In the Germanic languages, the posture verbs LIE, SIT, and STAND, generally cover a large semantic field and in contrast to, for example, Romance languages, the use of these verbs is often obligatory when one wants to express the location of an entity in space, or in metaphorical extensions thereof. These verbs have also grammaticalised to semi-auxiliaries in constructions that have a progressive value (e.g., *Jag sitter och läser* / *Ik zit te lezen* / *I sit and read*). In addition to the striking difference between Germanic and Romance languages, there is, however, considerable variation between the different Germanic languages (Lemmens 2005a, Ameka & Levinson 2007), and even within one language. This presentation will focus on some of these different aspects of inter- and intralanguage variation in the domain of posture (and placement) verbs.

The first part of the presentation will be devoted to our cognitive semantic analysis (see Lemmens 2015a) of posture verbs in Dutch, the language within the Germanic family for which the grammaticalisation seems to have gone farthest. We will also present several examples of intralinguistic coding variability where each variant imposes a different perspective on the same event. We also discuss some learner data revealing interesting cases of misinterpretation or overgeneralisation.

In the second part of the presentation, we will present a corpus-based study of the grammaticalisation of the Dutch posture verbs to semi-auxiliaries expressing progressive aspect (**zitten/staan/liggen+to+V** ‘sit/lie/stand+to+V’), and how these (quite frequent) POS-progressives relate to other progressive constructions, especially the prepositional construction **aan het V zijn** (**be at the V**) often considered the default progressive in Dutch. Our corpus-analysis reveals that there are striking differences between the two (cf. also Lemmens 2005b, 2015, in prep.). We will include some cross-references to Swedish posture verb progressives.

The third part of our presentation, focuses further on some of the differences between the Germanic languages that seem to present a continuum of degree of grammaticalisation, with Dutch on the one end, and English on the other. In particular, we present our recent diachronic study (Lesuisse & Lemmens, forthc.) into why English is so different from the other Germanic languages in its having lost previous uses of the posture verbs.

References

Lemmens, M. (in prep.) “A Tale of Two Progressives”.


