

# Adjectival Constructions in English

Athanasios Litsos, MA candidate in Linguistics

*Aristotle University of Thessaloniki*

## Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to discuss some key issues related to the position and interpretation of adjectives in English. The positions that are investigated are the predicative position in the sentence and the premodifier and postmodifier zones in the noun phrase. Through the analysis, it is evident that there are semantic patterns that emerge in specific positions and, thus, not all kinds of meanings are available in every position. The conclusion of this paper is that these three positions are, in fact, constructions in the fashion of Construction Grammar (Goldberg 1995). In particular, the premodifier zone possesses a number of specific slots associated with specific adjective functions, which can express a wide range of interpretations with the head noun. On the other hand, the predicative position can mostly express meanings related to the extra-linguistic reference of the noun. Last, the postmodifier zone also possesses two slots associated with particular interpretations and, thus, the postmodifier zone can express only some of the meanings available in the premodifier zone. Furthermore, the expression of permanence and temporariness of properties is investigated, as particular positions are commonly associated with temporary and permanent senses. The conclusion is that there are grades of permanence in both modification zones and that the adjectives' slots in these zones have specific correlations with these grades. On the other hand, the predicative construction is neutral to this issue, as the evocation of permanence or temporariness in this position needs further co-textual specification.

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