

Intelligibility of Swedish word accents produced by L2-speakers with tonal and non-tonal L1s – a case study

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This contribution presents a case study on how well speakers of languages of a different tonal typology manage to produce the two tonal word accents in L2-Swedish. Some previous studies suggest that it is an advantage for the speaker if their L1 is a tone language, when discriminating between different tones in another tone language, while others show that this may not necessarily be the case. Accuracy is studied with the help of identification tests performed by listeners with Swedish as their L1. The results for the L2-speakers were compared with results obtained from material produced by L1-speakers of Swedish. It is revealed that no adequate distinction was made between the tone accents by any of the three groups of L2-speakers. However, on a scale of degree of acceptability, the L2-speakers with tonal features in their L1 – Vietnamese, a tone language and Somali, a language with tonal accents – performed better than L1-speakers of Farsi, an intonation language. The two tonal patterns are both obscured to the same extent by L1-speakers of Somali. The speakers of L1-Vietnamese, on the other hand, produced patterns that more frequently were identified as one of the Swedish word accents. For the L1-speakers of Farsi one speaker produced intonational patterns identified as one of the Swedish two tonal accents, whereas the other speaker produced intonational patterns identified as the remaining Swedish tonal accent.