

Swedish Pronunciation

Luciano Canepari – © 2017

1. Swedish (Germ., IE), unlike Norwegian, exhibits narrow diphthongs ([V̥V]) for ‘long’ vowels, while it has some marginal phonemic diphthongs, with a number of more or less different realizations (as shown in the fourth vocogram, where the xenophoneme /æ/ [ɛ, ə] is given, as well), mostly used in new or old loanwords (mainly with Latin and Greek lexemes) or in some proper names, like *Gäutajaur* [ˈgɛʉta.jɔ̥r].

In fact, the frequent sequence /ɛj̥/ [ɛj̥] is not a diphthong (neither are /aj̥, ɔj̥/ [aj̥, ɔj̥], occurring in exclamations): *nej* /ˈnɛj̥/ [ˈnɛj̥]; in the vocogram we have also indicated the four vowel taxophones conditioned by a following /r/: /ɛ, ɛɛ, øø, œ/ [ɛ, ɛɛ, øø, œ].

Notice that ‘long *a*’ is /ɔɔ/ [ɔɔ]: *Karl, Lars* /ˈkɔɔrɪ, ˈlɔɔrs/ [ˈkɦɔɔ, ˈlɔɔs]. The actual realizations of /ii, yy, œœ, uu/ [i̯i̯, y̯y̯, œ̯œ̯, u̯u̯], with their second elements so tense and close as to cross the top margin of the vocogram are also worth noticing. They sometimes have a slight friction noise as in the semi-constrictive conoids [j̥, y̥, œ̥, w̥]: [i̯j̥, y̯y̥, œ̯œ̯, u̯w̯] (colloquially, also [-j̥, -i; -y̯, -y̯; -œ̯, -y̯; -w̯, -u]).

In Stockholm, /e, ɛɛ/ (not followed by /r/) become /ɛ, ɛɛ/. Again, especially in the Stockholm area, a paraphonic use of general nasality is typical. Besides, in non-Germanic words, we find the rarer [œ̯#].

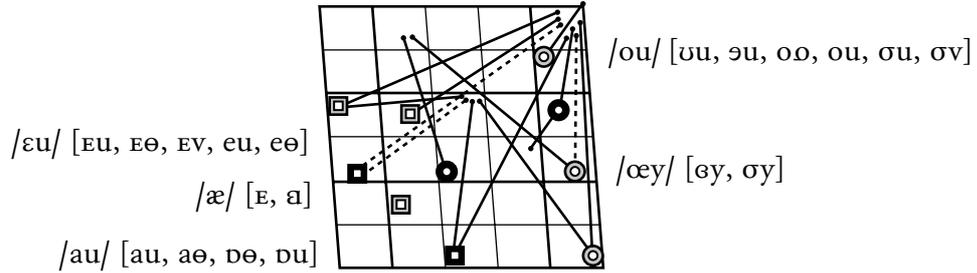
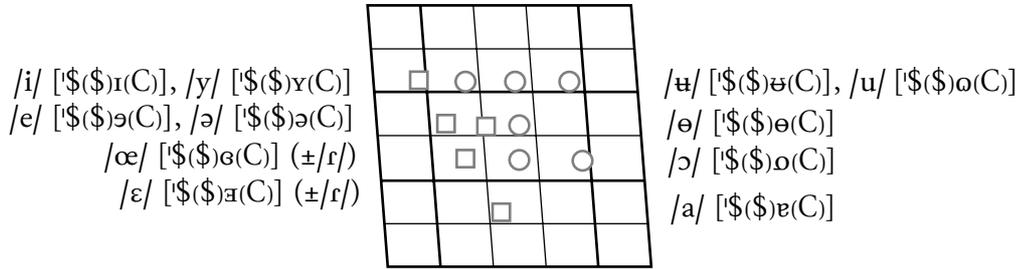
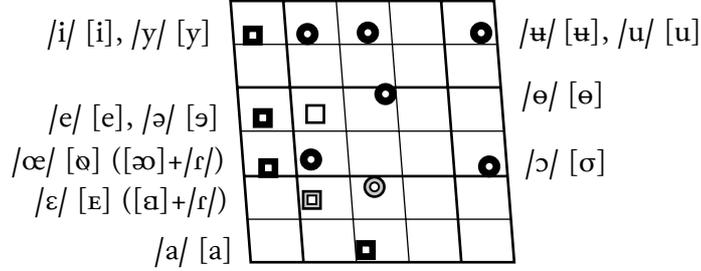
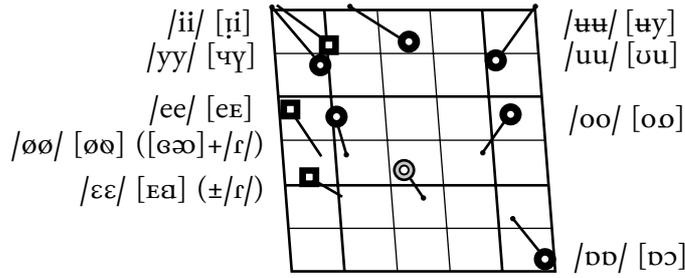
The third vocogram shows the typical reduction of unstressed short vowels occurring after stressed syllables, both in checked and unchecked syllables.

2. As for the *consonants*, let us observe that, for Swedish, the postalveolar series, [ŋ, t̪, d̪, ʂ, ʃ], is best considered as the realization of the phonemic sequences /r/ + /n, t, d, s, l/, rather than as self-standing phonemes ‘/ŋ, t̪, d̪, ʂ, ʃ’. As in Norwegian, we also find that /p, t, k/ (not preceded by /s/) are ‘aspirated’; and /k#, g#/ [ç, ʝ].

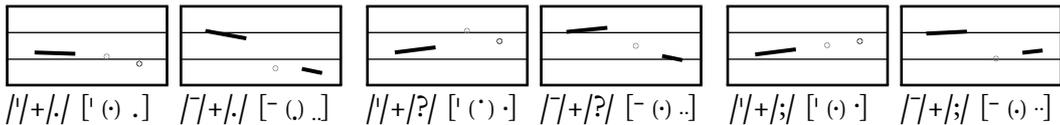
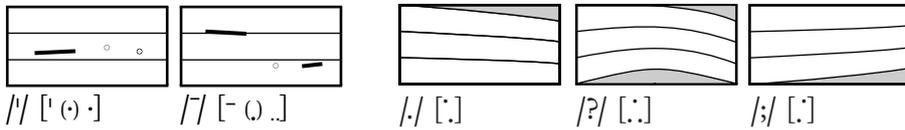
Typically Swedish, instead, is the realization of /r/ [r, r#], which generally becomes [z, z#] (even [ç#]) in Stockholm. The most typical consonantal articulation of Swedish is /ʃ/ [ʃ]: *stjärt* /ˈʃɛrt/ [ˈʃɛrt], with eight variants, more or less regionally marked, [ʃ, ʂ, ʃ̥, ʃ̥̥, ʃ̥̥̥, ʃ̥̥̥̥, ʃ̥̥̥̥̥, ʃ̥̥̥̥̥̥] (which we show for their peculiarity), including the change into [ʂ]. In addition, in quick speech /h/ can become [ɦ] between vowels..

3. Like Norwegian, Swedish still preserves word *tonemes*, so that we can find minimal pairs such as: *biten* /ˈbiitən/ [ˈb̥i̯i̯.tən] ‘the bit’ and /ˈbiitən/ [ˈb̥i̯i̯.tən] ‘(she/he/it) bit’; *tomten* /ˈtɔmtən/ [ˈtɦɔm.tən] ‘the ground’ and /ˈtɔmtən/ [ˈtɦɔm.tən] ‘the goblin’.

Let us notice that with the marked toneme, /ˈ/, secondary prominences do not follow the contour given in the tonogram, but that of compounds: *någonstans* /ˈnoo.gən.stans/ [ˈnoo.gən.stans, -gən-] ‘somewhere’, *anklaga* /ˈanklɔɔga/ [ˈaŋ.kɦlɔɔ.ga] ‘to accuse’.



m	[ɱ]	n	[ɳ]	[p]	ŋ
p b	t d	[t̪ d̪]	[c ɟ]	k g	
f v ([f̥])	s	[s̺] ([s̺])	ʃ ([ʃ])	ç ʝ ([ç]) ([ç̺])	h [h]
	[l]	r-l	[ʀ]		



Let us end with some useful examples: *Stockholm* /ˈstɔkˌhɔlm/ [-stɔk.hɔlm], *Göteborg* /jœtəˈbœrj/ [jœtəˈbœrj̥], *Magnus* /ˈmaɳnəs/ [ˈmaɳ.nəs], *Malmberg* /ˈmalmˌbœrj/ [-malm.bœrj̥], *blomma* /ˈbluma/ [-blum.ma] (with /VCV/ [C^c], short unstressed vowels).

In addition to the two tonemes, at the end of the figure, also the three marked

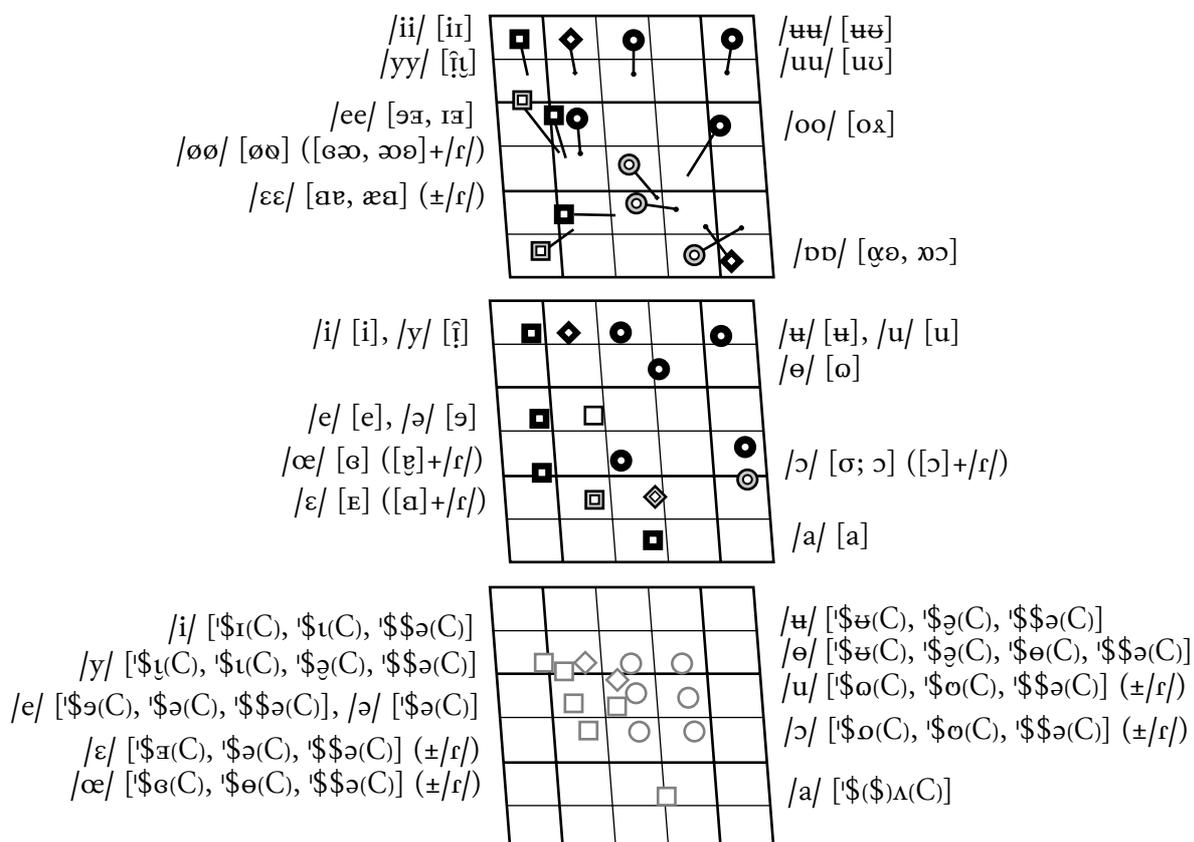
tunes are shown, which typically form the *intonation* patterns of neutral Swedish. Of course, the two tonemes interact with the tunes, producing some modifications, as shown.

4. *Spelling peculiarities*. Vowels: *e* /ee, ε, ə/, *ei* /εi/, *o* /u(u), oo, ɔ/, *u* /ʉʉ, ɵ/, *y* /y(y)/, *å* /oo, ɔ/, *ä* /ε(ε)/, *ö* /øø, œ/. Consonants: *c* /k, sʏ/, *ch* /ʃ/, *g* /g, jʏ/, *h* /h/, *#hj* /j/, *k* /k, çʏ/, *kj* /ç/, *lg#* /lj/, *ng* /ŋ/, *qu* /kv/, *rg#* /rj/, *s* /s/, *sj* /ʃ/, *sk* /sk, ʃʏ/, *skj* /ʃ/, *stj* /ʃ/, *tj* /ç/, *v* /v/, *z* /s/.

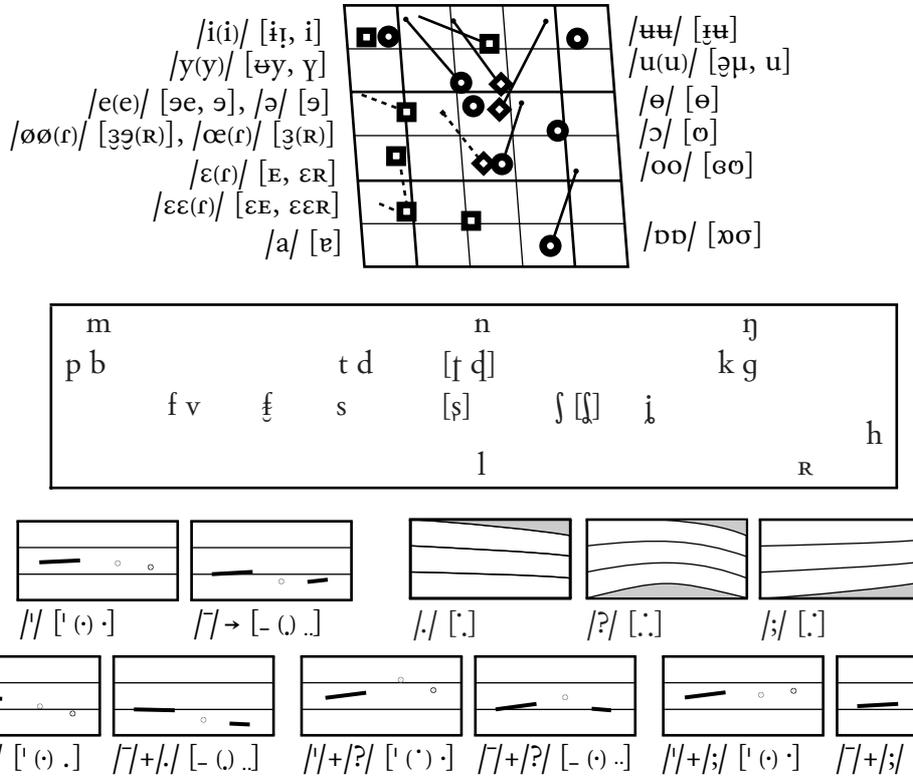
5. The vocalic realizations typical of the *mediatic* accent of Swedish are shown in the following figure. The third vocogram shows the typical reduction of unstressed short vowels occurring after stressed syllables.

By carefully comparing this vocogram with the corresponding one of the neutral accent, let us notice that, in mediatic pronunciation, their reduction is stronger, with a number of possible neutralizations, which are most evident in more distant syllables from the stressed one. In fact, in such cases, only /ə/ [ə] and /a/ [ʌ] can actually occur.

6. *Mediatic* Swedish can also present ‘preaspiration’ of medial and final [p, t, t̥, c, k], which may be ‘stronger’ [ɣ] (velar semiconstrictive) or milder [h] (laryngeal approximant); it can also be homorganic [ɸ, ʋ, ç, ɸ, ɸ] (approximants) and faint [ɸ, ʋ, ç, ɸ, ɸ] (semi-approximants). In addition, it can cause that preceding sonants and vowels are partially devoiced, [ʌ̥, ʏ̥], including some vowel lengthening [V̥V̥].



7. In Scania (in the South of Sweden) we find: /ç, ʃ, r/ [ʃ, ʂ, R], with [ʌC], in place of [ɲ, t̪, d̪, ʂ, l]; /ʃ/ can be [ʃ, ʂ]. Besides, [tʰ, dʰ, ʂʰ, Rʰ], /VCV/ [CVC], /r/ → /r/ [-]. All other characteristics are shown in the following figure, including the necessary tonograms.



8. About 5% of Finns are native speakers of Swedish, which is as follows: with no ‘aspiration’, no postalveolar taxophones, but [rn; rt, rd, rs, rʂ]; /ʃ/ [ʃ] for both /ʃ, ç/; /tʃ/ for both *tj* and *k* before front vowels, /ç/ for *dj*; final /k, g, r/ [c, ɣ; r]; [V-C:V] for [VC-CV]; *no toneme*, but normal stress on proper syllables.

Its *intonation* patterns are shown at the end of the following figure.

