

Göteborgsstudier i nordisk språkvetenskap 31

Så fångas de misstänkta ord

Förhör och dokumentationspraktiker
på Skattebrottsenheten

(English Summary)

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Akademisk avhandling för filosofie doktorexamen i nordiska språk, som med tillstånd av humanistiska fakultetens dekanus vid Göteborgs universitet kommer att försvaras offentligt lördagen den 26 januari 2018 kl. 10.15 i Stora hörsalen (2159), Eklandagatan 86, Göteborg.



GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET

TITLE: Capturing the suspect's words. Investigative interviewing and documentation practices at the Swedish tax fraud unit

SWEDISH TITLE: Så fångas de misstänkta ord. Förhör och dokumentationspraktiker på Skattebrottsenheten

LANGUAGE: Swedish and English (English summary)

AUTHOR: Ylva Byrman

Abstract

This aim of this thesis is to contribute to our understanding of the factors shaping institutional talk and documentation, using empirical data from the field of investigative interviewing. The study analyses how Swedish tax fraud investigators are instructed to conduct and record interviews with suspects – in policy documents and training programmes – and contrasts this with the reality of their actual everyday practice. Special attention is given to how investigators reason about the goals and rules of their work and about what constitutes good practice.

The study draws on a body of material consisting of policy documents, training materials, audio-recorded investigative interviews with their corresponding written reports, and questionnaires and interviews with investigators and prosecutors, where they are asked about their views and practice.

The results show that the goals and rules formulated by authorities and teachers of investigative interviewing are numerous and sometimes contradictory. For example, investigators are told both that a good interview requires full attention and that a written interview report should be ready by the end of the interview. Furthermore, prosecutors generally ask investigators to produce succinct interview reports, but when needed as evidence in court, verbatim transcripts are the best. However, verbatim transcript and audio-recordings are often avoided, because they are time-consuming and also may contain unnecessary private details about the suspect.

The investigators handle the contradictions by developing documentation strategies that they personally believe make for a good compromise solution. However, their individual compromise solutions and views on what constitutes best practice differ somewhat from each other, because investigators rank the importance of the goals and rules slightly differently. In fact, some investigators deviate from central policy in order to reach what they perceive as the most important goals. It also becomes clear that some general commonsense norms and values, such as respecting the integrity and private life of the interviewees, override institutional interests in some instances.

KEYWORDS: investigative interviews, documentation, forensic linguistics, police interrogation, institutional talk, conversation analysis, professional writing, front-line workers

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DISTRIBUTION: Institutionen för svenska språket
Box 200
405 30 Göteborg

ISSN: 1652-3105

ISBN: 978-91-87850-66-0

LÄNK TILL E-PUBLICERING: <http://hdl.handle.net/2077/54376>

SÄTTNING: Sven Lindström

TRYCKNING: Repro Lorensberg, 2017