

Klaske van Leyden

Prosodic Characteristics of Orkney and Shetland Dialects

An Experimental Approach

The dialects presently spoken in Orkney and Shetland - north of mainland Scotland - are conservative varieties of Lowland Scots with a substantial Scandinavian substratum. Shetland, the more northerly of the two island groups, appears to have retained its Scandinavian substratum to a greater degree than has Orkney. Although there is considerable variance between the two dialects, not only at lexical and syntactic levels but also with respect to segmental phonology and syllable structure, by far the most immediately striking differences concern intonation. Impressionistically, one may say that Orkney intonation is characterised by a very distinctive 'lilting' pattern, while that of Shetland is more compressed, having a preponderance of low, level tunes.

This study describes a series of production and perception experiments carried out with native speakers from Orkney and Shetland, and using speakers of Scottish Standard English to provide a control condition. The investigations had the following aims: (1) to examine the relationship between vowel and final-consonant duration in monosyllabic words; (2) to explore the role of intonation versus segmental information in the identification of the two varieties; (3) to conduct an acoustic investigation of the melodic and temporal differences between the two dialects and (4) to investigate the perceptual relevance of the prosodic parameters that were identified in the acoustic investigation. In addition, an attempt has been made to determine whether the observed prosodic characteristics can be better ascribed to the Scandinavian substratum or rather to Scottish influences.

This research will be of interest not only to phoneticians and phonologists working in the field of intonation but also to dialectologists and historical linguists.

—
: LOT
—
Netherlands
Graduate
School of
Linguistics

ISBN 90-76864-57-8

UL
CL
Universiteit Leiden
Centre for Linguistics

Klaske van Leyden

Prosodic Characteristics of Orkney and Shetland Dialects

An Experimental Approach



—
: LOT
—
Netherlands
Graduate
School of
Linguistics

Landelijke Onderzoekschool Taalwetenschap