

## *Benim* – a new first-person pronoun in Swedish

Nathan J Young

The Turkish loanword *benim* has become a first-person (1.PERS) honorific pronoun in Stockholm's multiethnic urban argot. The word has a self-aggrandizing indexicality, which can be intensified with a pronominal illeism (e.g., 1b).

Knowledge about the innovation is sparse. Kotsinas and Doggelito (2004) define *benim* as *I/me (jag/mig)*. In an earlier analysis I identified *benim* as especially frequent in Swedish slang (Young 2018: 181), but a more thorough account of its pragmatic and social function is lacking.

Data come from a corpus of hip hop songs and YouTube vlogs from 2012 to 2019 (>320 000 words). Over 450 exemplars of *benim* were examined. Subject (1a, 1b) and object forms (2) are common. Possessive forms (3) are few.

- (1a) *benim kommer göra shorba*  
I come to make mess  
'I will make a mess.'
- (1b) *benim, han e boss*  
I he is boss  
'I'm the boss.'
- (2) *du har benim i din mun*  
You have me in your mouth  
'You gossip about me regularly.'
- (3) *benims nia, den e ej latch*  
My niner is it is not nice  
'My niner is mean.'

*Benim* resembles the 1.PERS use of *man* in Multicultural London English (Cheshire 2013) and the Japanese 1.PERS masculine honorific pronoun *ore*, the use of which elevates the speaker and deprecates the interlocutor (*other-deprecatory*, Miyazaki 2004).

Interestingly, illeisms as in (1b) occur almost exclusively with a COPULA. In other words, I found very few constructions like (4) in the corpus. Such 'double subjects', however, are not particularly marked in Swedish because left-dislocated topicalization like in (3) and (5) is highly frequent (Johannessen 2014). Therefore, I suggest that the historical development of the illeism in (1b) may have been encouraged by the frequent occurrence of constructions like (3) and (5).

- (4) *\*benim, hon kommer göra shorba*  
I she come to make mess  
'I will make a mess.'
- (5) *Johan, han är bra komisk* (Johannessen 2014: 1)  
Johan he is rather funny  
'Johan is rather funny.'

### References

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