

Sociocultural conceptualizations: Schemas and metaphorical transfer as metalinguistic learning strategies for French learners of German¹

1. Introduction

Whereas traditional foreign language teaching mainly concentrated on language as an object, that is, on the transmission of grammatical rules and lists of foreign vocabulary items, today's modern language teaching rather concentrates on the language as a communication tool and aims for genuine and fluent communication in semi-authentic situations. Real-life situations are rooted in and follow from cultural experiences in past and present life. This is the dimension in foreign language teaching that cognitive linguistics is relevant for. By its usage-based orientation and its being rooted in gestalt psychology and phenomenology, it offers a possibility of perceiving and describing the layer of sociocultural experience in a scientifically motivated way. „Cognitive Linguistics approaches language as an integrated part of human cognition which operates in interaction with and on the basis of the same principles as other cognitive faculties.“ (Dirven, 2004: 1) „Sprache [wird] als ein Phänomen betrachtet, welches das Zusammenspiel biologischer, psychologischer, kultureller, sozialer, kommunikativer, ökologischer und anderer Faktoren widerspiegelt.“ (Meex/ Mortelmans, 2002: 51)

On this cognitive view, extralinguistic reality is not an unstructured mass, but it is experientially structured as the result of coherent conceptualizations in diverse categories, each firmly based in larger domains of experience. Reality, that is the experience of reality, is organized by speakers of different languages in different categories: “We communicate the world as our language structures the phenomena of the world and categorises them as entities, processes, actions, space, time, etc. Consequently our general cognitive ability, as far as categorisation functions are concerned, interacts with our linguistic ability.” (Dirven, 1989: 57) If we postulate an interactive relationship between language and the process of categorization, which is a result of our conceptualization, then we can conclude that differences between languages reflect differences in conceptualization: „formal differences between languages are symptomatic of differences in conceptualization.“ (Taylor, 1993: 213); (see also Barcelona, 2001). Categorization is not only or solely universal, but also and to a very large extent culturally specific, which means that more often than not it differs from one language to the other. This is particularly clear when we compare historically

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closely related conceptualizations in the Romance languages with those in the Germanic languages: Germans use a *Schraubenzieher* (*screwdriver*, literally a “screwpuller”), which stresses the aspect of “pulling the screws”, whereas French people use a *tourne-vis* which “turns the screws”². Even if the experience of the same reality is present in German and in French, often there is a major difference in the way this reality is focussed: French people speak of *danger de mort* (danger of (finding) death), whereas Germans talk of *Lebensgefahr* (life danger; danger of losing one’s life). Sometimes one particular language has linguistic signs for conceptualizations which are not expressed in the other language because they simply do not exist: In German we find linguistic signs like *hitzefrei* (having time off from school or work on account of excessively hot weather), *Adventsplätzchen* (special cookies baked during Advent), *das Räuchermännchen* (wooden figure from East Germany which burns incense) or *die Weihnachtspyramide* (‘Christmas pyramid’, i.e. a kind of merry-go-round with the holy family driven by candles); there are no counterparts in French for these German signs (as we see there are no linguistic signs for these objects in the English language either). Even if you try to explain or describe what these realities/objects are to French speakers, you will have many difficulties³.

This difference in the conceptualization and in the expressions of conceptualizations has implications for foreign language acquisition: The learner of a foreign language will have greater learning problems with the linguistic signs which reflect foreign categories not present in his own language or which reflect a different focus in the experiencing of reality; s/he will have to learn to view events in a different way. In his study in the classroom Danesi (1993) showed that students have indeed the greatest problems with “the foreign way of thinking”: “According to Danesi (1993: 490), students often develop a high level of speaking proficiency in a second language, but they continue to think ‘in terms of their native conceptual system: that is, students typically use target language words and structures as ‘carriers’ of their own native language concepts.’” (Lantolf, 1999: 43) That’s why Lantolf concludes: “Although it may be possible for people to develop an intellectual understanding and tolerance of other cultures, a more interesting question, perhaps, is if, and 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?” (Lantolf, 1999: 29f) This is exactly the question my paper deals with. I will first try to show the difference in conceptualization between French and German for two different domains, one in the verbal sphere and one in case morphology, and I will further look for solutions for an easier acquisition of the differences.

2 At the lexical level there is also a difference between French and German in the way that French mostly juxtaposes words as they occur in a verb phrase (*tourne-vis* (German: *Schraubenzieher*), *essuie-main* (German: *Handtuch*)), whereas German combines compounding (*Schrauben* (English: *screws*) + *zieh* (English: *pull*)) and derivation (*-er*; instrumental derivational morpheme).

3 Whereas German is highly flexible in the areas of compounding and derivation, French is far less so. This may explain why German coins all kinds of new compounds for its cultural innovations.

2. Construction grammar: verb-framed and satellite-framed languages

The following section deals with the way German and French speakers express motion, location and aspect. We will see that there are major differences between the two types of languages in the way these concepts are expressed. Already in 1985 Talmy compared the expression of motion in different languages; his analysis mainly focussed on the comparison between Spanish and English and the way motion and the path of motion is expressed. He came to the conclusion that Romance languages constitute a different type of language from other Indo-European languages (1985: 75), because they express the path of motion in a different way: Does a language privilege plain verbs, as Romance languages do, or is the path of motion expressed by satellites accompanying the verb, as in other Indo-European languages? This leads Talmy to differentiate between verb-framed and satellite-framed languages. Starting from this difference I will look at and compare examples from French (a Romance language) and German (a Germanic language).

2.1. Manner and path of motion as conceptualized in verb-oriented vs. satellite-oriented languages

2.1.1. Manner of motion

According to Slobin (2000) each language verbalizes experience favoring one particular perspective: “The world does not present ‘events’ to be encoded in language. Rather, in the process of speaking or writing, experiences are filtered through language into verbalized events.” (2000: 107) Romance and Germanic languages are different in the way they express motion and the path of motion. Whereas French uses the verb *aller* in a more schematic or abstract way for any kind of movement or change of location, German obligatorily uses several linguistic signs and must differentiate between the way the movement is taking place: *gehen* (only on foot), *fahren* (by car, train or boat), *fliegen* (by air). As Talmy (1985), Slobin (1996: 2000) and many other researchers have shown⁴, French and other Romance languages tend to use more general verbs of motion and do not tend to specify the manner of motion, whereas Germanic languages incorporate manner specifications much more into the verb. This explains the difference between the following German and French sentences:

(1a) *Er rannte aus der Küche* (He ran out of the kitchen);

(1b) *Il sortit de la cuisine* (He came out of the kitchen).

The German verb *rennen* expresses the manner of motion, whereas *sortir* expresses the very general movement of “exiting”. If there is a necessity or a wish to specify the manner of motion in French, the speaker will use a gerund or adverbial constructions. A literal

4 For Turkish, see e.g. Özçaliskan (2003, 2004, 2005a and 2005b); for Dutch: Lemmens (2002 and 2004) and van Oosten (1986).

translation of the German sentence (1a) *Er rannte aus der Küche* would then be: (1c) *Il sortit de la cuisine en courant* (general verb + gerund construction)⁵.

2.1.2. Path of motion

For the expression of the path of motion Romance and Germanic languages also use different syntactic possibilities: French for instance uses plain verbs: *traverser* (to cross/to go over), *sortir* (to go out), *entrer* (to come in),... whereas German requires satellites; "...satellites are certain immediate constituents of a verb root other than inflections, auxiliaries, or nominal arguments. They relate to the verb root as periphery (or modifiers) to a head." (Talmy, 1985, 102) Typical German satellites are prefixes with the verbs (so-called "Partikeln" in "Partikelverben"): *Wir gehen hinaus* (we go out), *wir kommen herein* (we come in), *gehen wir rüber ? (= über die Straße)* (Do we cross the road ?). Prepositions expressing motion with prepositional groups accompanying verbs also belong to the so-called satellites: *aus* (out of), *durch* (through), *zu* (to),... The following examples with prepositions illustrate the difference in the expression of the path of motion in French and German:

- (2a) *Er rannte aus der Küche durch das Wohnzimmer zur Straße;*
 (PLAIN V) (SAT.) (SAT.) (SAT.)
- (2b) *Il sortit de la cuisine, traversa la salle de séjour pour aller à la rue;*
 (PLAIN V) (PLAIN V) (PLAIN V)
- (2c) *He ran out of the kitchen through the living-room into the street.*
- (3a) *Sie kamen aus dem Theater und gingen nach Hause;*
 (PLAIN V) (SAT.) (PLAIN V) (SAT.)
- (3b) *Ils sortirent du théâtre et rentrèrent;*
 (PLAIN V) (PLAIN V)
- (3c) *They came out of the theatre and went home.*
- (4a) *Die Athleten schwimmen ans andere Ufer;*
 (PLAIN V) (SAT.)
- (4b) *Les athlètes traversent le fleuve (en nageant);*
 (PLAIN V)
- (4c) *The athletes swim to the other side of the river.*

Whereas German uses prepositional satellites (*aus der Küche* (out of the kitchen), *durch das Wohnzimmer* (through the living-room), *zur Straße* (to the street), *ans andere Ufer* (to the other side of the river)) to express the path of motion, French uses plain verbs (*sortir* (to go out), *traverser* (to cross), *aller* (to go)) which are far more general than the German satellites. As we can see with the translations, English as a Germanic language is quite

5 Studies on this topic have been done for translations between Spanish and English, e.g. by Slobin (2000).

similar to German in the way it expresses the path of motion. We are now in a state to understand why Talmy makes a difference between verb-framed and satellite-framed languages: French most frequently uses plain verbs to express the path of motion, which is why it belongs to the so-called “verb-framed” languages; German, on the other hand, prefers satellites to express the path of motion, so it is a “satellite-framed” language.

The description of this difference can help to explain why some syntactic constructions are not common usage in some languages although they are lexically possible and fully correct. Germans for instance will say:

- (5a) *Lass uns rübergehen* (Let us go over (to the other side of the street))
 (path of motion expressed by the satellite *rüber*) rather than
 (5b) *Lass uns die Straße überqueren* (Let us cross the road)
 (path of motion expressed by a plain verb, which is unusual in German)⁶.

French speakers on the other hand speak of :

- (5c) *traverser la rue* (cross the road)
 (plain verb for the path of motion).

2.1.3. Implications for foreign language teaching

Until now a contrastive linguistics approach showing this major difference between the Romance and the Germanic languages has been lacking in foreign language teaching. Often foreign language teachers react to foreign sentences by learners with: “You don’t say it like that in German”, without any further explanation. By using simple examples like those above and a summarizing table like the following, teachers can make learners aware of the differences in the expression of motion and of the path of motion.

	French	German
Manner of Motion	One single general verb: <i>aller</i>	Several differentiated verbs: <i>fahren</i> , <i>fliegen</i> , <i>gehen</i> , <i>schwimmen</i> ,...
Path of motion	Plain verbs: <i>traverser</i> , <i>sortir</i> , <i>entrer</i> ,...	Satellites: particles <i>hinein-</i> , <i>herüber-</i> , <i>heraus-</i> ,...; prepositions: <i>aus...</i> , <i>durch...</i> , <i>zu...</i> ,...

⁶ The particle *über-* in *überqueren* cannot be separated from the verb *-queren*, so it cannot be considered to be a satellite.

2.2. Manner of location and change of location

A similar distinction can be made in the way speakers express location or state and the change of location or state.

2.2.1. Expression of location/state

Whereas French speakers like to use the very general verb *être* (to be) to express a location of persons or things, Germans will almost always specify in which position they are located and use very different verbs which express the manner of location (a sitting, a lying or a standing position):

- (6a) *Où est ma tasse ? (Where is my cup ?);*
- (6b) *Wo steht meine Tasse ? (Where does my cup “stand” ?);*
- (7a) *Le livre est sur la table (The book is on the table);*
- (7b) *Das Buch liegt auf dem Tisch (The book is “lying” on the table);*
- (8a) *L’enfant est sur la commode (The child is on the chest of drawers);*
- (8b) *Das Kind sitzt auf der Kommode (The child is sitting on the chest of drawers);*
- (9a) *Le cadre est au mur (The picture is on the wall);*
- (9b) *Das Bild hängt an der Wand (The picture is hanging on the wall).*

Germans use the verbs *stehen*, *sitzen*, *liegen*, *hängen* to express a state or a location.

2.2.2. Expression of change of location/state

For the expression of a change of location or state Germans will obligatorily use differentiated verbs expressing how things or persons are put or placed: in a sitting (*setzen*), standing (*stellen*) or lying (*legen*) position, whereas French uses one single verb: *mettre*.

- (10a) *Où as-tu mis le journal ? (Where have you put the newspaper ?) ;*
- (10b) *Wo hast du die Zeitung hingelegt ? (Where have you “laid” the newspaper ?);*
- (11a) *Je mets le vase sur la grande table (I put the vase on the large table);*
- (11b) *Ich stelle die Vase auf den großen Tisch (I put the vase “in a standing position” on the large table);*
- (12a) *Où as-tu mis ma tasse ? (Where did you put my cup ?);*
- (12b) *Wo hast du meine Tasse hingestellt ? (Where have you put „in a standing position“ my cup ?).*

For the expression of the change of location German like French also has a very general verb which corresponds to the general *mettre*: *tun*. And indeed we sometimes hear in Germany sentences like:

- (10c) *Wo hast du die Zeitung hingetan ? (Where did you put the newspaper ?);*
- (11c) *Ich tue die Vase auf den großen Tisch (I put the vase on the large table);*
- (12c) *Wo hast du meine Tasse hingetan ? (Where did you put my cup ?)*

Sentence (10c) can be accepted because one does not know “in which position” the newspaper is. Sentences (11c) and (12c) are very colloquial and will probably be rejected by purists of the German language as being bad German sentences: a vase (11c) or a cup (12c) will usually be put in a standing position (a sitting position is never possible for a vase or a cup and a lying position is quite unusual⁷).

The expression of the manner of location/state and of the change of location/state in the Romance and Germanic languages can be represented in the following table:

	French	German
Manner of location/state	Very general verb: <i>être</i>	Several differentiated verbs: <i>sitzen, stehen, liegen, hängen</i>
Change of location/state	Very general location verb: <i>mettre</i>	Several orientation verbs: <i>setzen, stellen, legen, hängen</i>

2.3. Action/Aspect

This distinction between German and French seems to be a very general one: Germans specify how they cook (in boiling water (*kochen*), in the pan (*braten*), in the oven (*backen*); whereas this distinction is not optional in German, French speakers simply use *faire* (to make, to do) or *cuire* (to cook):

(13a) *Je cuis la viande* (I cook the meat);

(13b) *Ich brate das Fleisch* (I fry/bake the meat);

(14a) *Je fais un gâteau* (I make a cake);

(14b) *Ich backe einen Kuchen* (I bake a cake);

(15a) *Je fais le café* (I make the coffee);

(15b) *Ich koche den Kaffee* (I boil the coffee).

	French	German
Action/Aspect	General verb : <i>faire/cuire</i>	Several verbs: <i>kochen, braten, backen, grillen,...</i>

2.4. Implications for foreign language teaching

What are the consequences of these differences between French and German for the acquisition of the foreign language (in this case German)? We could see in our examples that German focusses on and differentiates the manner more than French (the manner of motion, the manner of location or state and the manner of cooking). To do this German uses different verbs. This seems to be a very general principle. For the French learner of German this not only means that s/he has to acquire many more specific verbs expressing the manner of motion, the manner of location/state or the manner of the cooking action, but also and

⁷ A lying position for a vase or a cup is possible when these objects are being transported (in a box for instance) but this is not the usual position.

especially that s/he has to learn to experience and see events in different ways: S/he will have to focus much more both on the manner as the core of the motion to be conceptualized obligatorily in each utterance and on the various possible satellites, which are not left as an optional choice but form part of the experiential habitus of focussing; s/he will have to think of the way things/persons are or in what position they are placed in German categories before s/he expresses a meaning of location/state or change of location/state; s/he will have to focus on the way things are being cooked before s/he expresses this kind of action. The foreign language teacher can introduce the differences with contrastive examples as we did above and then present the regularities in the form of schemas as described above. This kind of approach has been very much neglected up till now in foreign language teaching. With the use of the schemas as described above it should be easier to achieve first an increase in awareness and then a real active use of the differences.

3. Morphosyntax: spatial differentiation as static or dynamic location

3.1. Location and physical motion marked as dative or accusative

Teachers of German know all too well that spatial relations as conceptualized in German and syntactically realized in the system of verbs, prepositions and case marking in sentences constitute a major problem for French speakers, especially when prepositions can be used with two different cases dependent on the conceptualization which is being conveyed (called ‘two-way prepositions’ by Smith (1987)): verbs expressing spatial conceptualizations are used with prepositional nominal groups which are either dative or accusative objects (with a different case-marking):

(16a) *Er geht auf die Straße* (he is not yet in the street) (accusative object)

(16b) *He is walking into the street*

(16c) *Er geht auf der Straße* (he is already there) (dative object)

(16d) *He is walking (up and down) in the street*⁸.

This static/dynamic differentiation relates to the difference Germans experience and see between verbs which express an already existing location (*stehen* (to stand), *sitzen* (to sit), *liegen* (to lie)) (+ *wo*-complement, often realized by a dative in sentences) and verbs which express physical motion towards a landmark: something or someone *stellen* (to put in a standing position), *setzen* (to set), *legen* (to lay) (+ *wohin*-complement, which often implies the use of an accusative object). This differentiated use has been described in great detail by Leys (1989) and (1995). Traditional research tried to explain the difference with the concepts of ‘motion/no motion’, ‘direction/no direction’, ‘location/no location’. This is unsatisfactory. Cognitive linguistics approaches like those by Di Meola (1998), Draye

8 English keeps something of this differentiation by the use of *into* (he is walking into the street) or *in* (he is walking in the street).

(1996), Meex (2002), Meex & Mortelmans (2002), Smith (1993) and (1995), Serra Borneto (1997) offer a more insightful way of explaining the difference:

”Er lief in den Wald vs. imWald
 He ran in the-ACC. forest vs. the-DAT forest
 ‘He ran into the forest’ vs. ‘was running in the forest’.

Here, the dative designates that the process in which – in cognitive grammar terminology – the *trajector* *er* is engaged, is taking place in the *search domain* of the preposition, i.e., on a point or in a set of points which fulfill the (spatial) specifications that the preposition *in* imposes on the *landmark* *Wald*. The accusative designates that the trajector *er* is engaged in a process which brings it into a position which permanently satisfies the specifications imposed by the preposition on the landmark *Wald*.” (Draye, 1996: 187).

3.2. Case-marking for abstract/partial motion

In addition to the prototypical examples like (16a) and (16c) there is a list of more difficult cases:

- (17) *in einen Apfel beißen* (to bite into an apple),
- (18) *Kaffee in eine Tasse gießen* (to pour coffee into a cup),
- (19) *etwas an die Tafel schreiben* (to write something on the blackboard),
- (20) *an die Tür klopfen* (to knock on the door).

In these examples German sees a dynamic location which requires an accusative: there is a dynamic movement from the teeth to the apple, from the coffee to the cup, from the hand to the blackboard and from the hand to the door. To facilitate the experiential learning and gradual acquisition of these verbs one can describe German spatial verbs in visualised schemas with their syntactic realizations (the arrow is supposed to represent the concrete movement of the trajector or the trajectory):



<i>In einen Apfel beißen</i>	Zähne (teeth)	Apfel (apple) (<i>beißen/bite</i>)
<i>Kaffee in eine Tasse gießen</i>	Kaffee (coffee)	Tasse (cup) (<i>gießen/pour</i>)
<i>An die Tafel schreiben</i>	Hand (hand)	Tafel (blackboard) (<i>schreiben/write</i>)
<i>An die Tür klopfen</i>	Hand (hand)	Tür (door) (<i>klopfen/knock</i>)

This means that the learner of the German language must analyse the examples in a conscious way. The movement is not necessarily explicitly expressed but can be reconstructed with our very general encyclopedic knowledge: one bites into an apple with

one's teeth, one writes on the blackboard with the chalk in one's hand, one knocks on the door with one's hand. There is an underlying metonymic relationship between the action designated by the verb and some implicit objects (teeth or hand) which the learner must be made aware of and learn to visualize if s/he wants to find a justification for the use of the accusative.

3.3. Case-marking for abstract domains of thought perceived as motion

The crux is that this spatial distinction within spatial relations is also transposed to more abstract domains of thought as linguistically laid down in German. Some abstract German verbal expressions such as

- (21) *auf ein Problem eingehen* (to go into a problem),
- (22) *sich an die Hoffnung klammern* (to cling to hope),
- (23) *in eine andere Sprache übersetzen* (to translate into another language),
- (24) *ins Gesicht sagen* (to say to someone's face),
- (25) *hinter etwas schauen* (to look behind something (in a figurative way)),
- (26) *ich bin an den Vertrag gebunden* (I am bound to this contract)

face the French speaker with a similar dilemma: Is this an instance of a static or a dynamic abstract location? None of the approaches mentioned above look at these more abstract examples in which there is no real, concrete movement. An explanation attempt is made by Smith (1995) who shows that the difference between dative and accusative use can also be motivated by the presence or the absence of 'change': "Dative designates that the trajector of the preposition is confined to a set of points satisfying the locative specification of the preposition (i.e. the search domain of the preposition). This situation can be interpreted as unchanging with respect to the preposition's search domain. Accusative designates that the trajector of the preposition is not always confined to the search domain of the preposition, but enters the search domain at some point along a path. This situation can be interpreted as involving change with respect to the locative configuration encoded by the preposition." (296) Smith quotes the concept of 'change' to explain the use of the accusative with the verb *übersetzen*:

"Hans hat den Brief ins (in das) Deutsche übersetzt.

Hans has the letter in-the-ACC German translated

'Hans translated the letter into German.'

Thus, to translate from one language to another (encoded in German, as well as in English, by a verb which literally means 'to set over') involves the (figurative) movement of the trajector of the preposition over a (linguistic) boundary of sorts, which results in a change in the trajector." (Smith, 1995: 313) In my opinion this concept of change is too general; there is no change in the sentences: (21) *ich gehe auf ein Problem ein*, (22) *Ich klammere mich an die Hoffnung*, or (26) *Ich bin an den Vertrag gebunden*.

Serra-Borneto (1997: 192) looks at some more abstract examples of static verbs with the accusative:

“Das Wasser reicht ihm bis über die Schenkel.

The water reaches to-him till over the-ACC thighs

‘The water is above his thighs’.

Er ist über seine besten Jahre hinweg.

He is over his-acc best years away

‘He is over his best years (He has left behind the best years of his life)’.”

He justifies the use of the accusative with the sense of ‘abstract motion’, although the situation is in itself static: But “you can imagine the eyes of the speaker following a trajectory from the ground up to the thighs and beyond them”. (192) Langacker speaks of ‘subjective motion’ (Langacker 1990: 157-158). This subjective motion is typical for our examples above: the motion or the trajectory from the brain to the problem ((21) *auf ein Problem eingehen*), the motion of the hands to hope ((22) *sich an die Hoffnung klammern*), the motion of words from one language into the other ((23) *in eine andere Sprache übersetzen*), the motion of the words to the face ((24) *ins Gesicht sagen*), the motion of the eyes that look behind something or someone ((23) *hinter etwas schauen*), the motion of the hands to the contract ((24) *ich bin an den Vertrag gebunden*). The use of the accusative in the non-prototypical examples above highlights the entire path of motion. We need a further concept to explain the interpretation of the actions of our examples as being a (subjective) motion and we can find it in conceptual metaphor theory as proposed by Lakoff/Johnson (1980): The abstract activity is perceived as motion, which means that there is a metaphorical transfer from the abstract activity to the motion. The conceptual metaphor ‘ABSTRACT ACTIVITY IS MOTION’ underlies our examples. We can represent it like this:

Subjective motion



<i>auf ein Problem eingehen (to deal with a problem)</i>	Gehirn (brain)	Problem (problem) (eingehen/to go into)
<i>sich an die Hoffnung klammern (to cling to hope)</i>	Hände (hands)	Hoffnung (hope) (klammern/to cling)
<i>in eine andere Sprache übersetzen (to translate into another language)</i>	Wörter in einer Sprache (words in one language)	Wörter in einer anderen Sprache (words in another language) (übersetzen/to translate)
<i>hinter etwas schauen (to look behind something (in a figurative way))</i>	Augen (eyes)	Hinter etwas (behind something or someone) (schauen/to look)
<i>ins Gesicht sagen (to say in the face)</i>	Wörter (words)	Gesicht (face) (sagen/to say)
<i>An den Vertrag gebunden sein (to be bound to a contract)</i>	Hände (hands)	Vertrag (contract) (gebunden sein/to be bound)

The elements of the second column ('head', 'hands', 'words', 'eyes') are again not explicit but can be reconstructed by metonymy starting from the verbs used and our knowledge about the action they designate: you cling to something with your hands (22), you translate words (23), you look with your eyes (25),... The trajectory is between implicit elements which are metonymically bound to the verbs used.

3.4. Implications for the acquisition of German by foreigners

French speakers have major problems in the case-marking of such examples because the abstract activities are not necessarily perceived as a motion which motivates the use of the accusative. The difficulties can be reduced if the teacher chooses an approach in which he privileges an explanation that demonstrates the underlying conceptual metaphor. The examples we discussed are all illustrations of the underlying conceptual metaphor: 'ABSTRACT ACTIVITY IS MOTION'. The foreign language teacher can ask questions like: Imagine the verb *klammern* (*cling*) (example 22); what do you need to cling to something ? Show how you cling; what do you use when clinging ?... Learners will speak of their hands. This roundabout way is necessary to get to the underlying metaphor. The last step will be to show that exemplifications of this conceptual metaphor require the accusative case-marking.

4. Conclusion

We saw that many differences between French and German can only be explained when considering the way both languages conceptualize. As a very general principle, German likes to express the manner and therefore uses a variety of verbs. This dimension is not so important in French, which uses a small number of very general verbs.

The teaching of the German case-marking with abstract verbs can be facilitated if one chooses the indirect way of explaining the underlying conceptual metaphor: An abstract activity being interpreted as a motion offers a good explanation for the use of the accusative.

Until now, foreign language teaching has vaguely advised the foreign language learner “to learn to think in the foreign language”. However, this can only happen with a cognitively and experientially rooted approach to language understanding and description. We now are in a position to begin to appreciate what this slogan involves.

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