

Swedish focal accent – emphasized! Or: A linguistic vs. a para-linguistic type of focal peak raising?

Gilbert Ambrazaitis, Lund University

Thanks to Gösta Bruce's seminal dissertation (1977), we understand that Stockholm Swedish exhibits two phonological prominence levels: the word accent level and the focal accent level. The focal accent is understood as a high tone (H-) which is added to the word accent pattern of the word in focus, resulting in the tonal configurations (H+)L* H- (for accent I) and H*+L H- (accent II). What happens if further emphasis is added to a focused word? In this study, a short phrase (*i november* 'in November', Accent I) was elicited in five conditions, representing a variety of discourse contexts, in which emphasis is put on the target word for different reasons: new information (baseline), correction, question, exclamation, and surprised feedback. The expectation was to find, simply, an increase in range of the focal F0 rise for the four emphatic conditions, as compared to the baseline, or possibly some delay of the focal accent peak. The original incitement was to test whether and how Swedish (Accent I) would behave differently from German in these conditions. As an unexpected result, however, Swedish speakers applied two different strategies of peak raising, which go along with differently shaped rises: 'extending' (= faster rise) and 'shifting' (= slower rise). Furthermore, the two strategies tend to be used to distinguish 'linguistic' (correction, question: shifting) from 'para-linguistic' (exclamation, surprise: extending) types of emphasis. This finding could imply a further phonological device of sentence intonation in Stockholm Swedish, used to raise pitch for certain linguistic purposes.