

Motion-event Typology and Scene Setting in English, Japanese, and Mandarin

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Description of motion is an area of substantial crosslinguistic difference. Talmy (1991, 2000) proposed that expression of Manner of motion, i.e. the way in which a protagonist moves (e.g. *jump*, *roll*), depends on how Path of motion, i.e. the trajectory followed by the protagonist (e.g. *up*, *down*), is expressed. Satellite-framed languages, e.g. English, generally lexicalize Path of motion in adverbials, e.g. *up*, and Manner of motion in verbs, e.g. *roll*, and frequently mention both elements explicitly in speech. Verb-framed languages, such as Japanese, typically lexicalize Path in main verbs and Manner in adverbials or subordinated verbs and often omit Manner from speech. Empirical work in a range of languages has provided substantial empirical support for this analysis (e.g. Brown & Gullberg, 2008; Georgakopoulos et al., 2019; Gerwien, & Stutterheim, 2018; Hickmann et al., 2018; Li, 2015; Negueruela et al., 2004; Özçalışkan, 2015; Özçalışkan and Slobin 2003; Slobin 1996, 1997, 2004a, 2004b, 2006; Stam, 2006 inter al.). Slobin (2004b) proposed a third category, equipollently-framed languages, e.g. Mandarin, which lexicalize Manner and Path in ‘equipollent’ elements, e.g. serial verbs. However, mixed findings exist on the frequency of mention of Manner at least in Mandarin (frequent in Brown & Chen, 2013; Chui, 2009, 2011, 2012; Duncan, 2006; less frequent in Chen, 2007; Chen and Guo, 2009, 2010; Guo and Chen, 2009).

The basic typological distinction in dynamic descriptions of motion is argued to have implications for other areas of rhetorical structure, for example static “scene-setting”, i.e. description of the context in which motion takes place, which allows information about the motion to be inferred when not explicitly expressed (Slobin 1996). However, examining whether scene setting patterns in line with the typology for dynamic motion description is underexplored (see Cadierno, 2004, for Spanish versus Danish), especially in the third typological category of equipollently-framed languages. Thus, this study explores scene setting cross-linguistically across the typology: in English, Japanese, and Mandarin.

Narrative descriptions of purpose-designed animated events containing motion were elicited from native speakers of satellite-framed English (n=13), where Manner and Path are commonly expressed and consequently less scene-setting was expected, native speakers of verb-framed Japanese (n=15), where Manner in particular is less commonly expressed and consequently more scene-setting was expected, and equipollently-framed Mandarin (n=13), where findings on the frequency of Manner expression are to some extent mixed. Narratives were divided into clauses following Berman and Slobin (1994). Clauses were then identified as (1) dynamic motion, containing explicit of motion of Motion, with possible inclusion of a Figure on a Ground, or (2) static scene setting, where physical elements of the scene were described using existential or locative expressions (excluding emotion, facial expression of characters). In addition, construal

of (3) Manner and (4) Path of motion were identified. Two example narratives from English describing the same motion event follow: the first with no scene setting and the second with scene setting identified in bold, and target Manner and Path underlined.

- (1) dynamic motion: *triangle man goes down the ramp*
dynamic motion: *he's twirling*
dynamic motion: *he grabs tomato man*
dynamic motion: *and they go off to the left*
- (2) static locative/existential scene setting: ***so there's the ledge again and the slope and the low ground***
static locative/existential scene setting: ***and tomato's on the bottom***
static locative/existential scene setting: ***and the triangle man's up top***
neither dynamic nor scene setting: *still frowning*
neither dynamic nor scene setting: *tomato's still smiling*
dynamic motion: *triangle thing {does the little..} has to turn itself around multiple times*
dynamic motion: *to get down to the bottom of the hill*
dynamic motion: *and then they just kind of roll off together*

Analyses across languages revealed that speakers of all languages mentioned Path of motion to a high degree. English speakers mentioned Manner significantly more frequently and employed scene setting significantly less frequently than Mandarin speakers. Japanese speakers did not significantly differ from either English or Mandarin speakers in frequency of mention of Manner or scene setting, indicating an intermediary position.

These results support Slobin's (1996) general hypothesis that less explicit depiction of motion, specifically Manner, yields more explicit static scene setting. Results are in line with research showing Mandarin speakers' focus on location versus English speakers' focus on trajectory (Liao et al., 2020), and with the topic/comment structure in Mandarin, which "sets a spatial, temporal, or individual framework" (Chafe, 1976:50). Results relate interestingly to the status of Chinese as a paratactic, discourse oriented language, where frequent omissions include subjects but also prepositions (Yu, 1993). Results will also be discussed with respect to the differing findings regarding expression of Manner in Mandarin Chinese (Brown & Chen, 2013; Chen, 2007; Chui, 2009; Duncan, 2005, Guo & Chen, 2009), specifically with different event types.