

## MOTION CONCEPTUALIZATION AND TRANSLATION DIFFICULTIES (BASED ON ENGLISH AND ROMANIAN)

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**Abstract:** *The article examines the strategies applied in the translation of motion events from English into Romanian, taking into account the typological differences between these two languages, in Talmy's terms, that is English expresses the manner of motion in the main verb and the path is encoded in elements called satellites, while Romanian encodes the motion and the path in the verb, leaving the manner of motion to subordinating constituents. For translators of narrative texts, these typological differences represent significant challenges, as it is demonstrated through the analysis of the material (the original text and the translation of *The Lord of the Rings* by J. R. R. Tolkien), given that they have to preserve the plasticity of the original in rendering the motion (implicitly, of the character), the fidelity of the created mental image and of the narrative's dynamics (determined by text extension). Therefore, we consider essential the exploration of the aesthetic dimension of the present narrative text, considering that the task of translators is to assure a trade-off between text's economy, plasticity and stylistic image.*

**Keywords:** *motion event, motion verbs, path, manner, narrative, translation.*

Current research in cognitive linguistics has identified the event as one of the core elements of language and cognition [9]. The way events are construed varies from one language to another due to a diversity of means used to organise the spatial and temporal relationships, but also because the languages differ in the way they conceptualize the motion, a phenomenon that linguists have paid a special attention to. Motion means change and the change represents the core of a motion event, which makes it different from other types of events in the language. A motion event [9] is constituted of a framing event and a co-event, also called subordinated event, and includes surface elements. The framing event represents the schematic structure of a motion event and comprises four basic components or semantic elements:

(1) *figure*: is a moving object or an object being conceptualized as moving and which is located in respect to another object [9, p. 312]. The alternative term for Figure is Theme. When the movement of the Figure is not the result of self-movement/self-propulsion, we speak of the Agent's involvement, which is the instigator of the action or the "initiator of movement". As a rule, the Agent is a human being and its actions are dictated by volition, intentionality and responsibility [2, p. 62]. If the executor of the action displays the properties typical for an Agent but is not the direct cause behind the action, this one is called the Author. The Author lacks volition and is deprived of intentionality

[3, p. 205-206]. The subject or the object that suffers the situation or is affected by it is called the Patient [2, p. 70];

- (2)*path*: is one of the most encoded element of a motion event and refers to the itinerary that the figure follows in respect to the ground. An alternative term for path is that of trajectory.
- (3)*ground*: serves as a background for the displacement of the object that is moving or serves as "a reference point for the movement of the figure" [3, p. 176]. Talmy incorporated into this category both the source and the goal of motion.
- (4)*motion*: is the activating process and expresses the displacement and the change of position within an event structure. L. Talmy distinguishes between the concepts of *motion* and *movement*; the former refers to the displacement in space, whereas the latter does not imply a change of location.

D. I. Slobin proposed certain sub-elements for each of the above-mentioned core elements, such as the type of figure, the direction, the spatial and temporal frames, the speed, the means of conveyance, the source and goal of motion, etc. [7, p. 117-118].

As for the co-event, L. Talmy proposed the inclusion of *Manner* and *Cause* as associative characteristics generating further information about motion, like for instance, intensity: *hammer*, *slam* or the speed of subjects/objects involved into an event, whether it be rapid motion: *dash*, *rush* or slow motion: *drag*, *dawdle*. All languages tend to express the cause component. Basically, this will always appear with the motion component (the interaction between motion and cause is the result of applying physical force: *push*, *pull*), especially when the manner is also embedded: *roll*, *slide*.

There are two possibilities to express the motion event, relying on Talmy's well-known typology. Since path is a central element of a motion event, languages have proven various lexicalization ways, encoding the path as a rule, either in a verb or in a satellite. When describing a motion event, the speakers of a certain language can choose which of the previously enlisted elements be mentioned and how to include the information about them in sentences they produce.

Further analysis on language differences was conducted by various linguists, since "not all languages express the same spatial or motion concepts with clearly corresponding or easily inter-translatable terms" [6, p. 522].

The Germanic languages, which display a rich lexicon of manner verbs and are manner salient, are known as satellite-framed languages. English has a range of verbs conflating the manner, the class of verbs being enriched from other classes of verbs, through conversion, with semantic shifts, especially metaphor-based conversion. According to W. Frawley [3, p. 178],

the lexicalization of manner of motion is more frequent in colloquial English. The path or the direction of motion is expressed through additional elements (particles), called satellites<sup>1</sup>, the information about the ground being implicit:

(1) “It *wandered off* southwards and was lost”.

However, we consider that we should not attribute a general character to Talmy’s typology, since English has verbs which lexicalize motion and path in the main verb as in the example below and through the verbs borrowed from Latin via French, English has means to convey the path, similar to the Romance languages, like for instance, *ascend*, *descend*, *enter*, *cross*, which are not so numerous, but are stylistically marked, being used as a rule in formal speech [3, p. 178], [1, p. 173–195]:

(2) “They *left* the Last Homely House in the West and said good-bye to Elrond”.

Moreover, English allows the use of structures where there is a general verb (*go*, *come*, *send*) and an accompanying verb that conflates the manner of motion (participle I), followed by a satellite showing the direction. This is a construction that can be frequently encountered in Romance languages as well (for instance, in Romanian):

(3) “Soon, larger bits of split stone *went clattering* down and *started* other pieces below them *slithering* and *rolling*”./ „Curând după aceea, bucăți mari de piatră spartă o *porniră uruind* în jos, antrenând alte bucăți de sub ele, care le *urmară alunecând* și *rostogolindu-se* la vale”.

We shall emphasize that in nature, there are no absolutely pure types, but rather, varieties within one and the same type. Consequently, English is dominantly a satellite-framed language<sup>2</sup>, exception being the features taken over from Romance languages.

For Romanian, which is a verb-framed language<sup>3</sup>, the lexicalization pattern is that in which motion is conflated with path: „Zeci de orci *porniră alergând* după ei”; nonetheless, the cases in which Romanian verbs encode motion and manner are not so few. This is a model borrowed from satellite-framed languages: „gândul îi *fugi* la Inel” [metaphoric motion], „se *repezi* spre ușă”.

In the next example, Romanian employs subordinated verbal constructions (the main verb is accompanied by another verb expressed by a gerund (conveys a dynamic action), contrary to English, which uses participle I):

(4) “The gate opened and three huge dogs came *pelting out* into the lane, and dashed towards the travellers, *barking fiercely*”./ „Poarta se deschise și trei dulăi imenși ieșiră *mâncând pământul* și se *azvârliră* asupra călătorilor, *lătrând ca turbați*”.

In the following example, the manner of motion in Romanian is encoded in an adverb, similar to English:

(5) "But the Black Riders *rode like a gale* to the North-gate" ./ „Dar Călăreții Negri *goneau ca vântul* spre Poarta de la Miază-noapte”.

The translator favoured the use of an adverb to express the manner of motion, the Romanian verb *a goni*, which is stylistically marked, being strengthened by the phrase *ca vântul*. This construction was idiomatised by analogy with another set expression: *a zbura ca vântul și ca gândul*, which is frequently used in the Romanian fairy-tales. The intensity of speed is rendered through a comparison with the wind. In English, *to ride like a gale* was construed similarly with the idiom *to ride like a wind*.

The above-mentioned differences have an impact over the organisation of the representations and mental images that speakers construe in relation to the so-called spatial “surfing”. The aesthetic details of the “Lord of the Rings” play a crucial role in perceiving the narrative, and the genuine reader of this fantastic fairy tale is the one who can recreate the universe of the parallel world of Tolkien’s characters and can “inhabit” this imaginary world with its history, toponyms and languages.

The study carried out with the purpose of analysing the translation strategies of motion events from English into Romanian proved that in those passages which describe motion scenes, the verbs conflate the motion and the path and are followed by prepositions conveying information related to the ground (inclusively, the source, the goal and the location), as it is shown in this classical example:

(6) “He *walked away* towards the edge of the green” ./ „Îi întoarse spatele și *se depărtă* spre marginea întinderii verzi”.

When the English text presents a complex path set comprising a manner-of-motion verb, the challenge the translators have to face is to decide how they will arrange the path and the manner of motion in the target language. Thus, the example:

(7) “He *walked* home under the early stars, *through* Hobbiton and *up* the hill” ./ „Se îndreptă spre casă *trecând* prin Hobbiton și *urcând* Măgura”.

In this sentence, English uses a motion verb and several directional satellites (two spatial segments attached to a single motion verb: *through* and *up*). The satellite *through* shows the end of one episode of the motion event, but also, points to the border crossing phenomenon (shift from one space into another), while *up*, refers to an accomplished, telic process (the goal is reached). This complex path was rendered into Romanian through two verbs (gerunds) to describe a similar path of motion (hence, English is more compact); however, the process conveyed in Romanian is atelic. Motion is

projected in 2D, horizontally and vertically in both languages (*through and up/trecând și urcând*).

The text of J. R. R. Tolkien abounds in manner-of-motion verbs, which is a challenge for the Romanian translator, who has to search for appropriate means to avoid depriving the text of style and dynamism:

(8) "An odd-looking wagon [...] *rolled* into Hobbiton one evening and *toiled up* the Hill to Bag End [...]". / „Într-o seară, un car cu aspect neobișnuit [...] își făcu apariția în Hobbiton și *urcă opintit* Măgura spre Fundătura [...]”.

Schematically, we could represent this motion event as a series of actions taking place in *Hobbiton* with the involvement of a conveyance means: *the odd-looking wagon*. The manner of motion is encoded in the main verb *roll* that expresses a movement produced by a “direct external cause” [5, p. 252-254]. Moreover, the verb *to roll* conveys the velocity of motion, and Kudrnáčová [4, p. 53-58] stated that speed is a core, implicit component of the motion scheme and serves as an element of temporality. As for Romanian, the translators favoured a verb phrase (*își făcu apariția*), which makes the original text lose its compact character. The English phrase *toiled up* (manner-of-motion verb + directional satellite), which denotes a telic action, was translated through a verb conflating the path and a participle that describes the manner: *urcă opintit* (effort). *Urcă spre* describes a directional, however, atelic movement.

(9) “The wagon *was driven* by outlandish folk [...]”. / „Carul *era mânat* de străini [...]”.

In the pair *drive - a mâna*, the latter belongs to the subclass of syntactic motion verbs that are transitive and encode causative information, while the former was included by Slobin in the subclass of assisted motion. The verb *a mâna* has a value that is not identical to that of *drive*, because the Romanian verb is stylistically marked, is evaluative and is used colloquially.

(10) “At the end of the second week in September a cart *came in through* Bywater from the direction of the Brandywine Bridge in broad daylight. An old man *was driving* it all alone”. / „La capătul celei de-a doua săptămâni a lui septembrie, o căruță *străbătu* satul Lângă Ape, *venind* în plină zi *dinspre* Podul Viniac. De data asta, pe capră se afla un singur căruțaș bătrân”.

This example involves two motion verbs which describe the manner of motion: *come* and *drive*. Concerning the direction of motion, the reference is in relation to two points located on the trajectory (*Brandywine Bridge* and *Bywater*), without narrator’s specification of the source or goal of motion. The verb *to come* is a deictic motion verb accompanied by a series of satellites: *in, through, from* (*complex path*) expressing the path, which is a typical feature of Germanic languages and which was translated into Romanian by the verbal construction *străbătu venind* and the compound

preposition *dinspre* (complex path). The main verb *a străbate* has an inherent spatial meaning and conflates motion and path, while the manner of motion (co-event) is expressed by gerund of the verb *a veni* which describes a durational process, with temporality that is not reported to the time of utterance. From the aspect point of view, the motion is unbounded in Romanian. The verb *to drive* was not conveyed in Romanian, being omitted by the translator who opted for a reflexive verb of state that shows character's position or location. The displacement is mediated by the vehicle, although the verb *to drive* is used in those cases where a motor vehicle is employed, while the verb *a străbate* can be used in both walking and driving situations.

- (11) "The next day more carts *rolled up* the Hill [...] orders *began to pour out of* Bag End for every kind of provision, commodity, or luxury that could be obtained in Hobbiton or Bywater [...]."/ „A doua zi și mai multe căruțe *urcară* Măgura [...], de la Fundătura *au început să curgă* comenzile pentru tot felul de provizii, tot felul de bunuri sau articole de lux ce puteau fi obținute în Hobbiton sau Lângă Ape [...]."

The main verb and the particle in the construction *rolled up* express a vertical displacement and we suppose the English preposition influenced on the choice of the Romanian verb *a urca* (inherent directionality). Although the verb *a urca* was used, we implicitly realize that the cart goes on/forward when its wheels roll. Nevertheless, the verb *a se rostogoli* was not the translator's choice, since it denotes a movement on a sloping plan, i.e. only downhill. *Began to pour* denotes an inchoative action, *to pour* being a motion verb encoding the manner of action, and is stylistically marked. It conveys a caused motion, a displacement and implies the border-crossing phenomenon. We shall highlight its metaphorical use in this context, which makes the reader perceive the orders flowing likewise a river (metaphor-based conceptualization). Romanian used a syntactical means to express aspectuality - the aspect semi-auxiliary - *a începe* and the verb *să curgă*. In this very phrase, *a începe* constitutes the first part of the action, the second being the action expressed by the verb *a curge*.

- (12) "Bilbo *took out* the envelope [...] his hand  *jerked back*, and the packet *fell* on the floor. Before he could *pick it up*, the wizard *stooped* and *seized* it [...] 'Now I'm off!"/ „Bilbo *scoase* plicul [...] mâna *i se smuci* singură îndărăt și plicul *căzu* pe podea, înainte să apuce el *să-l ridice*, vrăjitorul îl *culese* de pe jos și-l așeză la locul lui [...] Acum *plec*".

Although it renders a physical action describing the motion of a body part, the verb *to take* from the above example belongs to the class of verbs of possession. Linguists like D. I. Slobin treat it as a special verb, since it encodes the caused motion of the object that is displaced. The physical action of taking out the envelope consists of a series of activities that could

be schematically represented as such: Bilbo (Bilbo's hand in the pocket) > Bilbo touches the envelope > the object is taken > the envelope is obtained (inchoative possession and goal reaching).

The reader conceptualizes all these actions conveying the possession and infers the motion segments, although they are not mentioned by the narrator. The aim of the action is to reach the object in order to possess it. This is another example involving border-crossing, since there is a shift from one state to another, i.e. entry into possession and initiation of a relationship. Consequently, the verb *to take* becomes a motion verb under the influence of the context and the satellite *out*, describing a movement from inside towards outside. Moreover, the manner-of-motion verb *to jerk* denotes the character's unwillingness to separate from the object. However, the Romanian translator used the transitive verb *a scoate*, which in this case is directional and belongs to the group of verbs expressing the motion in relation to a closed space. Romanian follows the same pattern as English in the second part of the sentence, the motion being abrupt and fast in both examples:

“His hand  *jerked back*”

(Figure + Main Verb conflating the manner of motion + satellite [adverb])

„Mâna  *i se smuci* singură îndărăt”

(Figure + reflexive verb conflating the manner of motion + satellite [directional adverb])

Linguists consider that *fall* is a verb expressing the path, because it denotes motion directed downwards under the force of gravity, although Slobin believes this verb belongs to those verbs encoding the manner of motion, an idea also shared by Zlatev, who regards it as a manner + path verb. The verb *to pick* is a general verb, that combined with the particle conveys the direction and vertical movement. The same pattern is adopted by Romanian. However, the Romanian translator omits the verb *to stoop*, which denotes a body movement. Further on, the translator uses a motion verb that we don't find in the English narrative - *a culege*, since the source language uses a verb expressing possession (*seize*). Additionally, Romanian uses a motion verb in the case when English uses the expression *to be off*, which has the meaning of *a pleca*. From the aspect viewpoint, the verb describes an inchoative action.

(13) “He tried  *to squeeze* through the crack”./ „El a încercat  *să se strecoare* prin crăpătură”.

In this example, the verb (both in English and Romanian), based on its main meaning belongs to the group of verbs which express the change of state and shape of an object (by analogy with the pressing process, the object's volume is decreasing) that is affected when a force is applied upon it. However, in this case, the semantics of the verb is different, since the verb describes a moving subject and also the manner of motion. Therefore, there

is an indirect force activated by the character and a motion oriented towards a point in the space - *the crack*.

### Conclusions

The typological differences between Germanic and Romance languages stated by Talmy and namely, that, speakers of English and Romanian encode motion events based on the lexical and grammatical means available in these two languages have been confirmed through this comparative analysis. Thus, English, which is a satellite-framed language, conflates the manner of motion in the main verb, expressing the path in satellites, while Romanian, which is a verb-framed language, encodes the path in the main verb, leaving the manner to subordinated elements.

However, we noticed that both English and Romanian do not exclude the use of the means corresponding to the other type of language.

Thus:

1. The satellites of the English motion verbs have acquired a higher degree of independence and they can show the complex path without involving additional verbs, contrary to Romanian, which needs to employ more verbs. Exception was one single case of complex path (*dinspre*) employed in Romanian that we found in example (11).
2. The English prepositions employed in the examples that were analysed were pointing to accomplished processes, due to the telic character of the satellites, compared to Romanian, where the actions were atelic. For more conclusive statements, a separate study shall be conducted to examine if Romanian could have more possibilities to express the telic character through satellites.
3. Some differences were observed in relation to the stylistic and functional registry. The English motion verbs which were borrowed from Latin are used formally, while the manner-of-motion verbs are employed colloquially. In Romanian, the motion verbs were used neutrally and colloquially.

The following strategies were applied in translation for the purpose of overcoming the typological differences: transfer of the English structure into the Romanian context, omission of the motion verb in Romanian, translation of the English motion verb through an verb phrase in Romanian, translation of motion verbs with qualitative meaning through motion verbs with spatial meaning, translation of motion verbs through verbs of state, transformation of the typically English structure into a structure peculiar to Romanian, translation of English idioms through motion verbs in Romanian, etc.

Therefore, in those cases when the linguistic tool is not identical, the role of the translator of narrative texts from a source language into a target language belonging to different types is crucial, since they have to take into



account the stylistic implications and preserve the original text's stylistics and narrative rhythm.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>A satellite, as defined by Talmy, represents "The grammatical category of any constituent other than a noun-phrase or prepositional phrase complement that is in a sister relation to the verb root" [8]. Most probably, the term "satellite" was borrowed from Pittman (1948), but it was also used by Seiler (1960) and Frei (1968).

<sup>2</sup>Or, manner-rich language.

<sup>3</sup>Or, manner-poor language.

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