

**Ida Toivonen (Carleton University): Apocope of infinitival -a in Åland dialects of Swedish**

**Abstract:**

In the dialects of Swedish spoken on Åland, the infinitival ending -a is often dropped; e.g. *kasta* ~ *kast* (to throw), *göra* ~ *gör* (to do), *hoppa* ~ *hopp* (to jump). A similar apocope also occurs in many other dialects of Swedish, especially the Swedish spoken on the Finnish mainland (Ahlbäck 1945, Tandefelt 1983, Harling-Kranck 1998, Lafage 2006). When the apocope would result in an /l/, /r/ or /n/ preceded by a consonant, a vowel /E/ or /ae/ is inserted before the /n/ /r/ or /l/: *ramla* ~ *rammel* (to fall), *ändra* ~ *änder* (to change), *hamna* ~ *hammen* (to end up).

The infinitival ending is not always apocopated, and this paper examines the variation in apocope on Åland. The variation is governed by a host of factors. One factor is geographic. The dialect that has been most carefully examined in this study is the one spoken in the village of Svartsmara on the main island. Here, the apocope follows a different pattern than in some other Åland locations; see, for example, the dialect spoken on Brändö in the Åland archipelago (Sundberg 1993). The variation is also governed by linguistic factors. For example, the /-a/ cannot be dropped at the end of clauses. This linguistic constraint holds in all Åland dialects, as far as I am aware. Finally, the variation is governed by sociolinguistic factors such as age and register. Interestingly, some young speakers who generally drop the /-a/ avoid apocope in words where apocope would lead to vowel epenthesis. The data presented in this paper are drawn from Svenska Litteratursällskapet i Finland's "Spara talet" recordings, as well as from an on-going project studying Swedish on Åland. The study has found infinitival /-a/ apocope to be a useful variable in the study of Åland dialects and linguistic variation within those dialects.