

Motion expression in Nyagbo frog story narrations

Talmy (1985, 2000) proposes that in the lexicalization of motion, languages fall into two types, namely verb-framed (V-languages) and satellite-framed (S-languages). This is based on the typical way the languages lexicalize the core schema of motion, i.e, Path: V-languages express Path with the main verb (e.g. *Juan salió de la casa* 'John exited the house) while S-languages express it in a satellite (e.g. *John went out of the house*). In addition to the core component, languages can express other events such as manner of motion or cause, which Talmy refers to as the co-event. While V-languages supposedly express the co-event in a subordinating element (*Juan salió corriendo de la casa* 'John exited the house running'), S-languages express it with the main verb (*John ran out of the house*). In a conference paper which I co-authored (Ameka and Essegbey, 2001) we argued that there is a third type in which both core element of motion AND the co-event are expressed by elements that are not subordinated to each other. This has been confirmed by several authors for serializing languages. Based on such findings Slobin (2004) proposes a third type, namely equipollent languages.

In my presentation, I discuss the expression of motion by narrators of Frog story in Nyagbo. The narratives were collected using the 'Frog where are you?' picture book (Mayer 1969). Nyagbo is a serializing language and, as such, is expected to behave like an equipollent language. However, all the narrators, from children to adults, express motion as if the language were a V-language. That is to say they concentrate on the expression of Path and, in the few instances where Manner or Cause is included, this occurs in a separate clause. I argue that this is because of Slobin's (2004) observation that differences in rhetorical style are not only dependent on Talmy's typology but also on the lexicon as well as ease of processing. Nyagbo has very few Manner of motion verbs, and has to resort to ideophones to fulfill this function. Using such ideophones in an SVC tends to be unwieldy leading narrators to avoid it wherever they can.

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