

Abstract

Johnson, Rakel, *Skrivaren och språket. Skriftspråksbruk, kasus och vokaler i medeltidsbrev på svenska.* (The Scribe and the Language. Literacy, case and vowels in the medieval charters in Swedish.) Dissertation in Swedish. Institutionen för svenska språket, Göteborgs universitet. (Department of Swedish Language, University of Göteborg.)

This thesis is inspired by recent research in literacy and focuses on how literacy effects the usage of case and vowels (in word-final syllables) in medieval charters written in Swedish. The theoretical framework for this study is post-structuralist theory. In accordance with that theory I assume that distinctions in a language are not generally distinctions between single, maximally distinct forms, but between clusters of forms. My interpretation of the results of the study is that the written language in the charters is the result of a more or less conscious construction of a Swedish written language, and to the schooling of new scribes.

The study of case shows that homography between case forms was common and that the realisations of one function could be very diversified. The clusters realising case are sensitive to primary syntactic functions, different semantic roles and individual prepositions. During the beginning of the period distinct nominative as well as dative forms are most frequent. The study of the use of vowels indicates that during the 45 years investigated, great changes took place. The investigation of vowels also indicates that the spelling changed in the different chancelleries in accordance with the diachronic tendency in the whole corpus and therefore the new convention of spelling seems to have been introduced gradually and simultaneously all over Sweden.

Keywords: Swedish, Middle Ages, charters, literacy, scribe, morphology, case, inflection, vowels.

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Distribution:
Institutionen för svenska språket
Box 200
405 30 Göteborg

ISBN 91-87850-22-2

Sättning: Gerhard Svedberg
Tryck: Kompendiet Aidla Trading AB, Göteborg 2003