

L2 exercises for East-Norwegian word accents and intonation

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The Computer-Assisted Listening and Speaking Tutor [1] is a platform for pronunciation training originally based on Ville [2]. Besides vocabulary exercises, the platform also offers minimal pair exercises for learning individual sounds and sound clusters. For each learner, these exercises are selected from a larger set of exercises based on a contrastive analysis of the learner's native language (L1) and the target language (L2). At this point, only Norwegian is available as a target language, but recordings for British English have been made and will be implemented soon.

CALST is presently being extended with exercises for learning word accent and intonation in Southeast Norwegian. Since no unified descriptive framework is available for tone and intonation (cf. workshop on Developing an International Prosodic Alphabet (IprA) within the AM Framework, ICPH2015), it is not possible to select exercises based on a contrastive analysis. We have therefore created exercises on the basis of experience with difficulties foreigners have when they learn Norwegian. If a framework for the contrastive analysis of tone and intonation becomes available, it can be implemented in our platform in a fairly straightforward manner.

There are two different word accents in Norwegian, called accent 1 and 2, which are realised in Southeast Norwegian as an L tone and as an HL tone sequence, respectively, both followed by an H phrase boundary tone [3,4]. These word accents are only differentiated in words where the accented syllable is followed by another syllable in the same word; otherwise, the word is realized with accent 1. As in the exercises for individual sounds, listening exercises for word accent make use of minimal pairs. CALST offers two types of exercises. In ABX exercises, the learner first hears a word with accent 1, then a word with accent 2, followed by another realisation of one of the words; the learner's task is to judge whether the last word is identical to the first or the second word. In a second type of exercises (identification exercises), the learner hears only one word and decides whether it has accent 1 or accent 2; unlike ABX exercises, this exercise does not allow the listener to compare with previous realisations stored in acoustic memory. In addition to listening exercises, pronunciation exercises which allow the learner to compare her pronunciation of the lexical tones with that of the tutor.

Intonation exercises build on the word accent exercises by using longer utterances. The first intonation exercise makes the learner aware that the last tone in the word accent exercises described above is a phrase boundary tone, even though its realisation affects the perception of prominence on the accented syllable. The user learns that the phrase boundary tone is always realised at the accent phrase boundary, regardless of its distance from the accented syllable. In addition, exercises for the realisation of focus initially, medially and finally in sentences with identical phonemic content are available. Focus exercises require the learner to match the realized intonation patterns to questions which can elicit them, and vice versa.

References

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