From physical to metaphorical motion: A cross-genre approach

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1 Introduction

Talmy (1991, 2000) classifies languages into verb-framed and satellite-framed types according to whether the Path of a motion event is lexicalized as a satellite of the main verb in the clause or as the verb itself. Thus, in English (and other S-languages like Dutch or Danish) verbs often encode rich information concerning Manner, Cause and/or Movement but need a so-called *satellite* to convey the Path of motion. In contrast, in Spanish and Romance languages in general, verbs are mainly concerned with trajectory or Path, and any other additional information (Manner or Cause of motion) is expressed by means of sentence constituents playing an adverbial role. As a result, speakers of verb-framed and satellite-framed languages appear to exhibit different rhetorical styles when describing the same motion event (Slobin, 1996, 2004).

Together with dealing with real motion, Talmy's work has provided the starting point in research on (a) fictive motion, i.e. the dynamic predication of physical yet static entities such as roads or cables, as in *The road climbs over the hill* (Langacker, 1986; Matsumoto, 1996a; Talmy, 2000; Matlock and Bergmann, in press), and (b) metaphorical motion, i.e. the dynamic predication of abstract entities such as the economy, emotions, and the like as in *Jealousy snaked its way into our relationship* (Özçalışkan, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007; Morris et al., 2007). In general, research on fictive and metaphorical motion has focused on the way the speakers of different languages typically describe motion events in everyday, general contexts. Although yielding interesting results for the overall characterization of languages, this may result in a degree of overgeneralization towards the phenomenon at issue. This is reinforced by the way in which the data illustrating the research claims are often presented: the examples often appear in a decontextualized manner, with scarce or no mention to the characteristics of the discourse context or event where they are used, typically, the discourse genre where they occur). This is unfortunate since the inclusion and description of the context of use is critical for the study of motion patterns –whether real, fictive or metaphorical– and, above all, their correct interpretation.

2 Research questions

In this talk, we discuss the lexicalization patterns of metaphorical events in genre-specific texts in English, a satellite-framed language, and Spanish, a verb-framed language. More concretely, we explore whether (a) the lexicalization and rhetorical differences between Spanish and English discussed in the motion literature are sustained in genres other than narratives, and (b) the idiosyncrasy of those genres has any typological implications and, at the same time, affects the expressions' creativity and expressiveness.

3 Methodology

We use a 600.000-word corpus comprising tennis, wine and architecture reviews written in these two languages. These genres (or genre colony (Bhatia, 2000)) fall within reviewing practices: their main goal is to describe and evaluate an event (a tennis match) or an entity (wine and buildings) for an audience that may or may not have any previous knowledge about them, yet is interested in having an assessment written by a knowledgeable source. The texts were searched by hand in order to identify the motion constructions used in them. The unit of analysis was any instance concerned with motion –figurative or otherwise. A second step involved cleaning the texts and converting them into machine readable in order to run a concordance program and count the verb types and number of instances (tokens) in the three sub-corpora. After identifying the verbs used in the three genres, they were classified into two main groups in agreement with two criteria. First, the semantic information of verb involved (motion1-when the verb includes motion information in its semantic description and motion2-when the verb, despite not being a motion verb per se, can be reinterpreted as such due to the construction it is used in) and, second, the motion elements (Path-the trajectory or course followed by the moving object, Manner-the way

in which motion is performed) present in the examples. Figure 1 illustrates the coding.

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                        WEC1925_SPECTATOR673
Like a gymnastMANNER, this lithe white glidesMOTION1 across the palatePATH, its
underlying strength and tautness merely supporting the dried apricot, guava,
honey and candied citrus. Finish just meltsMOTION2 awayPATH. Delicious. Drink
now through 2004.
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Figure 1: Example of corpus coding.

4   Results

As far as our first goal is concerned, our results show that the lexicalization and rhetorical patterns described for Spanish and English are maintained in the specific contexts explored, and therefore, results are congruent with research done on metaphorical motion events in general contexts. However, the data also yield interesting insights: metaphorical motion instances found in specific contexts are more expressive and abundant with regard to Manner than what is the case in general uses of language. This is particularly noteworthy in the Spanish data, whose expressivity contrasts with the general tendency to omit Manner and other details of motion events in other contexts. For instance, examples such as those in (1) are frequently used in our corpus:

(1a)   architecture
La senda de exhibiciones de arte nurágico se **desliza** *entre ambas pieles del edificio permitiendo una visualización más íntima de las obras*
'The exhibition path of nuragic art slides between the two skins of the building allowing a more intimate visualization of the works'

(1b)   wine
En boca tiene una magnifica entrada, suave, sabroso y equilibrado […], aunque en el paso sobresalen rasgos vegetales y **se precipita** *hacia un final en el que predominan notas tostadas y amargas*
'Smooth, tasty and balanced, it enters the mouth powerfully […] although some vegetal notes peek mid journey and it plunges towards a finish where toasty and bitter notes predominate'

(1c)   tennis
Murray **se pasea** *en el ágora de Valencia*
'Murray strolls in the agora in Valencia'

This expressivity is more outstanding in the case of English: the data from the specific corpus not only reinforce the high expressivity and richness of this language with regard of Manner, but add novel verbs to those susceptible to being used in the description of motion events in other contexts

(e.g. *hobble*, *sally forth*, *waltz…*), hence showing the creativity and –almost– endless possibilities of this language in this respect.

With respect to our second goal, we found that knowledge of the genre where the expressions are used is critical to correctly understand and explain metaphorical motion instances. This is particularly salient when comparing the use of the same verb in three different genres: indeed, a single verb may foreground aspects of a given situation irrelevant in a different context. For instance, the verb *tumble* in (2):

(2a)   architecture
A stair tumbles down from this first floor incision onto the man-made island.

(2b)   wine
The fruit shows well-ripened apples and peaches all the way into pineapples and mangoes, offering up a cascade of flavors that tumble across the palate.

(2c)   tennis
Andy Murray has been sent tumbling out of AO 2008 by Frenchman Tsonga

The property of *tumble* shared by all these examples is 'uncontrolled', but this lack of control has a different interpretation in each genre. Thus, although in (2a) *tumble* suggests a certain lack of order, the main concern of the verb is to convey the visual force of the stair thus described, which somehow overwhelms those gazing at it. In (2b), the 'uncontrolled' property does not suggest a certain disorder or chaos of a wine's gustatory properties; rather, it expresses a sensory overflow or gustatory richness perceived by this critic as a positive trait of a complex wine. Finally, in (2c) the verb not only conveys Tsonga's convincing win, but Murray's pain and shame when losing to an inferior player ranking-wise.

Examples like these are interesting in three respects. First, although the information conveyed by motion verbs may be perfectly obvious for architects, tennis fans and wine aficionados and critics, this may not be the case for people outside these communities. Hence, the need to underline the importance of bringing the notion of *acculturation* to the centre of metaphor research, i.e. the relevance of taking into account all the factors that shape a given culture and its characteristic genres within a broader cultural panorama. Second, they problematize some of the views on both fictive and metaphorical motion

discussed by cognitive scholars: (a) the trajectors and verbs involved depart from those typically described in fictive motion, and (b) the constructions dealing with buildings and wines do not comply with the unidirectional concrete-onto-abstract quality of the metaphorical mappings described in, for instance, the expression of financial issues or emotions, but involve concrete sources and targets. This suggests that fictiveness as opposed to metaphoricity may be a question of degree, yet this can only be ascertained by considering all the factors underlying the use of motion constructions in communication — from the trajectors involved to the reasons motivating their use. Third, while English and Spanish differ in the expression of real motion events, their differences are less dramatic in the expression of figurative motion which, again, points to the impact of culture and genre in the language use.

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