARIAN SWEDISH

Problem area

The Swedish tonal accent is difficult to master, both in the perception and in the production of Swedish speech, for immigrants to Sweden whose native language is Hungarian (as well as for numerous other immigrant groups). Neutralization, random accentuation, and over-use of accent 2 are frequent symptoms in speech production. The present paper deals with some attempts at describing this area of difficulty, drawing on ideas and material developed by Gösta Bruce (Swedish word accents in sentence perspective, Lund 1977).

Procedures

- (1) 8 Hungarian immigrants in Sweden (Stockholm/Uppsala area) and 7 Hungarian students of Swedish in Budapest took the test described in Bruce 1977:111 ff. (synthetic versions of the phrase INGA malmer, which is interpretable either as a woman's name or as 'no ores', depending on the tonal contour).
- (2) 10 Hungarian students of Swedish in Budapest produced four utterances containing INGA malmer and inga MALMER (emphasis and tonal contours varied) before and after a short period of practice. The number of acceptable attempts and the number and type of deviations was tabulated.
- (3) 7 immigrants in Sweden produced six samples of the same sentences as in (2), but without a practice session, spontaneously and in imitation. Evaluation as in (2).
- (4) Tape-cuttings from sample productions and imitations selected from 4 of the speakers in (3) were evaluated by 7 Stockholm speakers, 7 non-Stockholm speakers, and 7 Hungarian students of Swedish in Budapest (= the group in (1)).

Results

Hungarian listeners generally fail to distinguish between tonal accents out of focus in (1). There is a weak but negative correlation between Bruce's Swedish group and Hungarian immigrants in the case of Bruce's slow gradient stimuli. "Extreme" stimuli provide a weak, positive correlation.

In the speech of both Hungarian students and immigrants, accent 1 is more acceptable than accent 2, and emphasis on INGA is easier than emphasis on MALMER in (2) and (3). No effects of the practice session in (2) were noticeable, nor were there any clear differences between production and imitation in (3).

Judging a Hungarian speaker's intention in (4) proved to be a difficult task, for Swedish and Hungarian judges alike.