

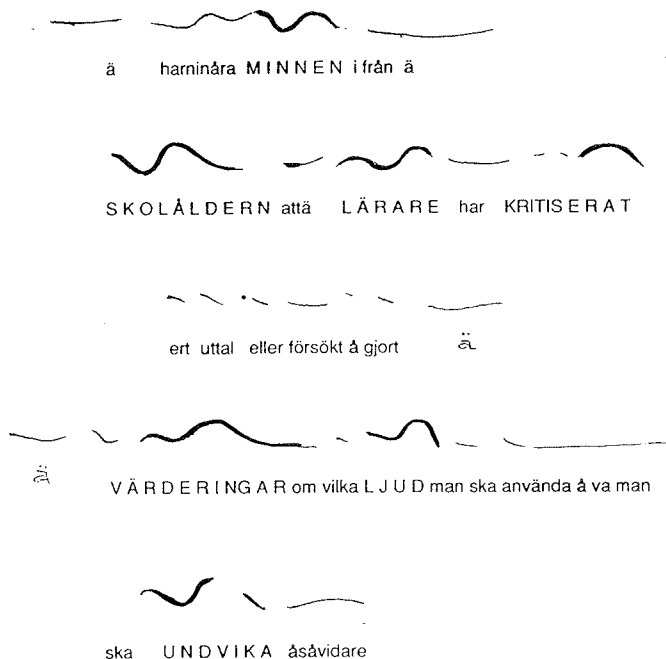
FOCAL DEFORMATIONS OF STOCKHOLM ACCENT PATTERNS AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

Eva Gårding

For Bengt Loman

In this paper I will show how focus signals not only the most important part of the message but that it can also signal modality and have other functions.

My introductory example is a passage from a recording of a spontaneous conversation which was moderated by Bengt Loman at the Studio of the Malmö branch of Radio Sweden in the early sixties. I was asked to analyse it prosodically for the project *Svenskt Talspråk* (see Gårding 1964, 1967 and Loman 1967). The text of this passage and the fundamental frequency curves are presented below.



The curves are copied from mingograms. At the time I called the contours marked by thick lines central stresses because they marked points that were central to the message without producing the impression of contrast.

My auditive and acoustic analysis of the spontaneous Stockholm material showed that there were two types of manifestations of central stresses (focal accents), both rising but with different

ranges. One of them covered half of the speaker's range and the other the whole range.

To understand this phenomenon, a special recording was made in which the main informant was asked to make a series of imitations of his own focal accents in one and the same carrier phrase. He did very well with the less marked focus manifestation but had a lot of resistance towards the strong one (Gårding 1967). I shall return to these difficulties later.

It is only recently that I have understood that such accentuations can express modality. To support this statement I have other examples from the same material, many observations that I have made listening to the radio, in particular to a program with many interviews called *Kanalen* 'the channel', a renewed analysis of my old material (Fig.1) and an analysis of a new material (Fig.2).

To begin with I will comment on the term *deformation* which I have used in the title of my talk. I regard the focal accents, like the expressions of other intonational features at the phrase and sentence level as deformations of certain basic contours of the accents.

What are these basic contours? I went through my own Stockholm material and the material that Gösta Bruce had presented in his dissertation (1977) to find common characteristics of the accents in different contexts. It became apparent that the distinctive features could only be defined in a negative way, i.e. A1 does not fall and A2 does not rise in the accented syllable of polysyllabic words.

To make the notion of deformation meaningful (which I think it must be particularly for the understanding of how accentual and tonal patterns are recognized in connected speech) I decided to regard the citation form as basic and the influence of phrase and sentence intonation as deformations of this form.

Figure 1 shows the citation forms of the two accents and below each of them examples of the two different deformations which have arisen from the two different manifestations of focal accents.

Let us look at the superposed curves of A2, *värden* 'values' and A1, *världen* 'the world', singled out from a carrier phrase *det gäller -- här* 'we are for -- here' in statement intonation with a falling terminal contour. The curves represent average values of five repetitions. In the curves local maxima and minima have been enclosed by grids according to a rule of thumb, described earlier (Gårding 1984).

It is easy to see for A2 that the highs and lows have roughly retained their positions relative to the segments although all the absolute values have changed. These changes can be captured in an economical way by means of the grid as an expression of the intonation of the focussed part.

The grid lines also show that the stronger degree of focus manifestation is accompanied by a stronger inclination of the grid. Note that the speaker, in order to achieve this effect has lowered the low. Another possibility would have been to raise the last high. That is a strategy used by two of my new informants. A fourth informant retains the same degree of inclination but uses a wider grid i.e. a larger amplitude for the pitch movements of the more marked focus.

The corresponding focus manifestations of A1 are more influenced by the global contour. The strong focus lies in a

rising part of the contour with its highest point in the second syllable. In contrast, the highest point of the weak focus occurs in the first syllable. Correspondingly, the first part of the strong focus is curved upwards and that of the weak focus is curved downwards. In Bruce's investigation only strong focus was taken into account (1977).

After this description of two different deformations in focus let me now pass on to their communicative functions. The spontaneous material has many instances of the stronger focus manifestation appearing in questions and in different discourse situations that for the sake of simplicity we may call emphasis or contrast.

To test this view I conducted a new experiment with different informants. The new speakers, all from Stockholm, were given a list of questions modeled on questions I had heard in the radio interviews with a sequence of focussed parts and answers to these questions with a comparable set of foci. There were also requests among the test sentences and reassuring answers to these requests (not treated here).

Figure 3 shows some examples from this investigation which started recently. I have used the beginning of the focussed words as line-up points for the pitch contours of the focussed parts. (Tempo variations and pitch differences outside of focus have been disregarded.)

The figure supports the contention that we have traces of the modal function all through the focus domain. A steep topline inclination is used in a question rather than in a statement. For this informant the ironic question has the steepest inclination, but for my other informants the lowest one.

I would like to sum up my observations about the communicative functions of focus and the focus domain in the following way. It expresses weight and brings out the lexical-distinctive function. It has a grouping and demarcative function and as we have seen in this paper it can express modality and emotion. To a certain extent this can also be said about the accent domains but it is only in focus that all the functions cooccur. To paraphrase a famous definition in segmental phonology: Focus is a bundle of intonational functions.

Among the functions of intonation we usually also count the extra linguistic ones, e.g. the power of intonation to reflect dialect. For this function I give priority to the focus domain. What happens to pitch in focus is perhaps the most powerful tonal dialect marker, the true *ostinato* of the dialect and the first feature to be copied in conscious imitation. Scandians living in Stockholm seem to take after the local *ostinato* unconsciously. Conversely the Stockholm *ostinato* tends to be suppressed for Stockholm speakers living in Skåne for a lengthy period of time.

The difficulties that my first informant had to produce marked focus in controlled speech have come into new light thanks to comments from my new speakers. A sequence with repeated strongly marked foci does not belong to the Stockholm prestige dialect. Rather, it seems to be typical of a dialect (Ekenssnack) spoken in some southern areas of Stockholm and something of a prosodic shibboleth.

References

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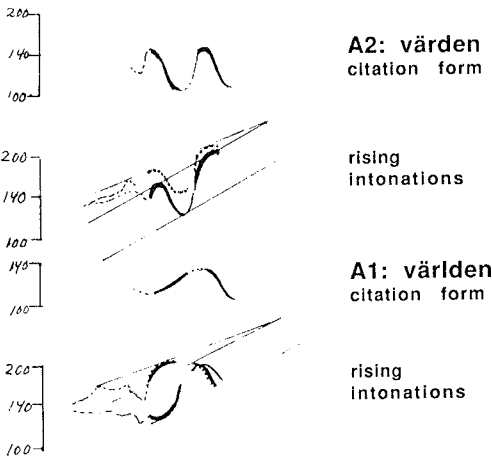


Fig.1 Strong _____ and weak focus.



Fig. 2 Focal deformations in different modes

(Interviewer to politician): _____
 Har du nån ANING om vad man ska GÖRA för att få ORDNING på det här?
 (Question with suspicion): _ . _ . _ . _ .
 Har du nån ANING om vad man ska GÖRÄ för att få ORDNING på det här?
 (Politician, assuring):
 Jag har en ANING om vad jag ska GÖRA för att få ORDNING på det här.