

Construction-based teaching of the German caused motion and intransitive constructions to Italian learners

Sabine De Knop and Fabio Mollica

Université Saint-Louis, Brussels

Università degli Studi di Milano

sabine.deknop@usaintlouis.be

fabio.mollica@unimi.it



1. Introduction

Use of Placement (PLV) and Posture (PSV) Vs in German

→ **challenge for learners**

(1) *Im Deutschen muss man ein Komma zwischen Hauptsatz und Nebensatz setzen.* [Placement V]

Lit. 'In German must one a comma between main sentence and subordinate sentence [ACCUSATIVE] set.'

(2) *Im Deutschen muss ein Komma zwischen Hauptsatz und Nebensatz stehen.* [Posture V]

Lit. 'In German must a comma between main sentence and subordinate sentence [DATIVE] stand.'

Difficulties:

- Specific syntactic structure
- Correct selection of a PLV (*stellen/setzen/legen*) or PSV (*stehen/sitzen/liegen*)
- Specification of morpho-syntactic cases
- in 'Funktionsverbgefügen' (Eisenberg 2006 or Van Pottelberge 2001),
e.g. *in Verbindung setzen* (lit. 'to set into contact' = 'to get in touch')
in den Vordergrund stellen (lit. 'to put into the foreground' = 'to place special emphasis on')

- No systematic study in scientific literature,
 - Few studies for German focus on one specific aspect, i.e.
 - PSVs (De Knop 2014; Kutscher & Schultze-Berndt 2007),
 - PLVs (Berthele 2012; Fagan 1991)

- no systematicity in teaching manuals for German:
 - Themen Neu 1 (1992), Themen Neu 3 (2005), Lagune 1 (2005), Deutsch mit Erfolg 2 (1984)*
 - only concrete expressions of objects in manuals

➤ Aim of our study: make up for this gap!

- Describe the variation with German PLVs
- Describe learning difficulties for foreign learners
- Propose adequate teaching methodology based on Construction Grammar Model (CxG)
- Compare a traditional with a constructionist teaching methodology
- Test methodology with Italian master-students at University of Milano

2. Causes for learning difficulties

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

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

(3) *Leg das Buch auf den Tisch*

Lit. 'Lay the book on the table'.

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

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

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

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

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

Italian = verb-framed language (Talmy 2000)

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

Difficulties for Italian learners of German

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

- **Asymmetry** in encoding of placement (Narasimhan et al. 2012: 3) between different languages
- Often simplification through **non-use of placement/posture Vs** (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)

⇒ **Need to deal with PLVs/PSVs in detail and to offer some pedagogical aids**

3. Assumptions underlying the study

- **Posture + placement verbs** etymologically + diachronically linked (Berthele 2012: 149; Kluge 1883/2011)

stehen ('to stand')/*stellen* ('to put upright')

sitzen ('to sit')/*setzen* ('to put in a sitting position')

liegen ('to lie')/*legen* ('to put in a lying position')

stecken ('to be stuck')/*stecken* ('to put in smt tight')

hängen ('to be hanging')/*hängen* ('to hang')...

→ **Describe their uses in a parallel way**

(6) *Die Mutter legt das Kind ins Bett* [+ CAUSATIVE] [PLV]

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

(7) *Das Kind liegt im Bett* [- CAUSATIVE] [PSV]

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

■ Posture and Placement Vs used in specific Cs:

- PLVs: causative/caused motion C
- PSVs: intransitive C

→ Look at + describe Cs

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

Inspired by Goldberg's CxG (1995, 2006): abstract construction

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'

➤ **PSVs** used in intransitive motion construction

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

➤ Intransitive motion C linked to Caused motion C
by '**part-of-relation**'

4. Study

■ AIM

- More efficient to describe + teach both V types in Cs ?
- More efficient to teach them at same time?
- Compare traditional teaching method with constructionist

■ PARTICIPANTS

- 2 Groups of Italian master-I students at University of Milano, learning German
- N = 20 students per group

4. Study

■ TEST DESIGN

- Cloze test, fill in a verb
- 30 sentences, 7 distractors
- Pretest & posttest: same amount but different sentences

Ex.

Setzen Sie das fehlende Verb ein.

	Satz	fehlendes Verb
1	Seitdem er klein ist, ... er in Berlin.	
2	Kannst du bitte die Teller in die Spülmaschine ...	
3	Ich habe großen Hunger, wann kann ich etwas ...?	
4	Kannst du ohne Brille lesen, was an der Tafel geschrieben	
5	Er ... vor einem Problem.	
6	Die Verletzten ... ihre Hoffnung in die Hände der Helfer.	
7	Er wollte ein neues Auto ..., hatte aber kein Geld.	
8	Seitdem sie arbeitslos ist, ... sie in Schwierigkeiten.	
9	Der Arzt fragte: Wo ... der Schmerz?	
10	Ich habe so viel zu tun und ... unter Druck.	

4. Study

- PRETEST:

- done 1 week before the lessons
- « out of the blue »

- TEACHING METHODOLOGY CONTROL GROUP:

- traditional lesson by Fabio M. (45 min)
- Differences in orientation with PSVs and PLVs
- Also possible use in fixed expressions ('Funktionsverbgefügen')
- Case-marking

4. Study

▪ TEACHING METHODOLOGY TEST GROUP:

- Lesson by Sabine DK (45 min)
- Starting point: both Cs (caused motion + intransitive motion) + realisation with Vs
- Enriched by exs from tables with semantic uses of PSVs + PLVs: postural, locational, metaphorical

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

SITZEN/SETZEN

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

4. Study

■ RESULTS

➤ Immediate posttest in both groups

Control group:

	Pretest CG		Posttest CG	
Correct answers	157	34 %	277	60 %
Wrong answers	303	66 %	183	40 %

t-Test with paired samples:

$P(T \leq t)$ einseitig .000001, **very significant**

4. Study

■ RESULTS

➤ Test group:

	Pretest TG		Posttest I TG	
Correct answers	104	23 %	284	62 %
Wrong answers	356	77 %	176	38 %

t-Test with paired samples:

$P(T \leq t)$ einseitig .0000006, **very significant**

4. Study

■ RESULTS

Control group + Test group compared:

	Pretest CG		Posttest CG		Pretest TG		Posttest TG	
Correct answers	157	34 %	277	60 %	104	23 %	284	62 %
Wrong answers	303	66 %	183	40 %	356	77 %	176	38 %

- Similar results with posttests CG & TG;
- But TG not so good results for pretest => great progress!
- Confirmed by Chi-square test: $p = .004$, **very significant**

5. Conclusions

Teaching with Constructions + semantic uses

→ integrative approach:

- Learn structures with the matching lexemes

(= PLVs/PSVs) in Cs.

- In line with Ellis & Cadierno (2009: 114):

[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.

- Additional info about **morpho-syntactic cases**
 - accusative in caused motion Cs*
 - dative in intransitive Cs*
- Favorite prepositions in Cs (Schönefeld 2006)

6. Perspectives

- **Design exercises** with specific constructions + corresponding PLVs/PSVs
- holistic activity structures (Norris 2009)
 - make connections among linguistic forms, their meanings and situations
- **Develop strategies for selection** of PLV/PSV, esp. in collocations
- Also speak of **metaphor** for description of more abstract uses

THANK YOU !



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