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## Att tala om vem man är

En språkvetenskaplig studie av transitivitet, agentivitet och engagemang i unga kvinnors erfarenhetesberättelser

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Akademisk avhandling för filosofie doktorsexamen i allmän språkvetenskap vid Göteborgs universitet, som med tillstånd av humanistiska fakultetsnämnden kommer att offentligen försvaras fredagen den 16 december, 2011, kl. 13.15 i Sal T302, Institutionen för filosofi, lingvistik och vetenskapsteori, Olof Wijksgatan 6, Göteborg.



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## Abstract

Ph. D dissertation at Göteborgs university, Sweden, 2011. Title: *Att tala om vem man är. En språkvetenskaplig studie av transitivitet, agentivitet och engagemang i unga kvinnors erfarenhetsberättelser*. English title: *Young women tell their stories. A linguistic investigation of transitivity, agency and engagement in young women's stories*. Author: Elin Almér. Language: Swedish, with an English summary. Departement: The department of philosophy, linguistics and theory of science, Göteborg University, Box 200, ES-404 30 Göteborg.

This dissertation deals with the relationship between language and identity in narratives of personal experience told by young women in different settings. The aim of the investigation was to find out if there are cross-situational similarities in the individuals' language use concerning the construction of the concepts "I" and "others". The linguistic aspects investigated are connected to a sociopsychological concept of *identity style*. The purpose of investigating this aspect of language use and identity is to shed new light on the agency status of a person in relation to current interactional (constructionist) frameworks. Three women were recorded in two different situations: group conversations and interviews. The recordings were transcribed and twelve stories extracted. Systemic Functional Linguistics and the Appraisal framework were used to conduct two different studies: in study A *transitivity* and *agency* were investigated and in study B *engagement* was investigated. By relating the results to different parameters – *the situations, the genres* and *the individuals* – it was possible to conclude that there were patterns of linguistic aspects tied to each one of the three parameters. The results also showed that the generic structure potential of stories tends to be realized in different ways according to situation and that all of the investigated women altered their language according to situation in similar but, interestingly enough, not identical ways. The most interesting results were that some aspects of each of the individual's language use were realized in both situations, which indicated that their identity style could be traced in everyday conversations.

KEY WORDS: Narratives, language, language use, identity, identity style, young, agency, transitivity, engagement, variation, the Appraisal framework, Systemic Functional Linguistics, psychology, Swedish.

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