

From conceptualizations to
linguistic expressions
in Romance and Germanic languages

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1. Different languages = different conceptualizations

When learning a foreign language → **surprise** about the way some aspects are being expressed.

- **Some examples** from my experience as French-speaking native speaker learning German:
 - difference between eating by human beings and eating by animals



essen (,to eat ‘)



fressen (,to eat by an animal‘)



fressen (,to eat like an animal‘)

- D: *einen Kaffee kochen* (,to cook/to boil a coffee') → has to do with different ways of cooking:



braten ,to fry'



backen ,to bake'



kochen ,with boiling water'

- D: kitchen utensil

Eierpiekser (,egg pricker')



- Has to do with the way **different languages conceptualize** objects/events around us
- *Formal differences between languages are symptomatic of differences in conceptualization.* (Taylor, 1993: 213)
- Some aspects/dimensions are more important in some languages than in others,
E.g. Inuits: many words for different sorts of snow

Words For Snow

BY ADAM JACOT DE BOINOD

The circumpolar people have many words for snow in all of its forms. Here is a compilation from the Inuit in Greenland and Canada, the Yupik in Eastern Siberia and Aleut in Alaska.

- * Snow – **kaniktshaq**
- * No snow – **aputaitok**
- * To snow – **qanir, qanunge, qanugglir**
- * Snowy weather – **nittaatsuq, qannirsuq**
- * To get fine snow or rain particles – **kanevcir**
- * First falling – **apingaut**
- * Light falling – **qannialaag**
- * Wet and falling – **natatgo naq**
- * In the air, falling – **qaniit**
- * Feathery clumps of falling snow – **qanipalaat**
- * Air thick with snow – **nittaalaq**
- * Rippled surface of snow – **kaiyuglak**
- * Light, deep enough for walking – **katiksugnik**
- * Fresh without any ice – **kanut**
- * Crusty – **sillik**
- * Soft for travelling – **mauyasiorpok**
- * Soft and deep where snowshoes are needed for travel – **taiga**
- * Powder – **nutagak**
- * Salty – **pokaktok**

- * Wind-beaten – **upsik**
- * Fresh – **nutaryuk**
- * Packed – **aniu**
- * Sharp – **panar**
- * Crusty that breaks under foot – **karakartanaq**
- * Rotten, slush on sea – **qinuq**
- * Best for building an igloo – **pukaangajuq**
- * Glazed in a thaw – **kiksrukak**
- * Watery – **mangokpok**
- * Firm (the easiest to cut, the warmest, the preferred) – **pukajaw**
- * Loose, newly fallen which cannot be used as it is, but can provide good building material when compacted – **ariloqaq**
- * That a dog eats – **aniusarpok**
- * That can be broken through – **mauya**
- * Floating on water – **qanisqineq**
- * For building – **auverk**
- * On clothes – **ayak**
- * Beaten from clothes – **tiluktorpok**

- * Much on clothes – **aputainnarowok**
- * Crust – **pukak**
- * Cornice, formation about to collapse – **navcaq**
- * On the boughs of trees – **qali**
- * Blown indoors – **sullarniq**
- * Snowdrift overhead and about to fall – **mavsa**
- * Snowdrift that blocks something – **kimaugruk**
- * Smoky drifting snow – **siqoq**
- * Arrow shaped snowdrift – **kalutoganiq**
- * Newly drifting snow – **akelrorak**
- * Snowstorm – **pirsuq, pirsirsursuaq, qux**
- * Violent snowstorm – **igadug**
- * Blizzard – **pirta, pirtuk**
- * Avalanche – **sisuuk, aput sisurtuq**
- * To get caught in an avalanche – **navcite**

Adam Jacot de Boinod is author of The Meaning of Tingo published by Penguin Books.

2. Cognitive Linguistics

- Language use grounded in concrete situations and our perception of these situations and of reality
- As speakers of language community, we conceptualize reality and categorize objects and events around us

E.g. *table*



- **Talmy** (1975) approached linguistics with insights from cognitive gestalt psychology: viewing a scene, figure/ground dichotomy, windowing of attention, etc.



E.g. *The bicycle is against the house*
The house is against the bicycle

- **Langacker** (1987) turned insights into *Cognitive Grammar*
 - Speakers select some elements for description of scenes, perspective on situation
 - Speakers assemble elements and relations into higher relationships, then to sentences and text
 - Language meaning = result of conceptualizations and categorizations

- Conceptualizations + categorizations not universal,
but dependent on culture
- Different speech communities privilege
different conceptualizations + different expressions/
'lexicalization patterns' (Talmy 2000)

German	English	Dutch	French
<i>Lebensgefahr</i>	<i>life danger</i>	<i>levensgevaar</i>	<i>danger de mort</i>
<i>Schraubenzieher</i>	<i>screwdriver</i>	<i>schroevendraaier</i>	<i>tournevis</i>
<i>Hufeisen</i>	<i>horse-shoe</i>	<i>hoefijzer</i>	<i>fer à cheval</i>
<i>Bürgersteig</i>	<i>sidewalk, pavement</i>	<i>voetpad</i>	<i>trottoir</i>



(i) 1 similar word for different concepts

e.g. E/F/D: *Marmelade*

→ E = jam of orange

D = jam

F = stewed fruit



(ii) 1 word/concept in L1; several words/concepts in L2

- difference between eating by human beings and eating by animals



essen (,to eat')



fressen (,to eat by an animal')



fressen (,to eat like an animal')

- German posture verbs

E + F: **1 single word** for posture (E: *to be*; F: *être*)

D: **variety of posture verbs**

E.g. *Wo liegt die Zeitung?*

(lit. 'Where does the paper lie?' = 'Where is the paper?')

Die Tasse steht auf dem Tisch

(lit. 'The cup stands on the table')

Die Brille sitzt auf der Nase

(lit. 'The glasses sit on the nose')

➤ Obligation to express posture with manner dimension/orientation

➤ In E + F: expression of existence

○ German placement/'put' verbs

Wo hast du die Zeitung hingelegt?

(lit. 'Where have you put (in a lying position) the paper?')

Er hat die Teller in die Spülmaschine gestellt

(lit. 'He has put (upright) the plates into the dishwasher')

- E + F: 1 single word for placement (E: *to put*; F: *mettre*)
 - D: **variety of placement verbs**
-
- Expression of manner/orientation for placement
 - No superordinate term in German like English *to put*.

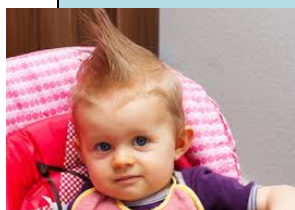
- Most common German posture and placement/'put' verbs

German posture verbs	German placement verbs
<i>stehen</i> ('to stand')	<i>stellen</i> ('to put upright')
<i>sitzen</i> ('to sit')	<i>setzen</i> ('to put in a sitting position')
<i>liegen</i> ('to lie')	<i>legen</i> ('to put in a lying position')
<i>stecken</i> ('to be stuck')	<i>stecken</i> ('to put into st. tight')

- Posture and placement verbs also for more abstract events
- Inventory of semantic uses: postural, locational, metaphorical
(inspired by De Knop & Perrez 2014, Lemmens 2002, Lemmens & Perrez 2010)

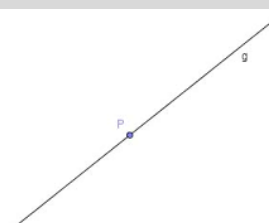
Stehen /Stellen

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 supergel 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 <u>setzt</u> 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?'	Wo hast du meine Schuhe hingelegt? Lit. 'Where did you lay my shoes?'
		Sie lag im Bett und schlief Lit. 'She lay in bed and was sleeping'	Die Mutter legte das Baby ins Bett Lit. 'The mother laid the baby in the bed'
locational	Location of dimension-less entities	Es liegt viel Salz auf dem Tisch Lit. 'There lies much salt on the table'	Sie hat viel Salz auf den Tisch gelegt Lit. 'She has laid much salt on the table'
		Der Ball liegt im Sand Lit. 'The ball lies in the sand'	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'
	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	sitzen	setzen
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



(iii) different words for same reality

→ different conceptualizations

e.g. traffic lights

F: *orange*

D: *gelb* ('yellow')

E: *yellow/amber*



German	English	Dutch	French
<i>Lebensgefahr</i>	<i>Life danger</i>	<i>Levensgevaar</i>	<i>Danger de mort</i>
<i>Schraubenzieher</i>	<i>Screwdriver</i>	<i>Schroevendraaier</i>	<i>tournevis</i>
<i>Hufeisen</i>	<i>Horse-shoe</i>	<i>hoefijzer</i>	<i>Fer à cheval</i>
<i>Bürgersteig</i>	<i>pavement</i>	<i>voetpad</i>	<i>Trottoir</i>



IV. No word in L1 for a concept in L2

- The L2-concept does not exist in L1

D: *hitzefrei* ('to have time off because of extreme heat')

Rabenmutter (lit. 'raven mother' = 'bad mother because she has a job and does not look after her children')

in den Geburtstag hineinfeiern ('to start with a birthday party the evening before your birthday, have a party through the night up to the birthday')

D: *Strandkorb* (lit. 'beach basket')



D: *Strandkorb* (lit. 'beach basket')



Trümmerfrauen (lit. 'rubble women')



Schultüte (lit. 'school cone')



Weihnachtspyramide (lit. 'Christmas pyramid')



Räuchermännchen (lit. '(incense) smoker')



Schlüsselkinder (lit. ‚key children‘)



- **L2-reality exists in L1 but no word in L2**

Geschwister ('sibling')

e.g. *Hast Du Geschwister?* (lit. 'Do you have brothers and/or sisters?')



Glatze ('bald head, dome')

e.g. *Er hat eine Glatze* (lit. 'He has a bald head')



Vorfreude (lit. 'joy in advance')

Feierabend (lit. 'home time/end of work/quitting time')

Zweisamkeit (lit. 'loneliness for two')

3. Differences between Romance and Germanic languages at the level of constructions

- German favors expressions of manner
- Examples with the German preposition *bis* ('up to/until')

(1) *Wir fahren **bis** Paris*

(‘We drive **up to** Paris’)



(dreamstime.com)

(2) *Wir fahren **bis an** den See*

(‘We drive **up to** the lake’)



(powerslider.de)

(3) *Das Auto ist **bis in** den See gefahren*

(lit. 'The car is **up to into** the sea driven')



(gr.ch)

(4) *Sie fahren **bis an** den See **hinunter***
(Lit. 'They drive **up to** the lake **downwards**')



(rabe-bike.de)

(5) *Sie laufen **bis an den See** **hinauf***
(Lit. 'They run **up to** the lake **upwards**')



(alpinforum.com/1234gifs.de)



Meaning of examples with German preposition *bis*

(1) *Wir fahren bis Paris*

(‘We drive up to Paris’)

(2) *Wir fahren bis an den See*

(‘We drive up to the lake’)

(3) *Das Auto ist bis in den See gefahren*

(lit. ‘The car is up into the sea driven’)

➤ Spatial meaning

- expression of stretch + viewpoint
- prototypical/basic meaning

➤ temporal meaning also possible

(6) *Große Spieler sitzen spät bis in die Nacht* (Cosmas II:100/DEZ.75273)

(Lit. 'Great players sit late until into the night')

(7) *In Wien tanzt man gewöhnlich bis Ostern, also bis in den April hinein* (DWDS)

(Lit. 'In Vienna dances one usually until Easter, i.e. until into the april within')

- Metaphorical extension: 'TIME IS SPACE' (Radden 2003)

➤ **Also fictive motion/mental scanning**

(8) *Ich werde dich lieben bis in den Tod* (DWDS)

(Lit. 'I will love you until into the death')

(9) *Die Älteren sind motiviert bis unter die Haarspitzen* (Cosmas II: M02/FEB.10642)

(Lit. 'The elder are motivated up to under the hair ends')

(10) *Er ist konservativ bis in die Knochen*

(Lit. 'He is conservative up to into the bones')

■ Metaphorical extension:

‘**ABSTRACT STATE IS LOCATION/MOTION**’

■ Often **bodypart** for ‘limit’ (cf. anthropocentric view)

■ Germanic way of expressing motion events

Model of Linguistic typology (Talmy 2000)

Germanic vs. Romance languages in expressions of motion events

Germ. *Er rannte durch den Garten.* [satellite]

Engl. *He ran across the garden.* [satellite]

Fr. *Il traversa le jardin (en courant).* [full verb]

Engl. *He crossed the garden (running).* [full verb]

- path of motion with satellites (prepositions, particles) or full verb
- Germanic = satellite-framed vs. Romance = verb-framed
- salience of manner of motion in Germanic
- manner of motion in the main verb in Germanic
- Examples with *bis* typical Germanic pattern

4. Learning strategies for foreign conceptualizations + expressions

- Lantolf (1999: 29f):

To what extent, it is possible for people to become cognitively like members of other cultures; that is, can adults learn to construct and see the world through culturally different eyes ? (...) The focus (...) is precisely on trying to understand what needs to happen for someone to acquire (i.e. appropriate) a second culture.

- Difficulties because you cannot rely on translation

➤ **Strategies** are needed

A. Scenarios

B. Embodiment

A. Scenarios

- Because learning a foreign language is about recognizing different conceptualizations => need to **identify concepts + expressions**
- **To do so:**
 - Try as much as possible to be in contact with the foreign culture (TV, internet, newspapers, magazines, or even better stay in country)
 - Teachers need to transmit foreign culture with description of "scenarios/lifelike situations" (Di Pietro 1987: 3)
 - Example: Advent + Christmas in Germany

Christmas + advent culture in Germany

- 4 Sundays before Christmas: advent time with *Adventskranz* (wreath + 4 candles)



Christmas + advent culture in Germany

- 24 December: Church, presents
- Decoration: *Weihnachtsbaum* (Christmas tree on 24 Dec. with real candles!)



■ Decoration:

Räuchermännchen



Nussknacker



Krippe (crib)



Weihnachtspyramide

■ Food:

Adventsplätzchen (biscuits in advent time)

Glühwein (moulded wine)



On 25 Dec: *Weihnachtsgans* (roasted goose with apples, no turkey!)



Organisation of school in Germany

- Not so many *Kindergarten*; Kindergarten is not part of school
- Grundschule ('primary school') only 4 years
- Till recently: 13 years of school till *Abitur* (gives access to university)
- Only in the mornings (changing) → *Halbtagsschule* ('half day school'), children come back home for lunch
- Many mothers are at home; if not → *Rabenmutter* ('raven mother') + *Schlüsselkinder* ('key children')
- If too hot (27 centigrades in class-rooms), pupils are sent back home → *hitzefrei* (= 'heat-free')

B. Embodiment

Cognitive Linguistics: conceptual categories + expressions are result of **embodied processes**. (Lakoff 1987)

➤ Evidence for embodiment in neurolinguistics

➤ Feldman/Narayanan (2004: 389):

... all understanding involves simulating or enacting the appropriate embodied experience. When asked to grasp, we enact it. When hearing or reading about grasping, we simulate grasping or watching someone grasp.

➤ Rathunde (2009: 71):

Embodiment suggests that it is through our bodily perceptions, movements, emotions, and feelings that meaning becomes possible.

Difficulties when learning a foreign language

- when learning L2, you have L1-categorization and L1-expressions in mind
- Learners have not made the experience of embodiment with L2-categorization as a child!
- Our Western world is 'disembodied'
- FLL should be **grounded in embodiment** to make up for the missing link between foreign concepts and language not acquired in childhood.

Embodied cognition can take many forms:

- visualization with pictures/objects (De Knop 2008, Even 2011)
- animations (Roche & Suñer 2017: 258-316)
- gesturing (MacArthur & Littlemore 2008)
- enactment (Gallagher & Lindgren 2015)
- bodily engagement & motor activation (Asher's 'total physical response' 1982; Johnson-Glenberg et al. 2014; Skulmowski & Rey 2018)
- combination of dancing and learning (Lapaire & Etcheto 2010)

Example of embodied practice for constructions with *bis* ('up to/until')

A. Interactive practice with own body

➤ Start with spatial Cs and ask learners to **perform** what they hear

(11) *Peter geht bis an die Tür und öffnet sie mit dem Schlüssel*

Lit. 'Peter goes up to the door and opens it with the key'

(12) *Maria streckt sich bis an die Tischecke*

Lit. 'Maria stretches herself up to the table corner'

B. Work with pictures/images for bodyparts

(13) *Das Wasser steht dem Mann bis ...*

Lit. 'The water stands to the man up to ...'



(faz.net)

(14) *Das Wasser steht dem Mann bis ...*



(zoonar.de)

(15) *Das Wasser steht dem Hund/der Frau bis ...*



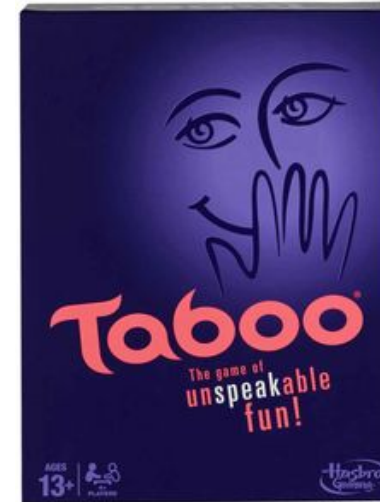
(16) *Das Wasser steht dem Mann bis ...*



(zoonar.de)

C. Interactive exercises with games

- Inspired by games like 'Taboo' (1989)
- Teacher brings some objects which can be moved or pictures representing “scenarios/ lifelike situations” (Di Pietro 1987: 3)



- One student should **perform a scene** without words, the other students have to guess what is represented
- Students become “**full participants in human discourse**” (Di Pietro 1997: 3) and use their body to represent scenes.

D. Use of puppets/Playmobil-figures



- Learners use puppets/Playmobil-figures to **represent scenes** which have to be guessed by other students.
- Importance of syntax with use of correct posture and placement verb.

5. Conclusions

Learning a foreign language

- is not simply about learning words/expressions
 - more about meeting or learning to know different conceptualizations and gain different views on the world
 - enriches our perception of the world
 - refines our mind and our personality!
-
- Learn several foreign languages and remain open-minded for foreign experience!

спасибо
danke 謝謝
ngiyabonga
teşekkür ederim
dank je
gracias
tapadh leat
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mochchakkeram
go raibh maith agat
arigato
takk
dakujem
merci
sukriya
kop khun krap
grazie
tenima kasih
감사합니다
obrigado

Summarizing table:

	Examples	L1 words	Concept/ categories	L2 words	Concept/ categories
i	<i>Marmelade</i>	Word W	Concept C	word W	Concepts C,D
ii	<i>Essen/fressen;</i> posture & placement verbs	Word W	Concept C	Words X,Y,Z	Concepts C,D,E
iii	Traffic lights	Word W	Concept C	Word X,Y,Z	Concept C
iv	<i>Strandkorb; Schultüte</i>	0 Word	0 concept	Word W	Concept C
v	<i>Glatze; Feierabend</i>	0 Word	Concept C	Word W	Concept C