

Abstract

This thesis is a comparative stylistic investigation between German and Swedish contemporary newspaper language. Generally, German written non-literary language is assumed to reveal a higher level of abstraction and to use more compressed expressions than corresponding Swedish language. These characteristics of the German language are considered to correspond to the concept of nominal style. In contrast, the Swedish language is regarded to use more verbs, is easier to comprehend and is thus conceived as a more verbal style. However, there is insufficient empirical support for these assumptions.

Newspaper language was chosen to represent a contemporary standard written language. From a corpus of 128 articles with 3704 sentences collected from national newspapers between 1994 and 1998 a sample of 1664 sentences was selected representing a carefully matched sample of 832 German and 832 Swedish sentences with equivalent contents spliced up into four different text types, i.e. politics, economy, sports and mixed texts. Quantitative evaluations according to a great number of linguistic categories were performed and statistical differences between the languages were computed.

Statistically significant differences were found in main linguistic categories between the German and the Swedish languages. German sentences contain more words and have more frequent simple sentences with an internal complexity as a consequence of longer nominal phrases, which in addition often contain more nominalisations than Swedish sentences. On the other hand, Swedish texts reveal a more external complexity in the structure of sentences with more subordinate clauses and more full verbs compared to German texts. These statistically secured differences were illustrated by examples from different text types with the intention to demonstrate some general principles as well as to pin-point some unique preferences of German and Swedish expressions.

The present corpus-based investigation of applied comparative linguistics showed significant differences between German and Swedish contemporary written languages in several relevant stylistic parameters. Previous assumptions were confirmed that German newspaper language mainly represents a more nominal style than comparative Swedish text-material. However, not only the high frequency of nominalisations, but also the presence of extensive and complex nominal groups in simple sentences contributes to a nominal style.

- Title: Deutsch und Schwedisch im Kontrast – zur Distribution nominaler und verbaler Ausdrucksweise in Zeitungstexten (German and Swedish in contrast – distribution of nominal and verbal expressions in newspaper texts)
- Language: German
- Written by: Maria Carlsson, Department of German, University of Göteborg, Sweden, 2004
- Key words: German, Swedish, cross-linguistic, contemporary newspaper language, non-fictional prose, stylistic, nominal style, verbal style, nominalisations, nominal phrases, length and structure of sentences, statistics