

The conceptual and semantic variation of placement verbs in German: Typological and pedagogical challenges

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1. Introduction

- **SPACE:**

- Conceptualisation + linguistic expressions:
interesting research topic (Aurnague et al. 2007;
Foolen et al. 2012; Kopecka & Narasimhan 2012;
Thiering 2014)
- many research facets, can be described from
different perspectives: focus on location, motion,
orientation in space, perspective of the speaker,
within one language, cross-linguistically,...
(cf. Levinson 2012)

- **STUDY:**

→ **German causative events** with “placement”
(Gullberg 2009) or “put” (Berthele 2012) verbs (**PLV**),
e.g.

- *stellen* (‘to put upright’)
- *setzen* (‘to set’)
- *legen* (‘to lay’)
- *stecken* (‘to stick’)
- *hängen* (‘to hang’)

→ favoured in German **expressions of motion events**

- **Causative Placement Verbs:**

- diachronically linked to non-causative posture verbs *stehen* ('to stand'), *sitzen* ('to sit'), *liegen* ('to lie'), *stecken* ('to be stuck') or *hängen* ('to be hanging') (Berthele 2012: 149);
- tendency in scientific literature (Fagan 1991) or in teaching manuals (Delfin Lehrbuch 2002) to describe both verb categories together

- Many studies about posture V: Ameka & Levinson 2007, De Knop 2014, De Knop & Perrez 2014, Kutscher & Schultze-Berndt 2007, Lemmens & Perrez 2010, or Serra-Borneto 1996
- Less research about PLVs: except Hijazo-Gascón, Cadierno & Ibarretxe-Antuñano in prep.; Gullberg 2009; Kopecka & Narasimhan 2011; Lemmens 2006; Viberg 1998
- German PLVs:
 - Berthele (2004, 2012): contrastive studies between German and Romansh dialects
 - Fagan (1991): partly comparative study of German causative and non-causative verbs (but not systematic)

- **Aim of study**

1. Description of conceptual and semantic variation of causative PLVs in usage-based perspective
 - Based on studies on posture V (De Knop 2014, De Knop & Perrez 2014, Kutscher & Schultze-Berndt 2007, Lemmens 2005 and 2006, Lemmens & Perrez 2010, Serra-Borneto 1996)
 - Examples from corpora of German DWDS
2. In cross-linguistic perspective explain difficulties for French-speaking learners of German
3. Offer pedagogical strategies/aids to facilitate teaching and learning of PLVs

2. Theoretical tenets

German = satellite-framed language (Talmy 2000)
(also Dutch and English)

➤ Path of motion expressed by a **satellite**, e.g.

(1) *Leg das Buch auf den Tisch*

Lit. 'Lay the book on the table'.

➤ Often **manner dimension** expressed (De Knop & Gallez 2013), e.g.

(2) *Er stellt den Teller auf den Tisch*

lit. 'He puts (upright) the plate on the table'

(3) *Die Mutter setzt das Baby in den Kinderstuhl*

lit. 'The mother sets the baby in the high chair'

French = verb-framed language (Talmy 2000)

- more rarely expression of manner
- Use of general superordinate verb for expression of placement, e.g. *mettre* ('to put') or *placer* ('to place')

Difficulties for French-speaking learners of German

- obligation to express manner of motion
- Variety of motion verbs, no superordinate term in German
- differentiation compulsory in German, right selection difficult



- Littlemore (2009: 29): *“Things become even more difficult for language learners when a concept that is divided into two broad categories in their own language is divided into, say, three categories in the target language”.*
- **Asymmetry** in encoding of placement (Narasimhan et al. 2012: 3) between different languages
- Often simplification through **non-use of PLVs** (Gullberg 2009: 8)
- Learners of satellite-framed languages have to **readjust** (in this case expand) **semantic categories** acquired in their mother tongue to fit the categories of the L2 (Gullberg 2009, Ijaz 1996).

3. Causative vs. non-causative verbs

- Assumption:

- because [+CAUS Vs] are diachronically linked to [-CAUS Vs], parallel description appealing and efficient in FLT for concrete uses of these verbs, e.g.

(4) *Die Mutter legt das Kind ins Bett* [+ CAUS][PLV]

Lit. 'The mother lays the child in (the) bed.'

(5) *Das Kind liegt im Bett* [- CAUS] [POSTURE V]

Lit. 'The child lies in (the) bed.'

- First check this with comparison of examples based on description of semantic uses of posture V

Stehen/Stellen

USE	DESCRIPTION	<i>stehen</i>	<i>stellen</i>
postural	Be/Put on a base	<i>Die Teller stehen auf dem Tisch</i> Lit. 'The plates stand on the table'	<i>Stelle bitte die Teller auf den Tisch</i> Lit. 'Please put (vertically) the plates on the table'
locational	Extend upward from a base	<i>Mit dem Supergel stehen die Haare den ganzen Tag</i> Lit. 'With the supergelly the hair stands the whole day'	/
	Verticality in absence of base	<i>Die Teller stehen schon in der Spülmaschine</i> Lit. 'The plates already stand in the dishwasher'	<i>Stelle bitte die Teller in die Spülmaschine</i> Lit. 'Please put (vertically) the plates into the dishwasher'
metaphorical	Being/Put in a canonical position	<i>Er steht vor einem Dilemma/Problem</i> Lit. 'He stands in front of a dilemma/problem'	<i>Vor eine Verantwortung stellen</i> <i>Vor Gericht stellen</i> Lit. 'to put/place in front of a responsibility' Lit. 'to place/to bring to court/justice'
	Written text	<i>Was steht an der Tafel?</i> Lit. 'What stands on the blackboard?' <i>Ein Komma steht zwischen den beiden Wörtern</i> Lit. 'A comma stands between both words'	/ <i>Er setzt ein Komma zwischen die beiden Sätze</i> Lit. 'He sets a comma between both sentences'

LIEGEN/LEGEN

USE	DESCRIPTION	<i>liegen</i>	<i>legen</i>
postural	Be/Put on one's side/not on the base with horizontal orientation	Wo liegen meine Schuhe? Lit. 'Where do my shoes lie?' Sie lag im Bett und schlief Lit. 'She lay in bed and was sleeping'	Wo hast du meine Schuhe hingelegt? Lit. 'Where did you lay my shoes?' Die Mutter legte das Baby ins Bett Lit. 'The mother laid the baby in the bed' Die Henne legt ein Ei Lit. 'The hen laid an egg'
locational	Location of dimensionless entities	Es liegt viel Salz auf dem Tisch Lit. 'There lies much salt on the table' Der Ball liegt im Sand Lit. 'The ball lies in the sand'	Sie hat viel Salz auf den Tisch gelegt Lit. 'She has laid much salt on the table' Er hat den Ball in den Sand gelegt Lit. 'He has laid the ball into the sand'
	Geotopographical location	Köln liegt am Rhein Lit. 'Cologne lies at the Rhine'	Der Nebel legt sich über die Stadt (REFL) Lit. 'The fog lays itself over the town'
metaphorical	Abstract entities	Die Verantwortung liegt bei dir Lit. 'The responsibility lies with you'	Die Verletzten legten ihre Hoffnung in die Hände der Helfer Lit. 'The wounded laid their hope in the hands of the helpers' Den Fokus/den Akzent/den Schwerpunkt auf etwas legen Lit. 'to lay the focus/the accent/the emphasis on something' Der Streit/die Aufregung legt sich (REFL) Lit. 'The quarrel/The upset lays itself'
	Scale	Der Punkt liegt auf der Gerade Lit. 'The point lies on the line'	Er <u>setzt</u> den Punkt auf die Gerade Lit. 'He sets the point on the line'

SITZEN/SETZEN

USE	DESCRIPTION	<i>sitzen</i>	<i>setzen</i>
postural	Be/Put in a sitting position	<i>Ein Ehepaar sitzt am Tisch</i> Lit. 'The couple sits at the table' <i>Das Baby sitzt auf der Kommode</i> Lit. 'The baby sits on the dresser'	<i>Das Ehepaar setzte sich an den Tisch</i> Lit. 'The couple sat down at the table' <i>Die Mutter setzt das Baby auf die Kommode</i> Lit. 'The mother sets the baby on the dresser'
locational	Location of small animals (+ insects)	<i>Wieviele Vögel sitzen im Baum?</i> Lit. 'How many birds sit in the tree?' <i>Eine Fliege sitzt auf dem Kuchen</i> Lit. 'A fly sits on the cake'	<i>Das Rotkehlchen setzt sich in den Baum</i> Lit. 'The robin sits down in the tree' <i>Die Fliege setzt sich auf den Kuchen</i> Lit. 'The fly sits down on the cake'
	Containment (+ Affiliation)	<i>Er sitzt im Gefängnis</i> Lit. 'He sits in prison' <i>Der Schmerz sitzt in dem Bauch</i> Lit. 'The pain sits in the stomach' <i>Er sitzt im Parlament</i> Lit. 'He sits in parliament' (= is a member of parliament)	<i>Die Polizei setzte den Kriminellen ins Gefängnis</i> Lit. 'The police set the criminal guy in prison' <i>Der Chirurg setzt eine Prothese in die Hüfte</i> Lit. 'The surgeon sets a prosthesis in the hip' /
	Contact	<i>Die Brille sitzt schief auf der Nase</i> Lit. 'The glasses sit crooked on the nose' <i>Das Messer sitzt an der Kehle</i> Lit. 'The knife sits at the throat'	<i>Er setzt die Brille auf die Nase</i> Lit. 'He sets the glasses on the nose' <i>Der Bandit setzte ein Messer an ihre Kehle</i> Lit. 'The bandit set the knife at the throat'
metaphorical	Containment	<i>Er sitzt in der Falle/in den Problemen</i> Lit. 'He sits in the trap/in the problems'	<i>Er hat sein Vertrauen in seine Schwester gesetzt</i> Lit. 'He has set his confidence in his sister'
	Contact	<i>Das Kleid sitzt nicht</i> Lit. 'The skirt does not sit' (= does not fit)	
	Written text	<i>Ein Komma steht zwischen den Wörtern</i> Lit. 'A comma stands between the words'	<i>Der Lehrer setzte ein Komma zwischen die Wörter</i> Lit. 'The teacher set a comma between the words' <i>Einen Diskussionspunkt auf die Tagesordnung</i>

SITZEN/SETZEN

Synonym of <i>bringen</i>	<i>In Kopie stehen/sein</i> <i>In Bewegung sein</i> <i>In Verbindung stehen</i> <i>In Verlegenheit sein</i> <i>In Kenntnis stehen?</i> <i>Unter Druck stehen</i> <i>Jmd steht vor der Tür</i>	<i>In Kopie/cc. setzen</i> <i>In Bewegung setzen</i> <i>In Verbindung setzen</i> <i>In Verlegenheit setzen</i> <i>Einen Motor in Gang setzen</i> <i>In Kenntnis setzen</i> <i>Unter Druck setzen</i> <i>Ein Gerücht in die Welt setzen</i> <i>Jmd vor die Tür setzen</i>
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STECKEN/STECKEN

USE	DESCRIPTION	<i>stecken</i>	<i>stecken</i>
postural	Be/Put into a reduced and tight space	Der Schlüssel steckt im Schloss Lit. 'The key is stuck in the keyhole'	Ich habe den Schlüssel ins Schloss gesteckt Lit. 'I have stuck the key into the keyhole'
locational	Tight Containment	Der Brief steckt im Kasten (DWDS) Lit. 'The letter is stuck in the letter-box' Der Splitter steckte noch in der Wunde (DWDS) Lit. 'The splint was still stuck in the wound' Die Füße stecken in derben Schuhen (DWDS) Lit. 'The feet are stuck in ... shoes' Der Wagen steckt im Schlamm Lit. 'The car is stuck in ...' (tight)	Der Briefträger steckte den Brief in den Kasten Lit. 'The postman stuck the letter into the box' Er steckte die Zigarre in den Mund (DWDS) Lit. 'He stuck the cigar into the mouth' Die Bauarbeiter steckten Pfähle in die Erde (DWDS) Lit. 'The workmen stuck ... in the ground/earth'
	Tight Contact	Der Ring steckt am Finger (DWDS) Lit. 'The ring is stuck at the finger'	Sie steckte den Ring an den Finger Lit. 'She stuck the ring to the finger'
metaphorical	Tight Containment	Sie steckt tief in der Arbeit (DWDS) Lit. 'She is deeply stuck in (the) work' In diesem Projekt steckt viel Geld Lit. 'In this project much money is stuck'	Sie steckt viel Arbeit in dieses Geschäft (DWDS) Lit. 'She sticks much work in this business' Gewaltige Mittel in die Forschung stecken Lit. 'To stick enormous resources into research'
	Tight Contact	Was steckt hinter dem Mord	?

- But some difficulties with the parallel description of [+/-CAUS Vs]:

- No 1-1 correspondence between both V-categories, e.g.

(6) *Es steht kein Komma zwischen den Sätzen*

Lit. 'There stands no comma between the sentences'

(7) *Im Deutschen muss man ein Komma zwischen 2 Sätze setzen*

Lit. 'In German one must set a comma between 2 sentences'

- Extension of some uses of [+CAUS PLVs],
e.g. *setzen* → synonym of ‘bringen’, e.g.

(8) *in Bewegung setzen*

Lit. ‘to set in motion’

(9) *in Verbindung setzen*

Lit. ‘to set into relation’ (= ‘to connect’)

- PLVs in collocations, e.g.

(9) *in Verbindung setzen*

Lit. ‘to set into relation’ (= ‘to connect’)

(10) *in den Vordergrund stellen*

Lit. ‘to put (upright position) into the foreground’,
‘to give priority to’, ‘to place special emphasis on’

4. Pedagogical issues

- Learning problem is not cultural: in most cultures, speakers have expressions of location/motion with canonical positions
- But different construal of reality
- Issues:
 - select focus on some aspects of location/motion according to the language
 - French-speaking learners must focus on canonical orientational positions when talking about location/motion in German

5. Teaching strategies: **Awareness-raising exercises**

Roberson (2005: 66): “*a critical component on any category learning is increased selective attentional weighting of salient dimensions*”.

Schmidt (1990; 2001): “*noticing hypothesis*”.

- with examples from both languages
(see table with semantic uses)
- Start with concrete uses, postural and locational, then with more abstract uses

5. Teaching strategies: **Chunks**

Ellis & Cadierno (2009: 114):

“much of communication makes use of fixed expressions memorized as formulaic chunks”.

“[L]anguage acquisition is the learning of an inventory of patterns as arrangements of words with their associated structural meanings.”

Wray (2002: 192): success in second language is heavily dependent on the ability to learn sequences.

➤ Association of PLVs with larger expressions, i.e. chunks or constructions

5. Teaching strategies: **Chunks**

Insight from CL:

- Linguistic units reflect conceptual units (Langacker 1987: 60)
- Selection of *stellen* or *setzen* in collocations reflects different conceptualizations:

E.g. (9) *in Verbindung setzen*

Lit. 'to set into relation' (= 'to connect')

(10) *in den Vordergrund stellen*

Lit. 'to put (upright position) into the foreground',

'to give priority to', 'to place special emphasis on'

- Stellen: more active concept, how involved persons contribute to the action/process; metaphor: THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS

Setzen: more passive concept

5. Teaching strategies: **Constructions**

➤ Inspired by CxG (Goldberg 1995, 2006):

abstract construction

➤ **PLVs** are used in caused motion constructions:

Sem.	CAUSE-MOVE ↓	< cause ↓	theme ↓	goal > ↓
Synt.	V	SUBJ	OBJ	OBL
	<i>legt</i> 'lay'	<i>die Mutter</i> 'the mother'	<i>das Kind</i> 'the child'	<i>ins Bett</i> 'into bed'

5. Teaching strategies: **Constructions**

- Intransitive motion construction with posture
V linked to Caused motion construction with
PLV by 'part-of-relation'

Sem.	MOVE	< theme	goal >
	↓	↓	↓
Synt.	V	SUBJ	OBL
	<i>liegt</i>	<i>das Kind</i>	<i>im Bett</i>
	'lies'	'the child'	'in bed'

5. Teaching strategies: **Constructions**

- Design exercises with specific constructions + corresponding posture/placement V
- Integrative approach
- holistic activity structures (Norris 2009, quoted in Keck & Kim 2014: 171) → make connections among linguistic forms, their meanings and situations
- Focus on different conceptualizations
- Add info about morpho-syntactic cases
 - accusative in caused motion C*
 - dative in intransitive C*
- Favourite prepositions in C (Schönefeld 2006)

6. Conclusions and perspectives

- Work in progress
- Check this methodology with learners (write sentences starting from Bowerman et al. 2004)
- Develop strategies for selection of 1 PLV, esp. in collocations
- Also speak of ‘metaphor’ for description of more abstract uses

ALL YOUR IDEAS ARE WELCOME!



THANK YOU !



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