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Vreemde woorden in een vreemde taal

Volkstaalwoorden in Latijnse documenten uit Vlaanderen vóór 1250¹

Summary

The use of isolated vernacular words in Latin documents was common throughout the Middle Ages. Historians have tended to treat these vernacular intruders as the result of the growing inability of the Latin word hoard to provide adequate expression for a rapidly changing medieval society. What they have not extensively considered is the place of the scribe in between the proper written language, which was foreign to him, and the proper spoken language, which was natural but which had no real place in a written document. This article looks at that interplay of languages in documents from Flanders from before 1250. Taking the occasional vernacular word as an awkward sort of lexical loan, it examines how scribes differentiated these non-Latin words from their Latin context, and how they did not. It raises questions about where the lexical boundaries were in the world of bilinguals. In addition it questions the assumptions that vernacular loanwords were used because of the lexical deficiencies of Latin and that an increase in vernacular borrowings was a precursor to the ultimate documentary language switch of the thirteenth century.