

Improving Swedish by using Latin: Forms and functions of bilingual practices in Old Swedish texts

In late medieval Sweden's originally triglossic society (with Medieval Latin and Middle Low German being High varieties as opposed to the initially Low variety Old Swedish), Latin had an enormous impact on language *Ausbau* (Kloss 1979), i.e. the development of the emerging written variety of Swedish (in contrast to spoken varieties): Not only were lexical elements and grammatical structures borrowed from Latin, but also textual features such as the organization of written material into books, chapters, paragraphs, and even syntactic units were modelled on Latin patterns (Höder 2010). While the influence of transfer from Latin on the later development of Swedish has been documented and analysed from different perspectives, less focus has been placed, however, on the forms and functions of actual bilingual practices in Old Swedish texts.

In this contribution, I concentrate on bilingual practices in texts written and used by monastic communities such as the then-dominant Birgittine order, namely religious texts in a narrower sense (biblical texts, religious literature, sermons) as well as texts used for administrative purposes within ecclesiastical institutions. Constituting a community of practice (*sensu* Meyerhoff 2002), Birgittine monks and nuns are known to have been (at least) bilingual to a rather high degree, even more than clerics in general, being the driving force behind the boost in Old Swedish text production from about 1400 onwards. This is reflected not only in their writings in both Latin and Swedish (and, notably, their translations from Latin into Swedish; Wollin 1981–1983), but also in their use of elements from both languages within superficially monolingual texts, which was explicitly encouraged by normative authorities (Höder *forthc.*).

However, this was not done in a haphazard way, but rather governed by community-specific patterns of bilingual usage. Based on a quantitative and qualitative study on an Old Swedish corpus (HaCOSSA), I will argue that while these bilingual practices represent community-specific writing conventions, those in turn follow more general tendencies that have also been shown to hold for (oral) bilingual practices such as code-switching in 20th-/21st-century bilingual communities (Gardner-Chloros 2009). In particular, the use of Latin lexical material and structural patterns serves (a) as a marker of global domain-association of certain concepts such as in ecclesiastical or monastic terminology, consistently with what Grosjean (2008: 22–34) labels the 'complementarity principle' of bilingualism, and (b) as a means of locally delimiting discourse-structural units as well as marking intra- and intertextual reference (cf. Li 2005).

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