

Light Verb Constructions and Their Families – A Corpus Study on German *stehen unter*-LVCs

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Light verb constructions are complex predicates consisting of a semantically light verb and a phrasal element.

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The verb is semantically 'light' compared to its 'heavy' use:

- (2) a. *Der Verdächtige steht unter dem Dach.*
the suspect stands under the roof
'The suspect is standing under the roof.'
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'put under surveillance' [causative predication]

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'The suspect is under observation.' [state predication]

The light verb is semantically reduced but not semantically empty.

LVC-families

- (3) Light verb constructions form a family if (i) they only show variance with respect to their NP element, and (ii) they exemplify the same interpretational pattern.

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- (4) a. *unter Beobachtung stehen*
 ‘be under observation’
 b. *unter Verdacht stehen*
 ‘be under suspicion’
- (5) a. *unter Stress stehen*
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'be under suspicion' [event passive-family]

→ event passive paraphrase: 'Passive participle + *werden* 'become''

- (5) a. *unter Stress stehen*
'be stressed'
b. *unter Schock stehen*
'be shocked' [state passive-family]

→ state passive paraphrase: 'Passive participle + *sein* 'be''

Corpus study on *stehen unter*-LVCs

Background

- ▶ German reference corpus (DeReKo)
- ▶ search criterion: '&stehen \s0 unter'
- ▶ 80255 hits; 8023 randomly collected sentences manually annotated (55 sentences excluded)

Annotation: 1. step

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PP complement	PP not complement
5822	2146

Table: Results of the first annotation step.

Annotation: 2. step

2. step: Is *stehen* used as a heavy or a light verb? (only checked for those sentences which realize *unter* as the complement of *stehen*)

criterion: Can *stehen* be substituted by some other posture verb (e.g. *sitzen* 'to sit', *liegen* 'to lie') or by a general location verb (e.g. *lokalisiert/positioniert sein* 'to be located/positioned')?

- (6) a. *Der Mann steht/liegt/sitzt unter dem Dach.*
the man stands/lies/sits under the roof
'The man is standing/sitting/lying under the roof.'
- b. *Der Mann steht/*liegt/*sitzt unter Schock.*
the man stands/sits/lies under shock
'The man is in a state of shock/is shocked.'

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heavy use	non-heavy use
562	5260

Table: Results of the second annotation step.

Annotation: 3. step

Identification of LVCs-families.

criterion: paraphrase

event-passive paraphrase	state-passive paraphrase
1335	1524

Table: Results of the third annotation step.

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Criterion: Eventuality-denoting nouns accept temporal (e.g. *gestern* 'yesterday') and aspectual modifiers (e.g. *andauernd* 'continuous') (Fábregas & Marín, 2012; Fleischhauer & Neisani, 2020).

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- (7) a. *Alkohol* 'alcohol', *Beruhigungsmittel* 'sedative', *Drogen* 'drugs',
Medikamente 'medicine', *Suchtmittel* 'addictive substances'
- b. *Der Fahrer stand unter Drogen.*
the driver stood under drugs
'The driver was under the influence of drugs.'

Events vs. States

The PP-internal nouns of the event passive-family denote events, those of the state passive-family denote states.

Criterion: Event-denoting nouns can be realized as the object argument of *beenden* 'finish/stop', state-denoting ones cannot (Fábregas & Marín, 2012)

- (8) a. *Die Polizei beendete die Beobachtung.*
the police finished the observation
'The police finished the observation.'
- b. #*Der Arzt beendete den Schock.*
the doctor finished the shock

Conclusion

- ▶ Identification of the members of two LVC-families
- ▶ Families show a unique interpretation pattern
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	<i>stellen</i>	<i>setzen</i>
<i>unter Beobachtung</i> 'under observation'	201	4
<i>unter Schutz</i> 'under protection'	2179	0
<i>unter Schock</i> 'under shock'	1	7
<i>unter Stress</i> 'under stress'	1	244

Table: Preferences in the choice of causative light verbs.

search strings: '&stellen \s0 unter N' and '&setzen \s0 unter N'

Thank you very much for your attention!

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