

Göteborgsstudier i nordisk språkvetenskap 50

# Adjektivkongruens i estlandssvenska

En studie i förändring och variation

*(English Summary)*

Ida Västerdal

Akademisk avhandling för filosofie doktorsexamen i nordiska språk,  
som med tillstånd av Humanistiska fakultetens dekanus vid Göteborgs universitet  
kommer att försvaras offentligt fredagen den 5 juni 2026, klockan 13.15  
i Jubileumssalen (J222), Humanisten, Renströmsgatan 6, Göteborg.



GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET

TITLE: Adjective agreement in Estonia-Swedish. A study in change and variation  
SWEDISH TITLE: Adjektivkongruens i estlandssvenska. En studie i förändring och variation  
LANGUAGE: Swedish (English summary)  
AUTHOR: Ida Västerdal

## Abstract

This aim of this dissertation is to provide a systematic description of adjective inflection in the Estonia-Swedish dialects on the basis of new and more comprehensive empirical data. Departing from Old Swedish, the study examines the diachronic development of adjective inflection in these dialects. The study also discusses the Estonia-Swedish adjective inflection in relation to previous accounts of gender agreement and noun phrase structure in closely related varieties.

The study is carried out by examining adjective inflection in texts written in nine different Estonia-Swedish dialects. In addition, interviews with the last dialect speakers are conducted.

The results reveal several types of variation. The geographical variation is pronounced: only two of the nine dialects investigated exhibit identical inflectional paradigms. However, the syntactic variation is of particular interest. All but two dialects wholly or partially display distinct adjectival forms depending on whether the adjective occurs in attributive or predicative position.

The agreement patterns identified in the survey indicate that the Estonia-Swedish dialects are typologically distinctive. First, several dialects exhibit overt inflection in predicative position but not in attributive position. Second, two dialects employ different inflectional suffixes in attributive and predicative positions.

The underlying structure of the noun phrase in Estonia-Swedish appears not to align with that of Standard Swedish. The dissertation discusses what the adjective inflectional system reveals about the internal structure of the noun phrase in one of the Estonia-Swedish dialects, adopting a Minimalist framework. A central question in this discussion is whether attributive and predicative adjectives can be analyzed within a unified structural representation.

The inflectional suffixes of adjectives in Estonia-Swedish bear formal similarities to the Old Swedish adjectival endings for nominative and accusative case. The crucial difference, however, is that these suffixes do not encode case in Estonia-Swedish, but rather grammatical gender. In some of the dialects, a pattern emerges whereby the Old Swedish nominative endings correspond to gender endings in predicative position, while the Old Swedish accusative endings correspond to the gender endings in attributive position. A possible explanation for this development is discussed in terms of exaptation, i.e. the process whereby functionally redundant linguistic material is reassigned a new linguistic function.

KEYWORDS: Estonia-Swedish, dialect, morphology, morphosyntax, gender, agreement, language change, exaptation

© Ida Västerdal, 2026

DISTRIBUTION: Institutionen för svenska, flerspråkighet och språkteknologi

Box 200

405 30 Göteborg

PORTRÄTTFOTO: Anders Åkerström

OMSLAGSBILD: Asim-Backgrounds, Adobe Stock

ISSN: 1652-3105

ISBN: 978-91-8115-665-2 (tryck)

ISBN: 978-91-8115-666-9 (online)

LÄNK TILL E-PUBLICERING: <http://hdl.handle.net/2077/91105>

SÄTTNING: Jocke Wester

TRYCKNING: Stema Specialtryck AB