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Constructions of PURPOSE: A corpus-based analysis of corporate mission statements

Abstract: The various incarnations of cognitive linguistics can be characterized by a common contextualized view on linguistic structure. Emerging from this philosophical cornerstone of the cognitive-linguistic enterprise is a growing body of research that systematically inquires into the intricate interplay of the cognitive, social and situational dimensions determining grammatical and lexical choice. The present paper ties in with current explorations of the interface between cognition, pragmatics and grammar through a corpus-based study of the grammatical and discursive construction of purpose. We argue that constructions marking such goal-oriented actions provide a valuable resource for the study of the grammar-discourse interface, because they (implicitly or explicitly) involve a positioning on various axes, including modal, temporal, force-dynamic and interpersonal.

In order to answer the onomasiological question of how purpose is expressed in discourse, and how the above axes interact in motivating the choice for a specific grammatical construction, we conducted an exploratory corpus study, based on authentic German data. The specific text genre that we selected for our analysis is that of corporate mission statements (*Leitbilder*), which provide an interesting locus for investigating purposivity, since they contain a concise statement of an organization's chief purpose for existence. A qualitative analysis reveals that this genre makes use of specific grammatical patterns that profile positions and developments along different conceptual dimensions. This conceptual multidimensionality provides the possibility to simultaneously highlight or background different aspects associated with constructions of purpose.

Keywords: modality, purpose, discourse, force dynamics, corporate mission statements

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1 Introduction

The various incarnations of cognitive linguistics can be characterized by a common contextualized view on linguistic structure (see e.g. Geeraerts 2003), which aims to maximally incorporate language users' experiential basis into the description of grammar and lexicon. Emerging from this philosophical cornerstone of the cognitive-linguistic enterprise is a growing body of research that systematically inquires into the intricate interplay of the cognitive, social and situational dimensions determining grammatical and lexical choice (see e.g. Kristiansen and Dirven 2008; Givón 2005; Du Bois 2007). The present paper ties in with current explorations of the interface between cognition, pragmatics and grammar through a corpus-based study of the grammatical and discursive construction of *purpose*. According to Talmy (2000: 527), the construal of purpose involves profiling an intended event caused by a volitional act with an intended result. We argue that constructions marking such goal-oriented actions provide a valuable resource for the study of the grammar-discourse interface, because they (implicitly or explicitly) involve a positioning on various axes, viz. modal, force-dynamic, temporal, and interpersonal/moral.

In order to answer the onomasiological question of how purpose is expressed in discourse, and how the above axes interact in motivating the choice for a specific construction, we conducted a corpus study, based on authentic German data. The specific text genre that we selected for our analysis is that of corporate mission statements, which provide an interesting locus for investigating purposivity, since they contain a concise statement of an organization's chief purpose of existence (Ran and Duimering 2007). Of all content components that are commonly found in mission statements, purpose appears to be the most prominent one (Bart and Baetz 1998: 824, 846). An example of purpose can be found in (1):

- (1) *Unser Ziel als europäischer Konzern ist es, gemeinsam mit unseren Partnern verantwortungsvoll an der Gestaltung der Zukunft zu arbeiten, aufbauend auf dem Nachhaltigkeitsgedanken weiter profitabel zu wachsen und den Unternehmenswert langfristig zu steigern.* (Südzucker MS)

Our goal as a European corporation is to work in concert with our partners on responsibly shaping the future, based on a vision of continued sustainable, profitable growth and steadily rising shareholder value. (Südzucker MS)

The present paper seeks to investigate how grammatical and lexical constraints pertaining to (i) organizational volition, (ii) the profiled event, and (iii) the intended result support the realization of purpose in German corporate mission statements. In Section 2 we describe the generic features and communicative

goals of the discourse genre to better situate the analysis that will follow in Section 5. Section 3 outlines the concept of purpose, which incorporates both instrumental values and end values. The cognitive-linguistic concepts and models that we draw on for the analysis are described in Section 4. In Section 5 we argue that different constructional templates for the expression of purpose in German occupy different positions in the complex matrix of the above-mentioned axes, simultaneously highlighting and backgrounding specific aspects of the cognitive-social construction of purpose (Van Leeuwen 2008: 124–135). Finally, Section 6 presents some concluding remarks as well as perspectives for future research.

2 Mission statements: A genre definition

Mission statements are formal, written statements that contain an organization's general task and core *purpose* of existence, incorporating value-laden categories. Mission statements have developed into a widespread instrument in corporate communication worldwide because they allow organizations to share their corporate profile, culture, and brand with a vast audience of stakeholders. They are considered a powerful means of identity construction and positive organizational image building. Their discourse is built up around a number of generic claims including missions, visions, strategies, and identifying values. The German tradition uses the term *Leitbild* to refer to the mission statement genre as an organization's unique blend of immaterial views and values that are intended to appeal to multiple internal and external audiences alike (Heimerzheim 2008: 101; Van Beirendonck 2009: 70–71).

In line with Norlyk (2009, 2012), we assume that mission statements provide an excellent example of leadership discourse. Leadership discourse is typically of an abstract and non-routine nature as it is not so much concerned with everyday corporate practice than with immaterial guiding values and dimensions of organizational identity and organizational culture (Swales and Rogers 1995: 226). The communicative purposes that are linked to mission statements are embedded in leadership responsibilities. First, as stated above, mission statements are essentially about the identification and communication of the organizational purpose. Second, leaders are concerned with creating an emotional bond with their stakeholders. Bonding is successful if stakeholders are willing to align their own visions and values with those of the organization and with the direction leaders want to establish. Third, mission statements give voice to the corporation's vision and passion in ways that can engage, inspire and activate diverse stakeholder groups. And fourth, as Bhatia (2008: 167–168) points out, they increasingly serve promotional-persuasive purposes next to informative ones.

Somewhat complex is the differentiation between the related concepts of mission and vision. Example (2) is an instance of a clear mission statement, whereas (3) profiles the company's vision. The concept of mission as illustrated in (2) is rooted in present reality. More specifically, it provides a *path* towards accomplishment of the vision in line with the organization's culture and values. Vision, on the other hand, entails an aspirational view of the general direction that the organization's leaders want to follow (Cornelissen 2008: 10). It thus conveys a sense of change: it outlines the specific desired or intended future perspectives or aspirations in terms of an organization's fundamental objective and/or strategic *direction*. Contrary to a mission, a vision statement does not include the means (or *path*) that will be used to realize future aspirations and desired endpoints (Cornelissen 2008; Barrett 2006).

- (2) Wir informieren, inspirieren und unterhalten Menschen, um deren Leben zu bereichern. (G + J)
- (3) G + J will weltweit die journalistische Heimat faszinierender Medienmarken sein. (G + J)

3 The concept of purpose

Following Bart and Baetz (1998: 846), we define purpose as a generally oriented higher-order, multi-faceted aim, which encompasses a range of lower level and more concrete short-term goals and objectives. Therefore it is important for organizations not only to reach a consensus on the purposes, goals, and objectives, but also on the respective means that will be used to reach these purposes, goals, and objectives. Both means and purposes involve values, whereby a value is “an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence” (Rokeach 1973: 5). Rokeach (1973) distinguishes two types of values: instrumental values refer to the means to a purpose, whereas end values denote purposes with a completed character. An example of each type is presented in (4):

- (4) Unser leistungsfähiges Portfolio sowie eine viel versprechende Produktpipeline sollen bei CropScience ein Wachstum ermöglichen, das deutlich über dem Marktdurchschnitt liegt. Unser Ziel: die Nummer 1 der globalen CropScience-Unternehmen zu sein. (Bayer MS)

From a linguistic point of view, identity claims in mission statements either take the form of static existential statements of *being* (who/where are we now?) or that of dynamic representations of *becoming* (what/where will we be in the future?) (Ran and Duimering 2007: 174–175). Both manifestations are exemplified in (5).

(5) Leitbild der StepOver: “Wer wir sind und was wir wollen” (StepOver MS)

Dynamic discursive construals of purpose entail a combination of three different types of information: (i) the reference to different degrees of volition and intentionality, (ii) the profiling of an intended event, and (iii) the establishment of an intended result (cf. Talmy 2000: 527). An example of this is given in (6).

(6) Mit unseren Bereichen Consumer Care und Self Testing belegen wir bereits jetzt weltweit führende Positionen in verbrauchernahen Märkten (Consumer Health), wie z.B. mit unseren bekannten Produkten Aspirin, Alka-Seltzer, Aleve, Bepanthen, Rennie und Ascensia. Wir werden uns zukünftig verstärkt auf unsere Kompetenzen und Erfahrungen in diesem nah am Patienten orientierten Geschäft konzentrieren. Wachstumschancen wollen wir konsequent nutzen – sowohl intern wie auch extern. Unser Ziel: das führende Consumer-Health-Unternehmen der Welt zu werden. (Bayer MS)

In its mission statement, Bayer starts out stating its current leading market position: *weltweit führende Positionen in verbrauchernahen Märkten*. It then expresses its future (*zukünftig*) ambition to reposition the organization in terms of future perspectives, goals and values. This involves profiling an intended event (i.e. focussing on competence and experience as well as grasping opportunities respectively), caused by a volitional act (*werden, wollen*) in order to achieve an intended result (i.e. Bayer’s *goal* of becoming the world’s leading consumer health company). This volitional act of envisaging a purpose or goal with an intended result is, in more general terms, the means for/to purpose or instrumental value in the sense of Rokeach (1973) (Meex and Verplaetse 2011: 159–162).

4 Theoretical groundwork

The definition of mission statements given above highlights the conceptual-organizational, temporal and strategic position of an organization, generalized in the notion of purpose. As mentioned in Section 1, Talmy (2000: 527) defines the notion of purpose as the profiling of an intended event caused by a volitional act with an intended result. Providing a concise and coherent description of an

organization's purpose poses a significant challenge, as it requires a simultaneous positioning on various axes. These include:

- (i) A modal axis: a volitional agent contemplates an intended result of the act to be performed;
- (ii) A force-dynamic axis: intended act(ion)s result from the expenditure of force by an Agonist on an Antagonist along a path of abstract motion;
- (iii) A temporal axis: the expression of purpose construes a (contrastive) relation between two or more points on a time scale (current/past state of affairs vs. intended outcome);
- (iv) An interpersonal & moral axis: volitional acts with their intended result affect others, and hence, the relationship between those acting and those affected.

For the purpose of the present contribution, we will focus primarily on the first three dimensions and how they are construed grammatically and discursively. The modal axis, in the specific case of the expression of purpose, primarily pertains to the expression of *valuative attitude* (Givón 1995: 113–114): mission statements typically include modal constructions (modals, modal adverbs and adjectives) that express a degree of intent, desirability, preference, obligation, etc.

One of the conceptual structuring principles underlying the modal axis is covered by Talmy's notion of force dynamics. This schematic system (one of five which collectively constitute the conceptual structuring system of language according to Talmy) pertains to "the linguistic representation of force interactions between certain entities within the structured situation" (Talmy 2000: 12). The semantic category of force can be viewed simultaneously as a generalization over and refinement of the traditional notion of 'causative' (Talmy 2000: 409–470, cited in De Mulder 2007: 295–298). The conceptual primitives of force dynamics include (i) two entities, which (ii) exert a force on each other, with (iii) one foregrounded entity (Agonist) and an opposing counterpart (Antagonist). The opposing entities have an intrinsic tendency towards movement or rest, with different relative strength. An example is given in (7). Whereas (7a) is force-dynamically neutral (there are no opposing forces), (7b) construes the scene as the tension between the Agonist *door*, which exhibits a tendency to open, and an Antagonist, which blocks this tendency. The example in (8) is somewhat more complex: here the Agonist (*the ball*) is construed as having a natural tendency towards rest, which is overruled by the stronger tendency towards motion exerted by the Antagonist (*the wind*).

- (7) a. The door is closed
b. The door cannot be opened
- (8) The ball kept on rolling because of the wind

The notion of force dynamics has been adopted in the description of a variety of grammatical phenomena, including aspect, number and the above-mentioned categories of modality and mood (see e.g. Sweetser 1991 for an account of modal verbs in force-dynamic terms). For the purpose of the present contribution, we are particularly interested in the extension of the concept to the psychological and social domain, including the above-mentioned notions of volition and intentionality (Talmy 2000: 430). In the case of (9), for instance, the subject is represented as a sentient being with a sense of responsibility, which withstands the psychological (rather than physical) pressures in a force-dynamic battle against opposing forces of the psyche. In (10), this metaphorical transfer is extended to the social-psychological (and economic) domain. The position of the company and its management in this example is construed in force-dynamic terms as a psychological Agonist-Antagonist relationship underlying the company's goals and identity.

(9) I resisted the pressure of my peers and stayed home to study

(10) The company successfully withstands the pressures of ever-growing internationalization

The conceptual framework of force dynamics has been integrated in the broader grammatical model of Cognitive Grammar, among others for the description of modality (Langacker 1991: 273; Langacker 2008: 306–309). This account adds to the basic conceptual architecture of force dynamics a model of the speaker's reality conception, which is conceived of as “what a conceptualizer at a given point accepts as valid or established” (Langacker 2009: 201). Conceived reality inherently includes a dimension of temporal dynamics and evolution: “Metaphorically, we can describe conceived reality as having evolutionary momentum [. . .]. Its evolution up through the current moment imparts a certain impetus, which tends to carry it in certain directions rather than others. The conceptualizer ‘feels’ this momentum in running the mental simulation – that is, in tracking Rc (conceived reality) and extrapolating its future course” (Langacker 2008: 306). According to this epistemic model (Figure 1), two different types of ‘future course’ are possible: (i) projected reality, which constitutes a likely future pathway from the perspective of the present, and (ii) potential reality, which is a pathway that reality does not preclude from following (independent of its likelihood). The epistemic model has been used to describe the semantics of epistemic modals, most notably so for those that pertain to future occurrences (e.g. epistemic *may* situates a process in potential reality (*it may rain*), whereas *will* construes an event in projected reality (*it will rain*)). As will be shown in the analysis in Section 5, corporate mission

Fig. 1: Epistemic model (Langacker 1991, 2008)

statements typically involve utterances that construe a temporal-modal positioning of the organization along the axes described above.

5 Corpus analysis and exploratory results

In this section we present a typology of the grammatical and discursive construal of purpose in a corpus of German mission statements, based on the three axes introduced in Section 4. More particularly, we inquire into the linguistic diversity of the construction of purpose along the modal, force-dynamic and temporal dimension, and combinations thereof. For the sake of clarity, we structure the results separately for each of the axes, but refer to their interaction in the analysis of specific examples. We start with the analysis of intended events on the modal axis (5.1), which is related to the concepts of volition, intentionality and agency. Sections 5.2 and 5.3 deal with the force-dynamic nature of purpose and intention, and the temporal dimension respectively.

As a basis for the exploratory analysis, we collected 25 mission statements, published on the corporate websites of German profit organizations in a variety of sectors (total number of words: 14,640). Table 1 presents an overview of the corpus, including sectors, organizations and number of words per mission statement.

5.1 The modal axis

As described in Talmy (2000: 513) agency in causal events implies an agent, i.e. some entity “with will” which intends that a given event should result from a

Table 1: Corpus overview

Sector	Organization/Words (n)
Automobile industry	Opel (n = 264), Daimler (n = 928)
Clothing	adidas (n = 1,424)
Energy	RWE (n = 131)
Engine building	Freudenberg (n = 447)
Exhibition services	Messe Frankfurt (n = 143)
Financial services, assurances	Deutsche Bank (n = 558), NRW Bank (n = 78), Allianz (n = 309)
Foods and beverages	Rapunzel (n = 414), Südzucker (n = 153)
ICT	StepOver (n = 873)
Media, publishing	Gruner & Jahr (n = 30), Deutsche Welle (n = 261)
Personal care, medical products	Beiersdorf (n = 421)
(Petro-/Agro-)chemical, pharmaceutical	Aral (n = 283), BASF (n = 1,384), Bayer (n = 1,479)
Public services	TÜV Rheinland (n = 1,126), Deutsche Post DHL (n = 616)
Steel	hkm (n = 819)
Telecommunication	Bosch Communication Services (n = 93), Vodafone (n = 651), Deutsche Telekom (n = 503)
Transport and logistics	Lufthansa (n = 1,252)

preceding event. In the case of mission statements this volitional entity is the organization that operates as an agent initiating and planning the projected (positive) causal events. Willingness or volition is the prerequisite for reaching the intended achievement of planned events. It is primarily subject-inherent, but can enter into the interpersonal realm as well. Interpersonal volition implies that the volitional act with its intended result affects others, and hence, the relationship between those acting (in the given case: the organization) and those affected (in the given case: stakeholders). The difference between both types of volition, subject-inherent and interpersonal, may be reflected linguistically in different ways and is gradual rather than clear-cut, as we will show in the following sections.

5.1.1 Subject-inherent volition

Subject-inherent volition is generally realized by modal constructions using (nominalized) modal verbs such as *wollen*, *sollen* and light verb constructions. In example (11a) the organization is the volitional agent that sets itself a higher-level target, which is to become the best among the other competitors in the commu-

nication sector (*der beste Kommunikationsanbieter Deutschlands*). This intended result is expressed by the combination of a modal with the future tense (*wollen X werden*). The use of the first person plural subject (*wir*) in this case emphasizes the conscious willingness of the agent. The same pattern can be identified in example (11b): The organization (Bayer) intends to reach an ultimate goal (*Erfolg*). The nominalization *Wille*, however, profiles a result rather than an ongoing act(ion), and thus expresses a somewhat reduced degree of intent compared to example (11a) ('reification' and 'atemporalization', cf. Langacker 2008: 122).

- (11) a. Wir wollen der beste Kommunikationsanbieter Deutschlands werden. (Vodafone)
 b. Wille zum Erfolg. (Bayer)
 c. Unsere Kunden sollen von uns begeistert sein. (Vodafone)
 d. Wir haben uns [. . .] ein konkretes CO₂-Ziel gesetzt. (Deutsche Post)

In example (11c) the use of the modal *sollen* expresses the valuative attitude of desirability, and more specifically the agent's desire that some other entity behaves or acts in a specific way. The organization (Vodafone) wants its customers (*unsere Kunden*) to be enthusiastic about the organization's services (*von uns*). The intended event (*begeistert sein*) presupposes the organization's volition to act correspondingly. In example (11d) volitional modality is realized by the light verb construction *sich ein X setzen*: The pronoun *wir* personalises the institution (Deutsche Post), which again is represented as a volitional agent with the firm intention to reach a well-defined goal (*ein konkretes CO₂-Ziel*).

Next to personal pronouns (in the first person plural: institutional *we*), possessives may also be used to express subject-inherent volition. In the examples (12a) and (12b) the possessives *unseren/unser* in combination with specific (nominalized) verbs stress the organizations' decidedness to reach their respective goals. The verb *unterstreichen* in (12a) foregrounds and reconfirms the company's present willingness, whereas in example (12b) the modifying past participle *erklärt* reinforces the organization's readiness to meet self-imposed obligations. In example (12c) the use of the pronoun *alle* explicitly extends the volitional intention to the company's management *and* employees:

- (12) a. Das Leitbild unterstreicht unseren Willen [. . .]. (Bayer)
 b. Es ist unser erklärter Anspruch [. . .]. (Aral)
 c. Wir alle sind als Führung und Mitarbeiter gleichermaßen aufgefordert, die Werte des HKM-Leitbildes zu leben. (HKM)

5.1.2 Interpersonal volition

Next to subject-inherent volition, interpersonal volition expresses some external need and appeal. It can be viewed of as a form of ‘bilateral’ volition where both subject-internal and subject-external obligation comes into play (cf. Haegeman 1983). This kind of volition is linguistically realized by means of verbs belonging to the semantic category of ‘obligation’, implying some entity, which has specific expectations to be met by other entities. An example of this concept of implicit expectation is given in (13a), where the noun *Stärkung* represents the subject-external obligation of some implicit ‘demander’ (e.g. the competitive environment), who claims that only continuously boosted brands and products are economically viable. The company’s willingness to recognize and meet this claim is expressed by the construction *wir sind verpflichtet*. The same kind of subject-internal and subject-external obligation is given in example (13b). Here the subject-external obligation is the fact that the seller’s market offers opportunities for growth, which need to be seized in order to play an active role in the market. In contrast to example (13a) the degree of necessity required to meet this external obligation is less stringent, as indicated by the verb complex *sich verpflichtet fühlen* vs. *wir sind verpflichtet* in (13b).

- (13) a. Wir sind der fortwährenden Stärkung unserer Marken und Produkte verpflichtet [...]. (adidas)
 b. Wir fühlen uns verpflichtet, Wachstumschancen aktiv zu nutzen und Märkte maßgeblich mitzugestalten. (Deutsche Bank)

5.1.3 Commitment, determination and passion

Volition does not only relate to the above-mentioned concepts of willingness and internal need/demand or external need/appeal, but it may involve different degrees of commitment, determination and passion as well. These aspects are construed linguistically by (nominalized) verbs belonging to a semantic verb category embodying dedication and personal engagement. In examples (14a) and (14b) the (nominalized) verbs *sich engagieren/Engagement* encode the organization’s commitment towards universal values such as environmental protection in (14a) (*für die Umwelt*).

- (14) a. Außerdem engagiert sie [die StepOver] sich für die Umwelt gleich in dreifacher Hinsicht. (StepOver)
 b. Unser Engagement. (Opel)

In examples (15a) and (15b) the act(ion) verbs *antreten* and *daransetzen* express a high degree of determination:

- (15) a. Wir sind angetreten, ein neues Bayer zu schaffen [. . .]. (Bayer)
 b. Wir setzen alles daran, die Kundenbindung zu stärken. (Deutsche Post)

In example (15a) the verb (*wir sind*) *angetreten* suggests that the organization (Bayer) is set on performing activities that will improve the organization's existing structure: the intended result (*ein neues Bayer*) implies that the actual organization's state is suboptimal and requires improvement, which, in turn, requires the organization's commitment and determination. In example (15b) the organization (Deutsche Post) implicitly recognizes the urgency of winning over the customer (since the monopoly has come to an end). The construction *Wir setzen alles daran* reflects the organization's resolute attitude and determination to feel a sense of customer loyalty. In a range of other examples volition also features emotion involving a sense of passion. In example (16a) and (16b) the noun *Leidenschaft* expresses emotional volition or ardour, which motivates the responsible persons to keep up managing the organization as they do. This emotionally steered volition may concern social domains and activities (*Sport* in [16a]) or abstract entities (*Leistung* in [16b]). In both examples the emotional volition is the starting point for all activities and goals to be achieved.

- (16) a. Leidenschaft für den Sport. (adidas)
 b. Leistung. Aus Leidenschaft. / Passion to perform (Deutsche Bank)

In the cases of emotional volition there is a recurrent pattern in the data that attracts attention, namely verb type shifting. An example of this process is the intransitive verb *leben*, which in a number of mission statements is used as a transitive verb in order to express existential passion of the kind "We will live by our passion". In order to evoke this idea of existential passion, the verb *leben* is combined with an abstract entity in (17a) (*Leidenschaft*) and an artifact in (17b) (*Auto*).

- (17) a. Wir leben die Leidenschaft für unsere Produkte, denn wir sind von unseren Produkten überzeugt! (StepOver)
 b. Opel. Wir leben Autos. (Opel)

The improper use of intransitives as transitive verbs is referred to in Construction Grammar as coercion, a process forcing the language-user to reinterpret the (prototypical) semantic features of the verb based on the context in which it appears

(cf. among others Michaelis 2004). Concepts generally associated with *leben* are units of time (e.g. month, year) or social concepts (e.g. family, health, welfare etc.). In both cases in (17), however, the verb *leben* is combined with concepts from radically different domains. Nevertheless, the constructions *Leidenschaft leben* (17a) and *Autos leben* (17b) are meaningful because both the context and the genre (mission statements as an organization's unique blend of immaterial views and values; cf. Section 2) evoke a contextually specific meaning for *leben*, viz. 'to devote oneself' (*sich hingeben*) or 'to commit oneself' (*sich verschreiben*). This unorthodox use of the verb *leben* draws the reader's attention to the intensive, but implicit relation between the volitional and passionate agents (StepOver, Opel) on the one hand and the complements (*Leidenschaft*, *Auto*) on the other. The actual agents' actions remain implicit, but are presumably passionate acts with a favorable outcome.

5.1.4 Intentionality

As already stated above, mission statements not only refer to the volitional nature of past, present or future events, but to their intentional planning as well. In Talmy's terminology, mission statements refer to intended intermediate and purposeful events in which the organization (agent) is engaged as a moving agent (cf. also De Mulder 2007: 298). The agent's intentional movement and its engagement in purposeful corporate activities is illustrated in (18a–c): in these examples verbs of moving are used, such as *gehen* in (18a) and (18b) or nominalizations derived from moving verbs such as *Way* in (18c). In (18a) the figurative use of the common German collocation *einen Schritt tun* expands its meaning in such a way that the decisive feature of the organization's movement is in focus. As such the slogan refers to a scenario with different moving agents in which the *Deutsche Bank* is the one who intentionally moves towards a purposeful final aim. In (18b) the word play *VorWEg gehen* (combining the company's name RWE and the verb *vorweggehen*) alludes to a comparable scenario: everything is moving, but the company *RWE* moves in the front row (*vorweg*) with the firm intention to safeguard a successful future for its products. A similar conceptualization underlies example (18c). The slogan *The Vodafone Way* is reminiscent of the common saying "It's my way"; in this example the specification *Vodafone Way* evokes the mental image that this way is different (i.e. better) from others. In conclusion, examples (18a–c) profile activities with a specific purpose that are categorized metaphorically as *journeys*, thus evoking a mental timeline with a starting and end point that are bridged by intentional and purposeful activities.

- (18) a. Wir gehen den entscheidenden Schritt [. . .]. (Deutsche Bank)
 b. VoRWeg gehen in eine erfolgreiche Zukunft. (RWE)
 c. The Vodafone Way. (Vodafone)

5.2 The force-dynamic axis

As mentioned in the theoretical part (cf. Section 4) the coherent description of an organization's purpose requires a simultaneous positioning on various axes. Next to the modal axis the conceptualization of events as intended act(ion)s involves a degree of (competitive) interaction between (opposing) forces, as specified in the framework of force dynamics. The force-dynamic dimension refers to the expenditure of force by an Agonist (desiring part) on an Antagonist (blocking part) along a path of (abstract) motion (De Mulder 2007). In the specific genre of mission statements, organizational optimization processes (more, better, excellent) fulfill two different roles. As instrumental values, they refer to the means to a purpose, as end values they denote purposes with a completed character, as is obviously the case with intended results. Particularly relevant to the mission genre is the metaphorical transfer of force-dynamic conceptual patterns to the social-psychological and the intrapsychological domain, which are described in greater detail in the following subsections.

5.2.1 The social-psychological domain

In the social-psychological domain, the organization (Agonist) is portrayed as an entity that is exposed to opposing forces (Antagonist), viz. market competition. The lower-level goal for an organization is to outperform the competitors (in the sense of *gewinnen, die Besten sein, übertreffen, an der Spitze liegen*). Antagonists in this domain are (abstract) entities such as future challenges (in terms of resources and sustainability) or competition in the market in general. This tension is illustrated in (19a), where the force-dynamic tension between Agonist and Antagonist is construed metaphorically as a military conflict. In fact, military expressions such as *rüsten* (meaning 'to arm in order to face the enemy') convey the company's dauntlessness and decisiveness in order to overcome all kinds of implicit obstacles. In this case, the main obstacle (Antagonist) is the need for new energy resources (*spannende Energiezukunft*), which exerts pressure on the company Aral (Agonist). In (19b) the Agonist Deutsche Bank contends against competing banking institutions acting as potential Antagonists (*die Besten der Branche*).

- (19) a. So sind wir bestens gerüstet für eine spannende Energiezukunft. (Aral)
 b. Wir stellen uns dem Wettbewerb um die Besten der Branche. (Deutsche Bank)

The examples in (20) are similar to the ones in (19) in that they are based on the same force-dynamic optimization processes we described above. However, unlike (19), in (20) the organizational ambition to continue to strive to become better (20a) or simply to be the best in the market (20b–c) is construed here as a goal with a completed character, i.e. in terms of an end-value, and not in terms of an instrumental value. In its mission slogan “The Chemical Company“, BASF signals excellence through the strategic use of the definite article as a superlative marker (20c).

- (20) a. Unser Ziel ist, es besser zu sein als unsere Wettbewerber. (HKM)
 b. Wir wollen im Wettbewerb dauerhaft Qualitätsführer sein [. . .]. (HKM)
 c. “The Chemical Company” (BASF)

5.2.2 The intrapsychological domain

The metaphorical transfer of force-dynamic conceptual patterns to the intrapsychological domain manifests itself in the perception of the organization as an entity in which opposing forces are at work (both Agonist and Antagonist). The Agonist represents a past and current state of affairs or position, the Antagonist stands for a future state of affairs or some desired, intended position. But in their development and optimization process organizations (i.e. humans leading an organization) have to deal with emotional weakness and mental obstacles which are an impediment to motion and, hence, to progress. In other words, the human tendency to stagnation (the well-known ‘innerer Schweinehund’ in German) has to be overcome in order to realize the successive steps in the optimization process: more, better, excellent. An example of this internal dynamics is given in (21a), in which the Agonist RWE is conceived of as an entity in an anergic state that aims to bring itself to overcome its inertness (cf. De Mulder 2007: 299). The Antagonist in this mental process can be defined as an alter ego of RWE (the ‘innerer Schweinehund’) trying to hinder the company to overcome its inactivity. The same constellation Agonist-Antagonist holds for instance (21b), with the adverb *mehr* (‘more’) construing a comparison between the company’s current economic position and a projected alter ego situated in the future. This metaphorical force-dynamic structure is also illustrated in example (21c) by the adverbs *weiter* (*verbessern*),

stetig (*ausbauen*) and *kontinuierlich* (*perfektionieren*). These adverbs of degree refer to the continuity of the different act(ion)s expressed by the verbs.

- (21) a. RWE wird grüner, internationaler und robuster. (RWE)
 b. Doch wir wollen mehr. (Vodafone)
 c. Wir werden bewährte Kraftstoffe weiter verbessern und unsere Forschung [...] stetig ausbauen. Nur so können wir mehr Leistung bei gleichzeitig mehr Umweltfreundlichkeit kontinuierlich perfektionieren. (Aral)

Another specific manifestation of metaphorical force dynamics in the intrapsychological domain is the conceptualization of organizations as entities, which are ready to reach intrinsically accessible goals, thereby using the active expenditure of force. Expressions such as (*Wachstumschancen*) *aktiv nutzen* in (22a), (*Erfolgsschancen*) *eröffnen* in (22b) and (*Geschäftspotenziale*) *erschließen* in (22c) illustrate this intrapsychological force dynamics:

- (22) a. Wir fühlen uns verpflichtet, Wachstumschancen aktiv zu nutzen [...]. (Deutsche Bank)
 b. Wir eröffnen Erfolgsschancen durch vertrauensvolle und verlässliche Partnerschaft. (BASF)
 c. Hierfür erschließen wir gemeinsame Geschäftspotenziale. (BASF)

5.3 The temporal axis

A third dimension feeding into the construction of purpose is the temporal positioning of a company or organization in the past, present and future. Mission statements typically refer to goals or purpose in terms of both intended events and intended results, thus positioning future actions and states-of-affairs against the background of a current or past situation. With this dimension, we integrate both the notions of aspectuality and tense into the analysis of discursively realized expressions of purpose: the construal of the temporal flow (or internal event structure) and temporal positioning of an event (*vis-à-vis* the time of speaking) contributes to the presentation of an organization's (future) activities as firmly rooted in the current philosophy and method of working.

Taking Langacker's epistemic model as a basis (cf. Section 4), the description of purpose in terms of intended events and results typically involves the construal of a likely future pathway from the perspective of the company's present conception of reality. Examples of this construction of projected future reality are the use of the future auxiliary *werden* 'will' (23a) or elements with a durative/iterative

meaning such as *weiter* (23b). In what follows, we zoom in on a few features of the temporal-modal positioning of intended events and results, viz. progressivity and iterativity (5.3.1), continuity and change (5.3.2) and the focus on endpoints or achievements (5.3.3).

- (23) a. Wir werden uns zukünftig verstärkt auf unsere Kompetenzen und Erfahrungen in diesem nah am Patienten orientierten Geschäft konzentrieren. (Bayer)
 b. Durch Einlizenzierungen beabsichtigen wir, unsere Kernindikationen weiter zu stärken. (Bayer)

5.3.1 Progressivity and iterativity

As intermediate events between a source and a goal, intended events have an inherent temporal dimension which can be aspectually realized by means of the progressive or iterative. The progressive profiles an ongoing past or current state of affairs (progress is forward motion) and is expressed by particles such as *weiter* in (24a) (see also [23b]), progressive tenses such as the Future II progressive *niemals abgeschlossen sein wird* in (24b), or iteratively construed act(ion)s like *nachdenken* in (24c) and *(eine neue Herausforderung) darstellen* in (24d). In these examples adverbial constructions (*jeden Tag aufs Neue* in [24c]) or temporal adverbs (*tagtäglich* in [24d]) give additional expression to the temporal extension of the intended events.

- (24) a. Nur so können wir [...] weiter an der praktischen Umsetzung von Nachhaltigkeitskonzepten arbeiten [...]. (Aral)
 b. Eine Herausforderung, die für uns niemals abgeschlossen sein wird (Opel)
 c. Indem wir jeden Tag aufs Neue darüber nachdenken, wie wir das Leben von Menschen innovativ und nachhaltig bereichern können. (Opel)
 d. [...] stellen sie [Lösungen für Kunden] für uns tagtäglich eine neue Herausforderung dar. (StepOver)

5.3.2 Continuity and change

In the dynamic construal of purpose a contrastive relation between two or more points on a time scale is established. As can be seen from the examples in (25), intended results can be referred to on the temporal axis in two contrasting ways.

As stated above we use Langacker's epistemic model to account for both types. On the one hand, we assume a relation of continuity, in which an agent's past and current experience in conceived reality is used as a benchmark for an intended outcome in future reality (projected reality), as illustrated in example (25a). On the other hand, the construction of purpose may entail a temporal relation of change rather than continuity. Here the past or current state of affairs is contrasted explicitly with the intended or desired outcome or result, as illustrated in example (25b).

- (25) a. Wir wollen die Post für Deutschland bleiben und das Logistikunternehmen für die Welt werden. (Deutsche Post)
 b. Wir wollen weiter wachsen, uns aber die wesentlichen Vorteile eines flexiblen Betriebes, nämlich Kreativität und Anpassungsfähigkeit, erhalten. (StepOver)

5.3.3 Achievement

Another way in which purpose manifests itself on the temporal axis is in the expression of achievement. Here the focus is on the endpoint rather than the processual nature of the intended event, which makes the event object-oriented. The endpoint focus is realized by means of perfective verbs, such as prefix verbs with *er-* or *ver-* (e.g. *erreichen*, *erzielen*, *erwirtschaften*, *erbringen*) in combination with a direct object as in the examples (26a–c). The perfective aspect can be realized by verb tense as well, as illustrated by the past tense in (27).

- (26) a. Wir erreichen einen Benchmark von 20 Prozent OPEX am Umsatz. (Vodafone)
 b. Wir setzen auf die Vielfalt der Talente, die Energie und das umfassende Wissen unserer Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeiter, um die besten Ergebnisse für unsere Kunden zu erzielen. (Deutsche Bank)
 c. Bio-Qualität [...] verstärkt im Bewusstsein aller Mitarbeitenden verankern. (Rapunzel)
- (27) Unsere Vision, den Menschen und seine Bedürfnisse in unseren Mittelpunkt zu stellen, hat sich bestätigt. (Aral)

5.3.4 From effectedness to affectedness

A final temporal dimension to be discussed concerns another aspectual instantiation of the event and its intended result. The events described in (28) are construed as existential causatives of the type ‘effected-object verbs’, i.e. resultative verbs that effect objects in the sense of making the latter come to exist (see e.g. Duden 2009: 392). Verbs that typically occur in such effected-object constellations in mission statements are *schaffen* (‘to create’ [28a]), *entwickeln* (‘to develop’ [28b]), *(mit)gestalten* (‘to shape’ [28c]) or the English *to make* (28d), *produce* and *design*.

- (28) a. Mit internationalen Trends und den neuesten Produkten unserer Aussteller schaffen wir für Besucher großartige Erlebnisse [...]. (Messe Frankfurt)
 b. innovative Lösungen für unsere Kunden zu entwickeln (Deutsche Bank)
 c. Märkte maßgeblich mitzugestalten (Deutsche Bank)
 d. We make markets. Worldwide. (Messe Frankfurt)

Apart from the resultative verbs denoting effected objects, the corpus also contains constructions with ‘affected-object verbs’, i.e. verbs taking objects that are affected by the action expressed by the verb, but that exist independently from it. Examples are given in (29):

- (29) a. Wir fühlen uns verpflichtet, Wachstumschancen aktiv zu nutzen und Märkte maßgeblich mitzugestalten. (Deutsche Bank)
 b. Wir unterstützen unsere Kunden und Lieferanten im Bemühen um einen sicheren und umweltfreundlichen Umgang mit den Produkten, die sie von uns beziehen bzw. uns liefern. (BASF)
 c. Wir informieren, inspirieren und unterhalten Menschen, um deren Leben zu bereichern. (G + J)

Although we will not focus in detail on how volitional acts with their intended result *affect* others, and hence, how the relationship between those acting and those affected can be described, some observations relating to the interpersonal and moral axis (cf. *supra* Section 4) are in place. Because intended results affect stakeholders they intrinsically involve an *intersubjective* dimension: the organization commits itself making promises which raise certain expectations on the part of the stakeholders. An intersubjective dimension (in the sense of Verhagen 2005) is thus added to the genre by creating a kind of virtual dialogue between the organization and the broad stakeholder audience. A case in point is the concept of GIVING and OFFERING that is rendered by so-called transact(ion) verbs of

the type *bieten*, *geben*, and *liefern* ([30a–d], cf. Zifonun et al. 1997: 1320–1322). Here the (implicit) dative object is assigned the role of potential beneficiary, as in the case of customers who may benefit from the promise contained in the process and object of transaction.

- (30) a. [Die Allianz Deutschland] bietet auch künftig Lösungen [. . .]. (Allianz)
 b. Wir liefern umfassende und unzensurierte Informationen für Länder ohne Medienfreiheit, insbesondere Krisen- und Kriegsregionen. (DW)
 c. Wir geben unser Know-how an Partner weltweit weiter. (DW)
 d. Wir wollen unseren Kunden die beste Dienstleistung und Ware bieten. (Rapunzel)

A similar beneficiary relation is expressed by the concepts *STIMULATE* and *FOSTER*, which refer to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and, as such, also imply a moral and social dimension. Examples are verbs such as *beitragen* ('to contribute'), *fördern* ('to foster'), and (*fair*) *behandeln* ('to treat (fairly)'), combined with objects that have social and moral semantics such as *gesellschaftliche Entwicklung* ('social development'), *Wohlbefinden der Menschen* ('people's wellbeing'), *Lieferanten* ('suppliers'), *Kunden* ('customers', i.e. humans as social beings with specific requirements that need to be met from a moral viewpoint). Examples are given in (31):

- (31) a. Wir wollen mit unserem täglichen Einsatz im Positiven zur gesellschaftlichen Entwicklung beitragen! (StepOver)
 b. Unser Beitrag dazu sind gesunde hochwertige Lebensmittel, die das Wohlbefinden der Menschen fördern [. . .]. (Rapunzel)
 c. Wir wollen unsere Lieferanten unter den Aspekten des Wettbewerbs fair behandeln. (Rapunzel)
 d. Im Bereich DHL verzahnen wir die Geschäftsfelder enger, um die Ansprüche unserer Kunden optimal zu erfüllen. (Deutsche Post)
 e. Wir wollen unsere Kunden dauerhaft zufrieden stellen. (HKM)

In Section 2 we categorized mission statements as a leadership discourse genre that typically employs a top-down structure to communicate with a variety of internal and external stakeholders. Recent developments in the business world, however, have put some pressure on the genre. Nowadays it has more or less become obligatory in terms of branding to address moral and ethical values and embrace a more social stakeholder approach. It is not inconceivable that this development will bring about a shift from a monologue-based text type towards a more dialogue-based text type increasingly incorporating a positioning on the

interpersonal and moral axis. Especially interesting in this context is the question of how intersubjectivity is expressed in relation to the other axes described in the present paper.

6 Conclusion

The present paper was intended as an exploratory case of how concepts and insights from Cognitive Linguistics can be used to analyze the grammatical construal of key concepts in a specialized type of discourse. The specific phenomenon of the construal of purpose in corporate and organizational mission statements is of particular interest because these concise representations of values, mission and vision simultaneously profile positions and developments along different dimensions. As a consequence, they require an analytical framework that is situated at the interface between cognition, pragmatics and grammar. We adopted an essentially onomasiological approach (“with which grammatical and other means is the concept of purpose construed discursively?”), in which we combined insights from different strands in Cognitive Linguistics, including Force Dynamics and Cognitive Grammar. The exploratory corpus analysis reveals that mission statements make use of specific grammatical patterns that result from choices involving positioning in a matrix of multiple interconnected axes, including the modal, force-dynamic, temporal and interpersonal axis. This conceptual multidimensionality provides the possibility to simultaneously highlight or background different aspects associated with constructions of purpose.

The preliminary findings presented in the present paper open up perspectives for future research into the grammatical-discursive construction of conceptual content and more generally the grammar-discourse interface. For the specific case of the construction of purpose in corporate communication, the relation between intersubjective markers and the expression of corporate social responsibility, which was only briefly touched upon in the present paper, still requires further research. A more fine-grained analysis of the construal of purpose along these lines will provide interesting insights into the cognitive-social construction of meaning in discourse. In addition, the adoption of a semasiological approach would bring us one step closer to a full-fledged typology of constructions of purpose. A final desideratum is to complement this exploratory analysis, which is based on a close-reading and descriptive typology, with a larger-scale quantitative corpus-based analysis. This would provide relevant insights into the distribution of constructional patterns of purpose, also beyond the specific genre of mission statements.

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