

Frequencies of Manner Specifications and Manner Types: A Finer-grained Analysis in English and Japanese

One important topic in the typology of motion event descriptions is the frequency and nature of manner specifications. This paper proposes a fine-grained typology of “manner salience” based on different tiers of manner expressions. In an important previous work, Slobin (2004) discusses frequencies of manner expressions used by speakers based on the token frequency of such expressions in frog stories, arguing for its dependence on the framing typology (Talmy 1991), the richness of mimetics, etc. He also recognizes two major tiers of manner expressions: neutral (e.g., *walk*, *run*) and elaborated (e.g., *swagger*, *strut*) (Slobin 1997). In this talk we examine data from three speech elicitation experiments using a picture book and audiovisual stimuli done in English and Japanese. The examination reveals that quality and quantity of manner specifications in languages depend crucially on the still finer-grained types of manners, arguing for a four-tier division.

One experiment reported is part of the NINJAL-Kobe project of motion event descriptions (Matsumoto et al., in progress). An analysis of manner specifications obtained in this video-based project suggests that languages differ vastly in the frequencies of mentioning WALKING but much less in the frequencies of mentioning RUNNING and SKIPPING. For example, most speakers of English mentioned WALKING as often as RUNNING and SKIPPING, while many Japanese failed to mention WALKING but did mention RUNNING and SKIPPING, suggesting the need to differentiate Slobin’s neutral category that includes both walking and running. In Experiment 2, a picture book (“frog story”) explanation experiment is conducted in Japanese and the results are compared with Slobin’s English data (Marchman & Renner 2010). The comparison also showed that English is more manner-frequent than Japanese regarding the token frequency of mentioning running and other neutral manners. A new pattern has emerged in Experiment 3, a video explanation task, which involved sounds that accompany motion, the results of which are preliminarily reported in Akita, Matsumoto & Ohara (2010). A revised analysis of data revealed that Japanese speakers used walking expressions and conventional elaborated manner expressions less often, but Japanese exceeded English in a specific type of manner expression—the “expressive” manner expressions (a special subtype of Slobin’s “elaborated type”). Japanese speakers made creative use of adverbial and holophrastic mimetics with special morphological and prosodic properties (e.g., *Gasyaaan!* ‘Smaaash!’), which were totally absent in English speakers’ speech, though English does have such forms.

These findings suggest that manner expressions are divided into four types: (a) default manner expressions (e.g., *walk*), (b) non-default neutral manner expressions (e.g., *run*), (c) elaborated manner expressions (e.g., *skip*), and (d) expressive manner expressions (e.g., *smaaash*). (The first three can be grouped together as nonexpressive, plain manner expressions.) In comparison with English speakers, Japanese speakers’ use of manner expressions is much less frequent in the case of Type (a), as frequent or somewhat less frequent in Types (b) and (c), but much more frequent in Type (d). This fine-grained classification of manner expressions allows us to capture the observed differences between Japanese and English more accurately. Such a fine-grained analysis is needed to capture the typology of languages in terms of manner frequencies.

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