

## Motion, path, and topography in verbal constructions: An Amazonian perspective

Abstract category: Oral presentation

The role of non-linguistic factors in shaping typological variation across languages has been only minimally explored, and tends to be notoriously difficult to pin down (see, e.g., Evans 2003, Enfield 2002, Evans & Wilkins 2000, Sapir 1949: 26, Hill 2006: 619). This paper probes the relevance of culture and environment in the domain of verbal lexicalization patterns associated with the encoding of motion, manner, and path, in light of Talmy's (1985, 1991, 2000) familiar typology of 'verb-framed' vs. 'satellite-framed' languages (in which path and motion are encoded in the verb and manner subordinated, or motion and manner are conflated and path expressed via a satellite, respectively). Prior work has pointed out that non-linguistic factors may play a role in the encoding of motion events (see Slobin 2000, 2004, *inter alia*), most notably involving environmental setting and local approaches to orientation and movement within it (Wilkins 2004, Fortescue & Lennert Olsen 1992:215); however, the extent to which these cultural and environmental factors are actually implicated in the cross-linguistic expression of motion events remains little understood.

This paper considers the resources for encoding motion events in languages of the northwest Amazon, paying special attention to the encoding of path, which is arguably particularly likely to reveal culturally and environmentally relevant characteristics. The discussion focuses in particular on Nadahup, Tukanoan, Kakua-Nukak, and Arawak languages of the Vaupés region, which share many common grammatical structures due to pervasive contact (e.g. Aikhenvald 2002, Epps 2007, Gomez-Imbert 1996). In these languages, motion and path are typically conflated in a single root (which combines with manner in serial verb constructions); most notably, however, the expression of path is *also* frequently conflated with information about topographic features of ground, usually relating to waterways – which are of clear cultural and environmental salience in the region (see examples 1-3 below). This same topographic emphasis on water is evident in these languages' resources for encoding spatial/directional information outside the verb; Hup in particular is known to have an extensive set of water-related postpositions (a subset is listed in 4). Moreover, a comparative look at expressions of motion events in languages of the larger northwest Amazonian region indicates that topographic detail, particular relating to water, is in fact a fairly widespread typological feature, even where lexicalization strategies themselves are variable. This discussion contributes to our understanding of the role that cultural and environmental factors may play in shaping typological distributions of linguistic features, and suggests that a further refinement of Talmy's typology of lexicalization patterns should involve the inclusion of a topographic parameter in the linguistic encoding of path.

- (1) Tariana (Arawak; Aikhenvald 1999:57)

<i>lama-pidana</i>	<i>disa</i>	<i>di-nu-pita</i>
burn-rem.pst.rep	3sg.nonfem+go.upstream	3sg.nonfem-come-rep
'It went upstream, burning.'		

- (2) Hup (Epps fieldnotes)  
*tih*     *ʔot-kəd-cɔp-yiʔ-ay-áh*  
 3SG cry-pass-**go.from.waterway**-TEL-INCH-DECL  
 ‘She hurried crying from the river.’
- (3) Kakua (Kakua-Nukak; Bolaños p.c. 2010)  
*kǎn*             *fâ-bǔ*             *ʔa-men-hãʔh-beh-bip-na-ka*  
 3sg.msc             downriver-loc 3sg.msc-row-**go.downriver-go**-fut-imperf-ʔpres?  
 ‘He will row downriver.’
- (4) *hũyan*             ‘submerged in water’ (all other liquids: *g’od-an*)  
*pótʔah*             ‘upriver’  
*mæʔʔah*             ‘downriver’  
*déʔah*             ‘at waterway’  
*wáʔah*             ‘on other side of waterway’  
*deh páʔah*             ‘at edge of waterway’

Word count: 500

#### References

- Aikhenvald, Alexandra. 1999. *Tariana Texts and Cultural Context*. München: Lincom Europa.
- Aikhenvald 2002. *Language Contact in Amazonia*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Enfield, Nicholas. 2002. *Ethnosyntax: Explorations in Grammar and Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Epps, Patience. 2007. The Vaupés melting pot: Tucanoan influence on Hup. In Alexandra Aikhenvald & R.M.W. Dixon (eds.), *Grammars in Contact: A Cross-linguistic Typology*, Explorations in Linguistic Typology 4, 267-289. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Evans, Nicholas. 2003. Context, culture, and structuration in the languages of Australia. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 32:13-40.
- Evans, Nicholas and David Wilkins. 2000. In the mind’s ear: the semantic extensions of perception verbs in Australian languages. *Language* 76(3): 546-92.
- Fortescue, Michael & Lise Lennert Olsen. 1992. The Acquisition of West Greenlandic. in Dan Isaac Slobin (ed.), *The Crosslinguistic study of language acquisition, vol 3*, 111-221. Routledge Press.
- Gomez-Imbert, Elsa. 1996. When animals become ‘rounded’ and ‘feminine’: Conceptual categories and linguistic classification in a multilingual setting. In John Gumperz & Stephen Levinson (eds.), *Rethinking Linguistic Relativity*, 438–469. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hill, Jane H. 2006. Writing culture in grammar in the Americanist tradition. In Ameka et al. 2006, 609–628.
- Sapir, Edward. 1949 [1933]. The psychological reality of phonemes. In D. G. Mandelbaum (ed.), *Selected Writings of Edward Sapir in Language, Culture, and Personality*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Slobin, Dan Isaac. 2000. Verbalized events: A dynamic approach to linguistic relativity and determinism. In S. Niemeier & R. Dirven (eds.), *Evidence for Linguistic Relativity*, 107-138. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Slobin, Dan Isaac. 2004. The many ways to search for a frog: Linguistic typology and the expression of motion events. In S. Strömquist & L. Verhoeven (eds.), *Relating Events in Narrative, Vol. 2: Typological and contextual perspectives*, 219-257. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Talmy, Leonard. 1985. Lexicalization patterns: Semantic structure in lexical forms. In Timothy Shopen (ed.), *Language Typology And Syntactic Description. Vol. 3: Grammatical categories and the lexicon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Talmy, Leonard. 1991. Path to realization: A typology of event conflation. *Proceedings of the 17th Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*, 480-520.
- Talmy, Leonard. 2000. *Toward a Cognitive Semantics: Vol. II: Typology and process in concept structuring*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Wilkins, David. 2004. The verbalization of motion events in Arrernte. In S. Strömquist & L. Verhoeven (eds.), *Relating events in narrative: Typological and contextual perspectives*, 143-157. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.