



Conceptual metaphors for the efficient teaching of Dutch and German posture verbs to French learners

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1. Introduction

Typological differences between Romance and Germanic languages

(Talmy 1985 and 2000; Slobin 1996)

→ Explanation for acquisition difficulties with

- expressions of motion and location
- in Germanic languages (Dutch + German)
- by French-speaking learners

(Lemmens 2002; Lemmens and Perrez 2010; De Knop and Dirven 2008; De Knop Fc.)

Expressions under scrutiny in this presentation:

→ abstract uses of Dutch and German posture verbs



German:	<i>stehen</i>	<i>sitzen</i>	<i>liegen</i>
Dutch:	<i>staan</i>	<i>zitten</i>	<i>liggen</i>
English:	'to stand'	'to sit'	'to lie'

Examples:

- (1) *Ik zie het niet zitten*
*'I don't see it sit' (= 'I don't see that it can work');
- (2) *De verantwoordelijkheid ligt bij jou*
*'The responsibility lies with you' (= 'You have the responsibility');
- (3) *Das Kleid sitzt nicht*
*'The skirt does not sit' (= 'The skirt does not fit');
- (4) *Es liegt was in der Luft*
*'Something is lying in the air' (= 'There is something in the air');
- (5) *Der Unterschied liegt darin, dass...*
'The difference lies in the fact, that...'



Our observation:

In spite of the difficulties in the use of posture verbs by French-speaking learners it is often not properly dealt with in teaching manuals.

Aim of our research: make up for this deficit.



Structure of our presentation:

1. Introduction
2. Critical presentation of teaching manuals for Dutch and German;
3. Description of the uses of the 3 posture verbs in German and Dutch;
4. Description of the difficulties encountered by French-speaking learners with the use of posture verbs;
5. Metaphor and semantic network as teaching strategies.



2. Critical presentation of teaching manuals for Dutch and German

2.1. Manuals for German

- a. Aldenhoff, Jules (1994), *Allemand: Grammaire Progressive Avec Exercices*. Bruxelles: De Boeck, 178 pp.
- b. Bouillon, Henri (2001), *Grammaire Pratique de l'Allemand*. Bruxelles: De Boeck, 295 pp.
- c. Helbig, Gerhard und Joachim Buscha (1991), *Deutsche Grammatik: Ein Handbuch für den Ausländerunterricht*. Leipzig; Berlin: Langenscheidt, 736 pp.
- d. Schulz, Dora und Heinz Griesbach (1978), *Grammatik der Deutschen Sprache*. München: Max Hueber, 475 pp.



Observations:

- No German teaching manual (a-d) deals with the semantic uses of posture verbs!
- Helbig/Buscha (1991) describes the past participle forms of the posture verbs and the auxiliary to be used in the perfect forms;
- Bouillon (2001) describes the morpho-syntactic case to be used after posture verbs (dative).



2.2. Manuals for Dutch

(e) Devos, R. & Fraeters, H. (1998), *Vanzelfsprekend: Nederlands voor Anderstaligen*. Leuven: Acco, 540 pp.
 (f) Godin, P., Ostyn P. & Degreef F. (1993), *La pratique du néerlandais avec ou sans maître*. Louvain-la-Neuve: Peeters, 368 pp.
 (g) Henn, C., Vromans, J. & H. Bijleveld (1996), *Pratique du néerlandais de A à Z*. Bruxelles: Didier Hatier, 435 pp.
 (h) Sonck, G. (2009), *Néerlandais: grammaire de l'étudiant*. Bruxelles: De Boeck, 269 pp.
 (i) Wuyts, A. (2007), *Nederlands in Structuren: socratische grammatica van het Nederlands*. Leuven: Acco, 191 pp.



2.2. Manuals for Dutch

(i) Wuyts, A. (2007), *Nederlands in Structuren: socratische grammatica van het Nederlands*.
 > does not refer to posture verbs at all
 (e) Devos, R. & Fraeters, H. (1998), *Vanzelfsprekend: Nederlands voor Anderstaligen*, and
 (f) Godin, P., Ostyn P. & Degreef F. (1993), *La pratique du néerlandais avec ou sans maître*.
 > speak of the concrete posture and the form of the objects/ persons, e.g. *staan* for objects/persons in an upright position.
 > Some contradictions between exs and explanation in (f), e.g. «if the form of the object is higher than stretched, then one uses *staan*», an illustration for this is *bed* (!!)



2.2. Manuals for Dutch

- (g) Henn, C., Vromans, J. & H. Bijleveld (1996), *Pratique du néerlandais de A à Z*
 - > gives some exs of locational uses, but not well-structured;
- (h) Sonck, G. (2009), *Néerlandais: grammaire de l'étudiant*
 - > The most complete; already explains some metaphorical uses (e.g. containment and contact) and even uses the term «contact», but still lack of systematicity and structure.



Manuals for Dutch and German: Concluding remarks

1. Most Dutch manuals refer to the semantic use of posture verbs; German manuals don't;
2. In Dutch manuals «impressionistic approach» with exemplification of concrete postural use; metaphorical extensions are skipped.
3. No distinction between the different uses (postural, locational, metaphorical), no coherence in the explanations.



3. Description of the uses of posture verbs in German and Dutch

- Based on Lemmens (2002), Lemmens and Perrez (2010) for Dutch and Kutscher and Schultze-Bernd (2007) and Serra-Borneto (1996) for German.
- Examples that are not taken into account:
 - (a) Derived verbs with a particle + a posture verb, e.g. *aufstehen/opstaan, vorsitzen/voorzitten, ...*
 - (b) Posture verbs in fixed idiomatic expressions, e.g. *Wie steht es um ihn?* ('how is it with him?'/ 'How is he?')
- Lemmens and Perrez (2010) distinguish for all 3 posture verbs **3 main semantic uses**: postural, locational and metaphorical.

STAAN / STEHEN

		NL	D
Postural	Be on a BASE	<i>De stoelen staan in de woonkamer</i>	<i>Die Stühle stehen im Wohnzimmer</i>
Locational	Extend upward from base	<i>Er staan geen takken meer aan deze boom</i>	<i>Mit dem Supergel stehen die Haare</i>
Metaphorical	Verticality in absence of a base	<i>De borden staan in de afwasmachine</i>	<i>Die Teller stehen in der Spülmaschine</i>
	Canonical	<i>Tegenwoordig staan veel jonge gezinnen voor een dilemma</i>	<i>Er steht vor einem Problem / Dilemma</i>
	Written text	<i>Wat staat er op deze pagina?</i>	<i>Was steht an der Tafel?</i>

ZITTEN / SITZEN

		NL	D
Postural	Be in a sitting posture	<i>Er zit een vrouw aan tafel</i>	<i>Es sitzt eine Frau an dem Tisch</i>
	Be in a sitting posture (small animals)	<i>Er zit een vlieg op het plafond</i>	<i>Eine Fliege sitzt auf dem Kuchen/an der Decke</i>
Locational	Containment (+ affiliation)	<i>Hij zit in de gevangenis Hij zit in parlement</i>	<i>Er sitzt im Gefängnis Er sitzt im Beirat/Parlament</i>
	Contact	<i>Er zit geen deurknop aan deze deur</i>	<i>Die Brille sitzt auf der Nase</i>
Metaphorical	Containment	<i>Ik zit in de problemen</i>	<i>Er sitzt in der Falle/Klemme</i>
	Contact	<i>Deze broek zit lekker</i>	<i>Das Kleid sitzt nicht</i>

LIGGEN / LIEGEN

		NL	D
Postural	Be on one's sides (human posture) ⇒ not on base with horizontal orientation	<i>Hij ligt in bed</i> <i>Waar liggen de schoenen?</i>	<i>Er liegt im Bett</i> <i>Wo liegen die Schuhe?</i>
Locational	Location of dimension-less entities	<i>De bal ligt in het gras De zout ligt op tafel</i>	<i>Der Ball liegt im Gras Das Salz liegt auf dem Tisch</i>
	Geotopographical location	<i>De kerk lag pal voor ons</i>	<i>Die Kirche lag vor uns Frankfurt liegt am Main</i>
Metaphorical	Abstract entities	<i>De verantwoordelijkheid ligt bij jou</i>	<i>Die Verantwortung liegt bei dir</i>
	Scale	<i>Het punt ligt op de lijn</i>	<i>Der Punkt liegt auf der Geraden</i>



4. Difficulties in use of posture verbs by French-speaking learners

Our teaching experience but also studies with French-speaking natives in Belgium (Lemmens/Perrez 2010) show 3 types of problems:

- (i) **Underuse** of posture verbs (which are compulsory in Germanic languages because of prominence of manner dimension)
 - use of a general verb like *être* 'to be' in French:
 - (6a) *Les chaises sont* (= 'are') *dans la salle à manger.*
 - (6b) *Die Stühle stehen* (= 'stand') *im Wohnzimmer;*
 - (6c) *De stoelen staan* (= 'stand') *in de woonkamer;*
 - (6d) *The chairs are/(stand)* *in the living-room.*



- (ii) **Overuse** of posture verbs in contexts where a posture verb should not be used → 'posture verb panic' (Lemmens/Perrez 2010)

*De vrouw *staat [is] een beetje wanhopig omdat ze wilde dat haar man de tuintrap verft (DL2-s-0205)*

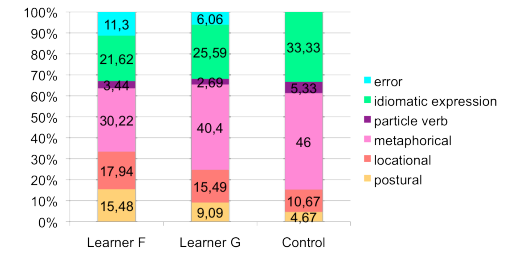
'The woman *stands (is) a bit desperate because she wanted her husband to paint the garden stairs'

- (iii) **Abstract uses** of posture verbs are **problematic**:
Exs (1)-(5)

- (7) *Er zit spanning in deze wedstrijd*
'There «sits» (= is) suspense in this competition'
- (8) *Diese Eigenschaft liegt in der Familie*
'This property «lies» (= is present) in the family'



Distribution of the uses of posture verbs in learner corpora of Dutch
(Results of studies with French-speaking and German-speaking learners)





Abstract uses are problematic for French-speaking learners:

- Need of a posture verb in contexts where French does not use such verbs but the general *être* 'to be' or *se trouver* 'sich befinden/to find oneself in';
- Which of the 3 posture verbs?

➔ Need to describe some regularities;

Tools: Metaphor and semantic network



5. Metaphor and semantic network as teaching strategies

Boers/Demecheleer (1998), Özçaliskan (1998) see a possibility to exploit conceptual metaphor in teaching/learning of FL:

« ... the ways spatial organization is used to metaphorically structure abstract domains of experience » (Boers/Demecheleer 1998: 197)

Underlying conceptual metaphor that characterizes our examples in Germanic languages:

ABSTRACT STATES ARE POSITION/LOCATION
(see also: Jäkel 1989; Özçaliskan 1998: 201)



5.1. Some metaphorical concepts

Most metaphorical uses of posture verbs can only be explained with more specific concepts like 'CONTAINER', 'CONTACT', 'UP/DOWN', 'VERTICALITY', or 'STRETCH' (*Der Tag liegt noch vor uns*).

We will look in detail at the concepts of CONTAINER, CONTACT and VERTICALITY



I. CONTACT

This metaphorical concept allows to explain some abstract uses of the posture verb *zitten/sitzen*:

- (3) *Das Kleid sitzt nicht*
 *'The skirt does not sit' (= 'The skirt does not fit');
 → contact between the garment and the body;
- (9) *Die Brille sitzt auf der Nase*
 'The glasses sit (= are) on the nose'
 → contact between glasses and the bodypart
- (10a) *Die Augenbrauen sitzen niedrig über den Augen*
 (DWDS-Korpus)
 → contact between the eyebrows and the eyes/face.



II. CONTAINMENT

Containment characterizes many metaphorical uses of *zitten/sitzen*:

- (7) *Er zit spanning in deze wedstrijd*
 'There «sits» (= is) suspense in this competition'
 → The competition is seen as a container in which there is suspense.
- (11a) *Ik zit in de problemen;*
 (11b) *Ich sitze in der Falle;*
 'I sit (= have) in the trap'.
 → The trap/the problems is/are seen as a container and I am sitting in the middle of this container.
- (12) *Der Schmerz sitzt im Magen;*
 'The pain sits (= is) in the stomach.'
 → In German, many body-parts are seen as 'containers': *Ein Krampf sitzt im Bein* ('a cramp sits in the leg'), *Zähne sitzen locker im Mund* ('teeth sit loose in the mouth'), *ein Splitter sitzt im Fuß* (a splinter in the foot),...



III. Metaphorical VERTICALITY

The verbs *staan/stehen* are used for metaphorical extensions of states, in which the figure is characterized by verticality/functional position:

- Or the figure is a metonymy (e.g. a conference, an association) for 'people' who are characterized by verticality/functional position:
- (14) *Die Konferenz steht unter dem Schutz der Polizei*
 'The conference stands under the protection of the police'



5.2. Figure and ground

Similar examples can be used with different posture verbs depending on the meaning that the speaker wants to convey.

To facilitate the selection of a posture verb in the metaphorical uses
 → need of a further distinction: between 'figure' and 'ground'

- Concrete figure in abstract location,
 (11a) *Ik zit in de problemen;*
 (11b) *Ich sitze in der Falle;*
 'I sit (= have) in the problems/trap'.
- Abstract figure in concrete location,
 (15) *Symboliek zit in de pyramide*
 'Symbolism sits (= is) in the pyramid'
- (16) *Erfolg liegt in der Familie*
 'Success lies (= is) in the family'



Compare:

(2a) *De verantwoordelijkheid ligt bij jou*

(2b) *Die Verantwoording ligt bei Dir*
 *'The responsibility lies with you'
 (= 'You have the responsibility');

(2c) *Hij staat voor de verantwoordelijkheid*

(2d) *Er steht vor der Verantwortung*
 *'He stands before the responsibility'
 (= He has the responsibility)

In (2c) and (2d), the concrete figure represents the canonical position 'to be on a base'; it is decisive for the selection of *staan/stehen*;

In (2a) and (2b), the figure is abstract and not characterized by a base, but by a stretch; that's why *liggen/liegen* is selected.



5.3. Preposition + posture verb

Some differences in use are also reflected in the use of the prepositions.

Compare (11a) and (11b) with (11c) and (11d):

(11a) *Ik zit in de problemen;*

(11b) *Ich sitze in der Falle;*

'I sit (= have) in the problems'.

(11c) *Ik sta voor grote problemen;*

(11d) *Ich stehe vor großen Problemen;*

'I stand before great problems'.

- The prepositions sustain the ideas of containment or canonical position on a base + verticality.
- Interaction preposition/posture verb.



Conclusions

Teaching strategies:

1. Awareness-raising exercises with FLL: typological differences between French and Dutch/German; French: *être/se trouver*; Dutch/German: posture verb;
2. Introduction of underlying conceptual metaphor: ABSTRACT STATES ARE POSITION/LOCATION
3. Description of metaphorical concepts: CONTAINER/ CONTACT/VERTICALITY
4. Distinction figure/ground
5. Interaction with prepositions.

Further research:

- Test the new teaching strategies with our students;
- Extend our analysis to posture verbs + prepositions.

THANK YOU!

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