

Abstract

Attributive absolute constructions in contemporary French

The aim of this master thesis is a detailed analysis of French attributive absolute constructions (att. AC) with emphasis on their semantic characteristics. Att. AC is an example of what is called “secondary predication”, i.e. a non-finite predicative structure modifying the primary predication, see a typical example “*les yeux fermés*”, ‘the eyes closed’, in the sentence “*Marie est assise, les yeux fermés.*”, ‘Mary sits with her eyes closed.’. The main function of the att. AC is the modification of the head noun through the relation of inalienable possession (IP), or a part – whole relation, between this noun, which is mostly a human being, and an entity conceptualized in the att. AC.

The thesis finds its main source in a monograph about AC written by Suzanne Hanon (1989), which is here completed by a qualitative analysis of syntactic and semantic factors that come into play in the formation of att. AC. Att. AC are approached from the perspective of Cognitive Linguistics and Construction Grammar as conceptualizations of the IP (or part – whole) paradigm and it is proposed their description as a prototype-based category with some instances more typical (see the example above) than others (e.g. att. AC with an adverbial function or modifying an inanimate entity). In the very end it is presented a possible formal representation of some basic types of att. AC that uses the formal mechanism of Berkeley Construction Grammar.

Key words: absolute construction, attribute, inalienable possession, French, Construction Grammar