

The lexicalization of speech act evaluations in German, English and Dutch

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1. Introduction

This article is concerned with the way in which different types of speech act evaluations are lexicalized by speech act verbs and speech act idioms. We first distinguish different types of explicit and implicit evaluations which may be lexicalized by speech act verbs. The meanings of speech act verbs in German, English and Dutch are compared to examine which types of evaluations are lexicalized in each of these languages. Having established an inventory of evaluation types lexicalized by speech act verbs, we compare the evaluations lexicalized by speech act verbs with those lexicalized by speech act idioms. Particularly, we shall ask ourselves whether certain types of evaluations may be lexicalized by idioms rather than by verbs, and if so, whether this phenomenon also holds cross-linguistically. We shall also examine whether those evaluations typically expressed by speech act idioms are the same in German, English and Dutch.

2. Two specific properties of the semantics of speech act verbs

The representation of the meaning of speech act verbs requires semantic categories different from those needed for that of other verb classes such as causatives and verbs of vision or motion. This is due to the following two properties specific to the semantics of speech act verbs.

- (1) The use of speech act verbs involves two types of situations. The first is one in which a speaker uses a speech act verb to refer to a speech act performed by another speaker. This situation type is called the "discourse situation (DS)" and contains three situation roles: a speaker, a hearer and an utterance which, in the prototypical case, contains a proposition. The second situation type is the one the discourse situation speaker refers to by using a speech act verb. The latter type of situation is called the "resource situation" (RS). Like the discourse situation, the resource situation contains the roles of a speaker, a hearer and an utterance containing a proposition (cf. Barwise/Perry 1983, Harras/Winkler 1994):

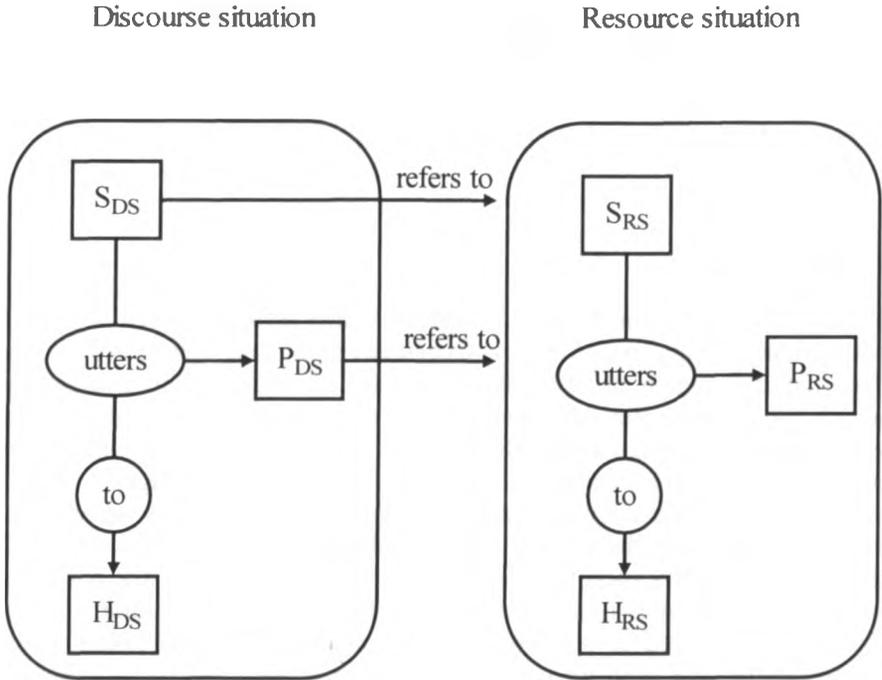


Figure 1. Two types of situations

When a speech act verb is used performatively, the discourse and the resource situation coincide.

- (2) Speech act verbs lexicalize configurations of attitudes of the RS speaker. These include propositional attitudes as well as speaker intentions and speaker presuppositions (cf. Searle/Vanderveken 1985, Vanderveken 1990, Harras 2001). The propositional attitude of a speaker is the attitude of that speaker towards the propositional content of his utterance. In the case he asserts p , he takes p for true (epistemic attitude), in the case he promises p or asks someone to do p , he wants p (attitude of wanting), or in the case he praises or blames someone for p , he evaluates p positively or negatively (evaluative attitude). On the whole, the attribute of the RS speaker's propositional attitude may be assigned one of the following values:

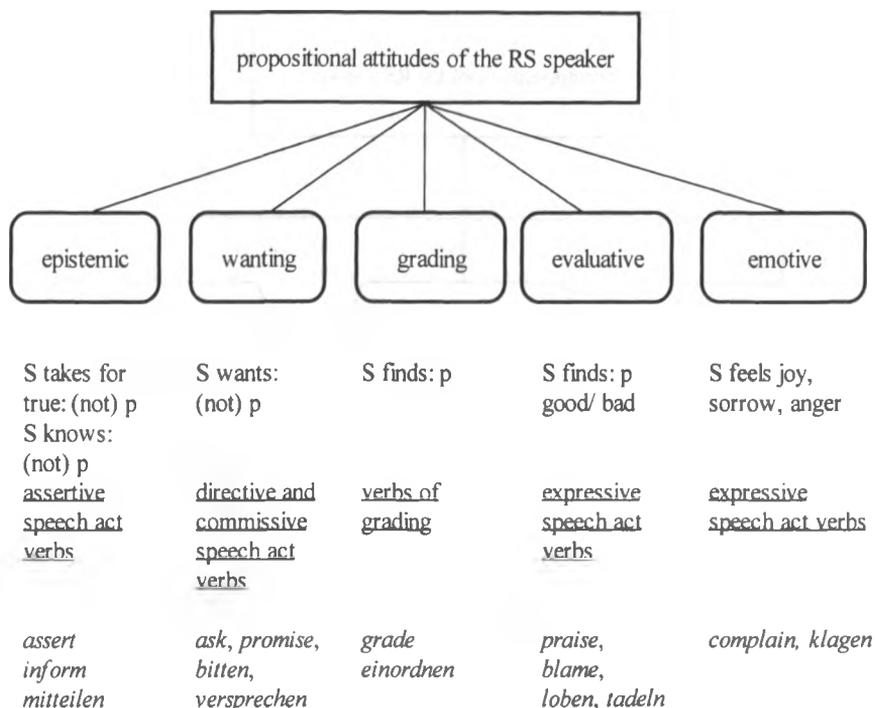


Figure 2. Values for the RS speaker's propositional attitudes

The intentional attitude of the RS speaker is related to the RS hearer's reaction. The possible values for the attribute of the speaker's intention are: S wants H to do or not to do p (*ask, prohibit*), S wants H to take p for true (*assert*) or false (*deny*), S wants H to know p (*inform*), S wants H to recognise that S evaluates p positively (*praise*) or negatively (*criticize*), S wants H to recognize that S is in a particular mental state (*complain*).

Apart from these two attitudes, speech act verbs lexicalize presuppositions of the RS speaker. These correspond to the preparatory conditions which have to be fulfilled if a given speech act is to be performed successfully and non-defectively (cf. Searle and Vanderveken 1985, Vanderveken 1990). The presuppositions of the RS speaker concern the expectability of p, the field of interest of p and the presupposed attitude of H:

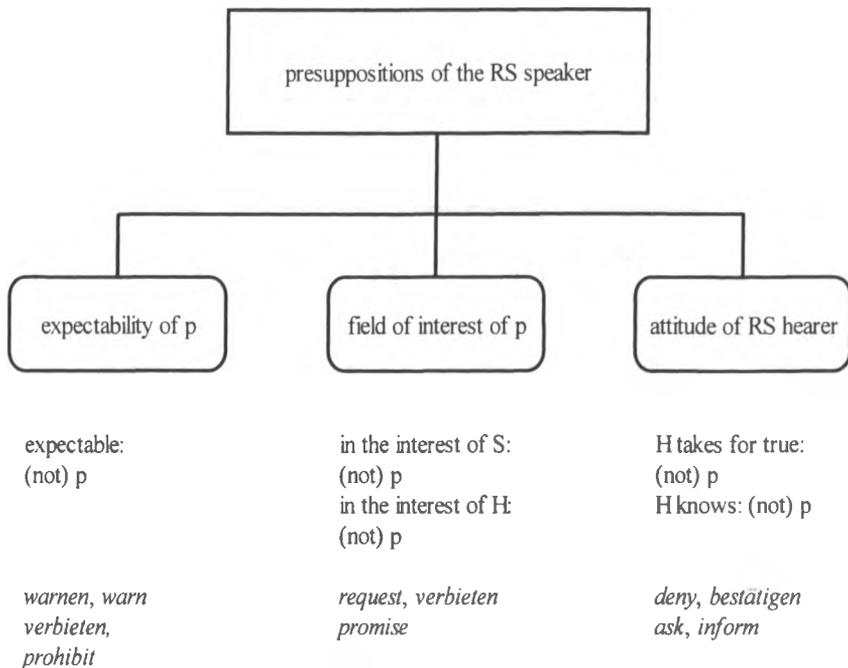


Figure 3. Values for the RS speaker's presuppositions

For some speech act verbs, the propositional content may be constrained in several ways: the use of the verb *announce* is restricted to future events; the use of *request* is restricted to a future action of the RS hearer, the use of *promise* is restricted to a future action of the RS speaker and so on.

3. The lexicalization of evaluations by speech act verbs

Of the three types of attitudes mentioned above (i.e. the RS speaker's propositional attitude, the RS speaker's intention and the RS speaker's presuppositions), two are relevant to the lexicalization of speech act evaluations:

- (1) the propositional attitude of the RS speaker
- (2) the presuppositions of the RS speaker

Speaker intentions are not relevant, because they involve propositional attitudes. For example, the verbs *ask* and *prohibit* lexicalize the intentional attitude ‘S wants H to do p /not to do p’, which contains the propositional attitude ‘S wants p /not p’. The evaluation of p as something which is desirable/ undesirable for S is a genuine propositional attitude and only an indirect part of the speaker’s intention.

In those cases where the RS speaker’s propositional attitude is evaluative, the evaluations expressed by the corresponding verbs are explicit. This is true of expressive speech act verbs like German *loben/tadeln/kritisieren*, English *praise/blame/criticize* and Dutch *prijzen/berispen/kritiseren* (cf. Zillig 1982). Explicit evaluations can also be part of the discourse situation: they are evaluations by a DS speaker of a RS speaker’s speech act. Evaluations like these are lexicalized by the following verbs: German *angeben/sich aufspielen* (English *boast*, Dutch *opscheppen/bluffen*) and German *schwindeln* and *flunkern* (English *fib*, Dutch *jokken*) as opposed to *lügen* (English *lie*, Dutch *liegen*).

Speech act verbs may also lexicalize implicit evaluations. These are expressed by utterances containing directive or commissive speech act verbs like German *auffordern* (English *request*, Dutch *vragen*) or German *versprechen* (English *promise*, Dutch *beloven*) (cf. Zillig 1982; Fries 1991). *auffordern* (*request/ vragen*) is used to refer to situations where the speaker considers the action p desirable for him- or herself, while *versprechen* (*promise, beloven*) is used to refer to situations where the speaker considers the action p desirable for the hearer. Although these implicit evaluations are part of the preparatory conditions of the corresponding speech acts, they do not constitute lexical presuppositions. However, the verbs *warnen/ warn/ waarschuwen* are both exceptions to this general fact, because sentences involving these verbs presuppose a negative evaluation of an expectable event.

On the whole, we get the following possibilities for evaluations lexicalized by speech act verbs: see figure 4.

The semantic difference between speech act verbs lexicalizing evaluations as elements of a discourse situation and those lexicalizing evaluations as elements of a resource situation is that evaluations which are elements of a resource situation can be cancelled by a DS speaker, while such which are elements of a discourse situation cannot. Sequences of utterances such as the following seem to be quite coherent:

- (1) Hans hat Anton dafür getadelt, dass er ins kalte Wasser gesprungen ist, aber bei der Hitze war das das einzig Richtige.
- (2) John blamed Anthony for having jumped into the cold water, but in this heat it was just the right thing to do.

- (3) Hans hat Anton dafür getadelt, dass er ins kalte Wasser gesprungen ist, dabei hat Anton nur ein Fußbad genommen.
- (4) John blamed Anthony for having jumped into the cold water, but he only took a foot bath.

The examples show that the DS speaker can - from his point of view - cancel the supposed evaluation (in this case: 'jumping into the cold water is bad') as well as the presupposed event of Anthony's jumping into the cold water. We can conclude that, like the cognitive verbs *glauben*, *believe*, *geloven*, these expressive speech act verbs have two uses: a *de re* use where the DS speaker shares the attitudes of the RS speaker and a *de dicto* use where the DS speaker only reports the attitudes of the RS speaker without sharing them (cf. Lakoff 1970; Fillmore 1973; Wunderlich 1973).

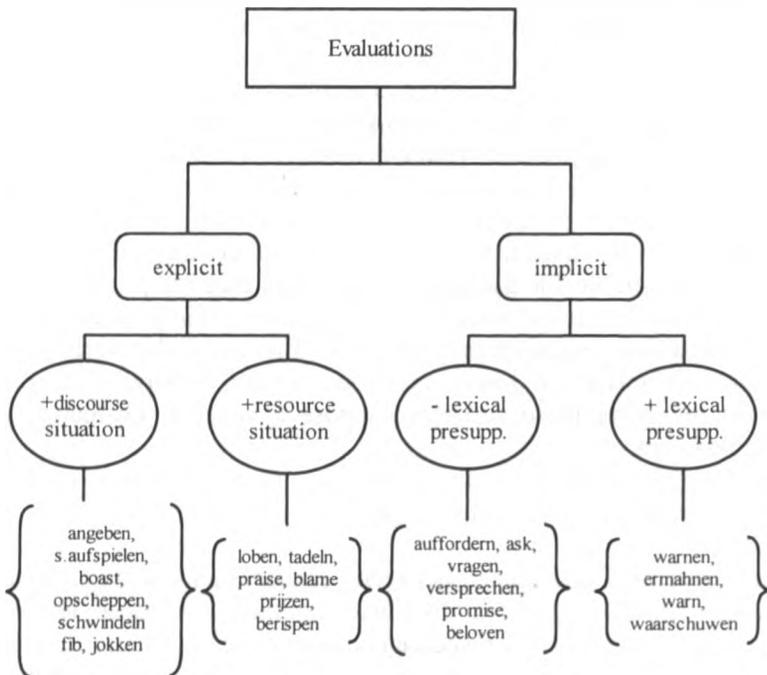


Figure 4. Different kinds of evaluations

It is quite clear that supposed evaluations which are elements of the discourse situation cannot be cancelled by a DS speaker without getting into a kind of Moorean paradoxon. The following utterances are defective in much the same way as an utterance like *The cat is on the mat, but I don't believe it is*:

- (5) *Hans hat mächtig mit seinem Auto angegeben, aber ohne zu übertreiben
 (6) *John boasted enormously about his car, but without exaggeration

Apart from some rare examples such as those instantiated by *warnen* (English *warn*, Dutch *waarschuwen*), evaluations which are part of a RS speaker's presuppositions do not constitute lexical presuppositions. Verbs like German *auffordern* and *bitten*, English *request* and *ask* or Dutch *vragen* en *verzoeken* lexicalize the RS speaker's propositional attitude ,S wants: p' with the implicit positive evaluation ,p is in the interest of S', but the negation test for the corresponding lexical presuppositions fail, cf.:

- (7) Hans hat Anton nicht aufgefordert, die Tür zu schließen
 (8) John did not ask Anthony to close the door
 (9) Hans heeft Tony niet gevraagd de deur te sluiten

In all these cases, there is nothing left to be presupposed concerning the attitudes of a RS speaker: attitudes of speakers do not exist in the world before the corresponding speech act is performed. Rather, they are introduced by the utterance itself, and in the case that there is no request at all, there are no speaker attitudes either. As Searle has pointed out: speech acts create social facts, and this is reflected by the semantic behavior of speech act verbs.

One definition of possible non-lexical presuppositions of sentences containing speech act verbs has been proposed by Chierchia and McConnell-Ginet. These authors define non-lexical presuppositions of sentences containing speech act verbs in terms of context-dependency (cf. Chierchia and McConnell-Ginet 1990):

A sentence S presupposes B relative to a set of premises P iff
 S can be felicitously uttered in a context c in which premises P hold only if c entails B.

P includes premises about human behaviour, elements of Gricean practical reasonings and other more specific premises about a state of affairs (cf. Kadmon 2001). The definition covers cases where a pragmatic, i.e. conversationally triggered, presupposition may arise in some contexts and fail to arise in others. The difference between conversationally triggered and lexical presuppositions is that lexical presuppositions such as those contained in sentences with verbs like *aufhören* (English *stop*, Dutch *ophouden*) contribute to the truth value of utterances, while conversationally triggered presuppositions do not. The utterance

- (10) John promised Bill to come to the party
 has the conversational implicature in (10'):

(10') Bill wants John to come to the party.

This conversational implicature arises in such contexts in which (11) holds:

(11) People perform speech acts only if they take it for granted that the preparatory conditions of these hold true. (cf. Kadmon 2001).

(11) determines the contexts in which (10') constitutes a pragmatic presupposition. The interpretation of (10) as containing (10') is a preferred, i.e. default, interpretation, but (10) may be true if (10') is not the case. (10') constitutes a generalized implicature, which is part of the presumptive meaning of the utterance (cf. Levinson 2001). The pragmatic account clearly shows that the preparatory conditions of speech acts do not manifest themselves as lexical presuppositions of the corresponding speech act verbs.

The rare cases where the negation test for lexical presuppositions does not fail are the verbs *warnen* (English *warn*, Dutch *waarschuwen*) and *ermahnen*, cf.:

(12) Hans hat Anton nicht vor dem Unwetter gewarnt

(13) John did not warn Anthony of the thunderstorm

(14) Hans heeft Tony niet voor het onweer gewaarschuwd

(15) Hans hat Anton nicht ermahnt, das Manuskript heute abzugeben

In the examples (12)-(14) the referent of the prepositional phrases *vor dem Unwetter*, *of the thunderstorm*, *voor het onweer* constitutes an existential presupposition, and therefore it cannot be cancelled by negation. In (15), Anton's obligation of doing something (*Manuskript abgeben*) is lexically presupposed as a result of a past request of Hans or some other person, and consequently, an implicit positive evaluation (,p is in the interest of Hans or some other person') is presupposed as well. Both the natural event of a thunderstorm and the social event of a past request are facts of the external world. They are independent of the performance of any act and therefore constitute real lexical presuppositions.

4. The lexicalization of evaluations by idiomatic speech act expressions

Having shown that the evaluations expressed by speech act verbs are either explicit or implicit, we will now take a closer look at explicit evaluations, especially those lexicalized by idiomatic speech act expressions. We shall be concerned with the question of whether the evaluations lexicalized by idiomatic speech act expressions of the category 'verb' differ from those expressed by speech act verbs. Particularly, we shall ask ourselves whether there are specific types of evaluations which only idiomatic expressions can express and, if so, whether these are identical in different languages.

It has often been suggested that idiomatic expressions (i.e. lexical expressions showing a certain degree of idiomaticity such as idioms and collocations) express speaker attitudes, often including an evaluation, to the situation referred to (cf. Černyševa 1984 and 1989, Dobrovol'skij 1988, Schindler 1993, Fleischer 1997). As we have shown in the first part of this paper, speech act verbs differ from most other semantic classes in that they express speaker attitudes, often including speaker evaluations, as an essential part of their meaning. If idiomatic expressions in general typically express speaker attitudes and evaluations as well, it is not clear how the meanings of such idiomatic expressions which refer to speech acts differ from those of speech act verbs.

In spite of the wide-spread view that idioms and collocations typically express speaker attitudes, there are quite a few idiomatic speech act expressions which do not lexicalize any such attitude. This is especially true of such idioms and collocations making reference to conversational structure (e.g. *broach the subject, canvass the idea (that)*), a particular mode of communication (e.g. *drop sb. a line*) or a specific manner of speaking (e.g. German *in Raten sprechen* – meaning 'stutter'). Still, the majority of speech act idioms and collocations do express a certain speaker attitude, doing justice to the idea that the meaning of idiomatic expressions is characterized by a certain degree of "subjectivity". In the light of the fact that this holds true of speech act verbs too, the claim that idiomatic expressions typically express speaker attitudes at least requires some specification as far as speech act expressions are concerned. We shall illustrate what is specific about the meaning of idiomatic speech act expressions (as opposed to speech act verbs) by means of the lexicalization of the concepts (TO) LIE and (TO) BOAST.

4.1. Verbs and idiomatic expressions lexicalizing the concept (TO) LIE

The evaluations expressed by idiomatic speech act expressions are primarily elements of the discourse situation. Examples are provided by the German word field which centres around the verb *lügen (lie)*. The verb *lügen (lie)* does not by itself lexicalize any type of evaluation, though it does, of course, express a particular attitude on the part of the speaker. Specifically, the verb *lügen/lie* is used where a RS speaker does not take the proposition of his utterance to be true, while at the same time wishing that the RS hearer does take it to be true. This means that the attitude of the speaker towards the proposition is epistemic in nature, and not evaluative, as in the case of *tadeln (reprimand)*. Neither does the meaning of *lügen/lie* involve any evaluative presupposition, the only presupposition of the speaker being that the hearer does not know p (cf. Figure 5):

lügen (lie)

- PROPOSITIONAL ATTITUDE: S does not take to be true: p
- SPEAKER'S INTENTION: S wants: H take to be true: p
- SPEAKER'S PRESUPPOSITION: H does not know: p

Figure 5. speaker attitudes lexicalized by *lügen/lie* (S='Speaker', H='Hearer', p='proposition')

The word field centring around the German verb *lügen* (*lie, liegen*) includes other verbs like *flunkern* and *schwindeln* (both equivalents of English *fib*) and may be expanded by the presence of idiomatic expressions. All of these inherit the speaker attitudes lexicalized by *lügen*, but unlike the verb *lügen* itself, they seem to lexicalize some kind of evaluation by the DS speaker of the speech act performed by the RS speaker. Particularly, these verbs and complex expressions lexicalize the DS speaker's evaluation of the gravity of the lie. When the DS speaker wants to emphasize the RS speaker's insincerity, he can choose from a wide range of options including *lügen wie gedruckt* ('lie as if it were printed'), *lügen, dass sich die Balken biegen* ('lie until the beams bend') and *jmdm. die Jacke/die Hucke voll lügen* ('lie until somebody's pockets are filled'). Additionally, it is possible for the DS speaker to specify the source of the gravity of the lie by focusing on single components of the idiom's meaning, such as the directness of the act of lying (*jmdm. ins Gesicht lügen – lie sb. straight into the face*) or the impossibility for the proposition to come true (*das Blaue vom Himmel herunter lügen-* 'lie the blue down from heaven'). Though attributes like 'specification of the proposition' or 'manner of speech act performance' are not by themselves evaluations, the values attributed to them (e.g. 'direct' or 'unrealistic') are. The images used in these idioms serve to emphasize the intensity of the act of lying. Apparently, acts of lying which are judged to be particularly serious cannot be referred to by verbs.

However, in such cases where the DS speaker considers the lie to be of a rather more facetious nature, his choice of expressions to refer to the corresponding act ranges from verbs like *flunkern* and *schwindeln* (both meaning 'fib') to true idioms like *jmdn. auf den Arm nehmen* ('to take sb. onto one's arm'). In these cases too, the proposition may be specified by the use of a particular image which emphasizes the innocence of the lie (e.g. *ein X für ein U – 'X instead of U'*), but apparently, only idioms and not verbs are used to express this kind of specification.

Whenever the act of lying is judged as neither particularly severe nor particularly innocent, both verbs and idiomatic expressions may be used (e.g. *lügen – lie* and *jmdm. einen Bären aufbinden*).

Summarizing what has been said so far, a DS speaker describing an act of lying can basically choose between words and idiomatic expressions, except in such cases where he believes the RS speaker to be particularly insincere. In such cases, the DS speaker can only choose from a range of idiomatic expressions (cf. Figure 6).

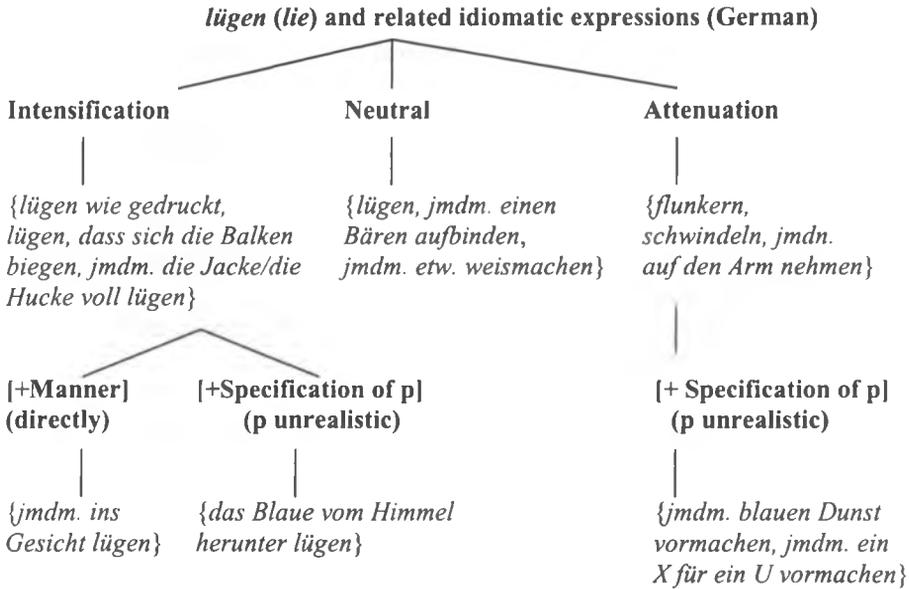


Figure 6. Degrees of intensity lexicalized by *lügen (lie)* and related idiomatic expressions (German) - (p='proposition'; H='Hearer')

A comparison of Figure 6 with Figures 7 and 8 shows that, on the whole, the lexical field around *lie* yields the same picture in English and Dutch as it does in German: intensifications of the meaning of *lie* are lexicalized by idiomatic expressions, while such lies which are judged to be less innocent or neither innocent nor serious may be referred to by verbs and idiomatic expressions alike. Single conceptual components, such as the manner in which the act of lying is performed or some kind of specification of p (the proposition), may be lexicalized as well. In spite of these similarities, the three languages differ with respect to the values assigned to attributes like 'Manner' or 'Specification of p'. German, for example, does not seem to allow the lexicalization of the value 'harmless' for the parameter 'Specification of p'. However, the various degrees of intensity are lexicalized in all three languages, and intensifications of the meaning of *lie* are consistently lexicalized by idioms, not by verbs. This is also true of

specifications of the proposition, no matter whether these emphasize the severity or the innocence of the lie (cf. Figures 7 and 8).

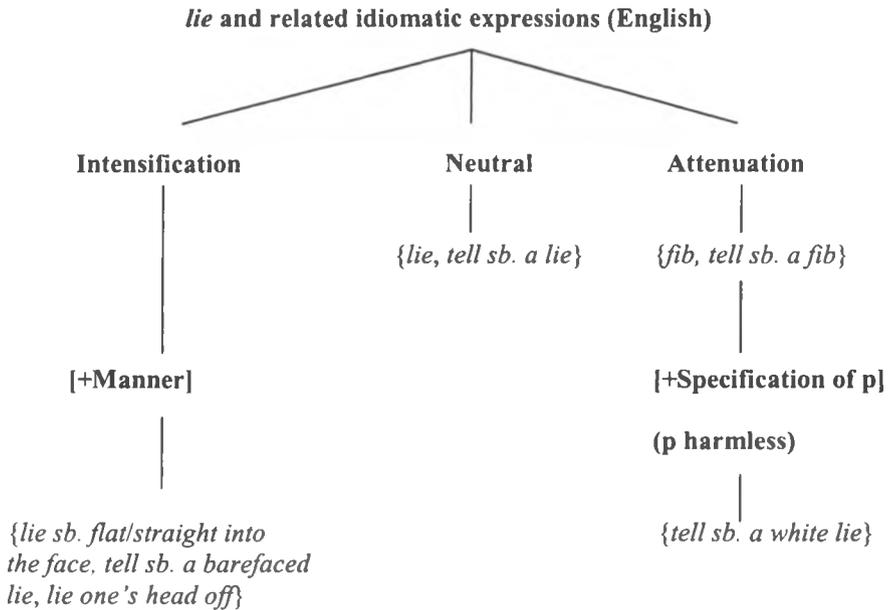


Figure 7. Degrees of intensity lexicalized by *lie* and related idiomatic expressions (English). (p='proposition'; H='Hearer')

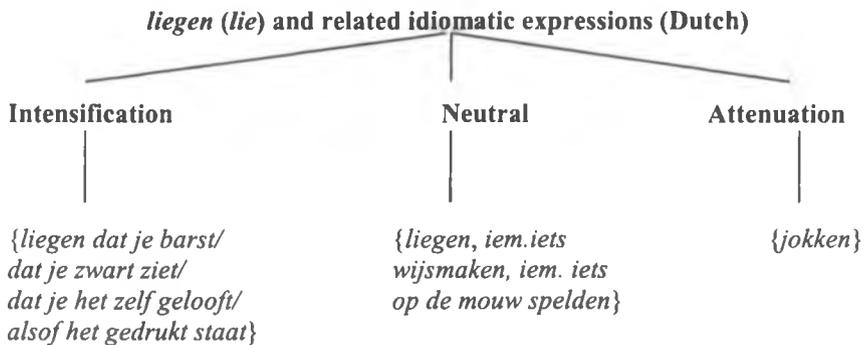


Figure 8. Degrees of intensity lexicalized by *liegen (lie)* and related idiomatic expressions (Dutch)

Bearing this pattern in mind, we shall turn the concept BOAST and the way it is lexicalised in German, English and Dutch.

4.2. Verbs and idiomatic expressions lexicalizing the concept (TO) BOAST

Unlike the verb *lügen* (*lie, liegen*), verbs like *angeben*, *prahlen*, *protzen* and *aufschneiden* (English *boast*, *brag* and *vaunt*) do lexicalize speaker evaluations. Some of these are elements of the resource situation. Verbs like *angeben/boast* are used to refer to the behavior of a RS speaker who evaluates his own past actions positively and also wishes that the RS hearer recognize this. Thus, a sentence containing a verb like *angeben/boast* supposes a positive evaluation of the proposition (p) by the RS speaker. At the same time, the RS speaker presupposes p to be the case, reflecting the fact that *angeben* is a factive verb (see Figure 9).

angeben (*boast*)

- PROPOSITIONAL ATTITUDE: S evaluates: p good
- SPEAKER'S INTENTION: S wants: H recognize: p good
- SPEAKER'S PRESUPPOSITION: p is the case

Figure 9. Speaker attitudes lexicalized by *angeben/boast* (S='Speaker', H='Hearer', p='proposition')

Other evaluations lexicalized by verbs like *angeben* are elements of the discourse situation. A

A DS speaker uses these verbs to indicate that he considers the RS speaker's positive evaluation of his own past actions to be exaggerated. Like the RS speaker's positive evaluation, the negative evaluation by the DS speaker is part of the lexical meaning of *boast*.

All of the idiomatic expressions lexicalizing the concept (TO) BOAST inherit both types of evaluations expressed by verbs like *angeben*. As Figures 10 – 12 show, English, Dutch and German all possess idiomatic expressions which may be seen as synonyms of verbs like *boast* and do not lexicalize a degree of intensity significantly different from that expressed by the corresponding verbs. Moreover, attenuations of the concept (TO) BOAST do not seem to allow for lexicalizations in any of these languages. German permits the lexicalization of intensifications of (TO) BOAST, while intensifications of (TO) BOAST are not as clearly marked in English and Dutch. In German, clear intensifications of the meaning of *angeben* are

expressed only by idiomatic expressions, meaning that these German idiomatic expressions lexicalize an evaluation of degree apart from the evaluations which they inherit from the verb *angeben* itself. Clearly, evaluations of degree are also elements of the discourse situation: the DS speaker considers the RS speaker's evaluation of his own past actions to be far too positive.

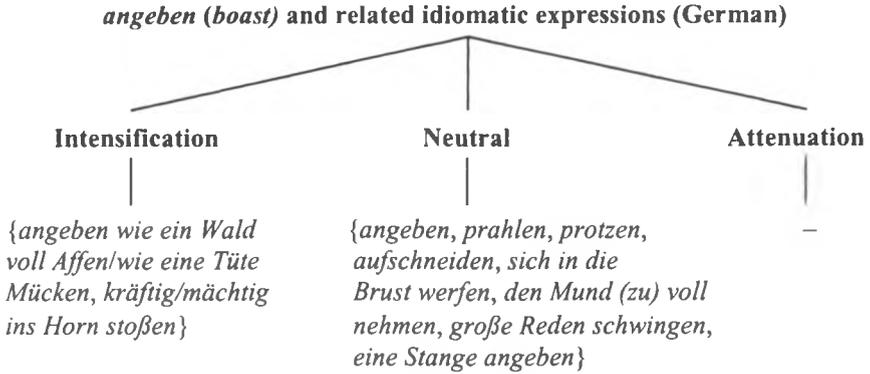


Figure 10. Degrees of intensity lexicalized by *angeben* and related idiomatic expressions (German)

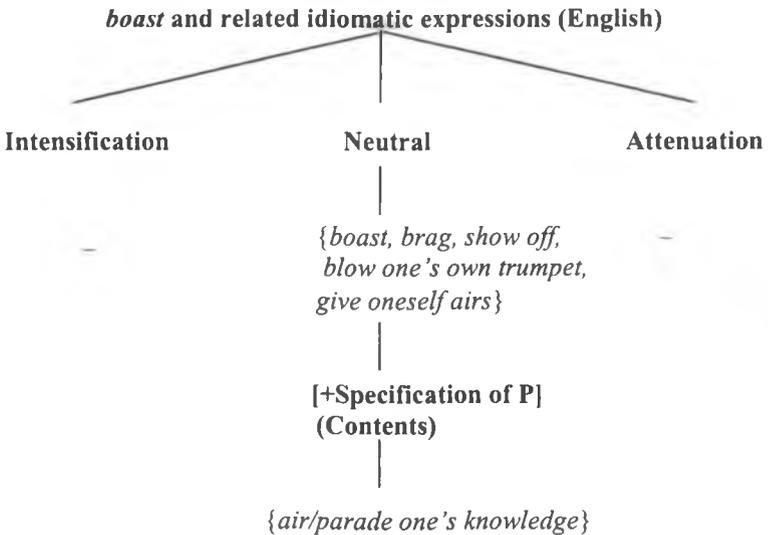


Figure 11. Degrees of intensity lexicalized by *boast* and related idiomatic expressions (English)

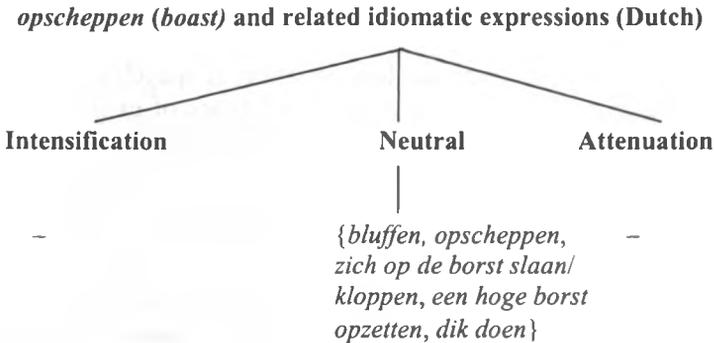


Figure 12. Degrees of intensity lexicalized by *opscheppen* and related idiomatic expressions (Dutch)

Here again, intensifications of evaluative meaning components are lexicalized by idiomatic expressions if they are lexicalized at all. This means that, on the whole, the lexicalization of the concept (TO) BOAST seems to follow the same pattern as that of (TO) LIE.

This pattern surfaces in other speech act word fields, especially in the sets of lexical expressions lexicalizing speech acts involving a negative evaluation by the RS or the DS speaker. Negative evaluations are obviously involved in concepts like REPRIMAND, CRITICIZE and BOAST, but they may also come into play when a DS speaker comments on acts of lying, promising or requesting. In cases like these, the DS speaker may express negative evaluations like his estimation of the gravity of the act of lying, the improbability that S will keep his promise, or the obtrusiveness of requesting acts. Idiomatic expressions typically lexicalize intensifications of such negative evaluations. Concepts of communication involving a positive evaluation (e.g. PRAISE) do not seem to be affected by this pattern (cf. Proost 2001a and 2001b). This does not mean though that verbs cannot lexicalize intensifications or evaluations by a DS speaker. However, when this is possible (e.g. German *ausfragen- ausquetschen (wie eine Zitrone)*, English *question - pump*, Dutch *uitvragen*), there are idiomatic expressions lexicalizing an even higher degree of intensity (e.g. German *jmdn. in die Mangel nehmen - jmdm. Daumenschrauben anlegen*, Dutch *iemand op de rooster/de pijnbank leggen - iem. de duimschroeven aandraaien*, English *put the screws on sb.*). In cases like these, idiomatic expressions seem to cluster around the extreme negative end of the evaluation scale. This pattern holds for those idiomatic speech act expressions which can be classified as belonging to one of the traditional speech act classes.

5. Conclusion

Our observations concerning the lexicalization of speech act evaluations in English, Dutch and German suggest that all types of explicit and implicit evaluations are represented in each of these languages. Both types of evaluations may be lexicalized by speech act verbs. Moreover, the set of expressions we can choose from to lexicalize a particular speech act can be expanded by idiomatic expressions. Idiomatic expressions lexicalize explicit evaluations. In each of the languages under consideration, idiomatic expressions as well as verbs lexicalize degrees of intensity, while intensifications, specifications of *p* and modes of speech act performance are primarily if not uniquely lexicalized by idiomatic expressions. Intensifications and attribute values like 'unrealistic' and 'direct' are specific to idioms. The three languages considered here differ in the way in which *p* is specified or in the particular manner of speech act performance. Not all types of specifications and modes of performance which are possible in principle are realized in each of the three languages investigated. The same is true of degrees of intensity: not all degrees which may be lexicalized in one language need automatically be lexicalized in other languages as well.

Abbreviations

S	Speaker
H	Hearer
<i>p</i>	Proposition
RS	Resource Situation
DS	Discourse Situation
S _{RS}	Resource Situation Speaker
H _{RS}	Resource Situation Hearer
<i>p</i> _{RS}	proposition of the RS speaker's speech act
S _{DS}	Discourse Situation Speaker
H _{DS}	Discourse Situation Hearer
<i>p</i> _{DS}	proposition of the DS speaker's speech act

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