

**Categoriality and categorial shifts.
The history of the present participle in Swedish.**

Every linguist relies on the classification of the lexicon into categories ('parts of speech'), even if such classifications are usually tacitly assumed and not elaborated on, unless it becomes imperative that they do. The research into such classifications is vast, in particular the criteria for defining and delimiting lexical categories and the question of universality of these categories has been much in focus. The two are closely connected: as classifications based on a small set of formal and semantic properties establish categories that are highly language-specific, they are hardly useful in cross-linguistic analyses and, indeed, in diachronic studies. Formal and semantic criteria are often at odds, to take the most basic examples not all verbs are inherently concerned with actions, nouns with things or persons, or adjectives with qualities.

The present project is concerned with one language unit, namely the present participle (e.g. *reading*) in Swedish, which will be studied from a synchronic (contemporary) and diachronic (changeable in time) perspective. The present participle is notoriously difficult to classify, as in some contexts it is reminiscent of a noun, in others of a verb, adjective, adverb or even a preposition. Furthermore, its categorial status is subject to change.

The question we are raising is how a given unit of language can be classified as belonging to one or other category, and whether some categories may have a hybrid character, showing resemblance to two or more other categories. Based on data from extant texts written in Swedish between 1225 and 2000 we would like to establish criteria for categorial classification as well as document the changeability in time.

The results of the project will have a bearing not only on a more comprehensive description of the Swedish language, but will also constitute an important input in the development of a theory of lexical categories.