

**Does a hotel stand or lie?
- A corpus-based study on German positional verbs *stehen* and *liegen* -**

Keywords: locative expression, postural/positional verbs, corpus survey, fictive motion

This research aims to clarify the difference between two German postural verbs, namely *stehen* (en. stand) and *liegen* (en. lie) when used as positional verbs. The focus is especially laid on the case where they refer to the location of large entities, such as buildings and geographical features (e.g. mountain). The corpus survey conducted by the presenter revealed that the verb *stehen* tends to refer to the situation before one's eyes and to the presence/absence of an entity. On the other hand, the verb *liegen* co-occurs frequently with the expression of distance and direction. Moreover, the verb is used when referring to an object along a linear entity (e.g. river, border). This research further intends to show that the characteristics of each verb found in the corpus survey can be seen to be respectively consistent with the concept "dimensionality" (v.i.). as suggested in the literature.

The literature regarding the postural/positional verbs *stehen* and *liegen* points out that these verbs differ in terms of "dimensionality" when used to illustrate the location of large entities. The former describes a locative situation in a three-dimensional way, while the latter refers to a situation as two-dimensional so as to perceive an entity as a plane or dot on a map (cf. Serra Borneto 1996). However, this distinction has not been fully elaborated to account for various ambiguous cases, as shown in (1) below. In this example, we see two verbs respectively referring to the same object (*das Excelsior Ernst Hotel*) in one web article with no clear indication of the change of the dimensionality.

- (1) *Deutschlands bestes Hotel steht direkt gegenüber dem Kölner Dom. (...)*
German best hotel stands directly across the Cologne Cathedral
Nur durch eine Strasse getrennt, liegt das Excelsior Ernst vom Dom entfernt.
Only by a street separated lies the Excelsior Ernst from the cathedral away
(Deutsche Welle, "Deutschlands bestes Hotel steht in Köln", 22.3.2010)

To reveal the relevant decisive factors for choosing a verb between *stehen* and *liegen*, a corpus survey was conducted. The method of the survey was that the sentences in which the verbs (*stehen*, *liegen*) and the word referring to a large object (17 words, including *Bibliothek* (en. library), *Kirche* (en. church), *Berg* (en. mountain)) co-occur were extracted from a German corpus (Deutsche Referenzkorpus (DeReKo)) and analysed mainly in terms of the co-occurred words. According to 1136 examples for *liegen* and 583 for *stehen*, the result obviously shows that the choice of verbs depends basically on how the locative situation tends to be conceptualised. When you see an entity before your eyes or when you focus on whether the entity is still there, the verb *stehen* is a preferred choice. When it is about the distance of two entities or direction in which an entity exists, the verb *liegen* is preferred. Furthermore, when an entity situates along a linear object, its location is expressed rather by *liegen*.

These characteristics of each verb seem to be somewhat random at first glance. However, they can be seen as connected to the "dimensionality" named in the literature. For example, the verb *stehen* is used when we pay attention to the presence/absence of an entity, which means that the focus is rather laid on the present/absent outline of the entity and consequently to its three-dimensionality. Regarding the verb *liegen*, we realise that the characteristics of this verb coincide with the concept "fictive motion" (Talmy 1996). That is, the verb *liegen* forces to conceptualise the situation so as the attention fictively moving along a line. While conceptualising the situation in this way, it is likely that it is perceived as two dimensional, ignoring the height of the entities related.

In conclusion, the corpus survey evidently reveals that there are several factors which had not been named in the literature but do play a role in the choice of *stehen* and *liegen*. These features can be summarised in terms of "dimensionality" and, especially for *liegen*, in terms of "fictive motion."