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The semantics of German posture and placement verbs in noun-verb phrases

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Abstract: In this contribution, we study the use of the German verbs *stehen* ('to stand'), *sitzen* ('to sit') and their causative equivalents *stellen* ('to put in a standing position') and *setzen* ('to put in a sitting position') in noun-verb phrases, such as *an der Spitze stehen* (lit. 'to stand at the top' = 'to be at the top') or *auf die Beine stellen* (lit. 'to put upright on the legs' = 'to achieve'). Among these phrases we are looking more particularly at the subcategory of complex noun-verb phrases which are commonly referred to as *Funktionsverbgefüge* in German. Numerous examples from the corpus *DeReKo* (IDS) are analyzed with the aim of identifying the conceptualizations and image schemas that motivate their use. This preliminary study shows that, even if these verbs seem very close at first sight, their use is highly differentiated.

Keywords: German, posture/placement verbs, image schemas, conceptualizations, noun-verb-phrases, *Funktionsverbgefüge*

1 Introduction¹

German uses very specific posture or placement verbs in order to locate an object or a person in space, such as: *stehen* ('to stand'), *sitzen* ('to sit'), *liegen* ('to lie'), *stellen* ('to put in a standing position'), *setzen* ('to put in a sitting position') and *legen* ('to put in a lying position'). These verbs are also used in several contexts that are very abstract and no longer express a localization. The use of

¹ I sincerely thank the reviewers for their suggestions as well as my PhD supervisor, Prof. Sabine De Knop, for her help and support for this article. This contribution is part of a larger contrastive study dealing with posture and placement verbs in German and Dutch: although both languages have very similar posture and placement verbs, they do not necessarily use them in the same way. In this article, we focus however exclusively on the German verbs and we do not take the differences with Dutch into consideration.

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posture/placement verbs in German has already received considerable attention from many linguists (e.g. Fagan 1991; Serra-Borneto 1996; De Knop 2016). The present study, however, focuses on the use of these verbs within noun-verb phrases, such as *etwas auf die Agenda setzen* ('put something on the agenda'). Among these phrases we are looking more specifically at the subcategory of complex noun-verb phrases (commonly referred to as *Funktionsverbgefüge* in German – see definition below). In this paper, we first define the research object of our study – noun-verb phrases consisting of a posture/placement verb (see Section 2). We then focus on the German verbs *stehen* ('to stand'), *sitzen* ('to sit') and their causative equivalents *stellen* ('to put in a standing position') and *setzen* ('to put in a sitting position') and present our corpus analysis in Section 3. In Section 4 we examine the different conceptualizations and image schemas that motivate the use of the posture and placement verbs. This analysis shows that each verb is related to different conceptualizations and that the verb uses are interconnected within a continuum – starting from their original spatial meaning.

2 Noun-verb phrases with posture/placement verbs

As mentioned above, our analysis focuses on the use of posture/placement verbs when they are combined with prepositional phrases (hereafter PPs). In this section, we define the kind of noun-verb phrases (hereafter NVPs) of our analysis. As illustrated in Figure 1, our study focuses on NVPs consisting of a preposition, a noun and a posture/placement verb. However, we exclude PPs that are not obligatory (5) and PPs whose preposition belongs to the valency of the verb (6) from our analysis²:

- (5) *Es soll ein Schwerpunkt [im Bereich Immobilienwirtschaft] gesetzt werden.*
It should be focused on the real estate industry.'
- (6) *Es [liegt an] der Politik.*
'It's up to politics.'

² The two examples mentioned have been extracted from the *DeReKo*-corpus.

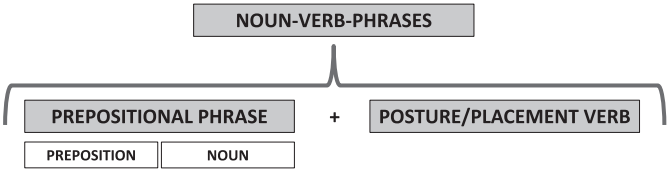


Figure 1: Object of analysis.

2.1 Four categories of noun-verb phrases

All NVPs central to our study can be classified in one of these four categories: idioms (A), collocations (B), *Funktionsverbgefüge* (hereafter FVG) and free word combinations (C) (see Figure 2, below.) The definition of these categories is inspired by the studies of, among others, Helbig (2006), Heine (2006) and Storrer (2006). A detailed description of each of these categories is presented in Hermann (forthc. 2019). It should be noted, however, that a clear delimitation of such constructions is almost impossible (see dotted lines in Figure 2). Each category presented below must therefore be considered in terms of a continuum with prototypical and more peripheral examples.

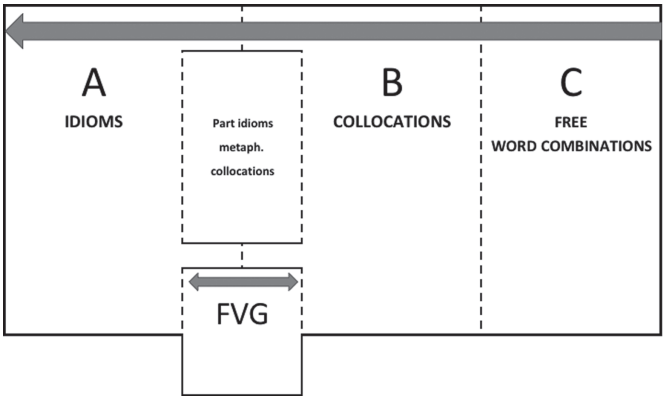


Figure 2: The different categories of PPs.

Category A includes the phrases whose phraseological meaning is not identical to the literal meaning and whose global meaning is not compositional. Example: *auf der Straße stehen* (lit. ‘to stand on the road’) which means ‘to be

homeless’. Prototypical idioms are fixed constructions and cannot be pronominalized or modified by attributes. Category B involves collocations which can be defined as “ein präferiertes Zusammenvorkommen von lexikalischen Einheiten” (‘a preferential combination of lexical units’) (Lemnitzer and Zinsmeister 2010: 188). Unlike idioms, the meaning of collocations is compositional and the phraseological meaning is identical to the literal meaning. Example: *auf dem Programm stehen* which means ‘to be on the program’. The nouns in collocations can generally be replaced by other nouns belonging to the same lexical field. So, *auf dem Programm stehen* can be replaced by *auf dem Plan stehen* (‘to be on the plan’), although this alternative is less common. Unlike idioms, collocations are not subject to strict morphosyntactic restrictions and they can be pronominalized or modified by an attribute (*auf dem Prüfungsprogramm stehen* – ‘to be on the audit program’). Category C brings together all non-fixed phrases of the type *im Flur stehen* (‘to stand in the corridor’). The meaning of these word combinations is totally transparent and compositional. The last category includes the *Funktionsverbgefüge* (FVGs), a type of complex NVPs which has already been extensively studied in the German scientific literature (see among others von Polenz 1963; Heine 2006; Kamber 2008; Eisenberg 2013). FVGs are often described as complex phrases consisting of a noun phrase (with or without preposition) and a functional verb, which has lost its lexical meaning and just has a functional role. The prototypical noun occurring in FVGs is an abstract noun derived from a verb. Example: *in Bewegung setzen* (‘to put into motion’). In Figure 2, FVGs are represented between idioms and collocations because they share characteristics with both categories. Some FVGs are lexicalized and have therefore more in common with idioms (like *in Frage stellen* – ‘to question’) and others are closer to collocations (*unter Schutz stehen* – ‘to be under protection’).

2.2 The localization meaning of posture/placement verbs

As indicated above, the category of FVGs is between idioms and collocations because FVGs have similarities with both categories. However, as can be seen in Figure 2, FVGs have a unique feature that makes their distinction from idioms and collocations easier: in FVGs, the verb has lost its lexical meaning, which means that it no longer expresses a localization in space (see details in Hermann forthc. 2019). However, in the idiom *auf der Straße stehen* (‘to be homeless’) or in the collocation *auf dem Programm stehen* (‘to be on the program’), we still have the idea of localization in space – even if it is metaphorical. However, in the FVG *in Bewegung setzen* (‘to put into motion’), the PP no longer has a spatial meaning. The semantics of posture and placement verbs in FVGs corresponds to a higher

level of abstraction than the one in idioms, collocations or free word combinations, as we can see in Figure 3:

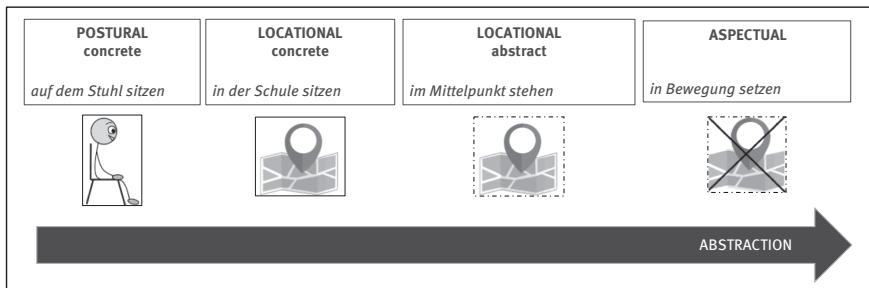


Figure 3: continuum about the semantic uses of posture/placement verbs.

In Figure 3, we see that there is a continuum starting from the original meaning of posture/placement verbs to more abstract uses. The original meaning of these verbs is strictly related to the concrete position of entities, e.g. in *auf dem Stuhl sitzen* ('to sit on the chair'). These verbs are then also used to express the concrete location of entities: *in der Schule sitzen* (lit. 'to sit in the school' = 'to be at school') (De Knop and Perrez 2014). In the next step, we have the abstract location: *im Mittelpunkt stehen* (lit. 'to stand in the center' = 'to be central'). This example no longer implies a location in the real world but rather in a mental space (Serra-Borneto 1996: 473). Finally, at the highest degree of abstraction, we have the FVGs (*in Bewegung setzen* – 'to put into motion') which no longer express a localization in space and are aspectual. The continuum in Figure 3 implies that posture and placement verbs are not semantically 'empty' in FVGs³. Even if their original meaning has undergone an abstraction process, their use is still motivated by some original conceptualizations (see more below).

3 Corpus analysis

As mentioned above, this article focuses only on the German posture verbs *stehen* ('to stand') and *sitzen* ('to sit') and their corresponding placement verbs *stellen* ('put in a standing position') and *setzen* ('to put in a sitting position').

³ This is the reason why we do not consider FVGs as 'light verbs' (see Hermann forthc. 2019).

As a first analysis, we examined 1000 examples for each verb from the corpus *DeReKo* – which is provided by the IDS (*Institut für Deutsche Sprache*). We confine our sample to contemporary uses (from 2000 to 2017) and to press articles. After having looked at each example manually, we classified all corresponding NVPs – which had at least three occurrences⁴ – in different tables (see below). At this stage, we did not differentiate between idioms, collocations, FVGs and free word combinations.

Table 1 contains all PPs extracted from our corpus (min. 3 tokens) for the verb *stehen*. In the 1000 sentences that have been manually analyzed, we found 409 sentences in which *stehen* was combined with an obligatory PP (50 types).

Table 2 gives an overview of all PPs extracted for *sitzen* (with min. 3 occurrences). Out of the 1000 sentences that have been examined manually, 449 of them contain a PP corresponding to our research object (56 types).

In Table 3, we see the PPs that have been, in at least three sentences, combined with *stellen*. We collected 233 tokens corresponding to 23 types. For the verb *setzen*, we have just extracted 19 types of PPs from our corpus in 172 tokens (see Table 4).

In Tables 1–4, some phrases are prototypical examples for idioms: *im Raum stehen* ('to be unresolved'), *in den Startlöchern stehen* ('to be in the starting blocks'), *auf freien Fuß setzen* ('to release'), *aufs Spiel setzen* ('to risk') etc. The other phrases are examples of collocations: *auf dem Platz... stehen* ('to be in the place ... (in a ranking)'), *im Gefängnis sitzen* ('to be in prison'), *vor Probleme stellen* ('to confront with problems'), *ins Internet stellen* ('to put on the internet') etc.

⁴ This allows us to exclude totally random free word combinations from our analysis.

Table 1: PPs extracted from the corpus for *stehen* (min. 3 tokens)⁵.

ZU	VERFÜGUNG	55	ZU	SEITE	9	IN	BUCH	5	IN	STARTLÖCHER	4	IN	FELD	3
IN	MITTELPUNKT	38	AN	STELLE	9	IN	FOKUS	5	IN	REGEN	4	AUF	GELÄNDE	3
AUF	PROGRAMM	32	AUF	PLAN	8	AUF	FUSS	5	AUF	SEITE	4	VOR	KAMERA	3
AUF	PLATZ	20	IN	RAUM	8	VOR	GERICHT	5	AUF	TREPPCHEN	4	IN	PFLICHT	3
AUF	TAGESORDNUNG	17	UNTER	DRUCK	7	IN	HAUS	5	VOR	AUFGABE	3	AN	PLATZ	3
AUF	LISTE	16	IN	FINALE	7	AUF	PODEST	5	UNTER	BEOBACHTUNG	3	AUF	PODIUM	3
AUF	BÜHNE	14	IN	ZEICHEN	7	IN	REGAL	5	ZU	DISPOSITION	3	IN	PROGRAMM	3
IN	VORDERGRUND	14	AUF	KIPPE	6	VOR	TÜR	5	UNTER	EINFLUSS	3	UNTER	SCHUTZ	3
AN	SPITZE	10	ZU	WAHL	6	ZU	BUCH	4	AUF	EIS	3	IN	ZEITUNG	3
UNTER	MOTTO	9	AN	ANFANG	5	AN	ENDE	4	IN	ELF	3	IN	ZUSAMMENHANG	3

Table 2: PPs extracted from the corpus for *sitzen* (min. 3 tokens).

AUF	BANK	53	IN	BURO	9	IN	REIHE	6	AUF	TERRASSE	4	AN	KASSE	3
IN	HAFT	45	AUF	PODIUM	9	IN	SAAL	6	AUF	TRIBUNE	4	IN	KLASSE	3
AN	TISCH	32	AUF	STUHL	9	IN	NACKEN	5	IN	WÄGEN	4	AUF	KOFFER	3
IN	RAT	25	IN	AUSSCHUSS	7	IN	ZUG	5	AUF	BERG	3	AN	ORGEL	3
IN	GEFANGNIS	23	IN	AUTO	7	IN	BUS	4	AUF	BETT	3	AUF	PFERD	3
IN	RAUM	13	IN	PARLAMENT	7	AN	COMPUTER	4	VOR	COMPUTER	3	AUF	PLATZ	3
IN	TAG	13	IN	SESSEL	7	VOR	FERNSEHER	4	IN	FAHRZEUG	3	IN	PUBLIKUM	3
IN	BOOT	11	AUF	SOFA	7	HINTER	GITTER	4	IN	GARTEN	3	IN	SCHATTEN	3
AN	STEUER	11	IN	CAFE	6	IN	KELLER	4	VOR	GERICHT	3	HINTER	STEUER	3
IN	ZIMMER	11	IN	GREMIUM	6	AUF	KOSTEN	4	ZU	GERICHT	3	AUF	THRON	3
IN	STUHL	10	IN	HAUS	6	IN	KUCHE	4	IN	JURY	3	IN	VORSTAND	3
												IN	ZELLE	3

5 The separation of the PPs in five distinct columns is not related to any motivated classification; it is just a matter of formatting. This formatting issue holds for all figures presented hereafter.

Table 3: PPs extracted from the corpus for *stellen* (min. 3 tokens).

ZU	VERFÜGUNG	69	IN	VORDERGRUND	9	IN	MITTELPUNKT	5	AUF	PRÜFSTAND	4
IN	FRAGE	29	IN	DIENTST	7	ZU	WAHL	5	IN	ABSETZS	3
UNTER	BEWEIS	20	VOR	PROBLEME	7	IN	WEG	5	ZU	DISKUSSION	3
AUF	BEINE	17	AUF	KOPF	6	IN	INTERNET	4	IN	ECKE	3
IN	AUSSICHT	15	UNTER	SCHUTZ	6	IN	SCHATTEN	4	AUF	FUSS	3

AUF	PROBE	3
IN	RECHNUNG	3
ZU	SCHAU	3

Table 4: PPs extracted from the corpus for *setzen* (min. 3 tokens).

UNTER	DRUCK	35	IN	VERBINDUNG	12	ZU	WEHR	7	AUF	FUSS	4
IN	BEWEGUNG	20	ZU	ZIEL	12	AUF	PLATZ	6	IN	STAND	4
IN	SZENE	18	IN	BRAND	8	AUF	SPIEL	5	VOR	TÜR	4
IN	GANG	13	AN	TISCH	7	AN	SPITZE	5	IN	KENNTNIS	3
									AUSSER	KRAFT	3

AUF	LISTE	3
IN	WELT	3

Some FVGs⁶ can also be found: *zur Verfügung stehen* ('to be available'), *in Frage stellen* ('to put into question'), *unter Beweis stellen* ('to provide proof'), *zur Wehr setzen* ('to defend oneself') etc. However, as mentioned above, some of these phrases are not prototypical for one particular category, but are rather somewhere 'inbetween'. The following phrases are situated somewhere between idioms and collocations: *im Mittelpunkt stehen* ('to be central'), *auf der Tagesordnung stehen* ('to be on the agenda'), *hinter Gittern sitzen* (lit. 'to sit behind bars' = 'to be in prison'), *in den Vordergrund stellen* ('to put in the foreground') etc. There are also some phrases that are between collocations and free words combinations: *an den Tisch setzen* ('to sit at the table'), *im Parlament sitzen* ('to be a member of parliament'), *in einem Rollstuhl sitzen* ('to be in a wheelchair') etc. It is interesting to notice that this is particularly the case with the verb *sitzen*. Some PPs can also belong to two categories depending on their interpretation ('Lesarten'). So, *auf der Bank sitzen* can mean 'to sit on the bench' (>free word combination) or, in a context of football, 'to be benched' (>idiom).

After having defined the data and the different categories, we now proceed to the analysis of conceptualizations related to the use of the posture and placement verbs.

4 Analysis of conceptualizations

4.1 Image schemas

One of the fundamental principles of cognitive linguistics is that language is all about meaning and that meaning is not an objective representation of the world, but rather a way of shaping it (Geeraerts 2006: 4). Considering that we are involved in the world with our whole body, our perception is strongly influenced by our embodied nature (Geeraerts 2006: 5). And our embodiment of the world around us does not only help to understand concrete processes, but also very abstract ones, i.e. "[a]bstract thought has a bodily basis" (Evans and Green 2006: 190). As discussed before, German posture and placement

⁶ Two prepositions are particularly common in FVGs: *in* ('in') and *zu* ('to'). Just like the noun phrases they are combined with, these prepositions have undergone an abstraction process and lost their spatial meaning. The preposition *unter* ('under') also occurs in some FVGs but it has kept a stronger spatial meaning. The abstraction process has thus to be considered as a continuum in which the prepositions *in* and *to* are more abstracted than *unter* (in FVGs).

verbs are used in a lot of different contexts and are therefore considered as highly polysemous. However, the organization of such polysemous verbs is not arbitrary at all. Their meanings are interconnected and structured by general cognitive principles, like e.g. metaphor, metonymy and image schemas – which derive from our embodied experience of the world (Gibbs and Colston 2006: 243). Gibbs et al. (1994) have shown that the different meanings of the verb *stand* are “motivated by different image schemas that arise partly from our bodily experience of standing” (Gibbs et al. 1994). Hereafter we thus try to show how the theory of image schemas can provide a cognitively motivated explanation for the use of posture and placement verbs in German. Image schemas have first been introduced by Johnson (1987); they are neither fixed as schemas, nor specific as images (Oakley 2007:216). In her introduction, Hampe (2005: 1) defines image schemas as preconceptual structures which arise from human recurrent bodily movements through space, perceptual interactions, and ways of manipulating objects. Image schemas emerge through our sensorimotor activity as we manipulate objects and orient ourselves (Gibbs and Colston 2006: 239). As observed before, posture and placement verbs are characterized by a continuum from concrete to abstract meaning. This continuum starts with the basic perceptual schemas of these verbs and moves to the more abstract ones (Serra-Borneto 1996). This explains why original image schemas can still be identified in uses with a higher level of abstraction (see discussion of Figure 3 above): “When meaning changes, details of source images are generally ignored but schematic structures are preserved” (Oakley 2007: 222).

In the next section, we discuss the underlying conceptualizations and image schemas that motivate the use of *stehen*, *sitzen*, *stellen*, *setzen* in the NVPs extracted from our corpus. Therefore, we rely on the (not exhaustive but significant) list of image schemas provided by Evans and Green (2006) (see Table 5).

Table 5: Partial list of image schemas (Evans and Green 2006:190).

SPACE	UP-DOWN, FRONT-BACK, LEFT-RIGHT, NEAR-FAR, CENTRE-PERIPHERY, CONTACT, STRAIGHT, VERTICALITY
CONTAINMENT	CONTAINER, IN-OUT, SURFACE, FULL-EMPTY, CONTENT
LOCOMOTION	MOMENTUM, SOURCE-PATH-GOAL
BALANCE	AXIS BALANCE, TWIN-PAN BALANCE, POINT BALANCE, EQUILIBRIUM
FORCE	COMPULSION, BLOCKAGE, COUNTERFORCE, DIVERSION, REMOVAL OF RESTRAINT, ENABLEMENT, ATTRACTION, RESISTANCE
UNITY/MULTIPLICITY	MERGING, COLLECTION, SPLITTING, ITERATION, PART-WHOLE, COUNT-MASS, LINK(AGE)
IDENTITY	MATCHING, SUPERIMPOSITION
EXISTENCE	REMOVAL, BOUNDED SPACE, CYCLE, OBJECT, PROCESS

4.2 Analysis of noun-verb phrases

4.2.1 The definition of the image schemas

In order to define the motivation for the selection of a specific posture or placement verb in the NVPs under study, we have to look at the conceptualizations linked to the PPs, but also further at the figure⁷ which appears in the larger context of the phrases. The figure can be the subject or the object of the sentence.

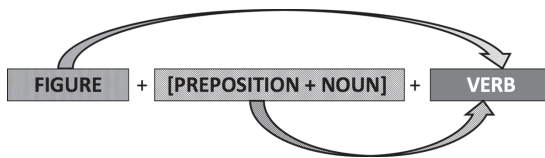


Figure 4: Selection of the verb – two possibilities.

As illustrated in Figure 4, the selection of the verb is determined either by the conceptualization linked to the figure or by the one linked to the PP – depending on which of both is predominant. In the sentence *Durch Geldprobleme stehen sie auf der Straße* ('Because of money problems they are (upright) on the street.') the selection of *stehen* is defined by the figure (*sie*) realized as subject: the verb *stehen* is indeed used for the location of a person being on his/her base (see De Knop and Perez 2014). By contrast, in *Er wird vor ein Problem gestellt*. ('He is put in front of a problem.'), the conceptualization of the PP is predominant: *stellen* is used when the idea of "exposure" is relevant (see following section). This predominance of the PP in this example becomes more obvious when it is compared to *Er wird vor die Tür gesetzt*. ('He is thrown out'): here we have the same figure as in the previous example (*er*) – so the figure cannot be predominant – but the verb *setzen* is used because of the image schema of CONTAINMENT linked to the PP *vor die Tür* (the location 'in front of the door' being outside of the 'house'-container – see more details in the following section). When speaking about the conceptualization of the PP, it should be emphasized that, in the extracted phrases, the preposition and the nominal phrase build a unit which, in turn, is combined syntactically and semantically with the verb (Eisenberg 2013:306). The preposition and the NP are linked to conceptualizations that are either similar (as in example 7: both are linked to the image schema of CONTAINER) or different

7 "The Figure is a moving or conceptually movable object whose path or site is at issue" (Talmy 1985: 61).

(as in example 8: *in* is related to “containment” and *Vordergrund* to “exposure”). The selection of the verb depends, however, on the overall conceptualization of the PP. We can thus make a distinction between prototypical (example 7) and non-prototypical (example 8) representativeness of image schemas in PPs.

- (7) *Das Gerücht wird [in die Welt] gesetzt.*
 ‘The rumor is being spread.’
- (8) *Das Thema wird [in den Vordergrund] gestellt.*
 ‘The topic is placed in the foreground.’

Hereunder we describe the different conceptualizations and image schemas identified in the NVPs extracted from our corpus. As mentioned above, we take the image schema inventory of Evans and Green (2006) (cf. Table 5) as a starting point and we also make some additional subclassifications in different semantic classes.

4.2.2 The verb *stehen*

Gibbs et al. (1994) have conducted four experiments in order to identify the main image schemas associated with the English verb *stand*: BALANCE, VERTICALITY, CENTER/PERIPHERY, RESISTANCE and LINKAGE. Some of these image schemas have also been identified in our data. In a second step, we have refined Gibbs et al.’s analysis and subclassified our data in more fine-grained semantic categories.

Image schema of VERTICALITY

Standing is, as a vertical posture, the canonical position of the human body. The verb *stehen* is therefore intrinsically linked to the image schema of VERTICALITY (see Serra-Borneto 1996). This image schema, which arises from our bodily experience, can be extended to several more figurative uses:

– to be on one’s base

This use has already been described by several linguists (see Serra-Borneto 1996, De Knop and Perrez 2014); it implies that a person or an object is resting on his/her/its base. In these cases, the conceptualization of the figure is predominant.

in den Startlöchern stehen (‘to be in the starting blocks’)

auf der Bühne stehen (‘to be onstage’)

vor Gericht stehen (‘to stand trial’)

– written text

The verb *stehen* is also used to express the location of any type of written text. Serra-Borneto (1996) explains the link to verticality as follows: “The basic

idea is that written texts can be seen as a sequence of lines vertically ordered on the page” (Serra-Borneto 1996:477).

auf dem Programm stehen (‘to be on the program’)

auf der Tagesordnung stehen (‘to be on the agenda’)

in der Zeitung stehen (‘to be in the journal’)

– **control and power**

The link between verticality and control is motivated by Lakoff and Johnson’s theory of metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). According to their findings, having control is linked to an upper position (CONTROL IS UP) and lacking control to a lower position (LACK OF CONTROL IS DOWN). Considering that up and down are closely related to the vertical dimension, the use of *stehen* is not surprising (cf. Serra-Borneto 1996):

*an der Spitze stehen*⁸ (‘to be at the head of’)

auf dem Podium stehen (‘to be on the winner’s podium’)

unter Beobachtung stehen (‘to be under observation’)

unter Schutz stehen (‘to be under protection’)

The two last examples belong to the category of FVGs. This shows that the meaning of *stehen* as functional verb is not totally arbitrary, but derives from its meaning as main verb.

– **scale**

We can consider a scale⁹ as being vertically oriented (GOOD IS UP – BAD IS DOWN) (cf. Lakoff and Johnson 1980 and Serra-Borneto 1996).

auf Platz ... stehen (‘to be in the ... place (in a ranking)’)

Image schema of CENTER/PERIPHERY

The image schema of CENTER/PERIPHERY refers to “the experience of some objects or events as central while surrounding objects and events are peripheral or to the outside” (Gibbs et al. 1994:237).

– **exposure**

In our corpus there are several PPs that are linked to the idea of exposure, in other words to the idea of a person or an object being at a place where it is exposed/accessible to all¹⁰.

⁸ In our corpus, the PP *an der Spitze* occurs both with the verbs *stehen* and *liegen* (‘to lie’). But an additional analysis has shown that with *stehen* the meaning was ‘to be at the head’ (of a company for example) and with *liegen* ‘to be at the top’ (in a ranking).

⁹ The conceptualization of scale is also closely associated to the verb *liegen* (‘to lie’), but we do not address this distinction in this article (see therefore Serra-Borneto 1996).

¹⁰ This use can be linked to the idea of “attention on figure” described by Serra-Borneto (1996).

im Mittelpunkt stehen ('to be central')

im Vordergrund stehen ('to be in the foreground')

The conceptualization of exposure also occurs in some FVGs, like in:

zur Verfügung stehen ('to be available')

zur Diskussion stehen ('to be under examination')

zur Wahl stehen ('to stand as a candidate')

Image schema of balance

The image schema of BALANCE refers to "our sense of symmetry or stability relative to some point within your body" (Gibbs et al. 1994:237).

– dynamic / functionality

The verb *stehen* is often related to the idea of dynamicity and functionality – which derives from the image schema of BALANCE.

auf der Kippe stehen ('to be in danger of failing')

ins Haus stehen ('to be coming up soon')

vor der Tür stehen ('to be imminent')

Image schema of LINKAGE

The image schema of LINKAGE is described by Gibbs et al. as referring to "the perception of a connection between objects or events" (Gibbs et al. 1994:237). We have identified this conceptualization in some FVGs:

im Zusammenhang stehen ('to be related')

in Verhältnis stehen ('to be related')

4.2.3 The verb *sitzen*

In our corpus we have found several NVPs with *sitzen* which we can relate to two image schemas defined by De Knop and Perrez (2014): CONTAINER and CONTACT.

Image schema of CONTAINER

Gibbs et al. (1994) describe the image schema of CONTAINER as referring "to the experience of boundedness and enclosure" (Gibbs et al. 1994:237). This image schema motivates the use of *sitzen* in a large number of NVPs.

It should be noted that the meaning of *sitzen* in this use does not imply that the person is literally in a sitting posture (De Knop and Perrez 2014).

– **enclosure**

The verb *sitzen* is used to express the containment in a given ground.

in einem Raum sitzen ('to be in a room')

im Auto sitzen ('to be in the car')

– **blockage**

The image schema of CONTAINER can also be extended to some uses in which the person is "stuck" in the ground (Fagan 1991).

im Gefängnis sitzen ('to be in prison')

im Rollstuhl sitzen ('to be in a wheelchair')

– **membership, affiliation**

As described by De Knop and Perrez (2014), the idea of containment can also imply the affiliation to an organization or the membership to an established group.

im Aufsichtsrat sitzen ('to be a member of the supervisory board')

im Parlament sitzen ('to be a member of parliament')

Image schema of CONTACT

We have extracted several phrases from our corpus in which the PP indicates where the figure is located. Because of the close relationship between the figure and the ground in these phrases, we see a link here to the image schema of CONTACT.

– **to sit somewhere**

We take over the idea of contact proposed by De Knop and Perrez (2014) and expand it to each use in which *sitzen* is combined with a PP expressing the location of an entity. We assume that the use of *sitzen* in the NVPs below is originally motivated by the image schema of CONTACT as there is a contact between the person and the ground. This is in line with Fagan (1991: 143): "The verbs *sitzen* and *setzen* [...] indicate something about the relationship between an object and its surroundings [...] these verbs express the idea that an object is firmly or permanently attached to something [...]".

am Tisch sitzen ('to sit at the table')

auf dem Sofa sitzen ('to sit on the couch')

auf dem Podium sitzen ('to be on the stage')

The PP *auf dem Podium* also occurs with the verb *stehen*. This is related to the polysemous meaning of the word *Podium*: in *auf dem Podium sitzen*, the word *Podium* means ‘stage’ whereas in *auf dem Podium stehen*, the ‘winner’s podium’ is meant. So, the conceptualization of the PP determines the selection of the verb: we have *sitzen* when it is a matter of “sitting somewhere” and *stehen* when it is about “control and power”.

It is interesting to notice that the use of the preposition supports our distinction: with the image schema of CONTAINER, we have the preposition *in* (‘in’) which is prototypical for enclosure (see also Tyler and Evans 2003) – and with the image schema of CONTACT we have *an* (‘at’) and *auf* (‘on’), which are two prepositions associated with contact (Schröder 1986).

4.2.4 The verb *stellen*

The use of the German verb *stellen* (‘to put in a standing position’) is motivated by the following image schemas:

Image schema of VERTICALITY

As described by De Knop (2016), the verb *stellen* is the causative equivalent of *stehen*, accordingly it corresponds to the vertical axis (De Knop 2016). This up-down dimension leads to two different subcategories:

- **to be on one’s base > foundation**

The verb *stellen* expresses the placement of an object or a person with a base (De Knop 2016: 5). The idea of “being on one’s base” is closely linked to the concept of foundation (supported by *auf*) which can be observed in the following NVPs:

auf die Beine stellen (‘to get off the ground’)

auf den Kopf stellen (‘to turn upside down’)

auf breitere Füße stellen (‘to broaden’)

- **control and power**

Just like *stehen*, *stellen* is often combined with a PP (mostly introduced by the preposition *unter*) which conceptualizes control and power (De Knop 2016). We extracted some FVGs out of our corpus in which *stellen* is motivated by this meaning:

unter Strafe stellen (‘to sanction’)

unter Beobachtung stellen (‘to place under surveillance’)

unter Schutz stellen (‘to put under protection’)

Image schema of CENTER/PERIPHERY

Just as its counterpart *stehen*, the use of *stellen* can be motivated by the image schema of CENTER/PERIPHERY which gives rise to the conceptualization of “exposure”:

- **exposure**

vor Probleme stellen (‘to confront with problems’)

in den Mittelpunkt stellen (‘to focus on’)

ins Internet stellen (‘to put on the internet’)

We also found this conceptualization in some FVGs:

zur Diskussion stellen (‘to put up for discussion’)

zur Wahl stellen (‘to run as a candidate’)

The use of *stellen* is also motivated by this semantics when the object or person is outside the exposure:

in den Schatten stellen (‘to outshine’)

ins Abseits stellen (‘to marginalize’)

4.2.5 The verb *setzen*

In the NVPs extracted from our corpus, the verb *setzen* (‘to put in a sitting position’) is linked to several image schemas:

Image schema of CONTAINER

The image schema of containment is not so frequent with the verb *setzen* as with its counterpart *sitzen*:

- **enclosure**

in die Welt setzen (‘to spread’)

vor die Tür setzen (‘to throw out’)

In the phrase *vor die Tür setzen*, *setzen* is motivated by the image schema of container, because what is decisive here, is not that someone is in front of the door, but much more the idea of being out of the ‘house’-container.

Image schema of CONTACT

Just like its counterpart *sitzen*, the verb *setzen* is used to express contact vis à vis a ground. This use implies that the person is in a sitting position:

- **to sit somewhere**

an einen Tisch setzen (‘to sit down around the table’)

Image schema of ENABLEMENT

The verb *setzen* is linked to the image schema of ENABLEMENT, which has neither been observed with *sitzen* nor with *stehen*. This image schema has mostly been observed in FVGs in which *setzen* is linked to an inchoative meaning (“inchoative Aktionsart”) (von Polenz 1963). This image schema gives rise to two different conceptualizations:

- **start of a concrete process**

Setzen has developed a meaning of “starting of a concrete process” when it is used as “Funktionsverb” in FVGs (see also De Knop 2016):

in Bewegung setzen (‘to put into motion’)

in Brand setzen (‘to set alight’)

außer Kraft setzen (‘to suspend’)

*unter Druck setzen*¹¹ (‘to put under pressure’)

- **start of a new state**

In some NVPs the inchoative aspect is rather linked to a new state than to a concrete process:

in Kenntnis setzen (‘to inform’)

instand setzen (‘to repair’)

sich zur Wehr setzen (‘to defend oneself’)

aufs Spiel setzen (‘to risk’)

Image schema of LINKAGE

The verb *setzen* is also associated with the image schema of LINKAGE, which has been observed with *stehen*, like in the following FVGs:

in Verbindung setzen (‘to make contact’)

in Beziehung setzen (‘to connect’)

in Szene setzen (‘to stage’)

Image schema of VERTICALITY

The image schema of VERTICALITY, which is prototypical for *stehen*, gives rise to the subcategories “scale” and “written text” (observed with *stehen*) that also motivate some uses of *setzen*:

- **scale**

an die Spitze setzen (‘to move into the first place’)

11 In the FVG *unter Druck setzen*, we have a preposition which is actually related to the idea of verticality. Since this image schema is rather prototypical for *stehen* and *stellen*, we consider the PP *unter Druck* as a peripheral representative of the image schemas associated with *setzen*.

auf Platz ... setzen ('to put in the ... place (in a ranking)')

The phrase *an die Spitze* also occurs with the verb *stellen*, but with a different meaning: with *setzen*, it is about "being at the top of a ranking", while with *stellen*, it is rather being "the leader of sth" (conceptualization of control and power).

– **written text**

auf die Agenda setzen ('to put on the agenda')

auf die Liste setzen ('to put on the list')

zum Ziel setzen ('to set as one's goal')

The FVG *zum Ziel setzen* also belongs to this group because we consider the concept of "being established" as an extension of the concept of written text. It is interesting to note that the PP *ins Internet* is not combined with *setzen*, but with *stellen* (see above). This means that the idea of "exposure" is more predominant here than "written text". In other words: when something is on the internet, it is not conceptualized as being written down, but as being exposed to all.

In this section, we have seen that each of the four verbs is linked to specific conceptualizations. In Table 6 is an overview of our analysis:

Table 6: Overview of the observed conceptualizations.

	STEHEN	STELLEN	SETZEN	SITZEN
to be on one's base (<verticality)	X	X		
written text (<verticality)	X		X	
control and power (<verticality)	X	X		
scale (<verticality)	X		X	
exposure (<center-periphery)	X	X		
dynamic, functionality (<balance)	X			
linkage	X		X	
enclosure (<container)			X	X
blockage (<container)				X
membership, affiliation (<container)				X
to sit somewhere (<contact)			X	X
start of concrete process (<enablement)			X	
start of new state (<enablement)			X	

On the one hand, when we look at the two non-causative verbs *stehen* and *sitzen*, we see that both verbs have a complementary distribution. The verb *stehen* occurs mostly with the image schema of VERTICALITY and *sitzen* with the image schema of CONTAINER. This is not surprising given that these are the two prototypical

image schemas for the respective verbs. If we consider the two causative verbs, we can see that there is no overlap between *setzen* and *stellen* either: both verbs are related to different conceptualizations although the meaning of *setzen* is much more diversified than that of *stellen* (seven different uses for *setzen* vs. three for *stellen*).

On the other hand, it can also be observed that *stehen* and *stellen* have three conceptualizations in common (“to be on one’s base”, “control and power” and “exposure”), whereas *sitzen* and *setzen* have only two (“enclosure” and “to sit somewhere”). It does not surprise that the verbs *sitzen* and *stellen* do not share any conceptualization. However, we notice that some conceptualizations which would be expected with *stellen* (as counterpart of *stehen*) have in fact been expressed with *setzen*: “written text”, “scale” and “linkage”.

It is also interesting to notice that we do not always have a non-causative/causative pair. The conceptualization of “dynamic/functionality” is for instance only related to *stehen*, “blocking” and “membership” only to *sitzen* and “start of concrete process/new state” only to *setzen*. Thus, there is no perfect match between the non-causative verbs and their causative equivalents.

5 Conclusion

In this article, we have examined the uses of the verbs *stehen* and *sitzen* and their causative counterparts *stellen* and *setzen*, when they are combined with prepositional phrases. Our analysis of the different image schemas and conceptualizations, which motivate their use, provided an interesting insight in their underlying semantics. We have demonstrated that each verb is related to very different meanings and that there is no perfect equivalence between the conceptualizations related to *stehen* and *sitzen* and their causative counterparts. We have also shown that the prepositional phrases – that occur with posture and placement verbs – refer to different degrees of abstraction and that the meanings of the verbs are interconnected within a continuum – starting from their original spatial meaning. This preliminary study will be completed by forthcoming analyses. Our next step is to look at other posture and placement verbs and then to examine the co-occurrences of these noun-verb phrases (in a larger corpus). As mentioned at the beginning, we will also carry out a similar analysis with Dutch posture and placement verbs in order to identify the differences between these two closely related Germanic languages.

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