

Cognitive and Functional Analysis of Experiencer Subject and Experiencer Object Psychological Predicate Constructions in French

Authors : Carine Kawakami

Abstract : In French, as well as in English, there are two types of psychological predicate constructions depending on where the experiencer argument is realized; the first type is in the subject position (e.g. Je regrette d'être venu ici. 'I regret coming here'), hereinafter called ES construction, and the second type is in the object position (e.g. Cette nouvelle m'a surpris. 'This new surprised me.'), referred as EO construction. In the previous studies about psychological predicates, the syntactic position of the experiencer argument has been just a matter of its connection with the syntactic or semantic structure of the predicate. So that few attentions have been paid to how two types of realization of experiencer are related to the conceptualization of psychological event and to the function of the sentence describing the psychological event, in the sense of speech act theory. In this research, focusing on the French phenomena limited to the first personal pronoun and the present tense, the ES constructions and the EO constructions will be analyzed from cognitive and functional approach. It will be revealed that, due to the possibility to be used in soliloquy and the high co-occurrence with ça ('it'), the EO constructions may have expressive function to betray what speaker feels in hic et nunc, like interjection. And in the expressive case, the experiencer is construed as a locus where a feeling appears spontaneously and is construed subjectively (e.g. Ah, ça m'énerve! 'Oh, it irritates me!'). On the other hand, the ES constructions describe speaker's mental state in an assertive manner rather than the expressive and spontaneously way. In other words, they describe what speaker feels to the interlocutor (e.g. Je suis énervé. 'I am irritated.'). As a consequence, when the experiencer argument is realized in the subject position, it is construed objectively and have a participant feature in the sense of cognitive grammar. Finally, it will be concluded that the choice of construction type, at least in French, is correlated to the conceptualization of the psychological event and the discourse feature of its expression.

Keywords : french psychological verb, conceptualization, expressive function, assertive function, experiencer realization

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