

The phonology of Norwegian

Topic 2: Pitch Accent

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June 26–29, 2006
Phonology Fest, Indiana University

- (1) These notes and my comments on pitch accent in Norwegian draw heavily on references such as Gussenhoven (2004: chapter 11), Kristoffersen (2000, 2006); Lahiri et al. (2005); Lorentz (1995); Morén (2005a,b); Riad (2003) and references therein.

1 The phenomenon

- (2) Norwegian has two different tones that can appear on stressed syllables, usually referred to as *Accent 1* and *Accent 2*, or in the structuralist literature as *toneme 1* and *toneme 2*.
- (3) There is dialectal variation regarding their realization, and indeed some dialects are claimed to have no contrast (e.g. around—but not in—Bergen, as well as some areas of Finnmark and Troms). The basic contrast is between ‘low tone dialects’ (Eastern Norwegian) and ‘high tone dialects’ (Western and Northern Norwegian). These terms refer to the nature of the pitch accent which is linked to the stressed syllable in Accent 1 words.
- (4) Surface declarative pronunciations in tonal terms (for the ‘low tone’, Eastern Nor. varieties):
 - a. A1: LH
 - b. A2: HLH
- (5) Are there minimal pairs? (What does *minimal pair* mean?)
 - a. A1: *bønder* ‘farmers’, A2: *bønner* ‘beans, prayers’
 - b. A1: *Rana* ‘country name’, A2: *rana* ‘robbed’
 - c. A1: *fjæra* ‘feather.the’, A2: *fjæra* ‘low tide’ (indef: *fjær* vs. *fjære*)
 - d. A1: *bygget* ‘building.the’, A2: *bygge* ‘to build’

- (6) The textbook line on the historical development of a contrast is that Old Norse had one profile for monosyllabic words (Accent 1) and another for disyllabic forms (Accent 2). This tidy distinction was blurred by at least two developments, which led to Accent 1 on disyllables.
- (7) One of these is the disyllabification of words which allegedly were monosyllabic in Old Norse, such as *vápn* ‘weapon’ or *ákr* ‘field’. Modern Norwegian *våpen* and *åker* have Accent 1, allegedly preserving their historical Accent while becoming disyllabic.
- What is the definition of syllabicity making such a story plausible?
- (8) The second claimed factor in the encroachment of Accent 1 onto disyllabic forms is the emergence of the suffixed definite article. When the stem is monosyllabic, the addition of the definite suffix gives a disyllable, but the pitch accent isn’t changed.

2 Analytical issues

- (9)
- a. Can word level pitch-accent be separated from the phrasal intonational contours?
 - b. Are there two basic tones to be specified?
 - c. How should they be represented?
 - d. Can we just specify one and take the other as a default (i.e. a ‘privative’ analysis)? If so, which?
 - e. Can we argue that one is more marked than the other?
 - f. Is there a possible analysis which doesn’t require specifying any, but which instead derives the difference from something else, e.g. foot structure?

3 Distribution

- (10) Monosyllables always surface with A1.
- (11) From Kristoffersen (2006), for polysyllabic words. ‘X’ marks the dominant pattern, but in each row, there are words in the ‘other’ category.

	Accent 1	Accent 2
SIMPLEX WORDS		
Ending in schwa		X
Ending in full vowel	X	
Ending in syllabic sonorant	X	
COMPLEX WORDS		
Inflection		X
Derivation		X
Compounds		X

- (12) Disyllables can have either A1 or A2, but monomorphemic disyllables almost always have A2. Possible contrasts arise only in a few situations.
- One of these is with roots which could be analyzed as monovocalic, i.e. with final obstruent+sonorant clusters, or final sonorant+coronal sonorant clusters. There are patterns, e.g. 90% of such nouns are A1; adjectives are divided about 50/50, but final [n] always gives A2 while final [r] always gives A1.
 - Trochaic V-final words with final schwa: A2 (except for *høyre, venstre, aksje, ordre, kaffe* and various foreign names)
 - Trochaic V-final words with something other than schwa: A1 (except for many names, e.g. *Eva, Hanna, Mona, Lisa, Ola, etc.*)
 - Words with final V+C: A2 on names (*Erik, Håkon, Bodil, Gudrun*) but otherwise A1, especially with loans (*krokus, faktor*).
- (13) Morphological category seems to matter only for monosyllabic stems. Disyllables keep the accent of the stem. For the monosyllables, the definite suffix leaves A1, while the indefinite plural and the infinitive give A2.
- A2 inducing: Indef. pl., Infinitive
 - Neutral: Def. sg.
 - A1 inducing: ?nothing
- (14) Compounds
- Two structures for compounds. febr + natt vs. sommer natt (K: 264)

4 Markedness

- (15) Arguments that A2 is more marked than A1:
- The appearance of A2 is more restricted, since it can't appear on monosyllabic words.
 - The tonal melody of A2 is more complex: HLH vs. LH
- (16) Arguments that A1 is more marked than A2:
- Recent disyllabic loans tend to get A2 (and to the extent that loans reveal the unmarked, A2 is then the unmarked pattern).

5 Analyses

- (17) A shared analytical move: Remove the final H from the word-level phenomena and treat it as a boundary tone, leaving ...
- A1: L
 - A2: HL
 - With this strategy, words are marked with either A1 or A2 as lexical tones, and the final H is part of the phrasal intonational contour marking

the boundary of an utterance.

- (18) Not a shared move: Remove the final LH from each, leaving ...
- a. A1: nothing
 - b. A2: lexically linked H
 - c. A ‘privativity hypothesis’: A2 is lexically marked with H; A1 has no lexical marking. Riad (2003)
 - d. Here, only A2 words have a lexical marking. When the intonational L*H is linked, it wants to go to a stressed syllable which has no tone.
 - e. Critique: Why can’t monosyllables have A2? Why specify H on a stressed syllable when there is a universal tendency in that direction anyway (de Lacy)? This treats the ‘unmarked’ as ‘marked’.
- (19) Can the grammar compel the appearance of the initial H in A2? If so, why doesn’t it happen with monosyllables? If there’s a story about this, how do we get either A1 or A2 in polysyllabic forms?

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