Annan-orientering i masskommunicerande brevtexter.
En tentativ modell.

av

Johanna Ledin

Akademisk avhandling

Avhandling för filosofie doktorsexamen i svenska språket,
som kommer att försvaras offentligt
fredagen den 17 november 2017 kl. 13.15,
Hörsal P2, Prismahuset, Örebro universitet

Opponent: Professor Mats Landqvist
Södertörns högskola
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Abstract


The aim of this thesis is to operationalise the concept of other-orientation. Based on an explorative approach, a tentative model for analysing the marks of other-orientation is developed. The model consists of four grammatical and pragmatic categories in language: deixis, speech acts, modality, and evaluative words. The process of finding out the significant marks in each category and develop a model has been an interplay between a thorough linguistic coding, an interpretative, evaluating reading, and abductive reasoning in a step-by-step process.

Theoretically the study is based on dialogism. From this perspective, the very fact that human nature is social indicates that other-orientation is a constituent component in every communicative act. For that reason, the challenge has not been to prove that other-orientation exists in texts, but to explore how a text is made interactive, contextual, dynamic and other-oriented by means of grammatical and pragmatic selectives such as words, phrases, and clauses.

The data consists of eight personally addressed mass communication letters about everyday matters. Each text has its model reader in a readers’ collective. Consequently the language in the texts is construed to form a dialogue between an in-text writer and reader that share the same context, although the distance between the real writer and reader is crucial.

One result of the study is the model as such, another the analyses in which the functions of other-orientation related to the four categories are presented. Moreover, the linguistic analyses show differences between texts and readers’ collectives. Texts aimed at large anonymous collectives generally feature a direct address singular you, a high rate of positive evaluative words, more responsive speech acts, and some more potential modality. In texts aimed at a small familiar collective, there is an “I” or a “we” addressing a collective “you”. There are not as many evaluative words but more assertions without any evaluation or modality.

When it comes to other-orientation, the categories of deixis and speech acts tend to be of greater importance compared to modality and evaluative words. It makes a difference if you address a reader with a singular or collective “you” and if you choose to interact with responsive speech acts or informative statements. These contrast ways to address a reader are of importance for the construction of genre and say a great deal about other-orientation in texts.

Keywords: other-orientation, tentative model, grammar, pragmatics, coding, dialogical theories, interaction, mass communication, letters, model reader

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