Abstract

Larsson, Lennart, lennart.larsson@nordiska.uu.se, Associate Professor, Dept. of Scandinavian Languages, Uppsala University, Sweden: “In what ways does a user of SAOB notice that 110 years have passed between A and TYNA?”. Språk och stil 19, 2009, pp. 35–52.

The Swedish Academy Dictionary (SAOB) aims to describe the Swedish language from 1521 to the present. Although its first section was published as early as 1893, work on the dictionary is still not complete, with the most recent, the 35th volume, comprising the words TOK–TYNA, being released in 2009.

This article discusses and illustrates some of the problems that inevitably arise when the publication of a dictionary is extended over a period of more than a century. Firstly, there are the changes in language, affecting both the meta-language and the object language of the dictionary. Secondly, there are some distinct changes in lexicographical practice. For example, there is a clear shift of focus from the spoken to the written language as well as from prescriptive to purely descriptive ambitions. Thirdly, the ideological shifts in society as a whole are clearly reflected in the dictionary, not the least in relation to gender and racial issues. While some of the articles in the older volumes are strongly inconsistent with today’s concepts of reality, more recent articles show a high degree of awareness regarding these issues.

Keywords: history of lexicography, diachronic dictionary, dictionary use, Swedish.