

Abstract

As one of the basic clause types, copular clauses have been discussed in many linguistic studies. Still, they continue to spark much debate, particularly when it comes to distinguishing different subtypes. This book explores two of the more common subtypes, namely predicative and specificational clauses. While most studies agree on the analysis of the first type, the second – specificational clauses – remains a contentious issue. A particular concern is how specificational clauses with indefinite ‘variable’ NP (e.g. *one of my favourite authors is Virginia Woolf*) compare to, and contrast with, other copular clauses, especially specificational clauses with definite ‘variable’ NP (e.g. *My favourite author is Virginia Woolf*) and predicative clauses with indefinite predicate nominative (e.g. *Woolf is a great writer*). This book addresses this question by making specificational clauses with indefinite variable the centre of attention, comparing them to the other two clause types. The book consists of two main parts. The first offers a general descriptive analysis of specificational and predicative clauses, in response to the existing literature (Chapter 3). The second part examines the implications of the general functional-structural analysis in the first part for the contextualised use of the different clause types. The book investigates these aspects of use – including lexicogrammatical realization (Chapter 4), the use of aspect and modality (Chapter 5), information structure (Chapter 6), and discourse-embedding (Chapter 7) – by taking a corpus-based approach, examining both written and spoken data. In doing so, it offers an empirical basis for testing some of the widespread assumptions that exist about predicative and specificational clauses.

