Jolien Scholten

The ins and outs of external possession
A micro-comparative perspective

This thesis presents a study of external possession in varieties of Dutch. External possessors appear outside of the possessum phrase syntactically, whereas semantically, they are interpreted as the possessor of one of their co-arguments. In such structures, the possessive relation is typically not marked morphosyntactically. Other characteristics include the use of the definite article to introduce the possessum, and the possessor generally being a body part noun.

The current study contributes to the empirical domain by giving a systematic overview of various external possessor constructions in Dutch dialects in different syntactic and semantic environments. In traditional terminology, this dissertation focuses on three types of external possessor constructions: (i) subject possessors, (ii) dative possessors and (iii) direct object possessors with the possessum embedded in a PP.

With respect to subject possessors, previous studies have reported that this construction is restricted to ‘gesture verbs’, but so far no explanatory account for this observation has been given. By investigating a comprehensive set of verbs, this study proposes an explanation for this restriction, analyzing the relevant verbs as unaccusatives. In addition, this study is able to treat the three external possessor constructions in a unified way, in which the possessor and possessum are syntactically related to each other in a local relationship. Finally, this study also deals with the geographic distribution of the various external possessor constructions.

This book is of interest to scholars working on morphosyntactic micro-variation, possessive structures and datives, as well as inalienability and definiteness.