

A Morphosyntactic Basis for Variation in the Encoding of Motion Events

Perhaps the best studied example of lexical semantic typology is in the domain of motion verbs, where following Talmy's seminal work (1975, 1985, 2000) there is an assumption that languages fall into two types according to how they lexicalize directed motion events. In so-called satellite-framed languages like English directed motion events are typically expressed via manner of motion verbs plus goal-marking adpositions (*He ran to school*), whereas in verb-framed languages like French directed motion may only be expressed via path verbs (*Il est allé à l'école* 'He went to school'). This typology leads to an important but seldom addressed question: why should languages show such distinct ways of describing directed motion events? This question is all the more urgent once it is recognized that Talmy's typology has led researchers to classify languages as either verb- or satellite-framed, although they don't all fit comfortably into this dichotomy. Contra some recent suggestions that the salience of certain semantic pieces (e.g. PATH) is significant in understanding Talmy's typology (cf. work by Slobin and his colleagues (1987, 1991, 1996, 1997, 2000)), we argue that the diversity among languages stems at least partly from differences in the morphosyntactic devices they make available for encoding the semantic ingredients common to all representations of motion events. Specifically, these differences have repercussions for the ways in which languages "combine" these ingredients, giving rise to surface differences in the encoding of motion events; here we build on related proposals by Bouchard (1995), Pustejovsky and Busa (1995), Cummins (1996), Song and Levin (1998). Our account thus changes the locus of cross-linguistic diversity in this domain from underlying semantic representation to morphosyntax.

Talmy's typology is rather limited in scope: although it highlights two classes of languages in which directed motion events are encoded differently, a broader cross-linguistic survey reveals much greater typological variation. Many languages such as Japanese (a purported verb-framed language (Wienold, 1995)), Korean (Kim, 1997), Mandarin, Emai (Schaefer, 1986), and Caribbean English Creoles (Winford, 1990, Sebba, 1997) use V-V compounds or serial verbs combining a manner verb with a path verb to express directed motion in a certain manner; these take a locational argument as a goal. Tswana (Schaefer, 1985) represents another possibility, where manner verbs may be affixed with an applicative (-*ǝl-*), again taking a locational argument as a goal. Russian is quite similar to English in allowing manner verbs with goal-marking prepositions, but it also requires preverbal prefixes also specifying the direction of motion (as well as specific case-marking for goals vs. locations). Even canonical verb-framed languages allow manner to be expressed in describing directed motion events. For instance, while French does not have a word-for-word translation of *John limped to the house*, ostensibly due to the lack of a *to* in French, such a meaning can be expressed via directed motion verb plus a manner adverbial (*Je suis entré à la maison en boitant* 'I entered the house limping', although this may be dispreferred on Gricean grounds; cf. Horn (1996)) or even via a generic *until* marker *jusque('à)* that can mark a goal with manner of motion verbs (*J'ai boité jusqu'à la maison* 'I limped until-at the house').

As these data show, Talmy's dichotomy does not represent the full spectrum of possible encodings of the various components of directed motion events. Furthermore, in all languages the same semantic ingredients (MANNER, GOAL, PATH) receive a direct morpholexical encoding, although the encodings differ from language to language: MANNER appears to always be a verbal concept; GOAL/PATH semantics is realized variously via verbs, adpositions (English *to*), applicatives (Tswana -*ǝl-*), verbal prefixes (Russian), event delimiters (French *jusque('à)*), case marking (German, Russian). These morpholexical differences are naturally reflected in the use of different compositional devices to encode directed motion event descriptions (e.g. compounds and serial verbs in Japanese, Emai, Korean, Mandarin; participial manner expressions in Spanish, French; V+Adposition constructions in English, German).

Our compositional approach allows a unified analysis of alternative cross-linguistic patterns for expressing motion events, shifting the burden of explanation from underlying semantic representations to the morphosyntactic and lexical resources of languages. As motion events have been a prime example of systematic lexical semantic differences among languages, this reanalysis raises questions about what differences can be expected to be found. It also raises questions about the role of linguistic relativity in this domain, where relativity must be constrained by the apparent universality of semantic primitives on one end and must interact with the systematic variation of morphosyntactic encoding on the other.

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