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Source and Goal expressions in German and Polish

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How do languages express initial and final portions of events, and how similar are speakers of typologically varied languages in their attention to each one of these portions? Previous research has shown that there is a bias toward the Goal over the Source and that languages encode final portions of events more frequently and in a more elaborate way than the initial portions. This preference given to Goal was largely attributed to its cognitive and pragmatic salience (e.g., Bourdin, 1997, Ikegami 1987). In the current presentation we explore another factor which might play an important role in the representation of Sources and Goals, that of typological characteristics of individual languages.

To examine in what way language-specific characteristics shape the expression of Sources and Goals, we asked 18 German and 16 Polish speakers to describe Source-oriented and Goal-oriented spontaneous motion events (e.g., a man walking out of the forest) using a standardized set of video-clips ("Trajectoire" stimuli, Ishibashi et al. 2006). In these clips, the Figure was systematically varied (e.g., individual vs. group of people) as was the Ground (e.g., objects vs. places), the initial and final Path of motion (e.g., into vs. out of), the Manner of motion (e.g., walking vs. running), and the perspective (towards vs. away).

German and Polish are particularly interesting for a cross-linguistic comparison because they show both typological similarities and differences in motion event expression. For example, they both use the satellite-framed strategy in describing motion, and encode Path of motion in verb prefixes as well as in prepositions and case markers. Nonetheless, while Polish prefixes typically convey Path (e.g., *w-biec* 'in-run'), German prefixes can convey either Path or Deixis (or even both, e.g., *da läuft sie herunter* 'she's running down (towards the deictic center)'). Besides, German can also express Path and Deixis in verbs (e.g., *da kommt sie rein* 'here she comes in (towards the deictic center)'); in Polish, the use of Path verbs is rare and mostly limited to Source-oriented events (e.g., *opuszczać* 'to leave').

In this talk, we evaluate the role of the typological factors (structural and semantic) that underlie the linguistic representation of Sources and Goals. To that effect, we discuss similarities and language-specific preferences in choices German and Polish speakers make when describing Sources and Goals in specific motion events. We thus compare the linguistic structures they use and try to understand possible differences in the way they conceptualize Sources and Goals.



References

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2. Ikegami, Y. 1987. 'Source' vs. 'Goal': a Case of linguistic dissymmetry. In Dirven, R. & G. Radden (eds.), *Concept of case*, 122-146. Tübingen: Günter Narr Verlag.
3. Ishibashi, M., Kopecka, A. & M. Vuillermet. 2006. *Trajectoire : Matériel visuel pour élicitation des données linguistiques*. Laboratoire Dynamique du Langage (CNRS / Université Lyon 2) – Fédération de Recherche en Typologie et Universaux Linguistiques, CRNS, France.