



**HAL**  
open science

## French onions and Dutch trains: Typological perspectives on learners' descriptions of spatial scenes

Maarten Lemmens, Julien Perrez

► **To cite this version:**

Maarten Lemmens, Julien Perrez. French onions and Dutch trains: Typological perspectives on learners' descriptions of spatial scenes. *What is Applied Cognitive Linguistics?*, De Gruyter, pp.121 - 150, 2018, 10.1515/9783110572186-005 . halshs-04292435

**HAL Id: halshs-04292435**

**<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-04292435>**

Submitted on 17 Nov 2023

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

1 Maarten Lemmens and Julien Perrez

2 **French onions and Dutch trains: Typological**  
3 **perspectives on learners' descriptions of**  
4 **spatial scenes<sup>1</sup>**  
5

6  
7  
8 **1 Scope and issues**  
9

10 Space is a universal cognitive domain whose linguistic realization shows a great  
11 deal of variation across different languages, as has been pointed out by numerous  
12 typological studies (see, for instance, Ameka and Levinson 2007; Levinson 2003;  
13 Talmy 2000).<sup>2</sup> One of the most influential taxonomies accounting for this variation  
14 is Talmy's typological distinction between verb-framed languages and satellite-  
15 framed languages. Verb-framed languages (from now on V-languages), like  
16 French, are languages in which the direction of the movement is encoded in  
17 the main verb and manner of motion is optionally expressed in an adjunct.  
18 Satellite-framed (from now on S-languages), like Dutch, are languages in which  
19 manner of motion is encoded in the main verb and the direction of movement in  
20 a satellite.

21 These typological differences between V- and S-languages have been con-  
22 firmed (but also nuanced) by cross-linguistic studies focusing on the encoding  
23 of motion and locative events (see among others Gullberg 2009; Hellerstedt  
24 2013; Hickmann 2007; Hickmann and Hendricks 2006; Lemmens and Slobin  
25 2008; Özçalışkan and Slobin 2003), but also by studies analysing the co-verbal  
26 gestures produced when talking about space (see among others Brown and  
27 Chen 2013; Gullberg 2009; Kendon 2004; Kita 2009; Kita and Özyürek 2003;  
28 Tutton 2013). At the same time, it has become clear that these two types of  
29 languages should be considered as two extremes on a continuum rather than  
30 as sharp dichotomies (see Berthele 2004; Berthele, Whelpton, Naess, and Duijff  
31 2015; Kopecka 2006; Slobin 2004).

32  
33 **1** This research was supported by the Fonds Spéciaux de la Recherche, Grant C-13/100 awarded  
34 to Julien Perrez and by the ANR-DFG grant "Lexis and gesture in L2 expressions of static spatial  
35 relations" awarded to Maarten Lemmens.

36 **2** The authors would like to thank the anonymous reviewer(s) and Hae In Park for their  
37 constructive comments on an earlier version of this paper. All remaining inaccuracies are the  
38 authors' responsibility.

39 **Maarten Lemmens**, Université de Lille 3

40 **Julien Perrez**, Université de Liège

<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110572186-005>

1 Applied to the domain of static location, the typological differences between  
 2 V- and S-languages result in a tendency of the latter to specify the manner of  
 3 location, by using a specific posture verb, like the Dutch verbs *staan* ‘stand’, *zit-*  
 4 *ten* ‘sit’ and *liggen* ‘lie’, whereas the former tend to use a single dummy verbs like  
 5 French *être* ‘be’ or *se trouver* ‘find oneself’ to encode the spatial orientation of  
 6 entities in space, often leaving the manner of location unexpressed (see among  
 7 others Hickmann 2007; Hickmann and Hendricks 2006; Lemmens and Slobin  
 8 2008). This quasi-automatic use of posture verbs to locate entities in space is not  
 9 without impact on their frequency and their extensive and complex semantic  
 10 networks, allowing them to express a whole range of metaphorical meanings  
 11 going beyond the simple postural or locational, for instance to locate abstract  
 12 entities in concrete space or concrete entities in abstract space (see Lemmens  
 13 2002 and Lemmens and Perrez 2010 for a detailed description of the semantic  
 14 networks of the Dutch posture verbs).<sup>3</sup>

15 From the perspective of foreign language learning, these typological differ-  
 16 ences are a source of learning problems, especially in the case of native speakers  
 17 of V-languages who learn S-languages (Ellis 1994; Gullberg 2009; Kellerman  
 18 1995). More particularly, going from a V-language to a S-language means that  
 19 learners have to readjust semantic categories acquired in the L1; more specifi-  
 20 cally, they need to go from a single large semantic category in the L1 to several  
 21 specific categories in the L2 (see Gullberg 2009; Ijaz 1986; Narasimhan and  
 22 Gullberg 2011), which represent pedagogical challenges (see, for instance, De  
 23 Knop and Perrez 2014). These learning difficulties have been reported for native  
 24 speakers of V-languages learning S-languages, moving from a less complex  
 25 system to a more complex system, but some studies have pointed out that also  
 26 moving from a L1 S-language to a L2 V-language leads to learning problems (see,  
 27 for instance, Cadierno 2004; Cadierno et al. 2016). More specifically, Cadierno et al  
 28 (2016) show that intermediate Danish learners of Spanish tend to overgeneralize  
 29 the use of the generic verb *poner* ‘put’ for configurations where more specific  
 30 placement verbs such as *dejar* ‘leave [in a place]’ or *meter* ‘put in’ would be  
 31 more idiomatic. They suggest that “when the two languages vary with respect  
 32 to the number of semantic categories [...], the process of L2 meaning reconstruc-  
 33 tion becomes difficult irrespective of the nature of the transition that has to be  
 34 made” (Cadierno et al. 2016: 214).

35 For French-speaking learners of Dutch, going from a L1 V-language to a L2  
 36 S-language, the semantic reconstruction process means they have to (i) get used

---

38 **3** Note that in this respect English stands out in the group of Germanic languages (all S-framed)  
 39 by not using the posture verbs *sit*, *lie* and *stand* as often as do its Germanic peers (see Lemmens  
 40 2014) for some discussion.

1 to using a posture verb instead of general verb such as *être* ‘be’ commonly used  
 2 in French in locative sentences, (ii) understand in which context a given posture  
 3 verb is to be used, and (iii) deal with the metaphorical extensions of these  
 4 posture verbs.

5 These alleged difficulties have been confirmed by cross-sectional studies,  
 6 looking at various typologically different languages, focusing on the encoding of  
 7 motion events (see, for instance, Cadierno 2004, 2008; Hendriks and Hickmann  
 8 2011; Hijazo-Gascon 2015), dynamic location events (see Gullberg 2009; Alferink  
 9 and Gullberg 2014; Narasimhan and Gullberg 2011), and static location events  
 10 (Lemmens and Perrez 2010; Lemmens and Perrez 2012). The study by Lemmens  
 11 and Perrez (2010) concentrated on the use of the Dutch posture verbs *staan*  
 12 ‘stand’, *zitten* ‘sit’ and *liggen* ‘lie’ by French-speaking learners in spontaneous  
 13 written productions (learner corpus analysis). When compared to native usage,  
 14 the learners tend (i) to underuse posture verbs in their target language (“posture  
 15 verb underuse”), (ii) to select erroneous posture verbs to encode the location  
 16 of given entities (“posture verb confusion”), and (iii) to use posture verbs in  
 17 contexts where such verbs do not apply (“posture verb overuse”). As stressed  
 18 by Lemmens and Perrez, these different characteristics of the learner use of  
 19 postures verbs suggest their use is influenced by negative transfer from their  
 20 mother tongue (“posture verb underuse” and “posture verb confusion”) but  
 21 also by patterns typical of a developing learner interlanguage (“posture verb  
 22 overuse”). A more specific analysis of the contexts in which posture verbs were  
 23 used further reveals that the learners tend to use the posture verbs in their basic  
 24 postural and locational domains, whereas the natives more frequently used  
 25 them in abstract metaphorical extensions.

26 In a follow-up cross-sectional experiment, based on an oral picture descrip-  
 27 tion task in which the subjects were to describe the location of entities on  
 28 various pictures taken from a children’s book, Lemmens and Perrez (2012) observed  
 29 similar tendencies, namely (i) that French-speaking learners of Dutch, when  
 30 compared to native speakers of Dutch, significantly overused neutral verbs and  
 31 underused posture verbs in their spatial encodings, (ii) that about 30% of the  
 32 erroneous uses of posture verbs were instances of posture verb confusion, and  
 33 (iii) that some learners tended to overgeneralize the posture verbs in some  
 34 contexts. Interestingly, when assessing the evolution of the use of posture verbs  
 35 at various stages of foreign language development, Lemmens and Perrez (2012)  
 36 observed that the use of posture verbs by French-speaking learners remains  
 37 problematic even at a high level of foreign language proficiency. More specifi-  
 38 cally, although the most proficient learners appear to show a more native-like  
 39 behaviour, in that their use of posture verbs significantly increases and their  
 40

1 use of neutral verbs significantly decreases, they concurrently appear to produce  
2 a higher percentage of erroneous uses of these verbs.

3 Building on these two studies, the study reported on in this contribution  
4 further zooms in on how speakers of Dutch and French encode locative events  
5 on a more general level, by moving away from the (typical) exclusively verb-  
6 centred approach to a more global perspective by analysing the syntactic con-  
7 structions used to encode locative events and the role they play in the overall  
8 discourse strategy in Dutch and French. The research questions underlying our  
9 study are thus the following. Are there any differences in the constructions used  
10 by learners of Dutch when giving spatial descriptions and, if so, what are these  
11 differences and how do they interact with lexical differences (cf. Lemmens and  
12 Perrez 2012)? Are they due to interference of their mother tongue (French) or to  
13 some other strategy (like overgeneralization or avoidance)?

14 This article is structured as follows. The following section (Section 2) sketches  
15 the methodological underpinnings of our study, presenting the data, the elicit-  
16 ation task, the participants, and the coding method. Section 3 presents the results  
17 and is structured around the discussion of constructional patterns on the one  
18 hand and discourse patterns on the other. The results are more specifically  
19 tackled from the perspective of the contrasting differences between French  
20 and Dutch and of developmental patterns of French-speaking learners of Dutch.  
21 Section 4 concludes the article.

22

23

## 24 **2 Data and method**

25

### 26 **2.1 Task**

27

28 The data on which this research is based are part of a larger data set for different  
29 languages (including English, Dutch, and French) and the procedure that has  
30 been used to collect these data has been described extensively in previous  
31 papers (see, for instance, Lemmens and Slobin 2008; Lemmens and Perrez  
32 2012). In a nutshell, the data are free picture descriptions of five pictures from  
33 two wordless children's books.<sup>4</sup> Each picture depicts a different kind of environ-  
34 ment: (1) a clothing shop for kids, (2) a shoe store, (3) a bedroom where a family  
35 is getting dressed for a party, (4) a street market, and (5) a butcher's shop; each

36

---

37 <sup>4</sup> The two books are (1) Capdevila, R. 1984. *La festa* [The party]. SA Editorial. Dutch edition by  
38 Casterman 1996. ISBN 90-303-0658-0 (used for P1, P2, & P3) and (2) Ribas, T. P. Casademunt &  
39 R. Capdevila 1984. *Les botigues* [The shops]. SA Editorial. Dutch edition by Casterman ISBN 90-  
40 303-0653-X (used for P4 & P5).

1 picture thus has a typical array of objects, respectively clothes (P1), shoes and  
 2 shoeboxes (P2), furniture and clothes (P3), vegetables (P4; at three vegetable  
 3 stands), and meat and delicacies (P5). However, they also show people interact-  
 4 ing with objects, such as a shop assistant carrying shoe boxes, a market woman  
 5 holding up a bunch of carrots, a woman folding clothes on a counter, people  
 6 trying on shoes, a man tying his tie in front of the mirror, or a butcher slicing  
 7 meat or laying it on a dish.

8 The subjects were asked to describe each picture, one after the other, on  
 9 the basis of a lead-question, targeting particular entities, e.g., for picture 1 (a  
 10 clothing shop for kids) the lead-question was *Can you tell me where the clothes*  
 11 *are in this shop and what type of clothes they are?* The resulting descriptions are  
 12 monologic, told to the experimenter, situated in front of them. The subjects were  
 13 presented one picture at a time, in a random order for different participants to  
 14 avoid any order effect. The subjects were seated on a chair without armrests.  
 15 Before starting the description, they could hold the picture for a while to study  
 16 it and then were asked to place it on a stand placed slightly to the right of them  
 17 (at about 1m distance) and start their description. The productions were video-  
 18 taped and transcribed verbatim. Afterwards the data were annotated in ELAN  
 19 (see below).

## 22 2.2 Participants

23 In total 46 participants took part to the elicitation study that we report on in this  
 24 paper, 12 native speakers of (Belgian) Dutch (3 male and 9 female students from  
 25 the University of Leuven, Belgium), 12 native speakers of French (7 male and 5  
 26 female students from the university of Lille, France), and 22 French-speaking  
 27 learners of Dutch (18 female and 4 male students from the University Saint-Louis  
 28 Brussels, Belgium). These learners are all undergraduate students majoring in  
 29 Dutch and one other Germanic language (English or German in this case). Prior  
 30 to the experiment, they all took a foreign language proficiency test, set at a B2-  
 31 level of the Common European Framework of Reference. The test was developed  
 32 at the Institute of Modern Languages (ILT) of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven  
 33 (University of Leuven) in collaboration with other institutions.<sup>5</sup> The test, com-  
 34 posed of 80 items, aims at measuring the grammatical and lexical knowledge  
 35 of the students as well as their reading and listening proficiency. The learners  
 36

---

37  
 38 <sup>5</sup> Many thanks to our colleagues of the Dutch department at the Leuven Language Institute at  
 39 the KU Leuven (ILT) for generously granting us the privilege to use this test for our experiment.  
 40 More information on this test can be found at <http://www.itna.be/>.

1 were divided into three proficiency groups based on a gap of 3 points which  
 2 occurred between the MIN and MAX scores (53–56 for groups 1 and 2, and 64–  
 3 67 for groups 2 and 3). An ANOVA test ( $F_{(2,19)} = 121.58$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) confirms the  
 4 significance of this division.

5 Both the learners and the native speakers have learned English as a foreign  
 6 language at school; some may also have studied other languages. This has not  
 7 been controlled for in this experiment but the influence of notably English on  
 8 the learners' performance can be assumed to be minimal given that the pre-  
 9 ferred English verb for coding location events, *be*, is no facilitating factor in the  
 10 semantic recategorization involved in the acquisition of Dutch posture verbs.  
 11 Furthermore, the exposure to English (in mass media, films, etc.) is fairly limited  
 12 in the southern French-speaking part of Belgium, most audiovisual cultural  
 13 products being dubbed.

### 15 2.3 Coding

17 Our basic units of analysis are locative clauses. In our approach, a locative  
 18 clause is broadly defined as any clause containing locative information, be it a  
 19 locative verb (such as posture or placement verbs, e.g., *staan* 'stand' in example  
 20 [1]) or a locative adjunct (adverbs like *there* or *here*, prepositional phrases like  
 21 *on the bed* or *next to the counter*, or particles, such as in example [2]), or a  
 22 combination of these two (example [1] is in fact such a combination).

24 (1) *De meeste schoenen staan in de etalage* (OPD-DU-01)<sup>6</sup>

25 'most of the shoes stand in the display'<sup>7</sup>

27 (2) *Vous avez trois boîtes à chaussure sur une chaise au fond* (OPD-FR-02)

28 'you have three shoeboxes on a chair behind'

30 While this may be straightforward at first sight, delineating what counts as a  
 31 locative clause is more complex than it seems, due to embedding of different  
 32 locative clauses. Consider the following example:

34 \_\_\_\_\_  
 35 <sup>6</sup> Examples with a reference like this are taken from our corpus of oral picture descriptions  
 36 (OPD), the labels DU, FR and Du2F refer respectively to native speakers of Dutch, natives speakers  
 37 of French and French-speaking learners of Dutch. The first digit (01, in this case) identifies the  
 38 speaker and the second digit (only for the learners) refers to his/her level of proficiency, ranging  
 39 from 1 (lowest) to 3 (highest).

40 <sup>7</sup> While they are not glosses, the English translations are fairly literal (and thus possibly non-  
 idiomatic), to capture the semantics of the original.

1 (3) *tussen de twee [...] nachttafels is er een bed waarop [...] twee hemden en*  
 2 *een broek liggen* (OPD-Du2F-12-2)

3 ‘between the two [...] bedside tables, there is a bed on which [...] two  
 4 shirts and one pair of trousers lie’

5  
 6 From a strictly syntactic point of view, there are two separate locative clauses  
 7 presenting two different locative events: the main clause (*tussen de twee*  
 8 *nachttafels is er een bed* ‘between the two [...] bedside tables, there is a bed’) locates  
 9 bed which functions as the Ground for the location of the clothes, presented in the following  
 10 relative clause (*waarop twee hemden en een broek liggen* ‘on which two shirts and a pair of  
 11 trousers lie’). On a functional level, however, this can be regarded as one single locative event,  
 12 as the speaker is targeting the location of the clothes, where the main locative clause is merely an  
 13 auxiliary event to locate the Ground (the bed). In other words, while on the level of the  
 14 main clause, the bed is a figure located within the room (Ground), it functions as a secondary  
 15 Figure in the larger locative event the speaker is targeting, i.e., the location of the clothes  
 16 which thus can be considered the primary Figure.

17  
 18 As we are interested in the expression of the location of entities, we have  
 19 considered clauses as separate locative clauses whenever they locate two  
 20 different figures; in the case of the example above, we have thus annotated the  
 21 two clauses separately. At a higher level, these clauses will be taken together  
 22 as a larger discourse unit. As detailed below, such complex clauses do reveal  
 23 interesting strategies of information packaging, which turn out to be different  
 24 in Dutch and in French.

25 Each locative clause has subsequently been annotated according to various  
 26 parameters, including identification of the Figure (the entity located), of the  
 27 Ground, the verb (lemma form), the (semantic) verb type, the construction type,  
 28 and the verb satellites. This method makes it possible to analyse the encoding of  
 29 location events from a combined lexical and constructional perspective.

30 The verb types have been characterized via the following categories:

31 – POSTURE verbs: *zitten* / *être assis* ‘sit’, *liggen* / *être couché* ‘lie’, *staan* / *être*  
 32 *debout* ‘stand’, and *hangen* / *être suspendu* ‘hang’<sup>8</sup>

33  
 34  
 35 ———  
 36 **8** As specified earlier, French disfavours the use of posture verbs which cannot be used to  
 37 refer to the location of inanimate entities; however, they do exist and can be used to refer to  
 38 the posture of human (or human-like) beings. Strikingly, however, these verbs tend not to be  
 39 used even in those contexts and French speakers will, unless there are reasons to the contrary,  
 40 resort to using *être* ‘be’, leaving the posture unspecified (which can usually be pragmatically  
 inferred).



- 1 – NEUTRAL verbs: verbs that are semantically quite empty, often existential or  
 2 dummy verbs, e.g., *zijn* ‘be’, *zich bevinden* lit. ‘REFLEXIVE find’ = ‘be found’;  
 3 *être* ‘be’, *il y a* ‘there is/are’
- 4 – DISPOSITIONAL verbs: these are (locative) verbs which provide some more  
 5 precise information about how the entity is located in space. These can be  
 6 attachment verbs, such as *coller*, *attacher* ‘attach’, arrangement verbs, such  
 7 as *éparpiller* ‘scatter’, *verspreid* ‘spread out’, or configuration verbs, such as  
 8 *drapé* ‘draped’.
- 9 – PERCEPTION verbs, e.g., *zien/voir* ‘see’, as in *On voit des vêtements sur le lit*  
 10 ‘One sees some clothes on the bed’
- 11 – POSSESSION verbs, e.g., *De mevrouw heeft kleren over haar arm* ‘The woman  
 12 has some clothes over her arm’
- 13 – OTHER: any other verb that is used in what is considered a locative clause,  
 14 e.g., *de papa knoopt zijn das voor de spiegel* ‘the dad ties (= ‘is tying’) his tie  
 15 in front of the mirror’
- 16 – ELLIPSIS: no verb, e.g., *er hangt vlees aan haken rechts en Ø worsten links*  
 17 ‘there hangs meat on hooks to the right and Ø sausages on the left’

18  
 19 The construction types in the data have been characterized as: basic locative  
 20 constructions, presentational constructions, identificational constructions, tran-  
 21 sitive constructions, progressive constructions, non-locative constructions, and  
 22 complex constructions (combinations of the previous ones). Each construction  
 23 type is briefly presented below.

24 Basic locative constructions (BLC), a concept introduced by Wilkins (1998,  
 25 1999), are constructions of the form <Figure> + <predicate> + <relator> (mostly  
 26 a preposition) + <Ground>, as illustrated in the earlier example (1) (reproduced  
 27 here for convenience) which has the canonical word order (Figure precedes the  
 28 Ground) and (4) which has a topicalized Ground.<sup>9</sup>

29 (1) *De meeste schoenen staan in de etalage* (OPD-DU-01)

30 ‘most of the shoes stand in the display’

31  
 32 (4) *Naast het bed staan twee nachtkastjes* (OPD-DU-01)

33 ‘next to the bed stand two night tables’

34  
 35 Presentational constructions (PRES) are constructions in which a figure is intro-  
 36 duced by presentational markers such as *er* in Dutch or *il y a* in French, the  
 37 equivalent of English presentational *there* constructions.

38  
 39 \_\_\_\_\_  
 40 <sup>9</sup> Such word order changes are typically motivated by discourse constraints, i.e. when the  
 Ground (the bed in this example) has been introduced previously and is thus old information.  
 For the coding of the type of construction, abstraction has been made of these word order  
 variations and both have been coded as basic locative constructions (BLC).

1 (5) *Er ligt een bloes in de badkamer* (OPD-DU-03)

2 ‘there lies a blouse in the bathroom’

3

4 (6) *et il y a donc une dame à la caisse* (OPD-FR-04)

5 ‘and there is thus a woman at the desk’

6

7 Identificational constructions (ID) are typically introduced by cleft-markers to  
8 identify a given figure.

9

10 (7) *les premiers clients que je vois, c’est une dame et une petite fille à la caisse*  
11 (OPD-FR-06)

12 ‘the first clients that I see, it is a lady and a little girl at the desk’

13

14 Transitive constructions (TRANS) include various constructions with transitive  
15 verbs (as opposed to intransitive location verbs or copula-like existential verbs);  
16 they come in various subtypes (usually because of the type of verb that is used)  
17 such as perception constructions (see [8]), possessive constructions (including  
18 viewer-based possession clauses such as in [9] as well as character-based  
19 possession clauses, such as in [10]) or causative constructions (see example [11]).

20

21 (8) *en in de slaapkamer ziet ge een stapelbed* (OPD-DU-06)

22 ‘and in the bedroom you see bunk beds’

23

24 (9) *à droite de ces chaussettes, on a des tee-shirts avec différents motifs*  
25 (OPD-FR-09)

26 ‘to the right of these socks, one has tee-shirts with different patterns’

27

28 (10) *en ze heeft ook nog kisten onder haar tafel, allez één kist en een mand*  
29 (OPD-DU-08)

30 ‘and she has also boxes under her table, I mean one box and a basket’

31

32 (11) *de verkoper legt ook worsten in een weegschaal* (OPD-DU-10)

33 ‘the shop assistant is also laying sausages in the scales’

34

35 A special category had to be created for progressive constructions (PROG) which  
36 in Dutch can either be built with *aan het V zijn* ‘be at the V’ (the verb ‘be’  
37 followed by a nominalized infinitive expressing the ongoing activity) or, more  
38 relevant to the current study, with a (grammaticalized) posture verb followed  
39  
40

1 by an infinitive, as illustrated in example (12). Although such constructions are  
 2 primarily used to refer to the ongoing or durative aspect of an event, and not so  
 3 much to locate entities in space, the fact that they are structured around one of  
 4 the three basic posture verbs *staan* ‘stand’, *liggen* ‘lie’ or *zitten* ‘sit’ does, to some  
 5 extent, add some manner of location information to the event.<sup>10</sup>

6

7 (12) *en iemand die in de etalage staat te kijken* (OPD-DU-04).

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

Non-locative constructions (NON-LOC) are constructions where there is no locative  
 complement (a prepositional phrase, a locative adverb, etc., see example [13]).  
 Although such constructions are not locative in nature (but more existential or  
 purely presentational), they were still included and annotated because they can  
 be used to introduce some information that can be used in a subsequent locative  
 clause (between square brackets), such as in example (14).

18 (13) *en dan zijn er ook winkeltjes [die eerder kledij verkopen]* (OPD-DU-02)

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

21 (14) *Er is ook een bed [waar kleren op liggen]* (OPD-DU-01)

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

Another context in which a clause was marked as NON-LOC is when a clear  
 locative verb (such as a posture verb) was used without any locative complement,  
 as in the example below:

28 (15) *Dus [...] vlees hangt* (OPD-Du2F-20-2)

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, the Dutch posture verbs in such progressive constructions have undergone a  
 grammaticalization process, such that the locative meaning of the verb in such constructions  
 does not always correspond to the basic human posture prototypically denoted by the verb  
 when used in isolation. At the same time, they do retain a certain locative character, as argued  
 in Lemmens (2005, 2015, 2017).

1 Example (15) is considered a locative clause in our data set following the criterion  
 2 that there is a posture verb, but the absence of a locative phrase is quite marked  
 3 (though not impossible). Example (16) is a pure postural clause which says some-  
 4 thing about the posture of the (human) Figure, but it is only indirectly locative  
 5 (she necessarily stands somewhere). The mark-up NON-LOC allows us to dis-  
 6 tinguish these from clauses where there is an overt locative complement (e.g.,  
 7 ‘there lie clothes on the bed’, ‘people stand near the counter’). As it turns out,  
 8 this will be relevant for the analysis of learner data (overusing the NON-LOC  
 9 pattern) and for complex constructions, discussed below.

10 In addition to these categories, there are also complex constructions in  
 11 which one type of construction is embedded in another construction. This is  
 12 more specifically the case with basic locative constructions (BLC), which can  
 13 be introduced by a presentational construction (17) or a perception (transitive)  
 14 construction (18).

15

16 (17) [*en daarnaast zijn er ook schoenen [die zich voor de zetel bevinden]* ]  
 17 (OPD-DU-02).

18

19 ‘[and next to it are there also shoes [that find themselves in front of  
 20 the sofa] ]’

21

22 (18) [*je vois aussi des t-shirts [qui sont collés au mur du fond]* ] (OPD-FR-04)  
 23 ‘[I see also tee-shirts [that are stuck onto the wall at the back] ]’

24

25 Because such complex constructions are a specific way of construing a spatial  
 26 event where the first construction is used to introduce the Figure and the sub-  
 27 sequent locative construction (the second clause) specifies its location, these  
 28 embedded basic locative constructions have been regarded as a separate cate-  
 29 gory, coded as X+BLC, where the X represents the type of matrix construction,  
 30 e.g. PRES+BLC for example (17) and PERC+BLC for example (18).

31

32 In such complex cases, the main clause can either have a locative com-  
 33 plement, e.g., *daarnaast* ‘next to it’ in example (17), or not, as in (18), with a  
 34 perception verb.

35

36 Elliptical constructions have also been marked as such; while it may some-  
 37 times be possible to reconstruct the construction type, this may not always be so  
 38 and it is therefore deemed relevant to be able to exclude these.

39

40 Finally, the category OTHER unites constructions of various types that are  
 less relevant to (pure) locative events, like intransitive or transitive constructions  
 (active or passive) with verbs such as *verkopen* ‘sell’, *passen* ‘try on’, etc.

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

48

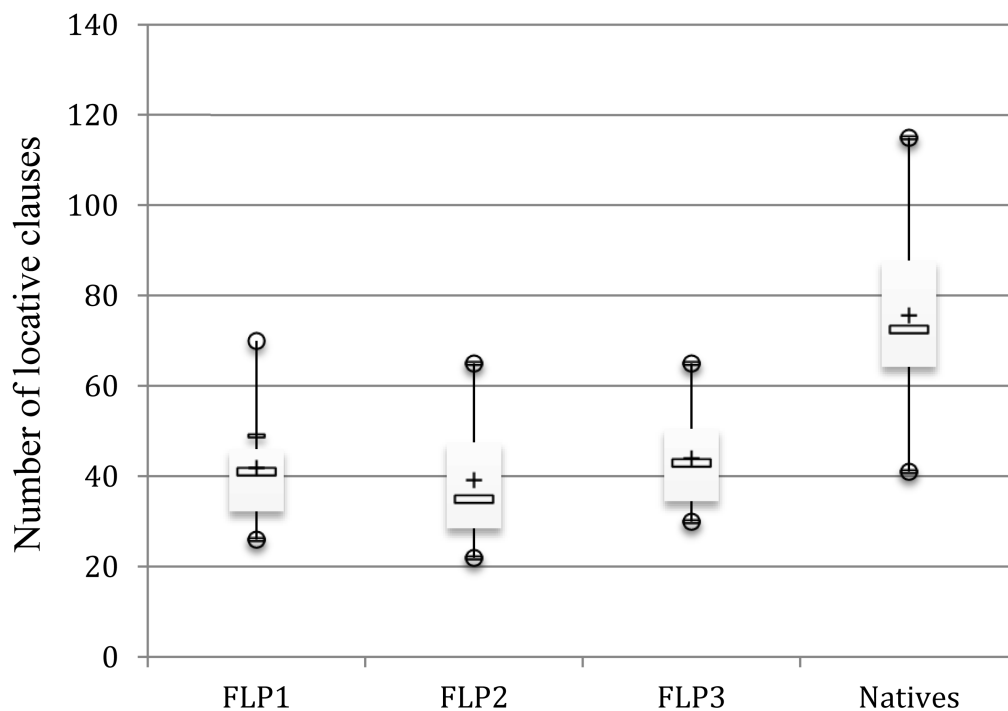
49

50

## 3 Results and analysis

### 3.1 Overview of the data set

The learners produced on average 33.8 locative clauses per interview. Although there is a slight, but non-significant ( $F_{(2,19)} = 0.207$ ,  $p = 0.815$ ) increase of the average number of locative clauses across the levels of proficiency (level 1: 41.8; level 2: 39.1; level 3: 44.0), the high level of individual variation in the learners' production of locative clauses is quite striking, both within and between proficiency groups. For instance, the most prolific learner (FLP1) produced 70 locative clauses, whereas the least prolific one (FLP2) only produced 22 locative clauses. The same observation goes for the native speakers: the most prolific one produced 115 locative clauses, whereas the least prolific one only produced 41 clauses (which equals the mean production score of the learners). The high level of individual variation in the production of locative clauses is illustrated by Figure 1, which suggests that the native speakers on average produce more locative clauses per interview than the learners (means for each group: FLP1: 41.87; FLP2: 39.14; FLP3: 44.00; Natives: 75.66). A one-way ANOVA confirms that this difference is significant ( $F_{(3,30)} = 10.502$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ). Further post-hoc tests

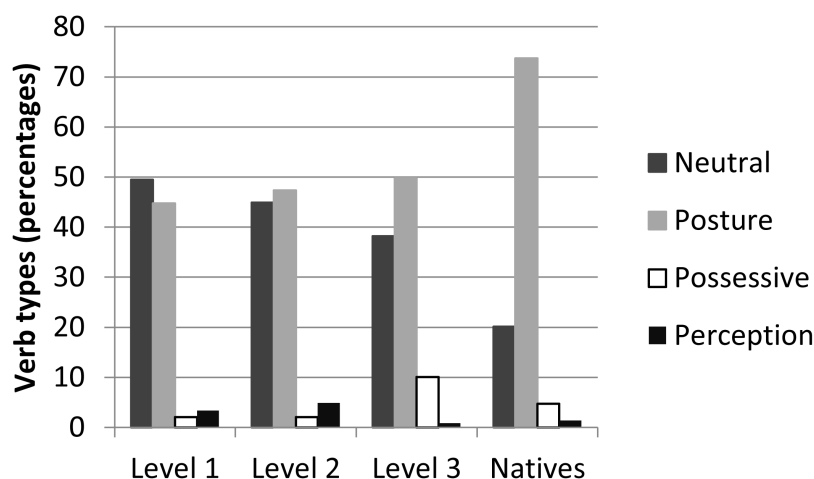


**Figure 1:** Production of locative clauses across the proficiency levels (Dutch; from Lemmens and Perrez 2012)

(Bonferroni) indicate, on the one hand, that the native speakers significantly produce more locative clauses than the learners of the three proficiency groups (Natives vs. FLP1:  $p < 0.002$ ; Natives vs. FLP2:  $p < 0.001$ ; Natives vs. FLP3:  $p < 0.001$ ) and, on the other hand, that there are no differences between the learners of the different proficiency ( $F_{(2,19)} = .092$ ,  $p = .912$ ;  $p = 1.000$  for all inter-group comparisons). These results suggest that the overall production of locative clauses by the learners is not dependent on their level of proficiency in the target language.

### 3.2 Lexical patterns

The aim of the present article is to complement the typical exclusively lexical focus of comparative studies with a constructional perspective, i.e., to evaluate the role that particular constructions play on the choice of lexical items (in both native and learner data). As extensively discussed in Lemmens and Perez (2012), there are relevant lexical differences. Figure 2 nicely summarizes these: at all three levels, the learners still follow the tendency of their native language (French) of using a neutral verb in locative contexts; there is a decrease over the three levels (49.5% – 44.9% – 38.2%), but Level 3 speakers still use these verbs almost twice as often as the native Dutch speakers (38.2% vs. 20.2%). However, this decrease is not paralleled with a comparable increase of posture verbs (only 5% increase). Once again, at all three levels, the learners underuse the posture verbs compared to the native speakers, confirming the overall underuse of these verbs in their descriptions ( $\chi^2 = 12.735$ ;  $df = 3$ ;  $p < 0.005$ ).



**Figure 2:** Overall distribution of verb types for learners and native speakers (Dutch; from Perez and Lemmens 2012)

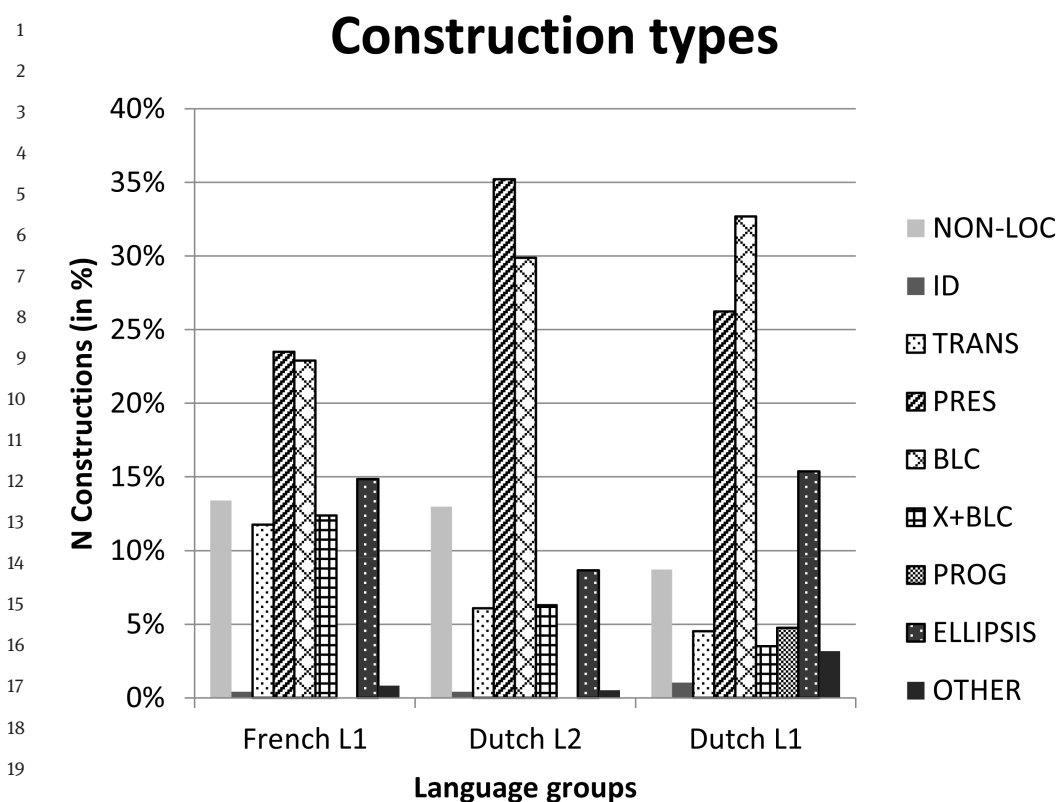
### 3.3 Constructional patterns

The analysis presented in Lemmens and Perrez (2012) focused on the lexical choices made by native and non-native speakers, with a particular attention to the degree of idiomaticity (qualitatively and quantitatively) in the learners' use of posture verbs. One of the surprising results in the analysis is that the native Dutch speakers still had a fairly high use of the neutral verb *zijn* 'be' (about 20% versus 73% posture verbs); intuitively, most speakers of Dutch would regard the use of *zijn* in a locative clause, such as for example, *De kleren zijn op het bed* 'the clothes are on the bed' or *Er zijn kleren op het bed* 'there are clothes on the bed' as (highly) unidiomatic or even incorrect. However, when the perspective is widened to include construction types, the high percentage of *zijn* 'be' can be explained, as will be shown in this section.

Table 1 summarizes the overall frequencies of the various constructions for the three language data sets, represented visually in Figure 3 for the relevant construction types. As far as the native speakers are concerned, the following tendencies can be observed. Firstly, the L1 speakers of Dutch appear to produce more presentational and basic locative constructions than the native speakers of French (respectively 26% vs. 24% and 32% vs. 22%). The French speakers, in turn, are more inclined to produce more transitive constructions on the one hand (respectively 11% vs. 4%) and more embedded basic locative constructions on the other (12% vs. 3%, see Section 2.3 Coding). Concerning the former, a more fine-grained analysis, given in Figure 4, shows that the high proportion of transitive constructions can be attributed to a more frequent usage of perception constructions.

**Table 1:** Frequencies of the construction types in the productions of native speakers of French, native speakers of Dutch and French-speaking learners of Dutch

CX Type	French L1		Dutch L2		Dutch L1	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
NON-LOC	65	13.4	126	12.98	77	8.71
ID	2	0.41	4	0.41	9	1.02
TRANS	57	11.75	59	6.08	40	4.52
PRES	114	23.51	342	35.22	232	26.24
BLC	111	22.89	290	29.87	289	32.69
X+BLC	60	12.37	61	6.28	31	3.51
PROG	0	0.00	0	0.00	42	4.75
ELLIPSIS	72	14.85	84	8.65	136	15.38
OTHER	4	0.82	5	0.51	28	3.17
TOTAL	485	100	971	100	884	100



**Figure 3:** Construction types in the three language data sets

Turning to the learner data, one can summarize the main developmental tendencies over the different proficiency levels as follows. The number of presentational sentences decreases over the three levels and the number of BLCs increases. Similarly, the non-locative constructions go down over the different levels as does the frequency of X+BLC, both coming closer to the native speaker frequencies. Also the frequency of elliptical constructions increases over the three levels towards those of the native speakers. However, two of these evolutions are not linear: the FLP2 group has a strikingly higher percentage of BLCs than both FLP1 and FLP3; conversely, it has a strikingly lower percentage of non-locatives compared to the other groups. We will return to this below, after a more detailed discussion of these evolutions.

The learners occupy an intermediate position between the native speakers of French and the native speakers of Dutch as far as the use of transitive and basic locative constructions are concerned. This observation emphasizes the developmental processes they undergo when going from constructions that appear to be typical of their mother tongue to constructions that are more typical of their target language.



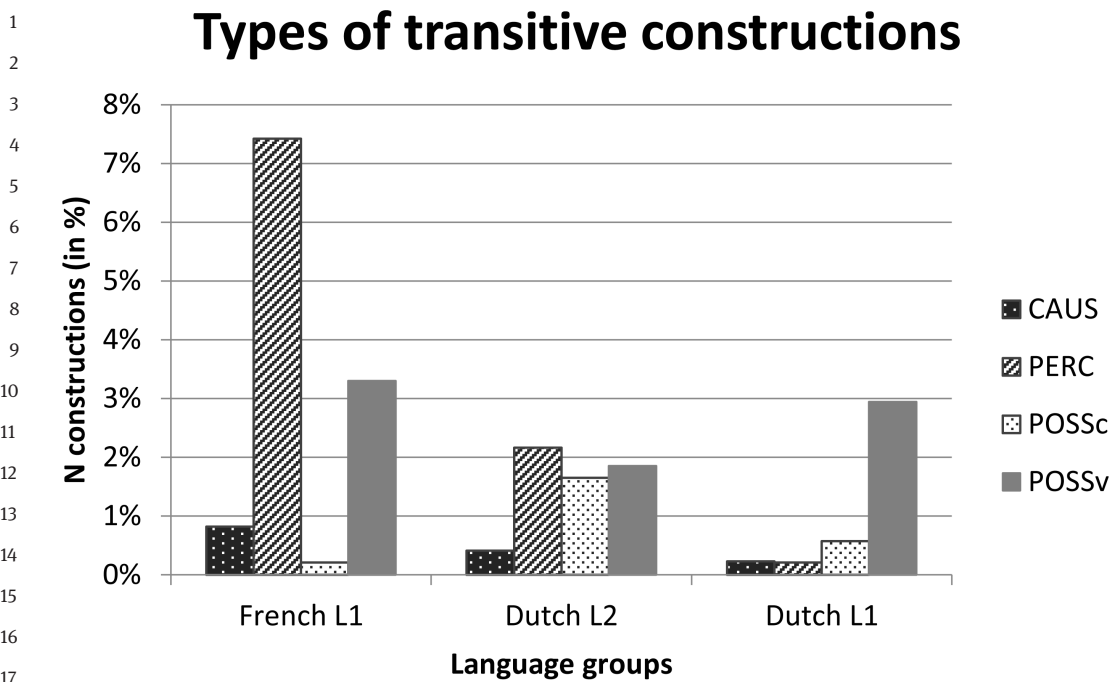


Figure 4: Transitive constructions in the three language data sets

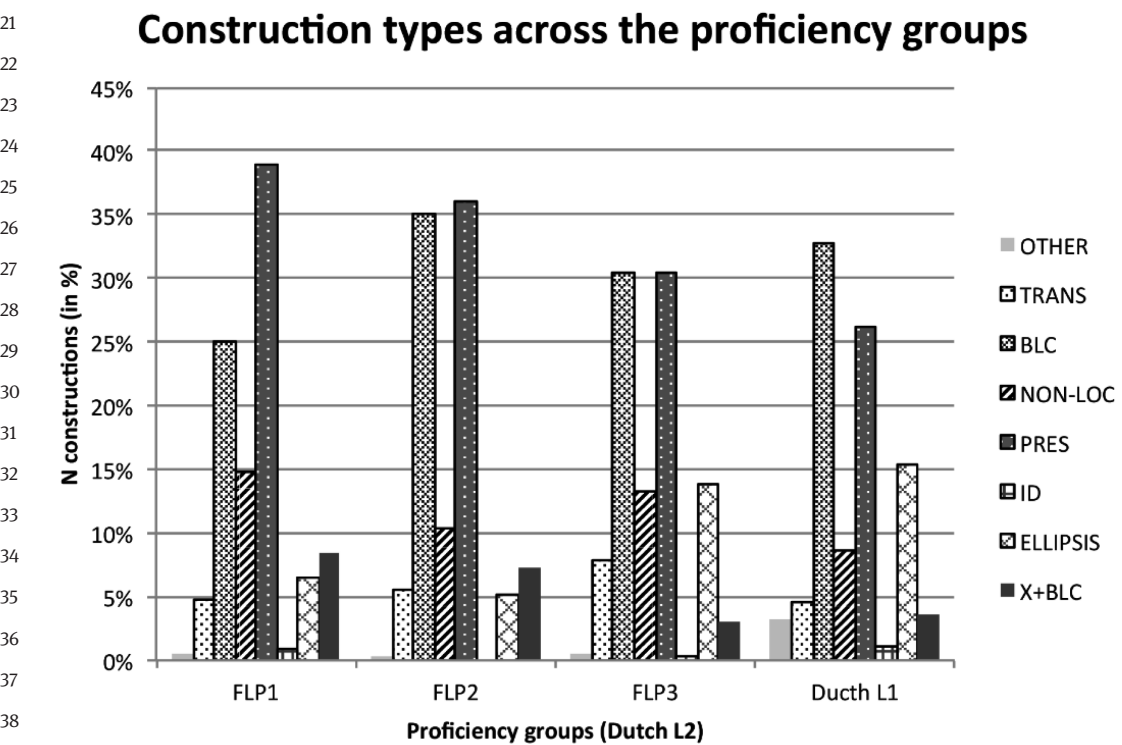


Figure 5: Construction types across the Dutch L2 proficiency levels

1 Interestingly, the French-speaking learners of Dutch show a peak in their  
 2 use of presentational constructions, which – despite a clear improvement as the  
 3 level of proficiency increases (FLP1: 38.92% > FLP2: 36.11% > FLP3: 30.51%) –  
 4 remain overrepresented in their locative descriptions, in comparison to both  
 5 the native speakers of French (23%) and the native speakers of Dutch (26%).  
 6 This peak could be explained by the learners’ tendency of using the presenta-  
 7 tional construction as equivalent of the French *il y a*-construction (‘there is/are’-  
 8 construction in English) as a kind of prefab construction that is repeatedly  
 9 applied to produce locative descriptions. Since this tendency does not appear  
 10 to be typical of native-like usage in French, it could more globally be regarded  
 11 as being part of a developmental compensatory strategy consisting in the  
 12 repeated use of an “all-purpose or catch-all” construction (cf. Dörnyei 1995) in  
 13 such descriptive contexts. It is, after all, also quite frequent in the descriptions  
 14 by the native Dutch speakers (PRES being the second most frequent construc-  
 15 tion). This strategy can be illustrated by the following longer passage in which  
 16 this learner almost invariably begins each new utterance with this *er is/er*  
 17 *zijn*-construction (for the sake of clarity, these have also been highlighted in  
 18 the gloss).

19  
 20 (19) *Dus we zijn in een schoenenwinkel. Er zijn veel schoenen. Er zijn*  
 21 *schoenendozen in het voorhand van de winkel euh naast het sofa euh links*  
 22 *van de prent. Er zijn ook dozen euh in de handen van de winkelier euh in het*  
 23 *midden van de prent. Er zijn ook dozen naast het glas? [...] Er zijn ook*  
 24 *dozen euh voor het sofa rechts van de prent en ook voor het sofa links van*  
 25 *de prent. Euh er zijn dozen euh ... ja, het is alles voor de dozen, denk ik.*  
 26 *Ah, nee nee! Er zijn ook dozen op de stoel naast de kassa euh en er zijn*  
 27 *schoenen boven de twee grote sofa’s. Er zijn ook schoenen voor de klant die*  
 28 *probeert te dragen, die probeert de schoenen te dragen. En er zijn veel*  
 29 *schoenen in het euh in de etalage. (OPD-Du2F-02-01)*

30 ‘So we are in a shoe shop. There are many shoes. There are shoeboxes in  
 31 the front of the shop err next to the sofa err left of the picture. There are  
 32 also boxes err in the hands of the shopkeeper err in the middle of the  
 33 picture. There are also boxes next to the glass? [...] There are also boxes  
 34 err in front of the sofa right of the picture and also in front of the sofa left  
 35 of the picture. Err there are boxes err ... yes, that’s it for the boxes, I think.  
 36 Ah, no no! There are also boxes on the chair next to the counter err and  
 37 there are shoes above the two large sofas. There are also shoes in front of  
 38 the customer who tries to wear who tries to wear the shoes. And there are  
 39 many shoes in the err in the display window’.

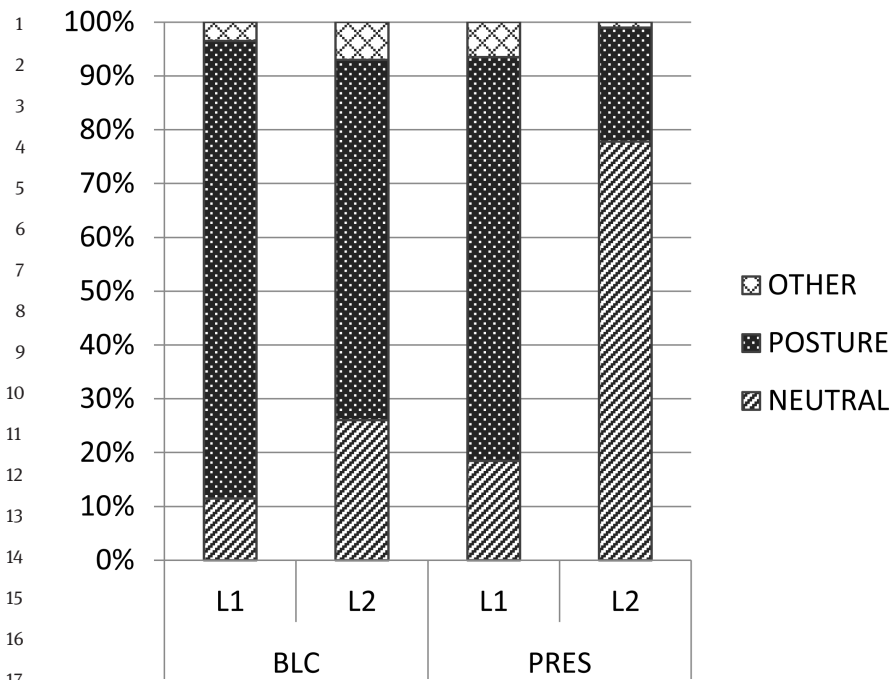
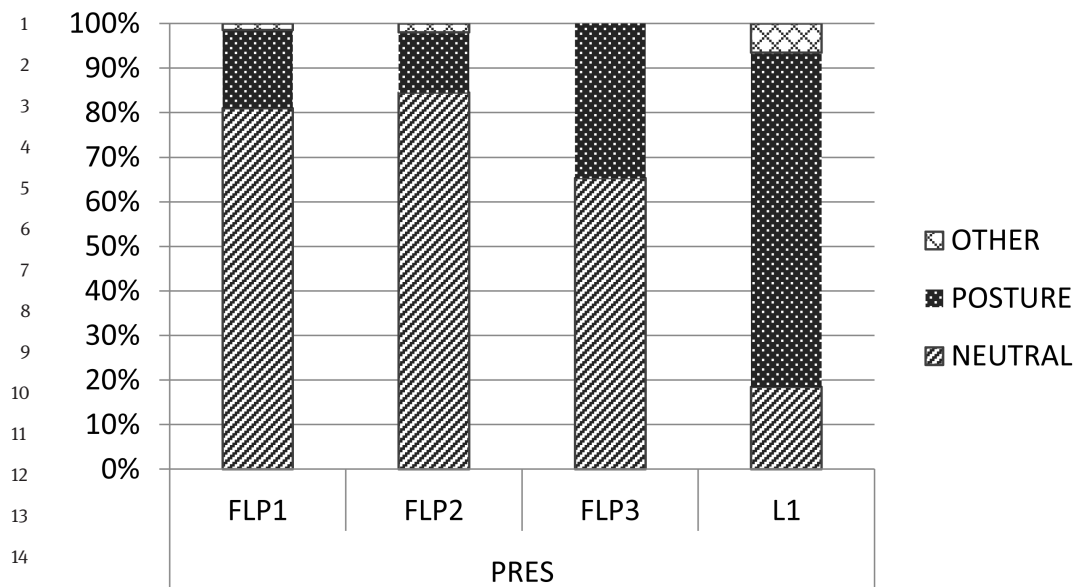


Figure 6: Verb types in presentational and BLC constructions in Dutch L1 and L2 data

Technically speaking, this construction is a correct construction in Dutch, but two elements make it stand out as unidiomatic. Firstly, the presentational construction in this excerpt (illustrative of the learner data in general) almost invariably occurs in a syntactically simplex clause ('there is X LOC', with LOC being the location where X is) while the native data shows a different pattern (see below). Secondly, the accumulation of such (identical) constructions in such a short text span suggests this learner is relying on one of the few constructions s/he knows to encode locative information, which results in a low level of constructional variation. Besides, the overall production shows, because of this repetition, a low level of target language idiomaticity, which seems to go hand in hand with a lower level of foreign language proficiency.

This example moreover suggests that French-speaking learners of Dutch tend to use neutral verbs (mostly *zijn* 'be') in their presentational constructions. This tendency is confirmed by a more specific analysis of the verb types used by the learners and the natives when producing presentational and basic locative constructions (see Figure 6). This analysis confirms that the learners are strongly inclined to use neutral verbs in presentational constructions (77% of the cases) whereas the natives show the reverse tendency of using a higher proportion of posture verbs (*zitten* 'sit', *liggen* 'lie', *staan* 'stand') in such constructions; 75% of the presentational constructions are thus of the form 'there lie/sit/stand X'. The

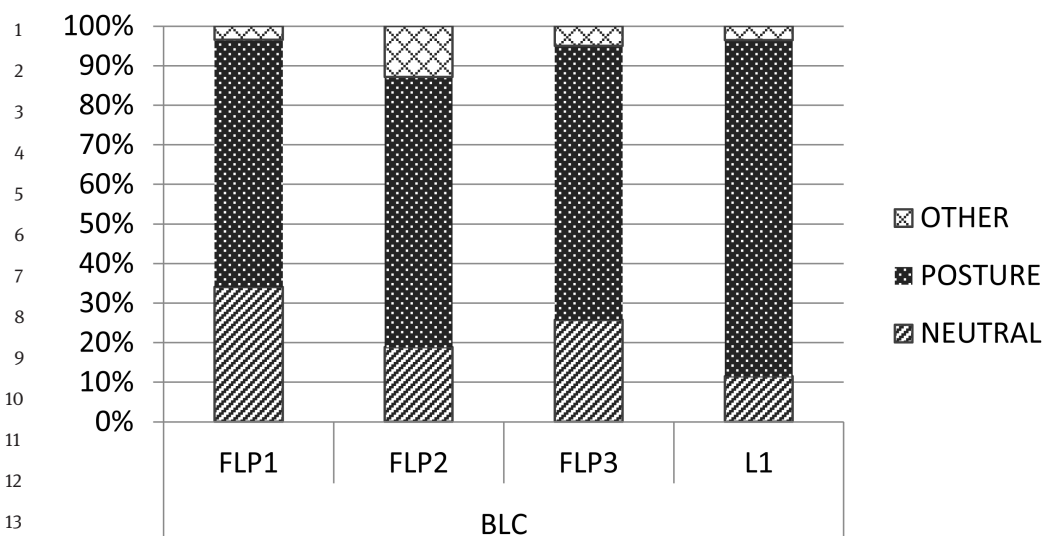


**Figure 7:** Verb types in presentational constructions across different levels of foreign language proficiency

use of posture verbs in presentational constructions remains fairly limited in the productions of the learners, suggesting that such constructions, specific to Dutch, only appear at an advanced stage of language development. This suggestion is partly confirmed by Figure 7 which shows an increase of the use of posture verbs in presentational constructions over the different proficiency levels (FLP1: 17%, FLP2: 13%, FLP 3: 34%), suggesting that such constructions typically appear at a later stage of foreign language development, even though this specific structure remains underrepresented in the productions of the learners with the highest level of proficiency in comparison to the natives. More generally, these results tend to confirm the observations made in Lemmens and Perrez (2012) according to which the learners with the highest level of proficiency tend to come closer to native-like patterns when encoding locative information.

When turning to basic locative constructions (Figure 8), our data indicate a strong decrease of neutral verbs in the production of the learners (26% of the cases) which goes hand in hand with a higher proportion of posture verbs (67% of the cases). When producing basic locative constructions, the learners thus seem to prefer posture verbs. This observation applies at all levels of foreign language proficiency, but it is more outspoken for the intermediate and most advanced learners.

These two figures reveal the mixed nature of the second level group (FLP2): they do have a higher frequency of posture verbs in the BLC than the FLP1



**Figure 8:** Verb types in basic locative constructions across different levels of foreign language proficiency

group, but at the same time a higher frequency of neutral verbs in the presentational construction than the lower level which goes counter to what could be expected. This suggests that this group is indeed struggling to reconcile lexical and constructional features of the target language. This provides an explanation for the non-linear (and opposite) developments for BLC and PRES in Figure 5 above.

When further considering the interaction between the construction types and the verb types used by the learners in their description of locative events, another interesting tendency emerges, viz. the learners' non-idiomatic use of posture verbs without any other specific locative element, as in the following two examples (coded as NON-LOC).

(20) *Dus euh vlees hangt* (OPD-Du2F-20-02)<sup>11</sup>

'so euh meat hangs'

(21) *Er is een vrouw die in de winkel werkt en die staat euh debout*  
(OPD-Du2F-19-02)

'there is a woman who in the shop works and she stands euh debout'<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> In this sentence, the learner also omits the (neuter) definite article (*het*) required in front of the noun *vlees* 'meat'; this has the same effect as the omission of the definite article in English (generic reading instead of a definite one). As this error is not relevant to the current discussion, we will ignore this.

<sup>12</sup> The learner is mixing up the French construction *être debout* lit. 'be upright' (= 'stand') and the Dutch posture verb, leading to *staan debout*.

1 Although such non-locative constructions with a posture verb are quantitatively  
 2 fairly limited (see Table 2), they occur with comparable frequency in the produc-  
 3 tions of both the L1 speakers of French and the L2 learners of Dutch (around 2%  
 4 in both cases). In such examples, the posture verb is used in isolation, not so  
 5 much to express the location of an entity but rather to specify the posture of an  
 6 entity. Such examples illustrate that some learners have picked up the explicit  
 7 focus on the postural information typical of Dutch, which can be regarded as a  
 8 sign of their growing awareness of the importance of Dutch posture verbs in  
 9 Dutch spatial descriptions. Strikingly though, such non-locative constructions  
 10 with a posture verb are quite unidiomatic in the kind of locative descriptions  
 11 that the learners produce. A locative description with a posture verbs generally  
 12 requires the specification of a ground; the more idiomatic counterpart to example  
 13 (20) would have been *Het vlees hangt aan een haak* ‘the meat hangs on a hook’,  
 14 that of example (21), *Er staat een vrouw in de winkel (te werken)* ‘there stands a  
 15 woman in a shop (to work)’. Uses of posture verbs without a Ground, as the  
 16 learners do here, are purely postural, whereas what is needed here is a locative  
 17 use of the posture verb (even if it still expresses the posture or orientation of the  
 18 Figure). In other words, in Dutch *De man staat* ‘The man stands’ and *De man*  
 19 *staat voor het huis* ‘The man stands in front of the house’ do not express the  
 20 same thing, even if in both cases the man is necessarily in a standing position.  
 21 The former is exclusively postural, the latter is postural and locative.<sup>13</sup> In  
 22 French, such descriptions of posture are more idiomatic, especially when added  
 23 in a subclause:

- 24 (22) a. *en bas, à droite, il y a trois filles qui essayent des chaussures,*  
 25 ‘below, on the right hand side, there are three girls who are trying  
 26 on shoes’,  
 27  
 28 b. *dont deux qui sont assises.* (OPD-FR-05)  
 29 ‘two of whom are sitting’.  
 30

31 In other words, while such “non-locative” uses of posture verbs could be indica-  
 32 tive of the learners’ increased awareness of the postural logic in Dutch, it cannot  
 33 be excluded that this is a simple transfer from their native language (French).

34 **Table 2:** Non-locative constructions with a posture verb in the three language data sets

CX Type	French L1		Dutch L2		Dutch L1	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
NON-LOC with posture verb	12	2.47	23	2.37	2	0.23

40 <sup>13</sup> Such exclusively postural uses are often used in a contrastive context, e.g., ‘the bottles do not lie, they stand’ or when the (postural) properties of the entity are at issue.

1 Summing up the findings for the learner data, these observations point at dif-  
 2 ferent developmental stages in the interlanguage of the learners with respect to  
 3 the encoding of locative events. The first stage is characterized by a frequent use  
 4 of presentational constructions with neutral verbs, as part of a compensatory  
 5 strategy resulting in the use of the *er is/zijn*-construction as a prefab construction.  
 6 In the second stage, the learners tend to produce basic locative constructions  
 7 with neutral verbs, a pattern that is present in French as well. In the third stage,  
 8 characterized by an increase in proficiency and a growing awareness of the  
 9 importance of posture verbs in Dutch to encode not only postural information  
 10 but also locative information, the learners use posture verbs in BLCs. In the  
 11 fourth stage they tend to produce presentational constructions with posture  
 12 verbs. Although these different stages are partly confirmed by our data, their  
 13 validity should be verified by further experimental research.

### 15 3.4 From syntax to discourse: French onions and Dutch trains

17 As in any text, the constructions do not appear in isolation in the elicited descrip-  
 18 tions produced by the informants, but in a given discourse with a particular focus  
 19 and information flow. Due to the limitations of our coding schedule, a full-  
 20 blown discursive analysis is currently not possible, but our data have allowed  
 21 us to uncover some pertinent differences between Dutch and French at dis-  
 22 course level, pertaining to the way in which locative information is provided. In  
 23 a nutshell, the difference is that between an onion-type structuring of informa-  
 24 tion (French; see Figure 10 below) versus that of a train-structure (Dutch; see  
 25 Figure 11 below).

26 This difference is revealed in our data through the basic locative construc-  
 27 tions embedded in a main clause (coded as X+BLC, see above). These embedded  
 28 constructions are instances of complex clauses in which more locative informa-  
 29 tion about an entity that has been introduced in the first part of the matrix  
 30 clause is given in a subclause as, for instance, in examples (15), (17) and (18)  
 31 already mentioned above and repeated here for convenience, and example (23).

33 (15) *Er is ook een bed waar kleren op liggen* (OPD-DU-01)

34 ‘there is a bed where on clothes are lying’  
 35

36 (17) [*en daarnaast zijn er ook schoenen [die zich voor de zetel bevinden]* ]  
 37 (OPD-DU-02).

38 ‘[and next to it are there also shoes  
 39 [that find themselves in front of the sofa] ]’  
 40

- 1 (18) [*je vois aussi des tee-shirts [qui sont collés au mur du fond]* ]  
 2 (OPD-FR-04)  
 3 ‘[I see also tee-shirts [that are stuck onto the wall at the back] ]’  
 4
- 5 (23) *On peut y apercevoir un tabouret sur lequel il y a une robe orange*  
 6 (OPD-FR-04)  
 7 ‘we can see there a stool where on there is an orange dress’  
 8

9 The information structure in these examples is not the same. In examples (15)  
 10 and (23), the matrix clause introduces a Figure (‘bed’ and ‘stool’, respectively)  
 11 which subsequently serves as the Ground for the location of another Figure  
 12 (‘clothes’ and ‘dress’, respectively). In examples (17) and (18), in contrast, the  
 13 matrix clause introduces a Figure (‘shoes’ and ‘tee-shirts’, respectively) and the  
 14 following subclause provides supplementary (locative) information on that same  
 15 Figure. Recall that in our coding scheme the former are considered as two  
 16 separate locative clauses, whereas in the second, they are not.

17 As illustrated by Figure 9, when independent and embedded BLCs are taken  
 18 together, their frequencies in French and Dutch are comparable (respectively  
 19 35% and 36%). However, when considering both construction types separately,  
 20 embedded BLCs are more frequent in French than in Dutch: 12% of the overall  
 21 constructions in the L1-French corpus and 3.5% in the L1-Dutch corpus. The  
 22 learners situate themselves perfectly in the middle (6%).

23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40

## Independent vs. embedded BLCs

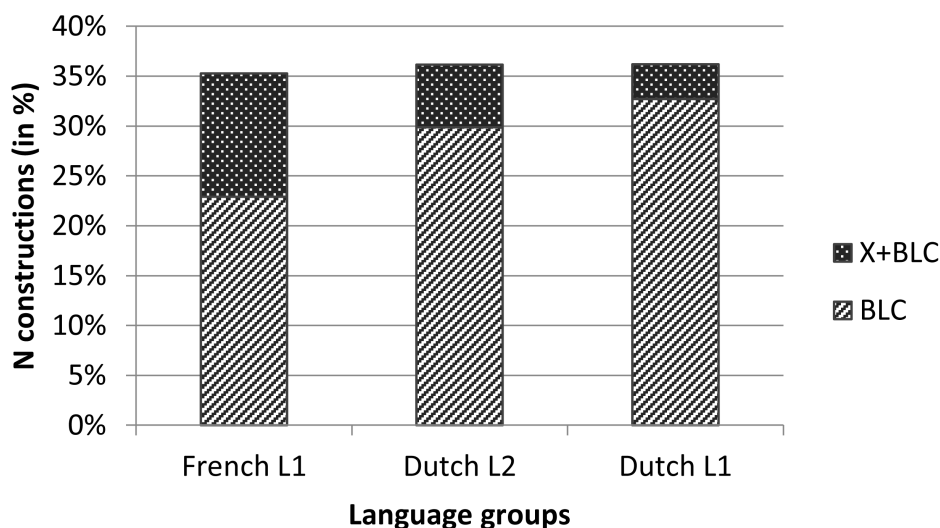


Figure 9: Independent vs. embedded BLCs in the three data sets



1        These findings suggest two important differences between French and Dutch  
 2 with respect to information structuring. Firstly, the data indicates that in French  
 3 BLCs are more often presented in a subordinate clause in comparison to Dutch.  
 4 This suggests that the locative information is often backgrounded, much like  
 5 manner of motion is subordinate in the case of motion events (see Slobin 2003,  
 6 among others). Secondly, this points at different ways of structuring locative  
 7 information in French and Dutch, in particular with respect to Figure and  
 8 Ground relations. In French, native speakers have the tendency to introduce an  
 9 entity (Figure) and then provide supplementary locative information on that  
 10 same entity, such as in example (18). This explains the higher percentage of  
 11 embedded basic locative constructions in the L1 French corpus, as the French  
 12 speakers typically use such an accumulative pattern. While such patterning is  
 13 clearly possible in Dutch (see example [17]), it is not very common (only 3.5%);  
 14 the typical information structuring pattern in Dutch, illustrated by example (15),  
 15 is to locate an entity which subsequently serves as the Ground for the location  
 16 of another entity expressed in the following subclause.

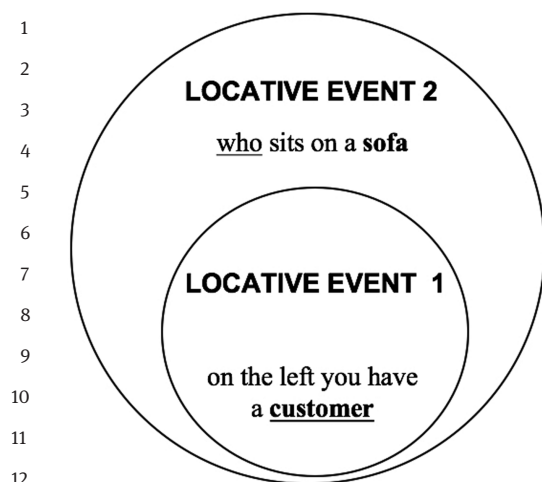
17        Metaphorically, the difference can be characterized in terms of an onion-  
 18 model (French) versus a train-model (Dutch). Consider the following examples,  
 19 representing the contrast.

20        (24) *vous avez un premier client qui est assis sur un fauteuil vert* (OPD-FR-02)  
 21            ‘you have a first customer who is seated on a green sofa’  
 22

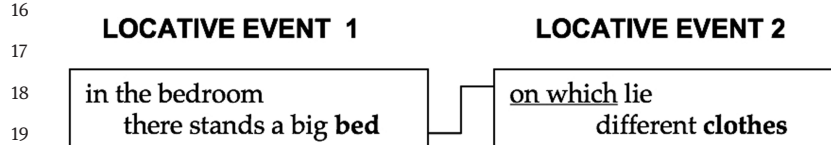
23        (25) *tussen de twee [...] nachttafels is er een bed waarop [...]*  
 24            *twee hemden en een broek liggen* (OPD-Du2F-12-2)  
 25            ‘between the two [...] bedside tables, there is a bed on which [...]  
 26            two shirts and one pair of trousers lie’  
 27

28        The French pattern is that of a layered onion: the centre is the Figure (‘customer’),  
 29 to which an additional layer of information is added (‘sitting on sofa’); the Dutch  
 30 pattern is that of a chain of information, much like wagons in a train, where  
 31 different entities play different roles: Figure<sub>1</sub> (‘bed’) becomes the Ground for  
 32 Figure<sub>2</sub> (‘clothes’). Schematically, these information structure models can be  
 33 represented as in Figures 10 and 11.

34        As indicated by the event labels, in the French example, we are dealing with  
 35 the same locative event in both clauses (location of the customers), whereas  
 36 in the Dutch example, we are dealing with two different locative events, even  
 37 if, as we mentioned earlier, from a functional perspective one could regard these  
 38 as building one single event, targeting the location of the clothes. In such a  
 39 perspective, the first locative event (location of the bed) is auxiliary to the  
 40 second (the location of the clothes).



13 **Figure 10:** The French onion model



21 **Figure 11:** The Dutch train model

22  
23  
24 These different tendencies are confirmed if we look at the Figure-Ground relationships within subordinate clauses, presented in Figure 12 below.

25  
26 The tendency for French is clear: in 91% of the cases the following sub-clause gives further information on the entity (either the Figure or the Ground) already introduced the Matrix clause (cf. +BLC above). The tendency for Dutch is more mixed: in about 40% of the cases, more information is given on a Figure or Ground and in about 40% there is a Figure-Ground reversal, i.e., the Figure in the matrix clause becomes the Ground to locate a new Figure (two different locative events). Strikingly again, the learners straddle the middle.

27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33 The above results clearly point to differences between Dutch and French with respect to both the weighing of information (backgrounded in a subordinate clause or not) and the structuring of information (onion-type layering vs. train-like chaining). However, some caution is in order. First of all, the tendencies represented in Figure 12 only concern subordination; in the current analysis, we have not (yet) included coordinated patterns. Secondly, we have not considered non-clausally expressed locative information, such as in the following examples (relevant parts have been highlighted).

34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40

## Figure-Ground relationships in complex sentences

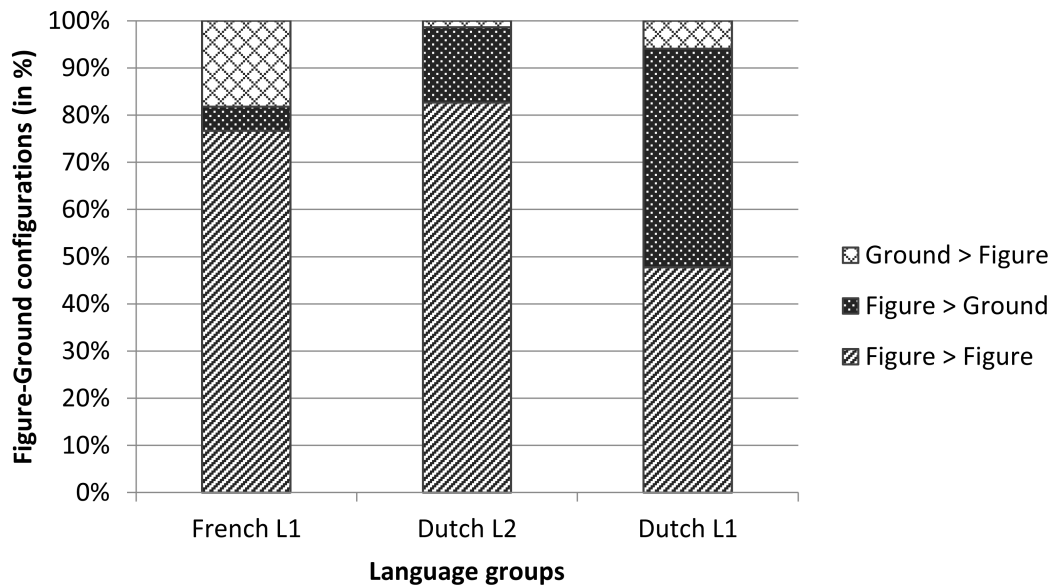


Figure 12: Figure-Ground relationships in complex sentences

(26) *In de slaapkamer staat een stoel met jas erover* (OPD-DU-09)

‘In the sleeping room stands a chair **with a jacket there on**’

(27) *A gauche de cette entrée, il y a une chaise avec une veste turquoise dessus* (OPD-FR-04)

‘On the left hand side of this entrance, there is a chair **with a turquoise jacket on**’

In these non-clausal encodings of location, there is also a Figure-Ground reversal where the first Figure that is introduced clausally serves as the Ground for the prepositional complement phrase. Even for these prepositionally encoded locative events, things are more complicated than they seem, since the prepositional phrase can be with or without an explicit locative element. The examples above both have such a locative expression, but in a sentence like *Er is een vrouw met een roze jurk* ‘there is a woman with a pink dress’ there is no such locative element in the prepositional phrase.

In sum, while the above discursive perspective on the data confirms the locative nature of Dutch that has been established by the lexical and constructional patterns, some more careful research on the different strategies of information structuring is needed.

## 4 General Discussion

The elicitation study reported on in this paper confirms the typological differences between Dutch and French in the expression of location. Overall, the data confirm the Talmian typology, in that Dutch typically expresses the manner of location via posture verbs and French is essentially “manner-poor”, much like in the expression of motion events. As confirmed by our data, French-speaking learners of Dutch struggle with the abundant use of the posture verbs in Dutch, even if there is an improvement for the higher levels of proficiency. At the lowest proficiency level, learners clearly overuse neutral verbs, a cross-over from French, but they do use them more often (but not necessarily correctly) as they get more proficient. The lexical difficulty French learners face is thus that of the one-to-many mapping that Viberg (1985, 1998) and Gullberg (2009) talk about: instead of one general verb (*être* ‘be’), they have to use three verbs (*liggen* ‘lie’, *zitten* ‘sit’ and *staan* ‘stand’) that each come with their own semantic specifications and constraints (see also Cadierno *et al.* 2016).

An important complement that was offered via our study is that these typological difficulties go beyond the verb, but also concern the construction type which interacts in intricate ways with the verbs that are used. Also here, a similar progression was observed in the type of constructions that the learners use: low-proficient speakers overuse the presentational construction with a neutral verb (*er zijn* ‘there is/are’) as a formulaic all-round prefab. In the two higher levels of proficiency, one notices a significant increase of locative constructions (BLCs) as well as presentational constructions with posture verbs.

Looking at the complex clauses in our data has further generated insights into how locative information is either foregrounded or backgrounded and how the information is structured. Also in this area, the data confirm the high locative nature of the Dutch descriptions, which present the location of entities in a more autonomous fashion than do the French descriptions; Dutch speakers chain individual locative events (in about half of the cases with a Figure-Ground reversal), whereas French speakers talk about one entity and give complementary information on this entity (which often is not locative information at all). Also here, the learners nicely straddle the middle between the two and develop an intermediate language system by combining the different locative features of French and Dutch.

In other words, our data show that learners become increasingly aware of the overall locative nature of Dutch in the context at hand (picture descriptions targeted at the location of entities), as reflected in lexis, grammar, and information structure. The challenge for French learners is not just restricted (as the previous studies by Viberg and Gullberg may have led one to believe), to figuring out the correct one-to-many lexical mappings but learning how to “locativize”

1 their descriptions, not just through the use of the correct lexical items, but  
 2 also via the constructions (notably, the use of the BLC) and the way in which  
 3 they present the locative information in the discourse (not independent of the  
 4 constructions, as has been shown). Currently, we are also investigating how non-  
 5 verbal gestures complement the information that is verbally expressed. Also  
 6 here, differences in learner and native speaker productions point at different  
 7 degrees of locativization of their narrations. It would also be interesting to  
 8 reverse the perspective and see to what extent Dutch speakers learning French  
 9 succeed in “de-locativizing” their descriptions of such scenes. This is a study  
 10 planned for the future.

## 13 References

- 15 Alferink, Inge & Marianne Gullberg. 2014. French-Dutch bilinguals do not maintain obligatory  
 16 semantic distinctions: Evidence from placement verbs. *Bilingualism: Language and Cogni-  
 17 tion* 17. 22–37.
- 18 Ameka, Felix K. & Stephen C. Levinson. 2007. The typology and semantics of locative predicates:  
 19 posturals, positionals, and other beasts. *Linguistics* 45. 847–871.
- 20 Berthele, Raphaël. 2004. The typology of motion and posture verbs: A variationist account. In  
 21 Bernd Kortmann (eds.), *Dialectology meets typology. Dialect grammar from a cross-linguistic  
 22 perspective*, 93–126. Berlin & New York.
- 23 Berthele, Raphaël, Matthew Whelpton, Åshild Naess & Pieter Duijff. 2015. Static spatial descrip-  
 24 tions in five Germanic languages. *Language Sciences* 49. 82–101.
- 25 Brown, Amanda & Jidong Chen. 2013. Construal of manner in speech and gesture in Mandarin,  
 26 English, and Japanese. *Cognitive Linguistics* 24. 605–631.
- 27 Cadierno, Teresa. 2004. Expressing motion events in a second language: A cognitive typological  
 28 perspective. In Michel Achard & Suzanne Niemeier (eds), *Cognitive linguistics, second  
 29 language acquisition and foreign language pedagogy*, 13–49. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- 30 Cadierno, Teresa. 2008. Learning to talk about motion in a foreign language. In Peter Robinson  
 31 & Nick C. Ellis (eds), *Handbook of cognitive linguistics and second language acquisition*.  
 32 239–275. New York & London: Routledge.
- 33 Cadierno, Teresa, Iraide Ibarretxe-Antuñano & Alberto Hijazo-Gascón. 2016. Semantic categoriza-  
 34 tion of placement verbs in L1 and L2 Danish and Spanish. *Language Learning* 66. 191–223.
- 35 De Knop, Sabine & Julien Perrez. 2014. Conceptual metaphors as a tool for the efficient teach-  
 36 ing of Dutch and German posture verbs. *Review of Cognitive Linguistics* 12. 1–29.
- 37 Dörnyei, Zoltán. 1995. On the teachability of communication strategies. *TESOL Quarterly* 29. 55–  
 38 85.
- 39 Ellis, Nick C. 1994. Implicit and explicit language learning—An overview. In Nick C. Ellis (eds.),  
 40 *Implicit and explicit learning of languages*, 1–31. London: Academic Press.
- Gullberg, Marianne. 2009. Reconstructing verb meaning in a second language: How English  
 speakers of L2 Dutch talk and gesture about placement. *Annual Review of Cognitive Lin-  
 guistics* 7. 221–244.

- 1 Hellerstedt, Maria. 2013. *L'utilisation et l'acquisition des verbes de position en suédois L1 et L2*.  
 2 Paris, France : Université Paris-Sorbonne doctoral dissertation. Available at: [http://www.e-](http://www.e-sorbonne.fr/sites/www.e-sorbonne.fr/files/theses/hellerstedt_maria_2013_these.pdf)  
 3 [sorbonne.fr/sites/www.e-sorbonne.fr/files/theses/hellerstedt\\_maria\\_2013\\_these.pdf](http://www.e-sorbonne.fr/sites/www.e-sorbonne.fr/files/theses/hellerstedt_maria_2013_these.pdf)
- 4 Hendriks, Henriëtte & Maya Hickmann. 2011. The expression of caused motion events in Chinese  
 5 and in English: Some typological issues. *Linguistics* 49. 1041–1076.
- 6 Hickmann, Maya. 2007. Static and dynamic location in French: Developmental and cross-  
 7 linguistic perspectives. In Michel Aurnague, Maya Hickmann & Laure Vieu (eds), *The*  
 8 *categorization of spatial entities in language and cognition*, 205–231. Amsterdam &  
 9 Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- 10 Hickmann, Maya & Henriëtte Hendriks. 2006. Static and dynamic location in French and in  
 11 English. *First Language* 26. 103–135.
- 12 Hijazo-Gascón, Alberto. 2015. Acquisition of motion events in L2 Spanish by German, French  
 13 and Italian speakers. *The Language Learning Journal* 43. 1–26.
- 14 Ijaz, Helene I. 1986. Linguistic and cognitive determinants of lexical acquisition in a second  
 15 language. *Language Learning* 36. 401–451.
- 16 Kellerman, Eric. 1995. Crosslinguistic influence: Transfer to nowhere? *Annual Review of Applied*  
 17 *Linguistics* 15. 125–150.
- 18 Kendon, Adam. 2004. *Gesture: Visible action as utterance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University  
 19 Press.
- 20 Kita, Sotaro. 2009. Cross-cultural variation of speech-accompanying gesture: A review. *Language*  
 21 *and Cognitive Processes* 24. 145–167.
- 22 Kita, Sotaro & Asli Özyürek. 2003. What does cross-linguistic variation in semantic coordina-  
 23 tion of speech and gesture reveal?: Evidence for an interface representation of spatial  
 24 thinking and speaking. *Journal of Memory and Language* 48. 16–32.
- 25 Kopecka, Anetta. 2006. The semantic structure of motion verbs in French. In Maya Hickmann &  
 26 Stéphane Robert (eds.), *Space in languages: Linguistic systems and cognitive categories*,  
 27 83–101. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- 28 Lemmens, Maarten. 2002. The semantic network of Dutch posture verbs. In John Newman (ed.),  
 29 *The linguistics of sitting, standing and lying*, 103–139. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John  
 30 Benjamins.
- 31 Lemmens, Maarten. 2005. Aspectual posture verb constructions in Dutch. *Journal of Germanic*  
 32 *Linguistics* 17. 183–217.
- 33 Lemmens, Maarten. 2014. Une grammaticalisation ratée? Une étude diachronique de stand en  
 34 anglais. *Anglophonia* 18. <http://anglophonia.revues.org/327>; DOI: 10.4000/anglophonia.327.
- 35 Lemmens, Maarten. 2015. *Zit je te denken of ben je aan het piekeren?* Persistentie in het  
 36 synchrone gebruik van de PREP- en POS-progressiefconstructies in het Nederlands [Per-  
 37 sistence in the synchronic use of PREP- and POS progressives in Dutch]. *Nederlandse*  
 38 *Taalkunde* 20. 5–36.
- 39 Lemmens, Maarten. 2017. A Tale of two progressives. In Anastasia Makarova, Stephen M.  
 40 Dickey, and Dagmar S. Divjak (eds.) *Thoughts on language: Studies in cognitive linguistics*  
 in honor of Laura A. Janda, 175–194. Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers.
- Lemmens, Maarten & Julien Perrez. 2010. On the use of posture verbs by French-speaking  
 learners of Dutch: A corpus-based study. *Cognitive Linguistics* 21. 315–347.
- Lemmens, Maarten & Julien Perrez. 2012. A quantitative analysis of the use of posture verbs by  
 Fench-speaking learners of Dutch. *Cognitextes* 8. <http://cognitextes.revues.org/609> (last  
 accessed on 12 October, 2016).

- 1 Lemmens, Maarten & Dan I. Slobin. 2008. Positie- en bewegingswerkwoorden in het Nederlands,  
2 het Engels en het Frans [Posture and movement verbs in Dutch, English and French]. In  
3 Philippe Hiligsmann, Mélanie Baelen, Anne Lore Leloup & Laurent Rasier (eds.), *Verlagen*  
4 *en mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde* 118,  
5 17–32.
- 6 Levinson, Stephen C. 2003. *Space in language and cognition: Explorations in cognitive diversity*.  
7 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 8 Narasimhan, Bhuvana & Marianne Gullberg. 2011. The role of input frequency and semantic  
9 transparency in the acquisition of verb meaning: Evidence from placement verbs in Tamil  
10 and Dutch. *Journal of Child Language* 38. 504–532.
- 11 Özçalışkan, Şeyda & Dan I. Slobin. 2003. Codability effects on the expression of manner of  
12 motion in Turkish and English. In Sumru A. Özsoy, Didar Akar, Mine Nakipoglu-Demiralp,  
13 Eser Erguvanli-Taylan & Ayhan Aksu-Koç (eds.), *Studies in Turkish linguistics*, 259–270.  
14 Istanbul: Boğaziçi University Press.
- 15 Slobin, Dan I. 2003. Language and thought online: Cognitive consequences of linguistic relativity.  
16 In Dedre Gentner & Susan Goldin-Meadow (eds.), *Language in mind : Advances in the study*  
17 *of language and thought*, 157–192. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- 18 Slobin, Dan I. 2004. The many ways to search for a frog: Linguistic typology and the expression  
19 of motion events. In Sven Strömquist & Ludo Verhoeven (eds.), *Relating events in narra-*  
20 *tive: Typological and contextual perspectives*, 219–257. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum  
21 Associates.
- 22 Talmy, Leonard. 2000. *Towards a cognitive semantics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- 23 Tutton, Mark. 2013. A new approach to analysing locative expressions. *Language and Cognition*  
24 5. 25–60.
- 25 Viberg, Åke. 1985. Lexikal andraspråksinläring. Hur polsk-, spansk- och finskspråkiga lär in  
26 svenskans placeraverb [Lexical second language acquisition. How Polish, Spanish and  
27 Finnish speakers acquire the Swedish placement verbs]. *SUM-rapport* 2. 5–92.
- 28 Viberg, Åke. 1998. Crosslinguistic perspectives on lexical acquisition: The case of language-  
29 specific semantic differentiation. In Kirsten Haastруп & Åke Viberg (eds.), *Perspectives on*  
30 *lexical acquisition in a second language*, 175–208. Lund: Lund University Press.
- 31 Wilkins, David P. 1998. The semantic extension of basic locative constructions cross-linguistically.  
32 In Sotaro Kita & Laura Walsh Dickey (eds.), *Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics: Annual*  
33 *report*, 55–61.
- 34 Wilkins, David P. 1999. The verbal component in basic locative constructions. In Veerle Van  
35 Geenhoven & Natasha Warner (eds.), *Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics: Annual*  
36 *report*, 61–71.
- 37  
38  
39  
40