

An enigma of manner expressions: saliency, frequency, and degree of integration

The aim of this study is, through analyses of various expression patterns of manner of motion in languages where manner information is encoded in non-head elements (other than the main verb), to argue that saliency has a close relation with the frequency of linguistic expressions, but it is not always possible to confirm the correlation between saliency and fore/backgrounding (cf. Talmy 2000) or between naturalness and degree of integration (cf. Croft et al. 2010).

Data

27 video clips, composed of three types of paths (TO, INTO, UP), three types of manners (WALK, RUN, SKIP), and three types of directions (VENITIVE, ANDATIVE NEUTRAL), are used to elicit narratives. The target languages are Japanese, French, Italian, Mongolian, Newar, and Sidaama.

Results and discussions

In the most part of languages of this study, the three manner types are expressed in different ways. WALK is not frequently described, RUN is likely to appear in a position close to the main verb or in the verb complex, and SKIP is often expressed in a detached position from the main verb or in subordinate clauses (Figure 1 shows the results of Japanese and Newar, Figure 2 the results of English and German as controls).

The languages with converb constructions have a clear tendency to use different morphological or syntactic means to express RUN and SKIP. For example, Japanese uses *-te* form for RUN (*hashiru*), which constructs a complex predicate with the main verb such as *hashit-te iku* (go running). In contrast, SKIP is expressed in another subordinate construction with *=nagara* as in *sukippu-shi=nagara* (while skipping), which has a more specific meaning of coincidence with the event described by the main verb (example 1 Japanese, example 2 Mongolian). In Mongolian and Newar also, RUN is expressed in a position close to the main verb with more integrated form, while SKIP often appears in a subordinate clause. French and Italian, provided only with a gerundive form of verbs, use nevertheless different positions for RUN and SKIP; *gérondif* and *gerundio* are more likely to appear in the adjacent position to the main verb for RUN than for SKIP (example 3, French). Sidaama, however, instead of rich converb constructions, uses the same construction with *-nii* for both RUN and SKIP, which emphasizes the coincidence of manner (example 4).

These results imply two types of correlation among saliency, frequency, and degree of integration. First, saliency seems to have a close relation with frequency. WALK is the default manner of human motion and it is not frequently described, while RUN and SKIP are frequently mentioned. In other words, the frequency of linguistic expressions allows us to estimate the visual saliency. The other aspect of the implication is the opposite result. Though the target languages seem to follow the hypothesis of Talmy or Croft et al. according to which more natural situations (running) are likely to be expressed in a more integrated way than those that are less so (skipping), this is not the case for Sidaama and some exceptional expressions in other languages. As a result, this hypothesis can be interpreted in another way: natural situations or salient events can be emphasized in a less integrated way, because the concepts of saliency and naturalness are not conflicting with speaker's intention. Linguistic analyses do not always allow us to assess the visual saliency or naturalness of situations.

Extracted Data

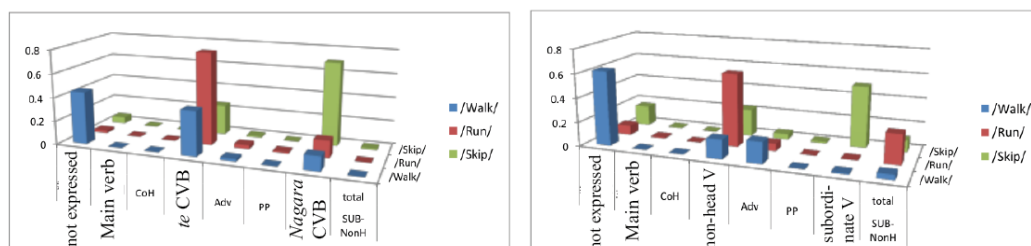


Fig 1. Manner expressing positions in Japanese (left) and Newar (right)

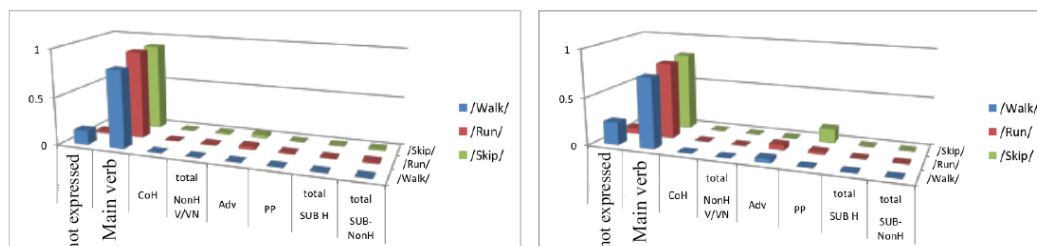


Fig.2 Manner expressing positions in English (left) and German (right) (Controls)

Examples

- (1) a. *Tomodachi=ga kocchi=ni mukat-te hashit-te ki-ta.*
 friend=NOM here=DAT seek-CVB run-CVB come-PST
 ‘My friend came running toward me’
- b. *Tomodachi=ga sukippu-si=nagara kaidan=o nobot-te it-ta.*
 friend=NOM skip-do=while stair=ACC ascend-CVB go-PST
 ‘My friend ascended the stairs away from me, skipping’
- (2) a. *Nayija duGui terge-yin Ogede gUyU-jU yabul_a.*
 run-CVB go
 ‘My friend goes running toward the bike’
- b. *Nayija UsUrcU qarayi-GsaGar duGui terge-yin qajaGu-du kUrUl_e.*
 skip CVB
 ‘My friend approaches beside the bike, jumping’
- (3) a. *Mon ami s’approche en courant vers moi.*
 my friend REFL-approach.PRES run.GER toward me
 ‘My friend approaches running toward me’
- b. *Mon amie arrive vers moi en sautillant.*
 my friend arrive.PRES toward me hop.GER
 ‘My friend comes toward me, hopping’
- (4) a. *Jaal-i-’ya dod-ø-a-nni (...) ha’r-ø-i.*
 friend-NOM.M-1SG.POSS run-3SG.M-MANNER/INS go-3SG.M-RECENT.PRF.3
 ‘My male friend went, running.’
- b. *Jaal-i-’ya kuk-kubb-ø-a-nni (...) e’-ø-i.*
 friend-NOM.M-1SG.POSS jump-jump-3SG-INF-MANNER/INS enter-3SG.M-RECENT.PRF.3
 ‘My male friend entered, jumping repeatedly.’

Selected Bibliography

- Croft, W. et al. 2010. Revising Talmy’s Typological Classification of Complex Events. In Boas, H. (ed.) *Contrastive Studies in Construction Grammar*, 201-235. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Talmy, Leonard. 2000. *Toward a Cognitive Semantics, vol.2*: The MIT Press.