Det-konstruktioner i bruk
En systemisk-funktionell analys av satser med icke-referentiellt det i modern svenska

(English Summary)

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to map out functions of modern Swedish det-constructions, i.e. different clausal patterns including the non-referential third person pronoun det, for example, det är kul att spela tennis (‘it’s fun to play tennis’), det fläktade en skön vind från sjön (‘there was a nice wind blowing from the lake’) and det är mysigt med blommor och växter i hemmet (‘it’s cosy with flowers and plants at home’). The research questions concern how the world is semantically represented, how assessment can be expressed and how non-referential det is distributed in comparison to referential det. The study uses corpus data consisting of sentences with det in texts from news reports, personal blogs and academic works. The analytical perspective derives from Systemic Functional Grammar, focusing on the ideational and interpersonal metafunction. Basic concepts used from the theory are process, modality and modal assessment.

The results show that non-referential det has approximately the same frequency as referential det in all three investigated text types, and that referential det sometimes has a wide and less clear kind of reference. Most of the det-constructions operate as a relational process where the first participant may be either implicit or construed as a medium as the process is non-agentive. However, passive det-constructions differ considerably from active ones as the process implicates an agent to a much higher degree – yet without expressing the agent role. Furthermore, the process of the passive det-construction is not relational but mental, verbal or material.

The results also show that det-constructions can be used as a modal resource expressing several types of modality and modal assessment. This interpersonal grammar is regularly construed metaphorically by a relational clause as a semantically extending alternative to an adjunct or finite construction. However, some det-constructions are used as a modal resource which is considered not metaphorical, as they do not have the adjunct/finite alternative. In addition, the borderline between metaphor and non-metaphor regarding the constructions is investigated and discussed.

By adopting a systemic-functional perspective on Swedish det-constructions, this study not only contributes a deeper understanding of the functions, but also increases the description of the Swedish language in systemic-functional terms, thereby developing the theoretical application.

KEYWORDS: non-referential det, det-constructions, impersonal constructions, existential constructions, Swedish, systemic-functional grammar, modality, modal assessment, semantics.

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