

Conceptual metaphors as a tool for the efficient teaching of Dutch and German posture verbs*

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Abstract

The article deals with the typological differences between the Romance language French and the Germanic languages German and Dutch for the linguistic expressions of posture and location. It describes how these typological differences can be problematic for French-speaking learners of German and Dutch. The main difference between both types of languages is that posture and location tend to be encoded by posture verbs in Germanic languages and by very general verbs in Romance languages (Talmy 2000). After a detailed description of the semantic networks of the German and Dutch posture verbs, the paper takes a critical look at how these expressions are dealt with in teaching manuals. It further presents strategies for the efficient teaching of posture verbs to foreign language learners. These strategies are among others awareness-raising exercises about the compulsory use of posture verbs in Germanic languages and the description of conceptual metaphors in different languages. These pedagogical avenues for the efficient teaching of the Dutch and German posture verbs constitute a first step towards the elaboration of an experimental set-up aiming at verifying them.

Keywords: posture verbs; teaching efficiency; pedagogical issues; typological differences; Romance languages; Germanic languages; conceptual metaphor; French-speaking learners; Dutch; German

1. Introduction

1.1. Scope and issues

As has been pointed out by numerous typological studies, the linguistic realization of spatial relations shows a great deal of variation across different languages (see for instance Ameka and Levinson (2007), Levinson (2003), Talmy (2000)). One of the most seminal taxonomies accounting for this variation is Talmy's basic distinction between verb-framed languages and satellite-framed languages based on the lexicalization of motion events. Verb-framed languages, like for example French, are languages in which the path of motion is encoded in the main verb, whereas the manner of motion is optionally expressed in an adjunct (see example 1). On the other hand, satellite-framed

languages like Dutch or German encode the manner of motion in the main verb and the path of motion in a satellite (see example 2). Let us look at both examples:

- (1) Fr. *Il traverse la rue (en courant).*
Lit. 'He crosses the street (while running).'
(main verb for the path: *traverser*; optional adjunct for the manner: *en courant*)
- (2) Gm. *Ich fahre ans Meer.*
Lit. 'I drive to the seaside.'
(satellite for the path: *ans*; manner of motion expressed in *fahre*).

Applied to the domain of location, i.e., the starting point of any motion event according to Talmy (2000), this typological difference concretely leads to a tendency to express locative events with neutral verbs such as *être* ('to be') or *se trouver* ('to find oneself') in French, whereas Dutch and German encode locative events with specific posture verbs such as *staan/steven* ('to stand'), *zitten/sitzen* ('to sit') or *liggen/liegen* ('to lie') (see Berthele (2004, 2006) and De Knop and Dirven (2008) for a comparison between French and German; for the difference between Dutch and French see Lemmens and Perrez (2010)). Compare the following examples:

- (3) Fr. *Il est en prison.*
Du. *Hij zit in de gevangenis.*
Gm. *Er sitzt im Gefängnis.*
Lit. 'He is/sits in prison'
- (4) Fr. *L'assiette est sur la table.*
Du. *Het bord staat op tafel.*
Gm. *Der Teller steht auf dem Tisch.*
Lit. 'The plate is/stands on the table'.

The expression of the manner of location is not optional in Germanic languages but simply the most salient way of 'saying things' (see De Knop and Gallez (2011) about the privileged manner dimension in German expressions).

In the context of foreign language learning, these typological differences often lead to difficulties, more particularly when native speakers of a verb-framed language like French acquire a satellite-framed language like Dutch or German. However, while it is generally accepted that the difficulties in the acquisition of the different semantic uses of Dutch and German posture verbs by French-speaking learners is due to typological interferences, the role of explicit instruction to foster the acquisition of posture verbs has hardly been studied. The present study takes a more applied perspective, as it (i) focuses on the role of explicit instruction for the acquisition of posture verbs and (ii) proposes some teaching strategies and tools in order to facilitate the acquisition of the more abstract uses of posture verbs by French-speaking learners. The paper also proposes a systematic review of how posture verbs are dealt with in teaching manuals for Dutch and German and will discuss some better alternatives. Following Boers (2004, 2011), we will more specifically suggest that enhancing the metaphorical awareness of the learners by introducing the conceptual metaphors underlying some of the extensions of the posture verbs, fosters the acquisition of the more abstract uses of these verbs. At this stage it should be noted that this paper is primarily based on pedagogical insights resulting from teaching experience or some smaller tests conducted with our students. But we are convinced that it constitutes a first step towards the elaboration of an experimental set-up aiming at checking our claims.

1.2. Pedagogical challenges

Recent studies have suggested that typological differences between verb-framed and satellite-framed languages lead to learning difficulties as far as the linguistic expression of spatial relations is concerned (see for instance Gullberg (2009), Lemmens (2002),

Lemmens and Perrez (2010, 2012) and De Knop and Dirven (2008)). This is more specifically the case with learners of satellite-framed languages with a verb-framed language background, such as French-speaking learners of Dutch or German, who frequently encounter difficulties with the acquisition and correct use of motion and location expressions. This can be explained by the fact that learners of satellite-framed languages have to readjust (in this case expand) semantic categories they know from their verb-framed mother tongue (L1) to fit the categories of the satellite-framed foreign language (L2) they want to acquire (see for instance Gullberg (2009), Ijaz (1996), Narasimhan & Gullberg (2011)). This readjustment is often characterized by processes of underuse and negative transfer in the target language. For French-speaking learners of Dutch Lemmens (2002) more particularly points to three types of interrelated difficulties when it comes to the encoding of locative information in the foreign language: (i) they have to get accustomed to using a posture verb instead of a neutral verb ('coding obligation'), (ii) they have to decide which posture verb to use ('coding variation') and (iii) they have to deal with the metaphorical extensions of the posture verbs ('coding flexibility').

These three problems have been further analyzed and described in a quantitative and qualitative learner corpus study by Lemmens and Perrez (2010). Their main findings are (a) that French-speaking learners underuse (or hardly use) posture verbs in their foreign language (FL) (which lines up with the coding obligation problem), (b) that about half of the mistakes by learners when using a posture verb had to do with posture verb confusion, i.e., with the selection of the wrong posture verb to encode a given locative event (which is related to the coding variation problem) and (c) that in some less frequent cases (in about 30% of the mistakes) the learners tended to overuse

the posture verbs, i.e. to use a posture verb in contexts where no such verb should be used. This kind of overgeneralization is typical of developmental patterns observed in the interlanguage of foreign language learners (Ellis 1997). These three tendencies have been confirmed in a more recent elicitation study by Lemmens and Perrez (2012) where learners had to locate a series of entities on a picture.

From our teaching experience we also know that French-speaking learners have major difficulties with the numerous abstract extensions of posture verbs in Dutch and German (i.e., the coding flexibility problem). This observation is partly confirmed by the study in Lemmens and Perrez (2010) about the use of Dutch posture verbs: a comparison of written texts produced by natives and learners shows that learners tend to use posture verbs more frequently in their basic postural and locational contexts (representing respectively 15.5 % and 17.9 % of the cases vs. 4.7 % and 10.7 % of the cases in the texts by natives), the more abstract extensions being expressed in only 30 % of the correct uses of the posture verbs (vs. 46 % in the texts by native speakers). From a quantitative point of view this suggests that learners are to some extent able to deal with the abstract extensions of *staan* ('to stand'), *liggen* ('to lie) and *zitten* ('to sit') but a more fine-grained qualitative analysis of the abstract uses by learners shows that they tend to use posture verbs in the same abstract contexts in a recurrent way. This is for instance clearly the case with *staan* ('to stand'), which they almost exclusively use in the metaphorical domain to encode the abstract notion of written material as a standing entity. These quantitative and qualitative observations may suggest that learners can acquire some ability in the expression of some more abstract patterns of posture verbs. However, this does not prove that they have understood the semantic structure of the whole category expressed by a posture verb and that they are able to recognize the

semantic relations between the more abstract uses and the postural or locational uses.

As Lemmens and Perrez (2010, p. 344) claim:

Having mastered some specific metaphorical uses of a given posture verb does not mean that the learners master the whole semantic structure of the category. [...] Our claim is that the learners, when assimilating a new pattern of use of a posture verb, might rather learn it as a separate unit and miss insights as to how the different nuances of a given posture verb relate to each other, preventing them to integrate the new pattern into the verb's semantic network.

From a more global perspective the difficulties in acquiring the metaphorical extensions of the Dutch (or German) posture verbs can be related to Littlemore's (2011, p. 48) observation that "non-native speakers tend to avoid using metaphorical senses of words, preferring to stick to more literal uses". She sees two possible explanations for this behaviour, namely (i) that "metaphorical meaning may not be salient to them or that they have not learned to pay attention to them" and/or (ii) that "the metaphorical meanings do exist in their passive vocabulary but have not yet crossed into their active vocabulary, possibly because they lack the confidence to use them correctly." (Littlemore, 2011, p. 94)

Considering the complex semantic networks posture verbs have developed in Dutch and German and the resulting learning difficulties caused by their acquisition by French-speaking learners, this paper aims at identifying possible pedagogical avenues for the efficient teaching of these Dutch and German posture verbs. Our paper is structured as follows: in Section 2 the different uses of the three posture verbs will be described in more detail for both Germanic languages Dutch and German. Section 3 proposes a critical presentation of how teaching manuals for Dutch and German deal

with the semantic uses of posture verbs. Finally, Section 4 discusses some teaching strategies and tools to facilitate the acquisition of the abstract uses of posture verbs.

2. Description of the semantic uses of posture verbs in German and Dutch

2.1. Diverging typological categories

In his language typology Talmy (1985) classified Dutch and German in one single category (i.e., satellite-framed languages), basing his argumentation on the linguistic realization of motion and location events. In a general sense, there are indeed many similarities between both Germanic languages as to the verbs for the expression of locative events: (i) both languages have three basic postural verbs corresponding to the three basic postures of human beings or animals; (ii) often the use of these verbs is not optional; (iii) the different metaphorical extensions of the German verbs more or less correspond to the semantic uses in Dutch. However, if one takes larger contexts or different syntactic structures into consideration, one realizes that German and Dutch behave differently in their concrete use of posture verbs. This is precisely what Ameka and Levinson (2007) claim in their introduction of the special issue about the typology and semantics of locative predicates when they categorize German and Dutch in different types of locative categories: Dutch is a Type II language which uses a small set of postural verbs and German a Type III language which often uses one single copula (or “dummy”) verb to express static location. Their decision to classify German in a different typological category results from the observation that “postural positionals in German [...] do not have the obligatory character of such positionals in Dutch. For in German the positionals compete with the copula *sein*” (Ameka and Levinson, 2007, p.

855). This conclusion is derived from the psycholinguistic experiments conducted by Kutscher and Schultze-Berndt (2007) for German. These experiments, i.e., the ‘Topological Relations Picture Series (TRPS)’ and the ‘Picture Series for Positional Verbs (PSPV)’, were designed by the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen. They are based on elicitation tasks and aim at analysing the linguistic encoding of concrete spatial figure-ground configurations. For instance, in the TRPS, each picture shows two or more objects of which one or one set is identified as a figure and the other as the ground, for example a cup or a set of bottles (= figure) on a table (= ground). For each picture the participants were asked to locate a given entity by answering a question of the type “Where is X?”, X representing the figure. With these experiments Kutscher and Schultze-Berndt could conclude that German is a multiverb language which uses up to ten different verbs (such as *schwimmen* ‘to float’, *hängen* ‘to hang’, *kleben* ‘to stick’, to name just a few) to encode basic locative events. Because the experiment was conducted with pictures representing inanimate figures, the very basic posture verb *sitzen* was not proposed by the informants and therefore it was not considered in the list of posture verbs by Kutscher and Schultze-Berndt (2007). Similarly, because of its primary onomasiological nature and its focus on basic locative contexts, Kutscher and Schultze-Berndt’s study (2007) – and by extension, Ameka and Levinson’s taxonomy (2007) – does not take the numerous metaphorical extensions of these German posture verbs into account, although they remain important semasiological features of their usage in German.

If one compares the syntactic structure of answers to basic locative questions of the type *Where is X?* in Dutch and German one will indeed realize that there are some differences between these languages: in German posture verbs often compete with the

copula verb *sein*, whereas in Dutch the use of posture verbs is more absolute. This difference also pertains to questions: in German the use of the general verb *sein* ‘to be’ is more frequent (e.g., *Wo sind meine Schuhe?* ‘Where are my shoes?’), whereas Dutch speakers will have the tendency to use a posture verb already in the question (e.g., *Waar staan mijn schoenen?* Lit. ‘Where do my shoes stand?’)¹. Additionally, the number of posture verbs used by natives in Dutch and German differs. Ameka and Levinson (2007, p. 864) quote six verbs for Dutch and with reference to Kutscher and Schultze-Berndt’s study (2007) ten positional verbs for German². Not only does the number of posture verbs differ between Dutch and German but, as suggested by one of the reviewers, there may even be a different selection of a posture verb in a similar context. For example, in German *Es liegt was in der Luft*, lit. ‘There lies something in the air’ (= ‘There is something in the air’), it is the verb *liegen* (‘to lie’) which is used, whereas Dutch would not use the corresponding *liggen* (‘to lie’) but *hangen* (‘hang’) [example from the reviewer]. As this paper does not aim at describing the differences between German and Dutch – considering that this would require a different type of approach in the form of a contrastive study – we will not go further into the distinctive features in the use of posture verbs in both Germanic languages. Because we can still postulate many similarities between the three basic posture verbs in both languages – as will be illustrated with the examples below – we will rather exploit the semasiological commonalities between both Germanic languages to describe the use of the three basic posture verbs in both Germanic languages in parallel. Furthermore, from the perspective of foreign language acquisition the difficulties encountered by learners with the more abstract senses of these posture verbs seem to be quite comparable for both Dutch and German.

2.2. Semantic networks of the Dutch and German posture verbs

Our description is based on Lemmens (2002), Lemmens and Perrez (2010) for Dutch and Kutscher and Schultze-Berndt (2007) and Serra-Borneto (1995, 1996) for German. The studies for German do not offer a systematic overview for the uses of the three main posture verbs: Serra-Borneto (1995) only describes the uses of *liegen* ('to lie') and *stehen* ('to stand') as representing poles of the two geometric axes, i.e., the horizontal vs. the vertical one.

Because Lemmens and Perrez's study (2010) presents the advantage of being systematic for all three Dutch posture verbs we will take their description of Dutch as a starting point for the study of the uses of posture verbs in both Germanic languages. Lemmens and Perrez (2010) distinguish for all three Dutch posture verbs *staan* ('to stand'), *liggen* ('to lie'), and *zitten* ('to sit') three main semantic uses, i.e., postural, locational and metaphorical uses. As "[t]he position of the human body is probably the first source of positional categorization" (Serra-Borneto, 1995, p. 460) the postural uses correspond to the three basic postures of human beings, i.e., the standing, sitting or lying position. The locational use refers to the location of a figure (human being, animal or entity) vis-à-vis a ground, such as in the following examples:

- (5) Du. *De bal ligt in het gras.* / Gm. *Der Ball liegt im Gras.*
Lit. 'The ball lies in the grass.'
- (6) Du. *Hij zit in de gevangenis.* / Gm. *Er sitzt im Gefängnis.*
Lit. 'He sits in the prison.'
- (7) Du. *Het bord staat op tafel.* / Gm. *Der Teller steht auf dem Tisch.*
Lit. 'The plate stands on the table.'

Posture verbs can also be used metaphorically to denote the location of abstract figures or abstract grounds. Some examples are:

- (8) Du. *De verantwoordelijkheid ligt bij jou.* / Gm. *Die Verantwortung liegt bei dir.*
Lit. 'The responsibility lies with you.' = 'You have the responsibility.'
- (9) Du. *Hij zit in de problemen.* / Gm. *Er sitzt in der Falle.*
Lit. 'He sits in the problems/in the trap.' = 'He has problems.'
- (10) Du. *Wat staat er op deze pagina?* / Gm. *Was steht auf dieser Seite?*
Lit. 'What stands on this page?' = 'What is written on this page?'

The different semantic uses of the Dutch and German posture verbs are summarized in the next section (see also Lemmens (2002) and Lemmens and Perrez (2010) for a more detailed overview of Dutch uses). The German examples were found in the German linguistic corpora of the Digitales Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache (DWDS), the Dutch examples are, unless specified, inspired from the corpus study by Lemmens and Perrez (2010) and the elicitation study by Lemmens and Perrez (2012). Their correctness has been checked with native speakers and with the Dutch version of the search engine Google. In a few cases and for the sake of completeness, some examples from one Germanic language were translated into the other Germanic language after checking the correctness of the translated examples with natives.

2.2.1. *Staan/Stehen* ('to stand')

In the postural domain *staan/steht* ('to stand') is used to refer to the standing posture of human beings or animals, for example,

- (11a) Du. *Er staan twee klanten aan de kassa.*
- (11b) Gm. *Es stehen zwei Kunden an der Kasse.*

Lit. 'There stand two customers at the cash-point.'

The image of a human being's posture extends in the locational domain to refer to any object being on its base. In the locational use it is not so much the verticality dimension which prevails with *staan/stehen* ('to stand') but much more the aspect of being on one's base, for example,

(12a) Du. *De stoelen staan in de woonkamer.*

(12b) Gm. *Die Stühle stehen im Wohnzimmer.*

Lit. 'The chairs stand in the living-room.'

Verticality only triggers the use of *staan/stehen* ('to stand') in contexts where the object's base is not salient as illustrated by the following examples:

(13a) Du. *De borden staan in de afwasmachine.*

(13b) Gm. *Die Teller stehen in der Spülmaschine.*

Lit. 'The plates stand in the dishwasher.'

In the metaphorical domain *staan/stehen* ('to stand') is used to refer to a "human being's default posture even when posture is backgrounded or even no longer at issue" (Lemmens and Perrez, 2010, p. 320), as exemplified with example (14):

(14a) Du. *Tegenwoordig staan vele jonge gezinnen voor een dilemma.*

(14b) Gm. *Heutzutage stehen viele junge Familien vor einem Dilemma.*

Lit. 'Nowadays many young families stand before a dilemma.'

In the metaphorical domain *staan/steven* ('to stand') also encodes the 'location' of any type of written material (mostly letters, texts and images) on any kind of support (including pages, websites, paintings, and so on):

(15a) Du. *Wat staat er op deze pagina?*

(15b) Gm. *Was steht auf dieser Seite?*

Lit. 'What stands on this page?'

Finally, Serra-Borneto (1995, p. 484) describes a further metaphorical use of *steven* ('to stand') which he defines as 'scale' as it "can be represented as a kind of vertically oriented path with some 'normative character'". Unfortunately, to illustrate this use, he discusses an example which is idiomatic in German, for example, *Das Thema Renovieren stand auch im Badezimmer hoch im Kurs* (Serra-Borneto, 1995, p. 484), lit. 'The topic renovation stood high in score' (= 'The topic renovation was very popular'). But the evaluative or normative dimension is expressed in some other non-idiomatic German and Dutch examples, such as:

(16a) Du. *Die jurk staat je goed.*

(16b) Gm. *Das Kleid steht dir gut.*

Lit. 'This dress stands you good.' = 'The dress fits you well and you look good in it.'

In the last section of this paper we will deal in more detail with the metaphorical concept of verticality and its normative character (see section 4.2.4).

2.2.2. *Liggen/Liegen* ('to lie')

In the postural domain *liggen/liegen* ('to lie') refers to the lying posture of human beings, for example,

(17a) Du. *Hij ligt in bed.*

(17b) Gm. *Er liegt im Bett.*

Lit. 'He lies in bed.'

The notion of horizontality is more salient for *liggen/liegen* ('to lie') than verticality is for *staan/steven* ('to stand'). In the locational domain the notion of horizontality becomes predominant in the absence of a base, for example,

(18a) Du. *Het document lag op mijn bureau.*

(18b) Gm. *Das Dokument lag auf meinem Schreibtisch.*

Lit. 'The document lay on my desk.'

The absence of a base is even more obvious in the following example of salt spilled on the table:

(19a) Du. *Er ligt veel zout op tafel.*

(19b) Gm. *Es liegt viel Salz auf dem Tisch.*

Lit. 'There lies much salt on the table.'

The notion of horizontality triggers the use of *liggen/liegen* ('to lie') to encode the location of different kinds of lines like borders and surfaces, e.g., tissues, clothes, sheets or substances, especially in the case of dimension-less entities like balls or cubes, for example,

(20a) Du. *De bal ligt in het gras.*

(20b) Gm. *Der Ball liegt im Gras.*

Lit. 'The ball lies in the grass.'

This use of *liggen/liegen* ('to lie') to denote the location of areas on some horizontal line, as if covering a given surface, motivates its use to refer to the location of cities or buildings which are then perceived as lying areas rather than standing entities. Serra Borneto (1995, p. 469) calls this semantic use the 'geotopographical location'. Here are some examples:

(21a) Du. *De kerk lag pal voor ons.*

(21b) Gm. *Die Kirche lag vor uns.*

Lit. 'The church lay in front of us.'

(22a) Du. *Amsterdam ligt in Nederland.*

(22b) Gm. *Frankfurt liegt am Main.*

Lit. 'Amsterdam lies in the Netherlands.'/'Frankfurt lies at the Main.'

In their metaphorical sense, *liggen/liegen* ('to lie') encodes the 'location' of abstract entities such as responsibilities, properties or causes, for example,

(23a) Du. *De verantwoordelijkheid ligt bij jou.*

(23b) Gm. *Die Verantwortung liegt bei dir.*

Lit. 'The responsibility lies with you.' = 'you have the responsibility.'

2.2.3. *Zitten/Sitzen* ('to sit')

In the postural domain *zitten/sitzen* ('to sit') refers to the basic sitting posture, be it with human beings or animals, for example,

(24a) Du. *Er zit een vrouw aan tafel.*

(24b) Gm. *Es sitzt eine Frau an dem Tisch.*

Lit. 'There sits a woman at the table.'

In its locational use the verb *zitten/sitzen* ('to sit') expresses either containment or contact. The expression of containment refers to contexts where a given figure is localized vis-à-vis a ground (such as school, prison, parliament), for example,

(25a) Du. *Hij zit in de gevangenis.*

(25b) Gm. *Er sitzt im Gefängnis.*

Lit. 'He sits in the prison.'

This use does not refer to a given posture although the sitting position might be the prototypical posture of the figure in this particular ground. In other words, even though a student is said to be 'sitting' at school, which can be considered as a posture typical for someone following classes at school, the use of *zitten/sitzen* ('to sit') in this context does not imply that the student is concretely sitting at his/her desk but rather refers to the global localization of the student by metonymy.

In the locational sense *zitten/sitzen* ('to sit') is also used to express a contact between a figure and a ground, for example,

(26a) Du. *De bril zit de hele dag op je neus.*³

(26b) Gm. *Die Brille sitzt den ganzen Tag auf deiner Nase.*

Lit. 'The glasses sit (= are) the whole day on your nose.'

Both locational concepts of containment and contact can further be used in a metaphorical sense, which justifies the use of *zitten/sitzen* ('to sit') as well. Such metaphorical containment is also expressed in the following examples denoting a concrete figure being contained in an abstract ground:

(27a) Du. *Ik zit in de problemen.*

(27b) Gm. *Er sitzt in der Falle.*

Lit. 'I/He sit(s) in the problems/in the trap.'

Zitten/Sitzen ('to sit') is also used to express the metaphorical conceptualisation of containment with clothing, for example,

(28a) Du. *Deze broek zit lekker.*

- (28b) Gm. *Die Hose sitzt gut.*
Lit. 'The trousers sit well.'

As pointed out by Lemmens (2002, p. 113-114) this is a special case of containment as these examples "express that the person (or part of him/her) is 'well-contained' by the clothes, i.e. 'sits' in them comfortably, as is the case for comfortable chairs".

Finally, in the metaphorical domain *zitten/sitzen* ('to sit') can also refer to non-concrete contact, such as in the following examples:

- (29a) Du. *Aan alle eenvoudige oplossingen [...] zitten grote nadelen vast.*
(from Lemmens 2002)
Lit. 'To all simple solutions [...] sit great disadvantages attached.'
- (29b) Gm. *Der Schlag hat gesessen.*
Lit. 'The punch has sat.' = 'The punch has hit home.'

Example (29b) expresses more than a non-concrete contact as it refers to the effect of the punch.

3. Critical presentation of teaching manuals for Dutch and German

Different types of possible mistakes related to the use of posture verbs by French-speaking learners were described in Section 1. They were defined as posture verb underuse, posture verb confusion, posture verb overuse and difficulties with the metaphorical extensions of posture verbs. In trying to account for these difficulties, different explanations can be provided. As already said before, posture verb underuse can typically be attributed to the typological differences existing between verb-framed and satellite-framed languages and therefore to a negative transfer from the mother tongue (L1) of the learners. Posture verb overuse is a form of overgeneralization, which is typical of the development of the learners' interlanguage. As suggested by Lemmens and Perrez (2010, p. 343):

This overuse of certain patterns not only shows that the L2 user has probably mastered the logic of certain specific uses, but also that they are exploiting these insights to encode similar situations. In doing so, they will inevitably overgeneralise or ignore collocational patterns of the target language that L1 speakers have acquired through massive and repeated exposure to linguistic input.

The cases of posture verb confusion and the problems related to the metaphorical usages of the verbs are perhaps more intricate. Although one could claim that these types of mistakes are instances of negative transfer from L1 (since these uses of posture verbs do not exist in French), they could also be induced by the kind of instruction the learners were given. In order to assess to what extent the patterns found in the learners' interlanguage could be explained in terms of instruction deficiency, we have analyzed how the semantics of posture verbs is dealt with in a series of manuals for Dutch and German. The results of this analysis are presented in this section.

Considering the typological differences between German and Romance languages as far as the expression of motion and location is concerned and the difficulties that learners encounter when trying to express location in the foreign language, it is more than surprising to notice that most teaching manuals hardly deal with the different uses of posture verbs. A few manuals give a description of posture verbs, which, however, often remains very unsatisfactory. Let us look at teaching manuals for German and Dutch in more detail.

3.1. Manuals for German

The following manuals are most frequently used in Belgian secondary schools and in university language courses for the teaching of German to French speakers:

- a. Aufderstraße, Hartmut, Heiko Bock, Mechthild Gerdes, Jutta Müller & Helmut Müller. 1992. *Themen Neu 1: Lehrwerk für Deutsch als Fremdsprache. Kursbuch*. München: Hueber.
- b. Aufderstraße, Hartmut, Werner Bönzli & Walter Lohfert. 2005. *Themen Neu 3: Lehrwerk für Deutsch als Fremdsprache. Kursbuch*. München: Hueber.
- c. Aufderstraße, Hartmut, Jutta Müller & Thomas Storz. 2005. *Lagune 1: Kursbuch Deutsch als Fremdsprache*. München: Hueber.
- d. Griesbach, Heinz. 1984. *Deutsch mit Erfolg 2: Ein Lernprogramm für Erwachsene. Lehrbuch für Fortgeschrittene*. Berlin; München: Langenscheidt.

Each manual quoted deals with posture verbs but in a different way and at different teaching levels (see a and b). In the elementary manual *Themen Neu 1* (a in the list) there is a small exercise in which the learner has to tell where Berlin's heraldic animal, the bear, is standing or where it is sitting. The pictures all represent very concrete grounds like benches, buildings, the Berlin wall, and so on. In *Themen Neu 2* which belongs to the same series as *Themen Neu 1* (see a), posture verbs are not quoted and in *Themen Neu 3* (b above), *sitzen* is quoted in some sentences illustrating "pupils 'sitting' (= being) at school". The manual *Lagune* (manual c above) has three volumes for the levels A1, A2 and B1 in the common reference frame of the Council of Europe. Only *Lagune 1* contains some exercises dealing with concrete postures expressed by posture verbs, for example, *Der Fisch liegt unter dem Tisch* (lit. 'The fish lies under the table') (2005, p. 105). The last manual considered in the list, *Deutsch mit Erfolg 2* (d), is a

handbook for adults, it offers more explanations and has hardly any pictures. Still, the examples are all very concrete, for instance, *Wo ist eigentlich der Wagen? Er steht vor dem Rathaus* (lit. ‘Actually, where is the car? It stands in front of the town hall’)⁴. In another exercise the learner has to combine a posture verb with one of the spatial prepositions. All in all, the different teaching manuals deal with the very concrete uses of posture verbs, without paying any attention to their metaphorical extensions.

3.2 . Manuals for Dutch

For Dutch the following five manuals⁵ were checked on the use of posture verbs:

- e. Devos, Rita and Fraeters, Han (1998), *Vanzelfsprekend: Nederlands voor Anderstaligen*. Leuven: Acco.
- f. Godin, Pierre, Ostyn, Paul and Degreef, François. (1993), *La Pratique du Néerlandais Avec ou Sans Maître*. Louvain-la-Neuve: Peeters.
- g. Henn, Carola, Vromans, Jef and Bijleveld, Henny (1996), *Pratique du Néerlandais de A à Z*. Bruxelles: Didier Hatier.
- h. Sonck, Gerda (2009), *Néerlandais: Grammaire de l’Etudiant*. Bruxelles: De Boeck.
- i. Wuyts, A. (2007), *Nederlands in Structuren: Socratische Grammatica van het Nederlands*. Leuven: Acco.

The elementary manual by Wuyts (2007) (see i) does not refer to posture verbs at all. Both manuals by Devos and Fraeters (1998) (e) and Godin, Ostyn and Degreef (1993) (f) speak of the concrete postures that can be expressed with posture verbs and the form of the figure, for example, *staan* (‘to stand’) for objects/persons in an upright position.

The explanations for the use of a particular posture verb are not really convincing. So for instance, Godin, Ostyn and Degreef (1993, p. 200) claim that “if the form of the object is higher than stretched, then one uses *staan* (‘to stand’)” [our translation from Dutch], but one of the illustrations for this claim is the location of ‘beds’, which does not really match the explanation. As was the case for the manuals for German, these two manuals do not refer to metaphorical extensions of the posture verbs either.

The teaching manual by Henn, Vromans and Bijleveld (1996) (see g) gives some examples of locational uses, but still the explanations remain quite general and are not always helpful to foreign students of Dutch. They refer for instance to “distance between extremities” (1996, p. 201) – which is a rather vague concept – to justify the difference in use between *staan* (‘to stand’) and *liggen* (‘to lie’) in the following examples: *De borden staan op tafel* (lit. ‘The plates stand on the table’) vs. *Het bestek ligt op tafel* (lit. ‘The cutlery lies on the table’). The claim that there must be two extremities – for example, the feet of a person and his/her head – in order to use *staan* (‘to stand’) is not really convincing when talking about plates.

Sonck’s manual (2009) (see h) is the most complete one, it already explains some of the metaphorical uses of posture verbs with the concepts of containment and contact, but still it lacks systematicity and structure. For example, Sonck (2009, p. 244) indicates that the verb *staan* (‘to stand’) can be used either to encode entities in vertical orientation (e.g., books standing on a shelf, photographs standing on a desk), to refer to containers in functional position (e.g., ash-trays, shoes, glasses, vases) or to refer to voluminous entities such as furniture (namely chairs and benches). Although these are correct instances of the use of *staan* (‘to stand’) the explanations seem to be overspecific since the notions of container or the volume of entities are not really at

issue for the selection of *staan* ('to stand'). Instead, introducing the notion of being on one's base would suffice to motivate the use of *staan* ('to stand') in all these cases.

3.3. Interim summary

To summarize, the following tendencies can be observed. First, most manuals for Dutch refer to some semantic uses of the posture verbs, whereas manuals for German do not do so explicitly. If manuals for German introduce some exercises about posture verbs it always concerns very basic concrete uses. Manuals for the acquisition of Dutch are characterized by an 'impressionistic approach' with an exemplification of concrete postural uses which correspond to the possible positions of human beings. A second observation is that generally no distinction is made in the manuals between the different uses – i.e., postural, locational, and metaphorical – and the explanations are not really helpful to the students. For instance, the use of *staan* ('to stand') is systematically presented as depending on the vertical orientation of the figure. However, this interpretation remains problematic in the case of plates, beds and other objects that are longer than high. The notion of 'being on one's base', which can help understand the whole semantic structure of *staan* ('to stand'), remains undiscussed in the manuals we examined. More specifically, they fail to describe a global semantic approach according to which each use of a posture verb would be integrated into a coherent semantic network. In most teaching manuals, metaphorical usages of the verbs are either completely neglected or presented as unrelated instances of the verb. The lack of accuracy regarding the semantic description of posture verbs observed in the manuals could explain some of the erroneous patterns in the learners' use of *staan/steven* ('to stand'), *liggen/liegen* ('to lie') and *zitten/sitzen* ('to sit'). Different teaching strategies aiming at facilitating the acquisition of posture verbs by French-speaking learners of Dutch or German are discussed in the following section.

4. Conceptual metaphors and radial networks as teaching strategies

As already explained at the beginning of this discussion, difficulties for French-speaking learners of Dutch or German depend on the typological differences in the way Germanic and Romance languages conceptualize and express posture and location events. Whereas French uses more general verbs like *être* ‘to be’ or *se trouver* ‘to find oneself’, Dutch and German have a set of posture verbs which have to be used according to the underlying conceptualization. French speakers will often transfer their L1-patterns on their expressions of L2. This frequently leads to a non-authentic way of expression in the Germanic languages. As Littlemore (2011, p. 31) puts it: “L1 categories exert strong priming effects that are then transferred into the L2”. Schmidt (1990, 2001) describes the important role of consciousness and attention in second language learning. So, when learning Dutch or German, French speakers will have to realize that expressions of posture and location are more differentiated according to the manner of posture or location in these Germanic languages. Therefore, a proper teaching methodology will have to start with awareness-raising exercises focussing on the differences between the two typological categories. After that, the different uses of posture verbs could be presented in semantic networks.

4.1. Semantic networks

In Section 2 we have described three major semantic uses for Dutch and German posture verbs. As already shown in Lemmens and Perrez (2010), learners seem to know the concrete postural and locational uses better than the more abstract uses. Therefore, the teacher can start with the more concrete uses and present them in detail. Then s/he can show the metaphorical extensions of the more concrete uses. The different uses can be introduced in the form of a semantic network representing meaning connections. It is only a small step between for example the locational container and contact meaning and the corresponding metaphorical uses of *zitten/sitzen* (‘to sit’). With semantic networks the semantic relationships between the different senses of the verbs can be presented in a motivated way. This explanation procedure should have a positive impact on memorization (Boers, 2011, p. 231). Here is an example of such a semantic network for *liggen/liegen* (‘to lie’) (compare also the description of the different uses of *liggen/liegen* in Section 2):

INSERT HERE

Figure 1: Semantic network for *liggen/liegen* ('to lie') (inspired by Lemmens 2002)

Such a representation of the semantic network of the posture verb *liggen/liegen* ('to lie') makes it possible to better visualise the boundaries between the postural, locational and metaphorical domains, as well as the interconnections between the various uses of *liggen/liegen* ('to lie') in these different domains. For instance, this representation clarifies how the notion of horizontality, derived from the basic lying posture of human beings, can motivate the encoding of surfaces (documents on a desk) and substances (salt grains spread out on a table). In turn, this image of documents on a desk of a substance spreading on a plain surface helps explaining why *liggen/liegen* ('to lie') may encode the location of areas on some horizontal axis (geotopographical location). As suggested by one of the reviewers, this geotopographical use of the verb can also be motivated by its use to locate dimension-less entities, such as balls, considering that in Euclidean space location on a map can be regarded as the location of a single point.

While it can be useful for foreign language learners to have the postural and locational senses of *liggen/liegen* ('to lie') (or of the other posture verbs) and the connections between these senses represented in a network, this visual representation falls short in clarifying the link between the more concrete senses and the metaphorical extensions of the posture verbs. In the following section, we will suggest that conceptual metaphors might be the missing explanatory link between the metaphorical extensions of the posture verbs and their more basic postural and locational uses.

4.2. Conceptual metaphors

Since Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999) and Johnson (1987) it is generally acknowledged that all human experience, also the non-perceptual one, is grounded in real perceptual world and that more abstract expressions are the result of metaphorical extensions from more concrete domains. Boers (2004, 2011), Boers and Demecheleer (1998), Li (2010) and Özçaliskan (1998) see a possibility to exploit conceptual metaphors in the teaching and learning of foreign languages. The idea behind this assumption is that conceptual metaphors are based on human experience, which is supposed to be universal. One has to recognize that it is especially "... the ways spatial organization is used to metaphorically structure abstract domains of experience" (Boers and Demecheleer, 1998, p. 197) which can be helpful in second language instruction. Boers (2011, p. 228) sees three main advantages in the application of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) to foreign language instruction: (i) it opens pathways for insightful learning which "is believed to be superior to rote learning [...]; (ii) CMT shows how seemingly unrelated expressions are actually associated through a shared conceptual metaphor [...]; and (iii) learners get more aware of the literal and concrete meaning of words which stimulates mental imagery" (Boers, 2011, p. 228). According to Boers (2004, p. 211) an "enhanced metaphor awareness" can have a positive impact on the learners' recognition of the "cross-linguistic variety in the linguistic instantiations of these metaphoric themes". Although Boers' focus is on the teaching and learning of figurative phrases, his concept of enhanced metaphorical awareness could open up new avenues for the efficient teaching of the Dutch and German posture verbs. In the following section, we discuss some of the basic conceptual metaphors

which can help capture the semantic relations between the different abstract senses of these posture verbs.

4.2.1. ABSTRACT STATES ARE LOCATIONS

Grady (1997) claims that so-called primary metaphors based on embodiment are even more basic than conceptual metaphors, they “result from a projection of basic bodily experiences onto abstract domains” (Littlemore, 2011, p. 100). One and the same primary metaphor can underlie several conceptual metaphors. One primary metaphor that characterizes the German and Dutch examples under study is: ABSTRACT STATES ARE LOCATIONS (see also Jäkel 1989; Özçaliskan 2003).

This conceptual metaphor identified by Lakoff and Johnson (1999) belongs to the list of primary metaphors because it is fundamental and early developed in life and results from our bodily interaction with our environment. Primary metaphors are shared across many cultures and are physically-based. The primary metaphor ABSTRACT STATES ARE LOCATIONS could help explain some of the metaphorical usages of *liggen* or *liegen* (‘to lie’) for instance. It is already realized in the students’ L1 and so one of the teaching strategies would consist in referring to the same underlying conceptual metaphor, while showing how it is realized in different languages (see among others Boers and Demecheleer (1998) who compare English and Dutch metaphorical expressions and Özçaliskan (2003) for her comparison of English and Turkish motion metaphors). Let us look at this conceptual metaphor and compare its different realizations in Dutch, German and French. In French we have examples such as,

(30a) Fr. *Nous sommes devant un problème.*

Lit. 'We are in front of a problem.'

(31a) Fr. *Nous avons laissé derrière nous tous les ennuis.*

Lit. 'We have left behind us all the trouble.'

(32a) Fr. *Puis au-delà même de l'intelligence, se trouve l'âme proprement dite.* (www.google.fr, 01/02/13)

Lit. 'and beyond intelligence is found the soul itself.'

In German we can find similar examples, like

(30b) Gm. *Wir stehen vor einem Problem.*

Lit. 'We stand in front of a problem.'

(31b) Gm. *Wir haben alle Schwierigkeiten hinter uns gelassen.*

Lit. 'We have left all the trouble behind us.'

(32b) Gm. *über der Intelligenz sitzt die Seele selbst.*

Lit. 'and beyond intelligence sits the soul itself.'

With such contrastive examples the teacher can already draw the learners' attention to the fact that German uses a posture verb in example (30b) (in this case *stehen*) whereas French uses the general verb *être* 'to be' in (30a); the same pertains to the French example (32a) in which the general verb *se trouver* 'to find oneself', is used whereas German favours *sitzen* in (32b). Here are some more examples:

(33a) Gm. *Die Schwierigkeit liegt in der Auffassung der beiden Konzepte.*

Lit. 'The difficulty lies in the interpretation of both concepts.'

(34a) Du. *Intelligentie ligt in interactie.* (www.google.nl, 01/02/13)

Lit. 'Intelligence lies in interaction.'

In the Dutch and German examples it is the posture verb *liggen/liegen* ('to lie') that is used. In the translations of the examples into French, the general verbs *se trouver* ('to find oneself'), *être* ('to be') or *résider* ('to reside') would be used:

- (33b) Fr. ‘La difficulté *reside/se trouve* dans l’interprétation des deux concepts.’
Lit. ‘The difficulty resides/finds itself in the interpretation of both concepts.’
- (34b) Fr. ‘L’intelligence *se trouve/est* dans l’interaction.’
Lit. ‘Intelligence finds itself/is in interaction’

These different verbs in German and French realize the same underlying conceptual metaphor ABSTRACT STATES ARE LOCATIONS. Using this metaphor as reference point could help students gain more insight into some metaphorical uses of *liggen/liegen* (‘to lie’). But this is not the only conceptual metaphor that plays a role in the metaphorical extensions of posture verbs. Let us now look at some more primary metaphors that are relevant for the abstract uses of posture verbs.

4.2.2. CATEGORIES ARE CONTAINERS

A primary metaphor that characterizes many metaphorical uses of *zitten/sitzen* (‘to sit’) is CATEGORIES ARE CONTAINERS, as illustrated in the following example:

- (35) Du. *Er zat een zekere urgentie in hun onderneming.* (Knack, 2012)
Lit. ‘There sat some emergency in their enterprise.’

In this example, the enterprise is presented as a container containing some kind of emergency. This metaphorical use of *zitten* (‘to sit’) can easily be related to its locative uses (see example 25a above), while the conceptual metaphor CATEGORIES ARE CONTAINERS motivates the metaphorical extension of *zitten* (‘to sit’). Also in the

following examples (repeated here for the sake of convenience) the problems or the trap are seen as containers and it is as if he were ‘sitting’ in the middle of these containers:

(27a) Du. *Hij zit in de problemen.*

(27b) Gm. *Er sitzt in der Falle.*

Lit. ‘He sits in (= has) the problems/trap.’

In German body-parts are often viewed as containers, in which case it is the underlying metaphor BODY IS A CONTAINER which is at stake – as also quoted by Özçaliskan (2003, p. 195) in her comparative list of target domains and metaphorical mappings observed in English and Turkish. This metaphor is realized at the German linguistic level with the posture verb *sitzen*⁶:

(36) Gm. *Der Schmerz sitzt im Magen.*

Lit. ‘The pain sits (= is) in the stomach.’

Here are some more examples of body-parts with the posture verb *sitzen*: *Ein Krampf sitzt im Bein* (lit. ‘a cramp sits in the leg’), *Zähne sitzen locker im Mund* (lit. ‘teeth sit loose in the mouth’), *ein Splitter sitzt im Fuß* (lit. ‘a splinter sits in the foot’), and so on.

The teaching methodology dealing with posture verbs should draw the learner’s attention to the use of the posture verb *sitzen/zitten* (‘to sit’) for the linguistic realization of the conceptual metaphor CATEGORIES ARE CONTAINERS. This, in turn, could have a positive impact on the learners’ integration of the abstract senses of *zitten* and *sitzen* (‘to sit’).

4.2.3. TIME IS LOCATION

Serra-Borneto (1995, p. 480) already discussed some of the examples with German *liegen* and temporal expressions: “Time is seen as developing along a one-dimensional axis (notably the front-back axis [...]), and since *liegen* is the verb selected for highlighting the one-dimensional axis in the spatial domain (geometrical location), its use for temporal expressions seems to be consistent”. Here, too, there is a conceptual metaphor underlying the use of *liegen* with time expressions, i.e., TIME IS LOCATION. The following example illustrates this metaphor:

(37) Gm. *Der Tag liegt noch vor uns.*

Lit. ‘The day lies ahead of us.’

(38) Du. *De professionele toekomst van jonge Portugese werkers ligt in China.* (www.presseurop.eu/nl, 01/02/2013)

Lit. ‘The professional future of young Portuguese workers lies in China.’

(39) Fr. *Notre futur est devant nous, nous ne pouvons plus rien y changer.*
(from www.google.fr, 01/02/2013)

Lit. ‘Our future is in front of us, we cannot change anything to it anymore.’

Again, it is important to point out that this conceptual metaphor is realized in French as well as in Dutch and German, but that French uses different linguistic means to instantiate it.

4.2.4. CONTROL IS UP/LACK OF CONTROL IS DOWN

In his description of the uses of *stehen* (‘to stand’) Serra-Borneto (1995, 1996) refers to the figurative extension of the notion of verticality in that “the idea of controlling is

metaphorically related to an upper position (CONTROL IS UP), lacking control to a low position (LACK OF CONTROL IS DOWN)” (Serra-Borneto, 1995, p. 478). Considering that the standing posture is generally associated with power and a greater control of bodily action (see Lemmens 2002), it is not surprising that the posture verb *staan/stehen* (‘to stand’) is used to encode such metaphorical extensions:

- (40) Gm. *Die Konferenz steht unter der Schirmherrschaft des bayrischen Staatsministers P.S.* (from Serra-Borneto 1995: 479).
Lit. ‘The conference stands under the auspices of the Bavarian state minister P.S.’
- (41) Du. *Deze raad heeft een bepaalde macht, maar staat onder de autoriteit van de CPA.* (from nl.wikipedia.org, 01/02/2013)
Lit. ‘This council has a given power, but stands under the authority of the CPA.’

This primary conceptual metaphor is also realized in French by different expressions, for example,

- (42) Fr. *Les décisions se prennent dans les étages supérieurs.*
Lit. ‘Decisions are taken in the upper floors.’
- (43) Fr. *L’organisation mondiale de la Francophonie est placée sous l’autorité de trois instances politiques.* (from www.google.com, 31/01/13)
Lit. ‘The international organization of Francophony is placed under the authority of three political authorities.’

Again a greater awareness-raising of the different realizations of these metaphors in Dutch and German as compared with the mother tongue of the students, i.e., in this case French, may have a positive impact on the learners' understanding of the whole semantic structure of the posture verbs. Li (2010, p. 208) and Boers (2011, p. 229) distinguish different steps in this awareness-raising enterprise. Firstly, the students should realize that metaphors are more than simple "rhetorical embellishments" (Li 2010, p. 208) but that they structure the way we perceive and make sense of our physical environment and our bodily interactions with it. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 42) put it, metaphors are "a means of understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another". Secondly, following Boers' (2011, p. 229) recommendation, "[t]he students may be asked to think of reasons for the existence of the given conceptual metaphors (i.e., their grounding in physical experience)". Finally, the students should think of how these basic conceptual metaphors are instantiated in the different languages and compare these different linguistic realizations. But the awareness-raising enterprise must be accompanied by additional classroom activities. Boers (2011, p. 229) suggests a few activities, for example, to compare expressions in L2 "with expressions in their mother tongue, to detect the metaphors in a text, to invent a context in which a given expression would fit, and so on." There are no limits to the teacher's creativity.

4.3. Figure and ground

Before we close this discussion we have to deal with a further question. Similar examples can be used with different posture verbs depending on the meaning the

speaker wants to convey. To facilitate the selection of a specific posture verb in the metaphorical uses, one needs a further distinction, i.e., the one between ‘figure’ and ‘ground’. According to Talmy (2000) the figure is ‘the thing, the object’ which is spoken about, it is often linguistically realized by the grammatical subject, whereas the ground is the entity against which the figure is located. The metaphoricity of the examples can concern the figure, i.e., the part of the sentence one is talking about, or the ground, i.e., more or less what is said about the figure (see also Dirven and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2010, p. 22). Here are some examples (some of the examples are repeated for the sake of convenience):

- Concrete figure in abstract location:

(27a) Du. *Ik zit in de problemen.*

(27b) Gm. *Ich sitze in der Falle.*

Lit. ‘I sit in the problems/trap.’

- Abstract figure in concrete location:

(44) Du. *De functies die in hun smartphone zitten [...]* (from Knack 2012)

Lit. ‘The functions that sit in their mobile phones [...]’

(45) Gm. *Erfolg liegt in der Familie.*

Lit. ‘Success lies in the family.’

Depending on whether the figure or the ground is metaphorical, the one or the other posture verb may often be selected. Compare the above examples (23a) and (23b) (repeated here for the sake of convenience) with (46a) and (46b):

(23a) Du. *De verantwoordelijkheid ligt bij jou.*

(23b) Gm. *Die Verantwortung liegt bei Dir.*

Lit. 'The responsibility lies with you.'

(46a) Du. *Hij staat voor de verantwoordelijkheid.* (from www.google.nl,
13/02/2013)

(46b) Gm. *Er steht vor der Verantwortung.*

Lit. 'He stands in front of the responsibility.'

The expressions in (23) and (46) focus on different perspectives of the same situation referring to the conceptual metaphor ABSTRACT STATES ARE LOCATIONS which triggers the use of different posture verbs in Dutch and German. In (46a) and (46b) the concrete figure represents the canonical position 'to be on a base' which leads to the use of *staan/stehen* ('to stand'). In (23a) and (23b) the figure is abstract and therefore not characterized by a base, that's why *liggen/liegen* ('to lie') is selected. As already mentioned in section 4.2.1 it is interesting to point out that this conceptual metaphor is also realized in French but with a different linguistic expression, for example,

(47) Fr. *Il doit faire face à ses responsabilités.*

Lit. 'He must face his responsibilities.'

5. Conclusions and perspectives

This article deals with the difficulties related to the acquisition of Dutch and German posture verbs by French-speaking learners. Regarding possible teaching strategies, our claim is that the lexical complexity of posture verbs should be introduced in a structured way, i.e., by following the next steps. Firstly, learners should become aware of the

typological differences existing between their mother tongue and the target language. They have to realize that as opposed to French – which uses general verbs like *être* ‘to be’ or *se trouver* ‘to find oneself’ – German and Dutch favour a more differentiated way of expressing location with a variety of posture-specific verbs. Secondly, following Boers (2011) we suggest that the different extensions of the posture verbs in the locational and metaphorical domains should be introduced in the form of semantic networks by insisting on the relationships existing between these meaning extensions. Thirdly, and most importantly, the teaching strategy should focus on the basic conceptual metaphors underlying and motivating the different meaning extensions and show how, i.e., with which linguistic means, these metaphors are instantiated in different languages. Our description was limited to a few conceptual metaphors, for example, ABSTRACT STATES ARE LOCATIONS, CATEGORIES ARE CONTAINERS, TIME IS LOCATION. A systematic list of conceptual metaphors which are relevant for the use of posture verbs would enrich the teaching methodology.

The hypothesis of the positive impact of conceptual metaphors on the learning of the semantic diversity of posture verbs should be tested in further experimental studies. At this moment we cannot report on a large-scale study showing the efficiency of such a teaching methodology. However, a pre-hoc study on the German posture verb *sitzen* (see De Knop, forthc. 2014), conducted with two groups of French-speaking learners shows encouraging results for this methodology. This pre-hoc study, conducted with 16 French-speaking students in translation and interpretation studies at a Brussels university of applied sciences, aimed at measuring the impact of the three-step teaching strategy described above on the adequate use of *sitzen* (‘to sit’) by these learners. To do so, the study was subdivided into (i) a pre-test consisting of 14 cloze sentences (11 of

which were typical *sitzen* contexts and 3 distractors), (ii) a teaching session of 45' including awareness-raising exercises, the presentation of the semantic network of *sitzen* ('to sit') and the discussion of the role of conceptual metaphors for the more abstract extensions, and (iii) a post-test, which took place just after the teaching session, and which was based on a similar cloze test procedure, but contained different sentences. A control test conducted with 20 native speakers of German showed that these used the verb *sitzen* 'to sit' in 57% of the contexts in which it was expected, confirming the validity of the cloze sentences. The results of the pre-hoc study with French-speaking learners show an interesting tendency: while they used the verb *sitzen* ('to sit') in only 1% of the cases in the pre-test, they used it in 56% of the cases in the post-test, which suggests a major impact of the teaching session on their ability to deal with the various senses of the German posture verb. Although this pre-hoc study should be considered with some methodological caution (low number of participants, post-test taking place just after the teaching session, cloze test measuring receptive lexical knowledge,...), it at least suggests that focusing on the semantic networks of the posture verbs and on the role of conceptual metaphors might effectively lead to a certain success in the learning and adequate use of posture verbs by French-speaking learners. In future research, the benefits of this teaching methodology should be tested in a more systematic way and a more controlled context, by paying attention to long-term results, the variation of posture verbs in both Germanic languages, and production abilities. Such controlled experimental set-up is the only way to effectively measure the impact of the didactic avenues proposed in this paper.

Notes

* We would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their numerous constructive comments on an earlier version of this paper.

1. As pointed out by one of the reviewers, Dutch might use *zijn* ‘to be’ in such *Where*-questions, e.g. *Waar zijn mijn schoenen?* (Lit. ‘Where are my shoes’). However, assuming the saliency of the canonical position of the entity in questions, it is often the case that a posture verb will be used.
2. The list of ten verbs is not even exhaustive as they do not deal with the verb *sitzen* for various reasons (see Kutscher and Schultze-Berndt 2007).
3. As suggested by one of the reviewers, in Dutch, glasses can alternatively be said to “stand” on one’s nose, where the use of *staan* (‘to stand’) can be interpreted as referring to the basic functional position of the glasses. However, as far as this example is concerned, the notion of contact is still what motivates the use of *zitten/sitzen*.
4. This simple example confirms what has been said in the discussion about the differences between Dutch and German, namely that German often favours the verb *sein* (‘to be’) in questions, rather than the posture verb. Dutch on the contrary will also use a posture verb in the question itself.
5. The *Algemene Nederlandse Spraakkunst* (ANS) or *Taalboek Nederlands* were not taken into account although they are general reference books for the Dutch language. But they mainly deal with phonology, morphology and syntax, which probably explains why they do not refer to the semantic uses of posture verbs.
6. As remarked by one of the anonymous reviewers, there is a difference between German and Dutch in the realization of this conceptual metaphor as German will say that teeth *sit* loose in the mouth (e.g., *Zähne sitzen locker im Mund*), whereas you say that they *stand* loose in Dutch, which illustrates the base-aspect of teeth in the mouth.

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