



Bringing experiencers into rage and excitement:

Light verb constructions with experiencer objects in German

Niklas Wiskandt & Dila Turus
Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf
Department of General Linguistics

15th Forum for Germanic Language Studies conference
(FGLS)
06 January 2022

Light verb constructions (LVCs)

In this talk we will explore the distribution and meaning of light verb constructions (LVCs) with experiencer objects in German, such as example (1):

- (1) *Der Prediger und Missionar Reinhard Bonnke versetzt Menschenmassen auf der ganzen Welt in Euphorie.*
,The preacher and missionary Reinhard Bonnke brought the crowd all over the world into a state of euphoria.’
(A11/JUN.01772)

1. Introduction
2. The problem: Three patterns for OE-LVCs and their behaviour
3. Methodology
4. Results of the corpus study
5. Analysis of the results
 - Meaning of the patterns
 - Meaning of the nouns
6. Conclusion

1. Introduction

Light verb constructions in general

Light verb constructions (LVCs) – in German ‘Funktionsverbgefüge’ – consist of a light (desemanticized) verbal head and an additional predicational element for instance a nominal phrase (2a) or a prepositional phrase (2b), which together form a single complex predicate (Fleischhauer & Turus 2021).

2. (a) *Peter gibt Maria einen Kuss.*

‘Peter gives Maria a kiss.’

- (b) *Die Hausaufgaben bringen Jana zur Verzweiflung.*

‘The homework exasperates Jana.’ (lit. brings Jana to desperation)

Light verb constructions with experiencer objects

- Object-experiencer verbs such as *frighten*, *annoy* or *amaze* have been discussed extensively during the last decades, since Belletti & Rizzi (1988).
- Complex predicates with experiencer objects received far less attention, despite being very frequent in some languages — such as German.
- German object-experiencer verbs have recently been investigated with respect to their aspectual properties, agentivity, word order, and valency-reducing operations (Hirsch 2018; Temme 2018; Temme & Verhoeven 2016; Verhoeven 2017; Wiskandt 2021, *inter alia*).

2. The problem: Three patterns for OE-LVCs and their behaviour

Three patterns for OE-LVCs

in N bringen (3a; lit. ,bring s.o. in N‘; abbreviated “IB“)

zu N bringen (3b; lit. ,bring s.o. to N‘; “ZB“)

in N versetzen (3c; lit. ,transfer s.o. to N‘; “IV“)

- (3) a) *Uli Hoeneß bringt nichts so leicht in Panik.*
‘Nothing makes Uli Hoeneß panic so easily.’
(HMP12/NOV.0059)
- b) *Diese Jungs [...] bringen ihr Publikum regelmäßig zur Ekstase.*
‘These guys regularly drive their audiences to ecstasy.’
(NUN05/DEZ.01241)
- c) *Ein weiteres Erdbeben hat gestern morgen [...] die Bevölkerung in Angst versetzt.*
‘Another earthquake struck fear into the population yesterday morning.’
(A98/MAR.18394)

Meaning of the LVC patterns

(i) The three pattern have in common that they are **causative**:

(4) a. *Der Knall der Explosion hat Monika **in Angst versetzt**.*

‘The bang of the detonation frightened Monika.’

b. *Der Knall der Explosion hat verursacht, dass Monika Angst empfunden hat.*

‘The bang of the detonation caused that Monika felt fear.’

Meaning of the LVC patterns

(ii) The constructions **entail** a causal chain between the stimulus, which is linked as the subject, and the experiencer, linked as the object:

- (5) *Karl hat Anna in Begeisterung versetzt.*
‘Karl enthused Anna.’

- a. *Er war wirklich der Grund für ihre Begeisterung.*
‘He was indeed the reason for her enthusiasm.’
- b. # *Er war nicht der Grund für ihre Begeisterung*
‘He was not the reason for her enthusiasm.’

Observations

German psych nouns behave inconsistently with respect to their use in LVCs:

- (6) a. *Das Pflegepersonal wird von den ungeduldigen Patienten in Stress gebracht [...].*
‘The nursing staff is stressed by the impatient patients.’
(BRZ07/OKT.23769)
- b. # *Das Geschrei der Kinder bringt die Mutter zum Stress.*
intended: ‘The screaming of the children puts the mother under stress.’
- (7) a. *Jedenfalls brachten Ade und seine "African Beats" das Publikum [...] zum Entzücken.*
‘Anyhow, Ade and his ‘African Beats’ delighted their audience.’
(S83/MAR.00433)
- b. # *Das Kettenkarussell auf dem Jahrmarkt bringt die Kinder in Entzücken.*
intended: ‘The merry-go-round at the fair delights the children.’

3. Methodology

Criteria for identifying psych nouns

1. The paraphrase „person A feels N“ must be possible.

(8) a. *Anna empfindet Eifersucht.*

‘Anna feels jealousy.’

b. # *Anna empfindet Überraschung.*

‘Anna feels surprise.’

2. The noun should not be polysemous (e.g. *Stärke* ‘power/strength’, *Wahnsinn* ‘insanity/madness’).

List of 60 psych nouns

Abneigung ‘dislike’
Abscheu ‘revulsion’
Angst ‘fear’
Arbeitsstress ‘work stress’
Aufregung ‘excitement’
Begeisterung ‘enthusiasm’
Dankbarkeit ‘gratitude’
Eifersucht ‘jealousy’
Ekel ‘disgust’
Ekstase ‘ecstasy’
Entsetzen ‘horror’
Entzücken ‘delight’
Ernüchterung
 ‘disillusionment’
Erstaunen ‘amazement’
Euphorie ‘euphoria’
Fassungslosigkeit ‘complet
 e bewilderment’
Freude ‘joy’
Fröhlichkeit ‘happiness’
Furcht ‘fear’
Glückseligkeit ‘bliss’

Hass ‘hate’
Heiterkeit ‘cheerfulness’
Herzschmerz ‘heartbreak’
Hoffnung ‘hope’
Interesse ‘interest’
Kummer ‘grief’
Langeweile ‘boredom’
Liebeskummer ‘lovesickness’
Lust ‘desire’
Neid ‘envy’
Nervosität ‘nervousness’
Neugierde ‘curiosity’
Osterfreude ‘hapiness of
 Easter’
Panik ‘panic’
Rage ‘rage’
Schadenfreude ‘schadenfreude
 /malicious joy’
Scham ‘shame’
Schrecken ‘fright’
Sorge ‘worry’
Spaß ‘fun’

Stimmung ‘mood’
Stress ‘stress’
Tierliebe ‘love of animals’
Torschlusspanik ‘last-minute panic’
Trauer ‘sorrow’
Trennungsschmerz ‘pain of seperation’
Unistress ‘university stress’
Unsicherheit ‘insecurity’
Verbitterung ‘bitterness’
Verblüffung ‘astonishment’
Vergnügen ‘enjoyment’
Verlustangst ‘seperation anxiety’
Versagensangst ‘fear of failure’
Verwirrung ‘confusion’
Verzweiflung ‘despair’
Weihnachtsfreude ‘Christmas joy’
Weltschmerz ‘weltschmerz/world-
 weariness’
Wut ‘fury’
Zorn ‘anger’
Zuneigung ‘affection’

Fig. 1: Set of 60 German psych nouns included in the study

Corpus study

- For the corpus study we searched the German reference corpus *DeReKo* by using the search engine COSMAS II. The analysis has been restricted to the W archive.
- search strings:
 - „&in N /s0 &ersetzen“
 - „&in N /s0 &bringen“
 - „&zu N /s0 &bringen“
- All hits were analyzed manually since the search string overlooks internal clause boundaries :

(9) *Ich weise darauf hin, dass die Vielzahl der Regelvarianten mehr zur Verwirrung beitragen, als sie Nutzen bringen.*

‘I point out that a large number of rule variations rather creates confusion than being of benefit.’
(WDD11/K11.86932)

Corpus study

- in cases of doubt, we double-checked and complemented our data with judgements by native speakers
- wherever we only found a small number of occurrences of a LVC, we opted for a cross-check by acceptability judgements

(10) a. „Er hat so viele **zur Glückseligkeit gebracht**“, beklagt er.

“‘He led so many people to bliss‘ he complained.‘

(U07/JAN.03201)

b. *Nun liegt alter auf jüngerem Stein.*

Das bringt Geologen ins Entzücken.

‘That delighted geologists.‘

(E11/AUG.02769)

4. Results of the corpus study

Results of the corpus study

- first impressions about the LVC patterns
 - *in N bringen* (IB) — compatible with 15 nouns
 - *zu N bringen* (ZB) — 9 nouns
 - *in N versetzen* (IV) — 34 nouns
- observations on compatibility behaviour of nouns
 - any noun compatible with one of the *bringen* patterns is also compatible with the *in N versetzen* pattern.
 - rarest combination: only 4 nouns work with the two *bringen* patterns
 - 26 nouns not compatible with any of the LVC patterns

Compatibility groups

Group	<i>in N bringen</i>	<i>zu N bringen</i>	<i>in N versetzen</i>	number of nouns
IB-ZB-IV	+	+	+	4
IB-IV	+	-	+	11
ZB-IV	-	+	+	5
IV	-	-	+	14
X	-	-	-	26

Fig. 2: Attested compatibility patterns of psych nouns with LVCs

5. Analysis of the results

Meaning of the patterns

in N bringen

causativization of a change of state

cause that the emotional state of OBJ changes into the state denoted by N

zu(r/m) N bringen

causativization of the onset of a state

cause that OBJ gets to the point where the emotion denoted by N sets in

in N versetzen

causativization without any aktionsart specification

cause that OBJ feels the emotion denoted by N

Abscheu ‘revulsion’

Angst ‘fear’

Eifersucht ‘jealousy’

Entsetzen ‘horror’

Freude ‘joy’

Furcht ‘fear’

Glückseligkeit ‘bliss’

Heiterkeit ‘cheerfulness’

Hoffnung ‘hope’

Kummer ‘grief’

Nervosität ‘nervousness’

Scham ‘shame’

Schrecken ‘fright’

Trauer ‘sorrow’

Zuversicht ‘confidence’

Aufregung ‘excitement’

Panik ‘panic’

Sorge ‘worry’

Stress ‘stress’

Torschlusspanik ‘last-minute panic’

Unsicherheit ‘insecurity’

Verwirrung ‘confusion’

Wut ‘fury’

Zorn ‘anger’

Stimmung ‘mood’

Entzücken ‘delight’

Ernüchterung ‘disillusionment’

Erstaunen ‘amazement’

Fassungslosigkeit ‘complete bewilderment’

Verblüffung ‘astonishment’

Begeisterung ‘enthusiasm’

Ekstase ‘ecstasy’

Euphorie ‘euphoria’

Rage ‘rage’

Verzweiflung ‘despair’

Abneigung ‘dislike’

Arbeitsstress ‘work stress’

Dankbarkeit ‘gratitude’

Ekel ‘disgust’

Fröhlichkeit ‘happiness’

Hass ‘hate’

Herzschmerz ‘heartbreak’

Interesse ‘interest’

Langeweile ‘boredom’

Liebeskummer ‘lovesickness’

Lust ‘desire’

Neid ‘envy’

Neugierde ‘curiosity’

Osterfreude ‘happiness of Easter’

Schadenfreude ‘schadenfreude/malicious joy’

Spaß ‘fun’

Tierliebe ‘love of animals’

Trennungschmerz ‘pain of seperation’

Unistress ‘university stress’

Vergnügen ‘enjoyment’

Versagensangst ‘fear of failure’

Weihnachtsfreude ‘Christmas joy’

Weltschmerz ‘weltschmerz/world-weariness’

Blocking property 1: no causativization

- causativization with the stimulus as the subject is infelicitous
- incompatible with direct causation scenarios with stimulus as causer
- observation: no corresponding simplex OE verbs
- example: *Hass* ‘hatred’

(12) a. * *Anna versetzt Tom in Hass.*

b. *Tom hasst Anna.*

c. *Toms Hass auf Anna ist riesig.*

d. # *Der Grund für Toms Hass ist Anna.*

e. *Der Grund für Toms Hass (auf Anna) ist, dass sie die AfD gewählt hat.*

Blocking property 2: no result state

- no result state after the perception of the stimulus is denoted
- emotion is felt temporarily, only while the stimulus is present, accompanied by typical behaviour
- examples
 - *Spaß* ,fun‘
 - *Langeweile* ,boredom‘

Blocking property 3: rection compounds

- observation: a number of N-N compounds do not allow any LVC pattern
- transparent rection compounds: stimulus of the emotion included in the noun
- stimulus cannot be linked as the subject of the predicate
- examples
 - *Arbeitsstress* ,work stress‘ => stress caused by work
 - *Versagensangst* ,failure fear‘ => fear of failure

Group X – sorted by blocking property

1 — no causativization	2 — no result state	3 — rection compounds
<i>Abneigung</i> ‘dislike’	<i>Ekel</i> ‘disgust’	<i>Arbeitsstress</i> ‘work stress’
<i>Dankbarkeit</i> ‘gratitude’	<i>Fröhlichkeit</i> ‘happiness’	<i>Herzschmerz</i> ‘heartbreak’
<i>Hass</i> ‘hate’	<i>Langeweile</i> ‘boredom’	<i>Liebeskummer</i> ‘lovesickness’
<i>Interesse</i> ‘interest’	<i>Neid</i> ‘envy’	<i>Osterfreude</i> ‘happiness of Easter’
<i>Lust</i> ‘desire’	<i>Neugierde</i> ‘curiosity’	<i>Schadenfreude</i> ‘malicious joy’
<i>Zuneigung</i> ‘affection’	<i>Spaß</i> ‘fun’	<i>Tierliebe</i> ‘love of animals’
	<i>Vergnügen</i> ‘enjoyment’	<i>Trennungsschmerz</i> ‘pain of separation’
		<i>Unistress</i> ‘university stress’
		<i>Verlustangst</i> ‘separation anxiety’
		<i>Versagensangst</i> ‘fear of failure’
		<i>Weihnachtsfreude</i> ‘Christmas joy’
		<i>Weltschmerz</i> ‘world-weariness’

6. Conclusion

Conclusion

What did we do?

- study on 60 German psych nouns
- check of compatibility with 3 causative LVC patterns
- analysis of the meaning of nouns and patterns

What did we find out?

- systematic variation in compatibility with LVC patterns
- groups of nouns with same behaviour
- three factors blocking all LVC patterns

Which questions remain open?

- How does the IB-IV group differ from the IV group?
- How can we explain microvariation in the use of the LVC patterns?
- How can we model the meaning of the LVC patterns?

Acknowledgements

The research reported in this talk is partially financed by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) (HE 8721/1-1; ‘Light verb constructions: families & composition’).

References

- Belletti, Adriana & Luigi Rizzi. 1988. Psych-Verbs and θ-Theory. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 6(3), 291-352.
- Hirsch, Nils. 2018. *German psych verbs — insights from a decompositional perspective*. Berlin: Humboldt University Dissertation.
- Fleischhauer, Jens & Dila Turus. 2021. *Der Angeklagte steht unter Schutz, wird er aber auch geschützt? - Eine Analyse passivischer Funktionsverbgefüge des Typs stehen unter*. In Gabrielle Jelitto-Piechulik et al. (eds.). *Germanistische Werkstatt* 11, 73-84. Oppeln: Uniwersytet Opolski.
- Leibniz-Institut für Deutsche Sprache. 2020. *COSMAS II (Corpus Search, Management and Analysis System)*. Leibniz-Institut für Deutsche Sprache, Mannheim.
- Leibniz-Institut für Deutsche Sprache. 2021. *Deutsches Referenzkorpus/Archiv der Korpora geschriebener Gegenwartssprache 2021-I (Release vom 02.02.2021)*. Leibniz-Institut für Deutsche Sprache, Mannheim.
- Temme, Anne. 2018. *The peculiar nature of psych verbs and experiencer object structures*. Berlin: Humboldt University Dissertation.
- Temme, Anne & Elisabeth Verhoeven. 2016. Verb class, case, and order: A crosslinguistic experiment on non-nominative experiencers. *Linguistics* 54(4), 769-813.
- Verhoeven, Elisabeth. 2017. Scales or features in verb meaning? Verb classes as predictors of syntactic behavior. *Belgian Journal of Linguistics* 31, 164-193.
- Wiskandt, Niklas. 2021. *Paul ärgert sich, nervt sich aber nicht. Semantische Merkmale deutscher Objekt-Experiencer-Verben und ihr Einfluss auf Antikausativkonstruktionen*. In Gabriela Jelitto-Piechulik et al. (eds.). *Germanistische Werkstatt* 11, 245-259.



Bringing experiencers into rage and excitement:

Light verb constructions with experiencer objects in German

Niklas Wiskandt & Dila Turus
Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf
Department of General Linguistics

15th Forum for Germanic Language Studies conference
(FGLS)
06 January 2022