

A Dialect-Geographical Survey of Pitch Accents in Finland Swedish

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The Swedish dialects of Finland differ widely in their intonational phonologies. In this paper, I propose an intonational typology for Finland Swedish dialects, based on acoustic analysis of spontaneous narratives from 29 dialects (Harling-Kranck 1998 and accompanying recordings). Through the typology, one can begin reconstructing the historical transition from Central Swedish-like to Finnish-like intonational patterns.

In recordings from speakers born around 1900 (Harling-Kranck 1998), the West Nyland dialects have contrastive word accents and a L*+H sentence-level prominence tone, similar to Stockholm Swedish (Bruce 1977). L*+H is also used, with geographically varying phonetic realizations, in Österbotten, Åboland, and Åland, which lack an accent contrast. Some dialects seem to use two prominence tones, L*+H and a Finnish-like H*+L. Meanwhile, those dialects in closest contact with Finnish (Central and East Nyland) use H*+L almost exclusively.

Drawing on phonetic and socio-geographical evidence, I reconstruct from the synchronic variation a pathway of intonational change: L*+H is the original, conservative prominence tone; it is supplemented with and gradually replaced by H*+L under contact with Finnish and with the Finnish-influenced prestige Swedish lects spoken in Helsinki and Turku.

References

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