Abstract: Poster presentation

**Syllable duration and comprehensibility: The case of Finnish-speaking upper secondary school students’ L2 Swedish**

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Prosodic features have been considered to have the biggest importance for comprehensibility in second language speech (e.g. Field 2005). For comprehensibility of L2 Swedish, stress and rhythm have been specified to be the most crucial (e.g. Bannert 2004). In particular, the contrast between stressed and unstressed syllables by lengthening the stressed syllable helps the listener to perceive rhythm and, further, recognize speech units (e.g. Thorén 2013). Stress is thus closely linked with comprehensibility. Nevertheless, prosody in general has been dismissed in language education in Finland (Tergujeff 2013, Iivonen & Tella 2009).

In this poster, I will present a study on syllable durations in L1 Finnish speakers’ L2 Swedish. The materials consisted of Swedish read-aloud utterances by 9 Finnish-speaking upper secondary school students. Comprehensibility of the utterances had been judged by L1 listeners in a previous study (Heinonen, forthcoming). In the present study, the utterances represented different comprehensibility levels, based on the ratings. Durations in L2 utterances were compared with identical utterances produced by 4 native Finland-Swedish and 4 Sweden-Swedish speakers.

The aim of this study was to find out how syllable durations are realized in Finnish speakers’ L2 Swedish, how L2 durations deviate from L1 pronunciation, and whether the deviances can be linked with the comprehensibility ratings. The results show that durations produced by L1 Finnish speakers differ from L1 Swedish speakers. Instead of actual duration of the stressed syllable the contrast between stressed and unstressed syllables seems to relate to comprehensibility ratings.

**References**


