

Spectacular splitters: posture verbs, motion verbs and copulas in Dutch and other West- Germanic varieties

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Introduction

Main data

- Verbs: to stand, to hang, to lie, to sit, to come, to fall
- Lexical reading:

Anna zit niet in haar bed, ze ligt in haar bed.

Anna sits not in her bed, she lies in her bed.

‘Anna is not sitting in her bed, she is lying down in her bed.’

- Bleached, locational reading

Anna zit in Frankrijk.

Anna sits in France

‘Anna is in France’

Main claim

Two routes towards locational readings:

- *To stand, to hang, to lie*: bleached readings result from productive polysemy
- *to sit, to come, to fall*: bleached readings result from grammaticalisation into copulas, which is an instance of listed, stored polysemy

**Productive and listed
polysemy**

Productive polysemy

- basic principles, such as conventionality and general cognitive principles cause the polysemy (Nurnberg 978, Lehrer 1990)
- similar polysemous patterns are attested over and over again cross-linguistically
- The polysemy is not stored (necessarily) in the languages' vocabulary.
- examples:
 - trees or plants that refer to materials (oak, cotton)
 - names of animals that refer to the meat
- **Productive nature of the meaning shift: it applies to neologisms**

The professor in genetics created a new animal, a *spork*. We are having *spork* for dinner.

Productive polysemy

Borer (2005): this type of polysemy can be derived at syntax:

Name of animal plus the syntax of a count noun: animal

Name of animal plus the syntax of a mass noun: meat

Distributed Morphology splits the vocabulary over two lists:

- Vocabulary: lists all available entries and their insertion context
 - Encyclopedia: assigns meaning to the structure (syntax and the lexical items) by connecting it to stored information and world knowledge
- Productive polysemy: no separate item stored at Vocabulary, but interpretational information may be available.

Listed polysemy

Depends on listedness in the Vocabulary:

The vocabulary has stored two separate entries

This can occur in the case of grammaticalisation, when a functional word exists next to the original lexical word

Zitten 1: lexical verb, root, ...

Zitten 2: copula

(See Cavirani-Pots (2020) for a theoretical approach on grammaticalisation)

Splitters

- Splitters: languages with specialised copulas for certain syntactic contexts (Stassen 2009:266)
- Splitters may have created copulas through grammaticalisation of position verbs

Example (taken from Zagana 2012:303)

- a. El siete **es** un número impar. (Spanish)
the seven is a number odd
'Seven is an odd number.'
- b. El coche **está** en el garaje.
the car is in the garage
'The car is in the garage.'

The verb *estar* 'to be' < Latin *stare* 'to stand'

- Lehrer (1990:227-230) : the polysemy of position verbs is an instance of productive polysemy

Main claim

- *to stand, to hang, to lie:*
 - productive polysemy, one polysemous vocabulary item
 - available for all Germanic languages (as it results from general cognitive patterns)
- *to sit, to come, to fall:*
 - grammaticalised into copulas, two polysemous vocabulary items (lexical verb and copula)
 - making the West-Germanic languages splitters typologically
 - depends on grammaticalisation, availability is language specific

3. Dependence on grammaticalisation

has a locational meaning in...	Dutch	Frisian	Low German	High German
to stand	✓	✓	✓	✓
to lie	✓	✓	✓	✓
to hang	✓	✓	✓	✓
to come	C	C	C	C
to sit	C	C	C	x
to fall	C	x	x	x

Lexical readings vs. Locational readings

Lexical readings versus locational readings

- Motion verbs (to come, to fall): the distinction is crystal clear

Lexical reading

Jan viel uit de boom.
Jan fell from the tree

Komt ze naar het feestje?
Comes she to the party

Locational (i.e. origin/temporal reading)

De oorlog viel in de 20ste eeuw.
The war fell in the 20th century

Ze komt uit Frankrijk.
She comes from France
(She was born and raised in France.)

Lexical readings versus locational readings

- Position verbs (to stand, to lie, to hang, to sit): often ambiguous

Anna zit in de tuin.

Anna sits in the garden

Lexical reading: 'Anna is sitting in the garden.'

Locational reading: 'Anna is in the garden.'

Distinctive criteria	Lexical reading	Locational reading
Prototypical size of the ground	Small	Large
Triggers lexical semantics of bodily positions	Yes	No
Contrasts with other bodily positions	Yes	No
Position results from a causative action	Yes	No
Free choice of posture verb	Yes	No

Lexical readings versus locational readings

Distinctive criteria	Lexical reading	Locational reading
Prototypical size of the ground	Ze zit op een tak. ‘She is sitting on a branch.’	Ze zit in Frankrijk. ‘She is in France.’
Triggers semantic field of chairs	Ze zit in de tuin op een nieuwe tuinstoel. ‘She is sitting in the garden on a new garden chair.’	Ze zit in Parijs. Ze loopt te winkelen in de Marais. ‘She is in Paris. She is shopping in the Marais.’
Contrasts with other bodily positions	Ze zit niet in haar bed, ze ligt in haar bed. ‘She is not sitting in her bed, she is lying down in her bed.’	*Ze zit niet in Parijs, ze ligt in Parijs. *‘She is not sitting in Paris, she is lying down in Paris.’

Lexical readings versus locational readings

Distinctive criteria	Lexical reading	Locational reading
Position results from a causative action	<p>De kat zit op de vensterbank. Ik heb haar daar niet gezet. Ze is er zelf gaan zitten.</p> <p>‘The cat is sitting on the windowsill. I didn’t put her there. She went to sit there herself.’</p>	<p>*Ze zit in Frankrijk. Ik heb haar daar niet gezet. Ze is er zelf gaan zitten.</p> <p>Intended: ‘She is in France. I didn’t make her go there. She went there herself.’</p>
Free choice of posture verb	<p>Ze zit/ligt/hangt op het rek.</p> <p>‘She is sitting/lying/hanging on the rack.’</p>	<p>Anna zit in Frankrijk. Anna sits in France</p> <p>*Anna ligt/hangt in Frankrijk. *‘Anna lies/hangs in France.’</p>

Lexical readings versus locational readings

Distinctive criteria	Lexical reading		Locational reading
	+animate	-animate	
Prototypical size of the ground & triggers semantic field of furniture	<p>Anna ligt in haar bed.</p> <p>‘Anna is lying in her bed.’</p>	<p>Het boek ligt in de boekenkast.</p> <p>‘The book is in the bookcase.’</p>	<p>Parijs ligt in Frankrijk.</p> <p>‘Paris is in France.’</p>
Contrasts with other bodily positions	<p>Anna zit niet in haar bed, ze ligt in haar bed.</p> <p>‘Anna is not sitting in her bed, she is lying down in her bed.’</p>	<p>Het boek ligt niet in de boekenkast, het staat in de kast.</p> <p>‘The book is not lying down in the bookcase, it stands upright.’</p>	<p>*Parijs ligt niet in Frankrijk, het hangt in Frankrijk.</p> <p>Lit. *‘Paris is not lying down in France, it hangs in France.’</p>

Lexical readings versus locational readings

Distinctive criteria	Lexical reading		Locational reading
	+animate	-animate	
Position results from a causative action	<p>Anna ligt in haar bed. Ze heeft zich daar gelegd. ‘Anna is lying in her bed. She went lying down there.’</p>	<p>Het boek ligt in de boekenkast. Ik heb het daar gelegd. ‘The book is in the bookcase. I put it there.’</p>	<p>*Parijs ligt in Frankrijk. De Galliërs hebben het daar gelegd.</p>
	<p>Anna ligt in haar bed. Ik heb haar daar gelegd. ‘Anna is lying in her bed. I put her there.’</p>		<p>Lit: Paris is in France. The Gauls put it there.</p>
Free choice of posture verb	<p>Anna zit/licht/hangt in op het rek. ‘Anna is sitting/lying/hanging on the rack.’</p>	<p>Het boek ligt/zit/hangt in de kast.</p>	<p>Parijs zit/hangt in Frankrijk. Lit. ‘Paris sits/hangs in France.’</p>

**Available locational
readings in continental
West-Germanic varieties**

Cross-Germanic comparison

TO STAND

- ✓ De Eiffeltoren **staat** in Frankrijk. [Dutch]
 - ✓ De Eiffeltoer **stjit** ynFrankryk. [Frisian]
 - ✓ Dei Eiffelturm **stait** in Frankriek. [Low German]
 - ✓ Der Eiffelturm **steht** in Frankreich. [High German]
- the Eiffel.tower stands in France
'The Eiffel Tower is in France.'

TO LIE

- ✓ Normandië **ligt** in Frankrijk. [Dutch]
 - ✓ Normandië **leit** ynFrankryk. [Frisian]
 - ✓ Normandie **liggt** in Frankriek. [Low German]
 - ✓ Die Normandie **liegt** in Frankreich. [High German]
- the Normandy lies in France
'Normandy is in France.'

Cross-Germanic comparison

TO HANG

- ✓ De Mona Lisa **hangt** in het Louvre. [Dutch]
 - ✓ De Mona Lisa **hinget** yn't Louvre. [Frisian]
 - ✓ Dei Mona Lisa **hangt** in d' Louvre. [Low German]
 - ✓ Die Mona Lisa **hängt** i- m Louvre. [High German]
- the Mona Lisa hangs in the Louvre
'The Mona Lisa is in the Louvre.'

TO COME

- ✓ Ze **komt** uit Frankrijk. [Dutch]
 - ✓ Ze **komt** út Frankryk. [Frisian]
 - ✓ Zei **kumt** ut Frankriek. [Low German]
 - ✓ Sie **kommt** aus Frankreich. [High German]
- she comes from France
'She is from France.'

Cross-Germanic comparison

TO SIT

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| ✓ Hij zit in Frankrijk. | [Dutch] |
| ✓ Hie zit yn Frankryk. | [Frisian] |
| ✓ Hai sit in Frankriek. | [Low German] |
| * Er sitzt in Frankreich.
he sits in France
'He is in France.' | [High German] |
| | |
| ✓ Er zit suiker in de koffie. | [Dutch] |
| ✓ Der sit sûker yn 'e kofje | [Frisian] |
| ✓ Doar sit Zucker in d' Koffje. | [Low German] |
| * Es sitzt Zucker i- m Kaffee.
theresits sugar in the coffee
'There is sugar in the coffee.' | [High German] |

Cross-Germanic comparison

TO FALL

- ✓ De oorlog **viel** in de twintigste eeuw. [Dutch]
- *? De oarloch **foel** yn 'e tweintichste iuw. [Frisian]
- *? Dei Krieg **ful** in d' twintigste Joarhunnert. [Low German]
- *? Der Krieg **fiel** in-s zwanzigsten Jahrhundert. [High German]
the war fell in the twentieth century
'The war was in the twentieth century.'

- ✓ De kerkdienst **viel** vroeg in de morgen. [Dutch]
- * Kark **ful** frau in d' Mörgen. [Low German]
the church.service fell early in the morning

- * De fiering **foel** moarns betiid [Frisian]
the celebration fell mornings early

- * Der Gottesdienst **fiel** am frühen Morgen. [High German]
the church.service fell in.the early morning
'The church service was early in the morning.'

Dependence on grammaticalisation

has a locational meaning in...	Dutch	Frisian	Low German	High German
to stand	✓	✓	✓	✓
to lie	✓	✓	✓	✓
to hang	✓	✓	✓	✓
to come	✓	✓	✓	✓
to sit	✓	✓	✓	x
to fall	✓	x	x	x

Productive polysemy unlikely

3. Dependence on grammaticalisation

has a locational meaning in...	Dutch	Frisian	Low German	High German
to stand	✓	✓	✓	✓
to lie	✓	✓	✓	✓
to hang	✓	✓	✓	✓
to come	C	C	C	C
to sit	C	C	C	x
to fall	C	x	x	x

Copulas? Small clauses

2. Small clauses

They should behave as the copula *zijn* grammatically:

Copular sentences are expanded small clauses.

→ Small clauses should differ from copular sentences, by definition.

In a full clause: copula obligatorily present

In a small clause: copula obligatorily absent

a. Anna **is** lief.

Anna is kind.

b. Ik vind [SMALL CLAUSE **Anna lief**].

I find

Anna kind

c. * Ik vind Anna lief zijn.

I find Anna kind be

Small clauses

For copular clauses with a PP, the effect can be seen for small clauses that are the complement of sentential verbs:

a. Anna **is** in de tuin.

Anna is in the garden

‘Anna is in the garden.’

b. Ik zag [SMALL CLAUSE **Anna in de tuin**].

I saw Anna in the garden

‘I saw Anna in the garden.’

c. *? Ik zag **Anna in de tuin** **zijn**.

I saw Anna in the garden be

Small clauses

Lexical verbs do not show this effect:

a. Anna **werkt** in de tuin.

Anna works in the garden

‘Anna is working in the garden.’

b. Ik zag **Anna in de tuin werken**.

I saw Anna in the garden work

‘I saw Anna working in the garden.’

Small clauses

Zitten, komen and vallen pattern with the copula *zijn*:

“What did you see in your dreams?”

a. Ik zag Anna in Frankrijk.

I saw Anna in France sit

b. Ik zag de 2de wereldoorlog in de middeleeuwen.

I saw the 2nd world.war in the middle.ages

c. Ik zag een Franse president uit Spanje.

I saw a French president from Spain

Small clauses

Zitten, komen and vallen pattern with the copula *zijn*:

“What did you see in your dreams?”

a. # Ik zag Anna in Frankrijk zitten.

I saw Anna in France sit

(no locational meaning)

b. *? Ik zag de 2de wereldoorlog in de middeleeuwen vallen.

I saw the 2nd world.war in the middle.ages fall

c. # Ik zag een Franse president uit Spanje komen.

I saw a French president from Spain come

(no born and raised interpretation)

Small clauses

staan, liggen and *hangen* **do not** pattern with the copula *zijn*, as expected:
“What did you see in your dreams?”

a. Ik zag de Eiffeltoren in Spanje staan.

I saw the Eiffel.tower in Spain stand
‘I saw the Eiffel tower standing in Spain.’

b. Ik zag de Mona Lisa in Spanje hangen.

I saw the Mona Lisa in Spain hang
‘I saw the Mona Lisa hanging in Spain.’

c. Ik zag de Statenbijbel in Spanje liggen.

I saw the State.bible in Spain lie
‘I saw the State bible lying in Spain.’

Small clauses

The contrast is even stronger in elided contexts:

a. #Ik zag Macron zitten, maar dan in Spanje.

I saw Macron sit, but then in Spain

b. # Ik zag de Franse president komen, maar dan uit Spanje.

I saw the French president come but then in Spain

c. Ik zag de Eiffeltoren staan, maar dan in Spanje.

I saw the Eiffel.tower stand, but then in Spain

‘I saw the Eiffel tower, but it was standing in Spain.’

d. Ik zag de Mona Lisa hangen, maar dan in Spanje.

I saw the Mona Lisa hang, but then in Spain

‘I saw the Mona Lisa, but it was hanging in Spain.’

**Copulas? Animacy, event
nouns and Aktionsart**

1. Aktionsart and subject selection

Vendler (1957): lexical aspect

- Activities: agentive, durative, atelic (to stand, to lie, to hang, to sit can function as activities)

She is singing/working/...

- Accomplishments: agentive, durative, telic (to come, to fall can function as accompl.)

She is falling/drowning/...

- States: non-agentive, non-durative (The copulas *zijn* is a state.)

She is/knows French.

States versus accomplishments: *vallen*

+event noun

-event noun

Modification of duration

een feest van drie uur
a party of three hours

*een stoel van drie uur
a chair of three hours

temporal interpretation
of prepositions

voor het feest
before the party

voor de stoel
in front of the chair

The copula *zijn* 'to be' and *zitten, komen en vallen*

- The Aktionsart of the copula *zijn* is a state.
- It takes both animate and non-animate subjects when the predicate is a locational PP, just like *zitten* (and unlike *staan, liggen* and *hangen*):

Anna is/zit in Frankrijk.

Anna is/sits in France.

Er is/zit suiker in de koffie.

There is/sits sugar in the coffee

- It takes both animate and non-animate subjects when the predicate is an origin PP, just like *komen*

Jean is/komt uit Frankrijk.

Jean is/comes from France.

Camembert is/komt uit Frankrijk.

Camembert is/comes from France.

- It only takes event nouns for temporal readings, just like *vallen*:

Die oorlog was/viel in de 20ste eeuw.

that war was/fell in the 20th century

States versus activities: zitten

Distinctive criteria	Lexical reading	Locational reading	
	+animate	+animate	-animate
	Activity	State	State
Duration	<p>De acrobaat zit op een koord.</p> <p>‘The acrobate sits on a rope.’</p>	<p>Anna zit in Fankrijk.</p> <p>Lit. Anna sits in France.</p> <p>‘Anna is in France.’</p>	<p>Er zit cafeïne in koffie.</p> <p>Lit. There sits cafeine in coffee.</p>
	<p>De acrobaat is op een koord aan het zitten.</p> <p>‘The acrobate sits on a rope.’</p>	<p>*Anna is in Fankrijk aan het zitten.</p> <p>Intended: Anna is staying in France.</p>	<p>*Er is cafeïne in koffie aan het zitten.</p>

States versus accomplishments: *komen*

Distinctive criteria	Lexical reading		Locational reading	
	+animate	-animate	+animate	-animate
	Accomplishment	Accompl.	State	State
Duration	<p>De vluchtelingen komen naar Berlijn. ‘The refugees come to Berlin.’</p>	<p>De verandering komt. Lit. Change comes.</p>	<p>Jean komt uit Frankrijk. Lit. Jean comes from France. ‘Jean is from France.’</p>	<p>Camembert komt uit Frankrijk. Lit. Camembert comes from France. ‘Jean is from France.’</p>
	<p>De vluchtelingen zijn naar Berlijn aan het komen. ‘The refugees are coming to Berlin.’</p>	<p>De verandering is aan het komen. ‘Change is coming.’</p>	<p>*Jean is uit Frankrijk aan het komen. Intended: Jean was born and raised in France.</p>	<p>*Camembert is uit Frankrijk aan het komen.</p>

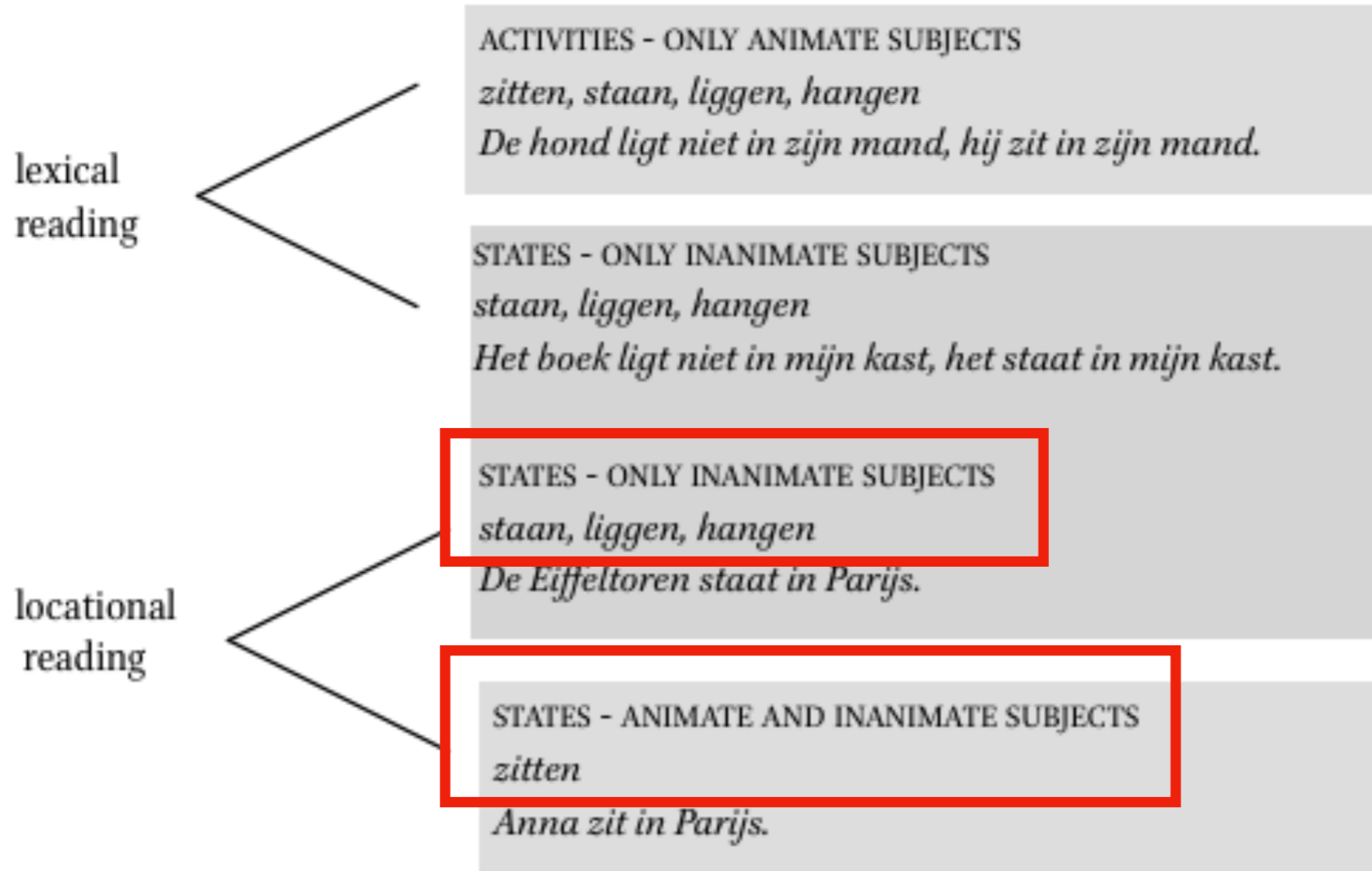
States versus accomplishments: *vallen*

Distinctive criteria	Lexical reading		Locational reading
	+animate	-animate	+event , -animate
	Accomplishment	Accompl.	State
Duration	<p>De acrobaat valt. 'The acrobate falls down.'</p> <p>De acrobaat is aan het vallen. 'The acrobate is falling down.'</p>	<p>De komeet viel in de 20ste eeuw. 'The comet fell in the 20th C.'</p> <p>De komeet is aan het vallen. 'The comet is falling down.'</p>	<p>De oorlog viel in de 20ste eeuw. 'The war fell in the 20th century.'</p> <p>*De oorlog was in de 20ste eeuw aan het vallen. Lit. *The war was falling in the 20th C.</p>

States versus activities: *staan, hangen, liggen*

Distinctive criteria	Lexical reading	Productive polysemy		Locational reading
	+animate	-animate	-animate	-animate
	Activity	State	State	State
Duration	De hond zit niet in zijn mand, hij ligt in zijn mand.	Het boek ligt niet in de kast, het staat in de kast.	*Parijs ligt niet in Frankrijk, het staat in Frankrijk.	
	De hond is in zijn mand aan het liggen.	*Het boek is in de boekenkast aan het liggen.	*Parijs is in Frankrijk aan het liggen.	
	'The dog is lying down in his dog bed.'	Lit. *The book is lying down in the bookcase.	Lit. *Paris is lying down in France.	

Aktionsart



**Verifying the copular
status cross-linguistically:
the small clause test again**

Low German

COME, FALL, SIT

Ik sach en Französische Präsident ut Spanien komn.
I saw a French president from Spain come
* 'I saw a French president who was from Spain.' (copula reading)
'I saw a French president arriving from Spain.' (lexical reading)

Ik sach Anna in Frankriek sittn.
I saw Anna in France sit
'I saw Anna sitting in France.' (lexical reading, pragmatically odd)
* 'I saw Anna in France.' (locational reading)

* Ik sach dei twaid Weltkrieg in d' Mittelalter falln.
I saw the second world.war.in.the Middle.ages fall
Intended: 'I saw the second world war taking place in the Middle Ages.'
(locational reading sowieso excluded)

Low German

STAND, HANG, LIE

Ik sachdei Eiffelturm in Spanien stoan.
I saw the Eiffel.tower in Spain stand
'I saw the Eiffel Tower in Spain.'

Ik sachdei Mona Lisa in Spanien hangn.
I saw the Mona Lisa in Spain hang
'I saw the Mona Lisa hanging in Spain.'

Ik sach dei Bibel in Spanien liergn.
I saw the bible in Spain lie
'I saw the States bible lying in Spain.'

High German

STAND, HANG, LIE

a. Ich sah die Mona Lisa in Spanien hängen.
I saw the Mona Lisa in Spain hang
'I saw the Mona Lisa hanging in Spain.'

b. Ich sah die Bibel in Spanien liegen.
I saw the bible in Spain lie
'I saw the States bible lying in Spain.'

COME, FALL, SIT

c. # Ich sah ein Französisch Präsident aus Spanien kommen.
I saw a French president from Spain come
'I saw a French president arriving from Spain.'
* 'I saw a French president who was from Spain.'

d. * Ich sah den zweiten Weltkrieg im Mittelalter fallen.
I saw the second world war in the Middle Ages fall
Intended: 'I saw the second world war taking place in the Middle Ages.'

e. # Ich sah Anna in Frankreich sitzen.
I saw Anna in France sit
'I saw Anna sitting in France.' (lexical reading, pragmatically odd)
* 'I saw Anna in France.' (locational reading, excluded)

Conclusion

Conclusion

has a locational meaning in...	Dutch	Frisian	Low German	High German
Productive polysemy:				
to stand	✓	✓	✓	✓
to lie	✓	✓	✓	✓
to hang	✓	✓	✓	✓
Copulas:				
to come	✓	✓	✓	✓
to sit	✓	✓	✓	x
to fall	✓	x	x	x

Conclusion

- *To stand, to hang, to lie:*
 - productive polysemy,
 - one polysemic vocabulary item
 - available for all Germanic languages (as it results from general cognitive patterns)
- *To sit, to come, to fall:*
 - grammaticalised into copulas,
 - two polysemic vocabulary items (lexical verb and copula)
 - making the West-Germanic languages splitters typologically
 - depends on grammaticalisation, availability is language specific