Motion verbs in Modern Standard Arabic and their implications for Talmy's lexicalization patterns☆

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ABSTRACT

Talmy's typology of motion events in world languages as verb-framed (V-framed) and satellite-framed (S-framed) languages focuses on the expression of Path and Manner either in the verb or in a satellite to it. However insightful and interesting this typology is, it has too restrictive a scope to account for the role of other conceptual components such as Figure, Ground, and Cause in the overall motion event. The current article brings evidence from Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) to bear on Talmy's lexicalization patterns. In particular, it shows that, owing to its rich morphology, MSA includes, apart from path- and manner-driven verbs, verb patterns centered on the Figure, Ground, and Cause. Because of the difficulty occasioned by data from MSA and various other languages for Talmy's typology, the article proposes a typology of motion verbs along conflation patterns rather than lexicalization patterns.

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1. Introduction

As a pioneer of cognitive semantics, Talmy (2000b) was the first to segment the motion event into its conceptual constituents of Motion, Manner, Cause, and Path (p. 25), and map them onto surface linguistic materials, thus isolating two "lexicalization patterns" of world languages as "verb-framed languages" vs. "satellite-framed languages" (pp. 221–22). Talmy's (2000b) concern with "a comparatively small number of patterns (a typology), or a single pattern (a universal)" (p. 21) led him to focus on Path and Manner of motion in order to arrive at "universal principles" (p. 23). However, this focus on Path and Manner did not seem to do justice to many of the morphology-rich world languages. Arising from the subsequent study of diverse languages, critiques of his typology abound (Slobin, 1996, 2004, 2005, 2006; Narasimhan, 2003; Bohnemeyer et al., 2007; Beavers et al., 2009; Sampaio et al., 2009; Chen and Guo, 2009; Al-Qarny, 2010; Cifuentes Férez, 2010; Ibarretxe-Antuñano and Hijazo-Gascón, 2012; Ameka and Essegbey, 2013; Slobin et al., 2014; Ibarretxe Antuñano, 2015; Louhichi, 2015). Speaking about Spanish as an exemplar of V-framed languages one, Slobin (1996) notes that "we will see that Spanish does not always behave like Talmy's characterization of a verb-framed language" (p. 196) since "Spanish also has a further

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restriction on the types of path phrases that can occur with verbs of motion" (p. 215), which ironically suggests that Spanish is somewhat an atypical V-framed language. As Slobin (1996) remarked, "as is almost always the case, typologies leak" (p. 214).

Owing to its distinctive structural properties, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), a high variety of Arabic, is "an important test case for competing theories in many fields." Conversely, "the absence of information on the frequencies of Arabic morphological constituents, for example, puts research into Arabic at a major disadvantage, as compared with other languages for which such resources have long been available" (Boudelaa and Marslen-Wilson, 2010: p. 481). MSA's motion events include not only features of V-framed, S-framed languages (Talmy, 2000b: pp. 221–22), and "equipollently-framed languages" (E-framed languages) (Slobin, 2004, 2005, 2006), but also other features pertaining to Cause-, Figure-, and Ground-driven conflations. Based on this evidence, the article suggests that the lexicalization patterns as defended by Talmy are too constraining to account for the linguistic reality of MSA and other languages.

The current article studies motion verbs not motion events in MSA. We take it that a motion event may embrace components of motion other than those allowed to be conflated in the verb. We only propose to focus on motion verbs because we are exclusively concerned with the conflation patterns that they admit. The article has the following structure. The first section offers an overview of motion events in cognitive linguistics. The second spells out the main tenets of MSA morphology. The third section, which constitutes the bulk of the article, analyzes motion verbs in MSA in terms of conflation patterns. The last section is a discussion of the viability of conflation patterns.

2. Overview of motion events

Talmy (2000a) defines a motion event as "an event of motion or location" (p. 8). He (2000b) distinguishes two types of motion: "translational motion" and "self-contained motion" (p. 25). In translational motion, "an object's basic location shifts from one point to another in space." In self-contained motion, however, "an object keeps its same basic, or 'average' location" (p. 35). To make a motion event possible, a Figure and a Ground are necessary. Talmy (2000b) captures Figure as "a moving or conceptually movable object whose path or site is at issue" while Ground is "a reference frame or a reference object stationary within a reference frame, with respect to which the Figure's path or site is characterized" (p. 26). Talmy (2000b) distinguishes Motion and Path as internal components of motion and Manner or Cause as external components or "co-event" of (pp. 25–26). The current article focuses only on translational motion.

Path is defined by Talmy (2000b) as "the path followed or site occupied by the Figure object with respect to the Ground object" (p. 25). Talmy (2000b) said very little to define Manner in a precise fashion. It was Slobin (2006) who captured it as "motor pattern (e.g., hop, jump, skip), often combined with rate of motion (e.g., walk, run, sprint) or force dynamics (e.g., step, tread, tramp) or attitude (e.g., amble, saunter, stroll), and sometimes encoding instrument (e.g., sled, ski, skateboard), and so forth" (p. 61). Talmy (2000b) also did not actually say what a satellite is but what a satellite is not: "the grammatical category of any constituent other than a nominal or prepositional-phrase complement that is in a sister relation to the verb root" (p. 222).

Talmy's (2000b) typology is captured in terms of universal, dichotomous "lexicalization patterns" of world languages as "V-framed languages" vs. "S-framed languages" (pp. 221–22). V-framed languages (e.g. French) map the core schema (Path, Motion) onto the verb and the co-event (Manner, Cause) onto satellites to the verb as in the following example:

(1)[1]

Il	traversa	la Manche	à la nage
He-3SG	cross-PST	the-ART-FEM Channel	PREP-ART-FEM swim
Figure	**Motion + Path**	**Ground**	**Manner**

'He swam across the Channel.'

The verb *traversa* conflates Motion + Path, which is moving from one shore of the river to another. However, the Manner of motion is expressed through a satellite, i.e. a prepositional phrase, *à la nage*. This division of labor between verb and satellite is actually one between Path and Manner, respectively. However, S-framed languages (e.g. English) map the core schema (Path, Motion) onto a satellite, with the verb carrying the co-event (Manner, Cause) as in the following example:

(2)

He	swam	across	the Channel
Figure	**Motion + Manner**	**Path**	**Ground**

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[1] The interlinear morpheme-by-morpheme glosses follow the conventions of Leipzig Glossing Rules. The following abbreviations are used: ACC (accusative), AGE (agentive), ART (article), CAUS (causative), COP (co-participation), DAT (dative), DEF (definite), DU (dual), FEM (feminine), FUT (future), GEN (genitive), MASC (masculine), NEG (negative), NOM (nominative), PL (plural), PREP (preposition), PROG (progressive), PRT (imperfective, present), PST (past), SG (singular).