Beyond the verb:
Constructions at work in the expression of static location in Dutch and French

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In the literature on expressions for static location, two main perspectives can be observed: (i) the distinction between verb-framed and satellite-framed languages suggested by Talmy (2000) and the categorisation in four types by Ameka and Levinson (2007). Both approaches would agree on seeing French and Dutch as diametrically opposed: in French the location of an entity is preferentially encoded by a single "dummy" verb (e.g., *être* 'to be'), whereas in Dutch, this is done via a small set of (posture) verbs. Strikingly, the models deviate in where they situate English, considered a satellite-framed language by Talmy (and thus similar to Dutch), but a Type I language by Ameka & Levinson (and thus similar to French). The present presentation shows that important nuances need to be added to both models.

The typological differences between V- and S-languages have been confirmed by cross-linguistic studies focusing on the encoding of motion and locative events (see among others Hickmann & Hendricks 2006). Similarly, L2 acquisition studies have shown how learners of V-framed languages (such as French) struggle with the expression of location and placement in S-framed languages (for instance Dutch, see Gullberg 2009) and more specifically with the use of the Dutch posture verbs (see for example Lemmens & Perrez 2010).

Building on these studies, this presentation zooms in even further on how speakers of typologically different languages (in this case, Dutch and French) encode locative events. However, instead of the typical exclusively verb-centered approach, we adopt a more global perspective by analysing the syntactic constructions used to encode locative events and the role they play in the overall discourse strategy.

The data on which this research is based are drawn from elicited picture descriptions where subjects were asked to talk about the location of certain entities. The languages considered in this presentation are French and Dutch, and we will consider both native speakers and learners, the latter being restricted to French-speaking learners of Dutch.

Our results suggest that, overall, French speakers use different locative strategies to describe the pictures and the specific location of entities. In addition to larger organisational patterns in the discourse, these different strategies are also revealed by the different constructions used, which show different degrees of "locativisation". The different constructions are the following (ranging from least to most locative):

- Non-locative clauses (*I see clothes*)
- Perception clauses (*I see clothes in front of her*)
- Viewer-based possession clauses (*You have clothes in front of her*)
- Character-based possession clauses (*She has clothes in front of her*)
- Presentational clauses (*There are clothes in front of her*)
- Basic locative clauses (*The clothes are in front of her*)

Using this continuum as a reference allows us (i) to establish how natives speakers of French and Dutch construct a locative event, and (ii) to show how French and Dutch incorporate different degrees of "locativization". The learner data show how French-speaking learners of Dutch develop an intermediate language system by combining the different locative features of French and Dutch.

References
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