

Testing predictions – studying word accents and morphology in Swedish

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Preliminary results will be reported from a study which investigated how Central Swedish word accents are used in on-line speech processing to predict upcoming information. Participants listened to sentences and judged whether the target noun was singular (suffix associated with Accent 1) or plural (suffix associated with Accent 2). Bruce (1998) suggested that Accent 2 can be used to aid morphological identification in word processing and previous studies have found evidence that word accents have a predictive function (Roll, Horne & Lindgren 2010; Roll, Söderström & Horne 2013). Like previous studies, the present study included a mismatch condition in which the word accent did not match the suffix. Furthermore, the study was the first to include a condition in which suffixes were replaced by a coughing noise. This condition was used in order to be able to analyse the word accent effects in isolation, to probe whether participants could restore the missing suffix based on word accent information alone, and to see whether there is a difference between Accent 1 and 2 in this respect. Furthermore, the study used pseudo-words in order to avoid e.g. frequency effects. It also allows for a more detailed analysis of the association between word accents and morphology, independently of any lexical meaning on the stem. Both behavioural (response time) and neurophysiological (EEG/ERP) measures were used.