Abstract

This paper offers a detailed description of lexicalisation patterns for the expression of motion available in French. By doing so, it brings to the fore patterns unaccounted for in the existing literature (e.g. Talmy 1985, 1991) and thus proposes to re-examine Talmy’s famous typology for motion in the light of these new findings. Such a presentation aims at documenting the linguistic complexity present in French usage for a better understanding of motion in language, and for wider applications in cognitive explanations linked to the domain of motion. Based on the variability of patterns reported, we suggest that a structural understanding alone of lexicalisation patterns – possibly in any domain – is insufficient to provide a thoroughly reliable framework of linguistic analysis and predictability. Instead, we propose to restore the focus on the study of meaning back to the centre stage of cognitive linguistic understanding by showing how crucially deterministic semantics and pragmatics are to lexicalisation patterns of a syntactic nature.

1. Introduction

This paper addresses the question of the lexicalisation of motion events with a specific focus on French, thus offering a new exploration of its typological properties. Talmy (1985) has famously suggested a dual typological framework dividing languages between satellite- and verb-framed types depending on how they structure motion dimensions in language. This typology has recently been challenged by the growing availability of detailed cross-linguistic analyses (e.g. Slobin 2004, Zlatev & Yangklang 2004). Of particular interest, Slobin (2004) has suggested that a structural typology is too rigid and may be better re-considered in terms of a discourse continuum along which languages would rank depending on their degree of Manner/Path salience as expressed in the main verb of motion sentences. So far, empirical work has demonstrated that our understanding of motion in language is partial and needs further exploration for linguistic formalisation. This paper hopes to contribute one thread to this understanding via a detailed exploration of motion expression in French. It offers data drawn from written elicitations (N=40) and verbal elicitations (N=25) of motion events, as well as acceptability judgements of over 85 motion sentences (N=129).

As a Romance language, French has been categorised as a verb-framed language lexicalising motion dimensions as follows:

(a) Subject [Figure] Verb [Path] Object [Ground] Gerund [Manner]
L’enfant est rentré à la maison à pied.
The child came back home on foot.

However, results suggest considerable variability in lexicalisation means and pattern acceptability by native French speakers, thus further challenging Talmy’s typology. For instance, the above pattern is not consistently judged correct and additional patterns are also available. One such pattern may be labelled ‘reverse verb-framed’ (Pourcel 2004b):
(b) **Subject** [Figure] | **Verb** [Manner] | **Gerund** [Path] | **Object** [Ground]
---|---|---|---
Un homme | court | en traversant | la rue.
A man | runs | crossing | the street.

Equally interesting, a satellite-like pattern is also considered acceptable, expressing Path in either an adverb, e.g. (c), or in a verbal prefix, e.g. (d) (see Kopecka in press), e.g.

(c) **Subject** [Figure] | **Verb** [Manner] | **Adverb** [Path + Ground]
---|---|---
L’enfant | courut | dehors.
The child | ran | outside.

(d) **Subject** [Figure] | **Prefix** [Path]- **Verb** [Manner] | **Object** [Ground]
---|---|---
Les abeilles | se sont en-volées | de la ruche.
The bees | flew away | from the hive.

Finally, a hybrid pattern conflating both Path and Manner in the main verb is commonly found as well (Kopecka 2004), e.g.

(e) **Subject** [Figure] | **Verb** [Manner + Path] | **Object** [Ground]
---|---|---
Le tonneau | a dégringolé | de la montagne.
The barrel | tumbled down | from the hill.

The present study examines these patterns and considers the variability observed amongst French speakers’ expression and perception of motion in language, and it further attempts to suggest likely possibilities for the variability obtained. This exploration might enable a better understanding of the encoding of motion in language as well as some new typological clarifications for a potential revision of existing linguistic analyses.

2. Motion as a Domain

Put simply, motion implies the movement or displacement of an entity through space. The study of motion, therefore, implies the study of space. Motion typically supposes an agent undergoing a change of spatial location from a source through a path to a goal, e.g.

(1) The dog ran away from me across the field to the house.
AGENT MOTION SOURCE PATH GOAL

Motion is, thus, a dynamic domain of experience, i.e. it is not static. Note, however, that the notion of ‘goal’ or direction need not be apparent for there to be motion, e.g.

(2) The dog is running around the house.
AGENT MOTION PATH

Likewise, motion may involve the crossing of a boundary – compare (2) and (3):

(3) The dog ran into the house.
AGENT MOTION BOUNDARY-CROSSING PATH
Motion of an entity may be ‘spontaneous’, i.e. acted out by a self-moving agent, as in (3), or it may be caused by an extra, independent agent. Caused motion occurs when an inanimate or animate entity is caused to alter its location or position due to the action of an external agent, e.g.

(4) The dog pushed the fence open.

Overall, the domain of physical motion fundamentally provides four central conceptual elements for potential encoding in language – as follows:

- **Figure**: moving agent or entity, e.g. a ball
- **Ground**: spatial reference, e.g. a hill
- **Path**: directionality followed by the Figure, e.g. downwards
- **Manner**: fashion in which the Figure achieves motion, e.g. rolling

In this paper, we concentrate on language expressions for agentive, physical motion – mainly performed by animate, and especially human, Figures – though it is hoped that the patterns to be discussed may further apply to extensions of the domain of physical motion.¹

3. Motion in language

According to Talmy (1991), Path is the defining conceptual element, or core schema, of motion, whilst Manner constitutes a subordinate, or supporting piece of information. To do justice to Talmy’s argument (1991: 483), it is worth quoting him at length:

> Since the figural entity of any particular framing event is generally set by context and since the activating process [the motion] generally has either of only two values, the portion of the framing event that most determines its particular character and distinguishes it from other framing events is the schematic pattern of association with selected ground elements into which the figural entity enters. Accordingly, either the relating function alone or this together with the particular selection of involved ground elements can be considered the schematic core of the framing event... the relating function that associates the figural entity with the ground elements among which the transition takes place constitutes the path. The core schema here will then be either the path alone or the path together with its ground locations.

From this schematic understanding of motion as a Path-framing event, Talmy (e.g. 1985, 1991) has suggested a dual typology for motion encoding in language, whereby languages preferentially frame the Path of motion either in a verbal satellite (e.g. English in (i)), or in the verb itself (e.g. French in (ii)) – thus proposing that languages are either satellite- or verb-framing for Path of motion. An ensuing difference between both types of

¹ Note that motion may be applicable to physical domains referring to agent parts only, rather than to the whole agent, or body. The motion agent may then become a body part, sensory capacity, or the like, e.g. *His eyes ran up and down her figure*. Further, the physical domain of motion may be extended to non-physical domains, in which case the motion becomes fictive, or metaphorical. Indeed, thoughts, emotions, and the like may arguably be perceived to be in motion, e.g. *Success went to her head.*
languages concerns the encoding of Manner, since English expresses it in the main verb, whereas French cannot afford this slot to Manner as it is already allocated to Path, hence lexicalising Manner information in optional constituents, e.g. gerunds, PPs, adverbs.

(i) Subject [Figure] Verb [Manner] Satellite [Path] Object [Ground]
Julie F ran M across P the street G

(ii) Subject [Figure] Verb [Path] Object [Ground] Gerund [Manner]
Julie F traversa P la rue G en cou rant M
Julie crossed the street running


Talmy’s typological framework has the valuable advantage of classifying languages neatly for subsequent analysis. However, typologies leak in general and languages do not always afford a tight fit into typological classifications. As Berman & Slobin (1994: 118) pointed out, “as a general caveat, it should be remembered that typological characterisations often reflect tendencies rather than absolute differences between languages.”

Nonetheless, in the light of vast cross-linguistic variability and with the aim of providing a useful model for discourse analysis, Slobin (2004) has suggested a more holistic approach to understanding linguistic expression for motion, offering a cline of Manner salience along which the world’s languages would rank – instead of a strict binary typology. Along this cline, ‘high-manner-salient’ languages (e.g. English) provide an “accessible slot for manner” (ibid. 250) in elements such as main verbs (e.g. English, Russian), serial-verb constructions (e.g. Mandarin, Thai), morphemes in bipartite verbs (e.g. Algonquian, Athabaskan), preverbs (e.g. Jaminjungan languages), or ideophones (e.g. Basque, Japanese), whereas ‘low-manner-salient languages’ (e.g. Romance, Semitic, Turkic languages) “require additional morphology” (ibid. 253) to encode manner information, e.g. gerunds, adverbs, PPs, so that “manner is subordinated to path” (ibid. 250).

This approach takes into account the discursive side effects of typological distinctions, especially noting the rich granularity of Manner distinctions in satellite-framed lexicons, as opposed to the overall poor encoding of Manner information in verb-framed languages. This discursive framework has the advantage of considering each language’s resources and usage patterns, and is thus better empirically informed. Yet, it unfortunately lacks some structural level of predictability in a typological sense, so crucially useful in applications of linguistics analyses.

4. Present research

This paper centrally aims to take an empirical, usage-based approach to investigate the applicability of Talmy’s structural typology and Slobin’s discursive cline to the French language through an illustration of the structural means available for the expression of motion in actual usage. For this purpose, we collected naturalistic and controlled language data from native French speakers – both verbal and written. Finally, in order to evaluate the acceptability of the various patterns found in the elicited data, we further asked an unrelated sample of native speakers to complete acceptability judgements.
4.1. Procedure

4.1.1. Written elicitations (40 subjects)
Using 45 video clips depicting human motion scenes in real-life settings, 40 French speakers described each stimulus scene in one sentence, yielding 1800 motion sentences. 65% of these sentences encoded Path in the main verb of the sentence, leaving 33% of sentences conflating Manner in the main verb, and 2% using nominalisations (cf. Pourcel 2004a). These figures only loosely conform to Talmyan predictions (see section 4.3. below for examples).

4.1.2. Verbal elicitations (25 subjects)
Using a 4 minute-long extract from Charlie Chaplin’s *City Lights*, 25 French speakers were asked to perform a free prose recall task, hence obtaining 594 further statements describing contextualised motion scenes (see section 4.3.).

4.1.3. Acceptability judgements (129 subjects)
Based on the variability of patterns obtained from the elicitations, 129 French speakers provided acceptability judgements on 85 motion sentences, using a 1-5 scale. Sociological variables (e.g. age, region) were monitored and proved insignificant in correlating with data variability, suggesting that the variability is, thus, primarily linguistic (see section 4.4.).

4.2. Activity vs. motion event
Part of the linguistic variability obtained related to the unexpected conflation of Manner in the main verb of the sentence. In a number of instances, this pattern further excluded Path information, yielding an *activity*, rather than an *event*, reading of the motion in question. The semantic emphasis in an activity consists of the Manner of motion as an end in itself, further specifying a motion in progress. We suggest that it is relevant, therefore, to make a distinction between motion activity and motion event. Unlike motion events, activities are essentially concerned with conveying information relating to the Manner of motion. In other words, the core schema of an activity is no longer Path, but Manner, as in (5).

(5) Marc \(_F\) court \(_M\) dans la rue \(_L + G\)
Marc is running in the street

The grammatical characteristics of an activity, therefore, differ crucially from those of a motion event in verb-framed languages, such as French, so that (a) Manner information is now obligatory and is centrally encoded in the main verb of the sentence, (b) Path information is now optional and may be left unspecified altogether, and (c) Ground information is also optional and may be left unspecified as well, as in (6).

(6) Marc \(_F\) court \(_M\)
Marc is running
Finally, it is relevant to note that a motion activity – through its de-emphasis on Path – typically yields an atelic reading, so that there is neither endpoint being reached, nor boundary being crossed, nor result being achieved in the case of a caused motion.

On the other hand, as already pointed out, a motion event requires the elaboration of Path information consistently, as Path is its core schema, even in cases where Manner of motion, and the fact that the motion is also in progress are relevant pieces of information. The grammatical characteristics of motion event encoding in French are, therefore, different to those of activity encoding, so that (d) Path information is obligatory and is centrally encoded in the main verb of the sentence, (e) Ground information is, together with Path, typically obligatory and thus encoded in a verb object or optional constituent directly following the verbal constituent, and (f) Manner information is now optional and may be left unspecified altogether, as in (7).

(7) Marc \textit{monte} \textit{les escaliers} (sur la pointe des pieds) \\
Marc goes up the stairs (on tiptoes)

Finally, a motion event may receive either a telic or an atelic reading, depending on the nature of the Path, so that an ‘into’ event would be telic by definition as in (8), and an ‘along’ event would be atelic as in (9), e.g.

(8) Marc \textit{est entré} \textit{dans le jardin} \\
Marc entered into the garden

(9) Marc \textit{longe} \textit{les bords de rivière} \\
Marc goes along the river banks

An ‘upward’ event such as (7), on the other hand, may be either telic or atelic depending on context, e.g. whether the top of the staircase, in this instance, is reached or not.

The conceptual distinction between activity and event is evident regardless of the language. However, structurally speaking, it is to some extent blurred in satellite-framed languages such as English, as both types of motion – activity and event – are lexicalised, conflating Manner in the main verb. Note nonetheless that English too marks a morphosyntactic distinction between the two types of motion, as an event requires Path to be encoded in a grammatical satellite as in (10), whereas an activity – no longer requiring a Path – optionally lexicalises location instead in a preposition, typically together with the Ground information in a prepositional phrase as in (11), e.g.

(10) The mouse \textit{ran} \textit{under the table} \\
(11) The mouse \textit{is running} \textit{under} \textit{the table}

The distinction, therefore, seems to require formalisation, especially in the case of verb-framed languages, since activities frame Manner in verbs, whereas events frame Path in verbs – typically, that is. Thus contradicting Talmy (1985: 60), we contend that we cannot “treat a situation containing movement or the maintenance of a stationary location alike as a

\footnote{Note too the aspectual distinction in English typically found between events and activities, with the progressive verbal form, e.g. in (11), emphasising the idea of motion in progress characteristic of activities.}
‘motion event’. Indeed, verb-framed languages, such as French, appeal to two different encoding strategies or construction types depending on the motion situation – event or activity.

4.3. French verbal constructions
4.3.1. Verb-framing patterns

The constructions in (12)-(15) conform to the Talmyan typology, according to which the verb encodes Path information in languages like French. Such constructions may dispense of Manner information altogether (e.g. (12)), or specify Manner in an adjunct, such as a PP (e.g. (13)), a gerund (e.g. (14)), or an adverb (e.g. (15)).

(12) Il \textit{rente} \textit{chez lui} \\
    He returned home

(13) Il \textit{rente} \textit{chez lui sur la pointe des pieds} \\
    He returned home on tiptoes

(14) Il \textit{rente} \textit{chez lui en courant} \\
    He returned home running

(15) Il \textit{rente} \textit{chez lui \textit{précipitamment}} \\
    He returned home in a sudden rush

Finally, it is also common in French to use ‘juxtaposition verb-framing patterns’ in descriptions of motion events, whereby two VPs co-exist in one sentence, one encoding an activity with a Manner verb, and the other a motion event with a Path verb alone, e.g.

(16) Il \textit{court \textit{dans une rue}} puis \textit{entre \textit{dans une maison}} \\
    He runs in a street and enters [into] a house

4.3.2. Reverse Path-verb-framing patterns, or Path adjunct-framing patterns

The constructions in (17)-(20) present ad hoc patterns which do not conform to the Talmyan typology. They show Manner information conflated in the main verb of the motion event sentence and Path information encoded in an adjunct, such as a PP (e.g. (17) and (18)), or a gerund (e.g. (19)), or even both (e.g. (20)). These patterns are neither satellite- nor verb-framed. Instead, they upset the Talmyan verb-framing pattern so that the prototypical syntactic slots for Path and Manner information are swapped round. The resulting grammatical organisation of those sentences may be described as ‘reverse verb-framing’.

(17) Il \textit{marche le long de la route} \\
    He walks along the road

(18) Il \textit{court dans le jardin} \\
    He runs into the garden
These patterns are considered ‘reverse’ verb-framing, as they allocate Manner to the verb slot and Path to the adjunct phrase slot. In other words, they reverse the Talmyan verb-framing pattern of allocation of conceptual information to grammatical slots, so that the gerund or PP adjunct no longer encodes Manner, but Path instead. We suggest, additionally, a distinction between the reverse verb-framing construction using a Path PP and the one using a gerund adjunct, as sentences using Path PP adjuncts are more consistently acceptable to native judgements, whereas Path gerunds yield ambiguous judgement responses (see below). This state of affairs may be due to at least two preliminary reasons, (a) Path PPs mirror the motion activity pattern, which is widely acceptable in French, and (b) Path gerunds remain atypical syntactically. In this sense, we may suggest that, though semantics is the primary licensor of grammatical acceptability of sentences, it is more likely that a combination of semantic validity together with syntactic typicality of pattern truly determines the optimal grammaticality of sentences.

4.3.3. Hybrid verb-framing patterns, i.e. Manner + Path verb

The constructions in (21)-(23) display yet another type of available lexicalisation means for motion events in French. Often taken as Manner verbs, the verbs in those examples actually differ from the verbs in (17)-(20), in that their semantic import additionally includes Path information – besides Manner information. In other words, the following sentences present verbs conflating both Path and Manner information in one lexical unit (see Kopecka 2004). Loosely speaking, the following therefore conform to an extent to the Talmyan verb-framing pattern. However, by lexicalising Manner information in an obligatory constituent, we suggest that these constructions differ from prototypical verb-framing as exemplified in (12)-(16), and constitute an independent hybrid conflation pattern, e.g.

(21) Il plonge M+P
    He dives in

(22) Il dévale M+P les escaliers G
    He rushes down the stairs

(23) Il claque M+P la porte G
    He slams shut the door

4.4. Acceptability judgements

The elicitations yielded an unexpected range of variability beyond the Talmyan typology. Our ensuing aim is to evaluate the reliability of these novel structures, in order to gauge the need for a re-assessment and potential revision of existing linguistic frameworks for
motion encoding in French, and possibly in other languages too. 129 native speakers\(^3\) of French were asked to provide judgements for these various patterns using a 1-5 scale of acceptability. We review below a sample of the patterns together with their percentages of acceptability.

### 4.4.1. Verb-framing patterns

The prototypical verb-framing pattern so far largely considered as characteristic of the French lexicalisation of motion proved acceptable in some, yet not all, instances, as shown in examples (24) through to (30). These examples illustrate wide disagreement across speakers as to the acceptability of the very patterns predicted as the way to encode motion in French, according to Talmy.

**Path verb + Manner PP**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Acceptability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aline F traverse P la rivière G à la nage M</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Aline swims across the river.’</td>
<td>0 0 0.6 0.5 8.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marc F longe P le trottoir G à pied M</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Marc walks along the pavement.’</td>
<td>1.4 2 1.1 1.6 3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Path verb + Manner gerund

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Acceptability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L’oiseau F est sorti P du nid G en sautillant M</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘The bird hopped out of the nest.’</td>
<td>0 0 0.5 0.5 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titì F sort P de la cage G en volant M</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Tweetie flies out of the cage.’</td>
<td>1.7 0.8 1.25 1.4 4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Les abeilles F sont sorties P de la ruche G en volant M</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘The bees flew out of the beehive.’</td>
<td>0.5 3.5 2.5 2 1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie F est montée P dans l’arbre G en grimpant M</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Julie climbed up into the tree.’</td>
<td>0.5 4 2 2 1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^3\) Subjects included male and female adult speakers of differing ages, professional orientations, and linguistic backgrounds. None of these variables correlated with the variability in judgements, hence the variability seems to be specifically linguistic.

\(^4\) Judgement variability is indicated by the statistics plotted in the boxes. Proportions range along an acceptability continuum with the (-) acceptable pole to the left, and the (+) pole to the right. The five columns correspond to the 1-5 range offered to the subjects for ranking the corresponding sentences in terms of acceptability.
(30)  Le bateau est arrivé au port en navigant 0%

The boat arrived at the harbour sailing

‘The boat sailed into the harbour.’

All the above sentences adopt the same structural organisation for the four central elements for motion expression. However, we can observe clear differences in acceptability rates, with sentences (24) and (26) as uncontroversially grammatical by native standards, (25) and (27) as ambiguous, and (28) to (29) as mostly ungrammatical.

We suggest that the main difference between these sentences is not grammatical in a typological sense, but semantic and pragmatic. Indeed, the sentences yielding ambiguous and ungrammatical readings appear to flout the Gricean maxim of quantity by adding Manner information in an adjunct phrase, when that information is already present – or at least implied – in the rest of the sentence, and, in particular, in the types of Figures in the examples above, except in (29) where Manner information is derivable from a combined reading of the Figure and of the Ground. Compare, for instance, (27) involving a bird exiting its cage, which would by default require a flying type of Manner, with (26) involving the same idea, but in which case a hopping type of Manner no longer constitutes the default Manner-of-motion for birds. By specifying the default flying type of Manner, (27) becomes semantically redundant – whereas (26) does not and, thus, remains acceptable. It is equally interesting to compare (27) with (28), where (28) clearly constitutes a poorly acceptable French sentence, whereas (27) remains somewhat ambiguous. The Figure in (28) is explicitly a flying agent, i.e. bees, whereas the Figure in (27) is only culturally a flying agent, i.e. Tweetie. In other words, you have to know that Tweetie is a bird, hence the latent ambiguity in judging this sentence – not found in judgements on (28).

In sum, the poorly rated sentences in the above examples are not structurally ungrammatical, but semantically ungrammatical.

4.4.2. Reverse verb-framing pattern

These unexpected constructions conflating the Manner in the main verb of the sentence and Path in an adjunct phrase – typically a gerund – also yielded variability in acceptability rates, as illustrated in sentences (31) to (34) below.

acceptability means

(– )  (+)

(31)  Le cheval galope en venant vers la prairie 9%

The horse gallops coming towards the meadow

‘The horse gallops towards the meadow.’

(32)  La barque flotte en s’approchant de la rive 29%

The boat floats nearing the bank

‘The boat floats/ sails to the bank.’
4.4.3. Hybrid patterns

Finally, hybrid patterns can be of two sorts, either a single, autonomous lexical item conflating both Path and Manner, as in (37)-(38), or a verb incorporating a Path prefix and an autonomous Manner verb, e.g. (35)-(36).

These judgements confirm the above suggestion that semantic redundancy as encoded and implied in Figures and types of Manner leads to unacceptability. Indeed, default types of Manner of motion include galloping for horses, floating for boats, and running – if not walking – for human agents. Again, the structural organisation alone of motion information does not suffice to determine sentence grammaticality.

5. Discussion

This paper has so far shown that although prototypical verb-framing may be the most widely used pattern for motion lexicalisation in French, numerous other patterns are available to describe motion. To summarise, (i) either Manner or Path information may be framed in the main verb, (ii) PPs are more typically used than gerunds to encode either Manner or Path as foregrounded information, (iii) numerous French verbs encode both Path and Manner in one lexical entry, e.g. grimper 'climb up', s'enfuir 'run away', écrouler 'run out(wards)',...
décoller ‘take off’, etc. However, neither prototypical verb-framing nor other patterns are consistently judged acceptable. Ambiguous and unacceptable judgements point to semantic redundancy rather than morphosyntactic licensing, i.e. French relies heavily on inference in linguistic expression and comprehension. For instance, Manner inferencing typically relies on contextual and general knowledge, so that Manner of motion may be perceived as conflated in the Figure (e.g. birds fly, pedestrians walk, boats sail), or in the Ground (e.g. swimming may occur in pools, skiing on ski slopes). Overall, taking into account the inferential nature of the French language and its ensuing lack of grammatical tolerance for semantic redundancy, we may now predict that sentences (41) to (43) below are, therefore, unacceptable.

(39) Le skieur a descendi la piste
The skier went down the slope

(40) Il a descendi la piste de ski
He went down the ski slope

(41) *Le skieur a descendi la piste de ski
The skier went down the ski slope

(42) *Le skieur a descendi la piste en skiant
The skier went down the slope skiing

(43) *Il a descendi la piste de ski en skiant
He went down the ski slope skiing

This point is equally valid when adopting a reverse verb-framing structure, e.g.

(44) Il a skié jusqu’en bas de la piste
He skied all the way down the slope

(45) *Le skieur a skié jusqu’en bas de la piste
The skier went down all the way down the slope

(46) *Le skieur a skié jusqu’en bas de la piste de ski
The skier went down all the way down the ski slope

Finally, a strictly Talmyan typology entails a very restricted ability to express motion in verb-framed languages, as strictly Path verbs are few – even in verb-framed languages. Indeed, Path types constitute a finite conceptual set which is likewise represented in language (see Table 1).

Table 1. Pure Path verbs in French

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image schema</th>
<th>DOWN</th>
<th>UP</th>
<th>INTO</th>
<th>OUT</th>
<th>THROUGH, ACROSS</th>
<th>ALONG</th>
<th>NEAR, TO</th>
<th>AWAY</th>
<th>FROM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>descendre</td>
<td>monter</td>
<td>entrer</td>
<td>sortir</td>
<td>traverser</td>
<td>longer</td>
<td>approcher</td>
<td>élloigner</td>
<td>partir</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most supposed Path verbs in French actually include some degree of Manner specification either explicitly or implicitly (by relying on inferences), and are, therefore, hybrid semantic clusters including at once Path and Manner information. In this light, the patterns recorded for French seem to fit along a continuum akin to Slobin’s (2004), ranging from high degrees of Path salience to high degrees of Manner salience. In other words, here Slobin’s whole continuum is represented in one language (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. French motion constructions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Path-framed pattern</th>
<th>Hybrid pattern</th>
<th>Reverse verb-framed pattern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verb_PATH (+) Adjunct_MANNER</td>
<td>Verb_PATH+MANNER</td>
<td>Verb_MANNER (+) Adjunct_PATH</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PATH / MANNER SALIENCE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[+Path / – Manner]</th>
<th>[+Path / + Manner]</th>
<th>[–Path / + Manner]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>descendre ‘go down’</td>
<td>tomber ‘fall down’</td>
<td>courir ‘run’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>monter ‘go up’</td>
<td>plonger ‘dive’</td>
<td>voler ‘fly’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>entrer ‘enter’</td>
<td>grimper ‘climb up’</td>
<td>nager ‘swim’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sortir ‘exit’</td>
<td>escalader ‘rock-climb up’</td>
<td>marcher ‘walk’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such a continuum relates verbal semantics to structural patterns and enables predictions to be made regarding pattern acceptability. At the [+Path] end of the continuum, it is, therefore, possible to envisage Manner information encoded in an optional constituent, typically in the form of a PP, or also in the form of a gerund. At the [-Path] end of the continuum, such Manner encoding in an extra constituent would become superfluous, unless it specifies the Manner with added semantic fine-graining, e.g.

(47) L’enfant \_F marche \_M à quatre pattes \_M vers sa mère \_P

*The child walks on all fours towards his mother*

In this case, Path information may be specified in an optional constituent – preferably, again, in a PP. As for hybrid verbs, they call forth a hybridised pattern, whereby neither extra Path nor Manner information is necessary to specify the motion event, as both types of information are already expressed in the verb. In light of the data collected in this study, the following set of patterns may thus be posited for French:

**Table 2. Summary of complex verbal patterns for motion expression in French**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pattern</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Optional Constituent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Verb-framing</td>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Path</td>
<td>Ground</td>
<td>Manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Hybrid</td>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Path &amp; Manner</td>
<td>Path &amp; Ground</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Reverse verb-framing</td>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Manner</td>
<td>Path &amp; Ground</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pattern preferences rank from (a) to (c) in French, hence showing a tendency towards Path-loaded information. These patterns are obtained so long as Manner information is not already inferable from the Figure as in (48), or from the Ground as in (49), e.g.
6. Conclusion

To conclude, French appears to be more complex in its treatment of motion encoding than assumed so far. This complexity is partly due to the quantitative variability of means available to lexicalise motion events, as well as to the qualitative variability of those means in terms of acceptability. Hence, a purely structural typology is not sufficient as a reliable index of motion lexicalisation in French; yet nor is Slobin’s continuum according to which French should not have verbal slots available for the encoding of Manner. In other words, there is no straight-forwardly reliable recipe for the encoding of all motion events alike, and patterns are not predictable upon morphosyntactic criteria alone. Instead, the typological complexity of French suggests that semantic and pragmatic factors must be integrated in descriptive accounts of motion grammar in French, as one of its typological dimensions.

References:


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