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DOI : 10.32734/lwsa.v7i3.2113  
Electronic ISSN : 2654-7066  
Print ISSN : 2654-7058

*Volume 7 Issue 3 – 2024 TALENTA Conference Series: Local Wisdom, Social, and Arts (LWSA)*



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# Motion Event in Japanese language and Vietnamese Language (Typology of Path Motion in Vietnamese and Japanese Language)

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## Abstract

This article is concerned with motion event in Japanese language and Vietnamese language from the viewpoint of path motion, and the comparison between Japanese postpositions (*kakujoshi*) and Vietnamese prepositions. There has been discussion on motion events based on Talmy's two-way typology: satellite-framed (SFL) languages and verb-framed languages (VFL). Several important issues have been discussed in the literature, and the question of whether manner and path are complementary or not is a controversial one in lexical semantics. This paper consists of a classification of motion verbs in Japanese and Vietnamese, an analysis of paths, manner in motion events between Japanese and Vietnamese language.

Keywords: manner; motion events; motion verb; postposition; path; preposition

## 1. Introduction

Motion events typically involve an entity moving along a path in a certain manner. Research on language typology has identified three types of languages based on the characteristic expression of manner and path information. In satellite-framed languages, the main verb expresses information about manner of movement and a subordinate satellite element to the verb conveys the path of movement. In verb-framed languages, the main verb expresses the core information of the path of movement, and the manner information is expressed in a subordinate structure. Both manner and path, however, are expressed by equivalent grammatical forms in equipollently-framed languages. In this article, we explore the place of Vietnamese language in motion event typology through an examination of motion event descriptions in Vietnamese novels. We find that Vietnamese writers do not pattern their narrative descriptions of motion events as do writers of satellite-framed languages, nor as writers of verb-framed languages. Rather, Vietnamese writers follow unique habitual patterns of language use that lead to the contention that Vietnamese is an equipollently-framed language. In this article, based on Talmy's approach according to the type theory of cognitive geometry, we have investigated and researched in detail the similarities and differences between the series of path motion. Vietnamese and Japanese languages with survey data of 18 motion verbs in Vietnamese were collected through the Vietnamese Dictionary (Phe, 2003) and 12 motion verbs in Japanese collected through the National Japanese Dictionary (Iwanami, 2019). In spite of their importance in our daily lives, however, the ways to describe motion events in Japanese are not clearly explained in textbooks. For example, the textbooks introduce Japanese motion verbs, such as 歩く (*aruku* - to walk) and 泳ぐ (*oyogu* - to swim)... in their early lessons, but they do not explain that those Japanese motion verbs do not always function in the same way as Vietnamese equivalents, walk or swim.

Based on the aforementioned studies, this article seeks to determine if the tendency to prioritize categorizing the manner of motion over the path of motion for speakers of either an equipollently-framed language (Vietnamese) or verb-framed language (Japanese) is influenced by whether or not the motion event contains boundary crossing or the degree of manner noticeability. This is important, as it can help to guide future studies, potentially re-interpret previous results, and shed light on to what degree language type affects focus, and to what degree focus is affected by other, non-language specific factors.

## 2. Typology of motion events

### 2.1. Talmy's linguistic typology of motion events

According to Talmy (1985), "motion events is a situation containing movement or maintenance of a stationary location". Motion is one of the most essential and pervasive experiences, which can be subdivided into two kinds: self-contained motion and translational motion. Upon examining the views available to languages for encoding directed motion events, Talmy (2000) explains that languages fall into two types based on what kinds of semantic elements the path verbs decode. Motion event consists

of six basic semantic components, while the first four elements constituting the central or “internal components”, the last two are associated or “external co-event components”. These are: Figure, Ground, Path, Motion, Manner and Cause.

### 2.1.1. *The internal components of a motion event*

1. Figure: the object that moves
2. Ground: The object that functions as a spatial reference point for the motion/location of the figure.
3. Path: The motion path of the figure.
4. Motion: The fact that some object changes its location

### 2.1.2. *The external co-event components of a motion event*

In addition to the four components constituting a moving event, a moving event can also be related to a Co-Event, usually expressing the manner or cause of the motion. A Co-Event, which was also known as a subordinate event, is an event that is simultaneously present with the moving event; it performs supporting functions and provides additional information related to the moving event.

1. Manner: The manner of motion by which the figure moves along the path.
2. Cause: The cause from which motion arises.

These components can be illustrated with some of Talmy’s classical examples (1985):

(1)	The pencil	rolled	off	the table
	[figure]	[motion+manner]	[path]	[ground]
(2)	The pencil	Blew	off	the table
	[figure]	[motion+cause]	[path]	[ground]

In (1), the manner component is conflated with the motion component, and the verb “rolled” specifies that the manner of movement.

In (2), it is the cause component that is conflated with the motion component and the verb “blew” specifies the cause of the movement of the pencil, which is the figure object.

Talmy (1985, 2000) presents an intriguing assumption on lexicalization patterns to the effect that languages are divided into two types: verb-framed languages and satellite-framed languages.

- “Verb- Framed” languages (VFL)

Verb-framing languages refer to languages where the element indicating the direction of motion often appears at the verb stem in structures expressing movement. Path is encoded in the verb, while Manner is encoded via a separate adjunct clause or a satellite. Only languages where the directional element usually appears at the verb stem in structures expressing movement. Japanese language is classified as a Verb-framed language (VFL) that expresses moving entity’s path/trajectory of motion with its main verb and encodes manner of motion outside the main verb or not at all.

Verb-framed lexicalization:

V (Path + Move) (+ adjunct - Manner/Cause)

- “Satellite - Framed” languages (SFL)

In contrast, languages where motion direction elements are often encoded with modifiers in motion statement constructs are called by Talmy as satellite framing languages. The term “satellite” (satellite) is defined by Talmy (2000) as follows: “satellite” is a grammatical category of any element that has a parallel relationship with the verb stem. In satellite framed languages, Manner is mainly encoded in manner verbs, while Path, which is considered a satellite to the verb, is denoted by the surface forms of language including particles and verb affixes.

Satellite-framed lexicalization:

V (Manner/Cause + Move) + Sat (Path)

However, according to Slobin (2004) and other researchers, there are several languages that do not fit into Talmy’s two-way typology because these languages encode both Manner and Path in the same linguistic forms like in Vietnamese language.

### 2.1.3. *Slobin’s “Equipollently – framed” languages*

In a special case, Vietnamese does not only fit into Talmy's binary typology (VFL and SFL), but it can be accounted for with Slobin's tripartite typology (equipollently-framed language) as well.

In an attempt to account for such linguistic diversity, Slobin (2004) proposed one more typology of motion - event construction, which is termed a tripartite typology of motion events in a so-called equipollently - framed language (EFL). In an equipollently-framed language, Path is normally expressed in equivalent grammatical forms such as path verbs, prepositions, and other linguistic units. This typology seems to fit the Vietnamese language. Thus, when analyzing lexical expressions of path motion in Vietnamese, this typology will be adopted to elucidate some cases in which Vietnamese does not fit into Talmy's binary typology.

Slobin (2004) suggests three subtypes of equipollently framed languages (EFL)

1. Serial-verb languages: Serial- verb languages are those languages in which the serial verb construction is a syntactic phenomenon in which two or more verbs or verb phrases are strung together in a single clause.
2. Bipartite verb languages: Bipartite verb languages are those languages in which the verb consists of two morphemes of equal status, one expressing Manner and the other expressing Path.
3. Generic verb languages: Generic verb languages are those languages in which the verb is combined with satellite-like elements or co verbs, which encode both Path and Manner in the same fashion.

This typology of motion expression can accommodate languages with serial-verb constructions. The verbs in motion expressions can encode Manner denoted by manner verbs, and these expressions denote this motion type called an expression of manner motion. In contrast, verbs in motion expressions encode Path termed as directed verbs, and this expression is called an expression of directed motion. In short, Talmy's typology is a useful tool to distinguish languages worldwide.

### 3. Typology of path motion in Vietnamese language

#### 3.1. Path verb in Vietnamese

Vietnamese is an isolated language in which the predicate sequence is a common structure in communication activities to encode a situation. According to Nguyễn Lai (2001), there are four pairs of path verbs in Vietnamese grouped into opposite-direction pairs such as:

“vào”(to enter) and “ra”(to exit)

“lên”(to rise) and “xuống”(to fall)

“qua”(to cross) and “lại”(to return)

“đến”(arrive) and “lùi”(to come back)

Path conceptualizations representations in and Vietnamese manifest certain similar and different typological characteristics. On the one hand, Vietnamese runs parallel with English in that path properties are realized in the satellites. However, the satellites are different. They are prepositions and particles in English, as up in the following sentence (3).

(3) Buồn vui bong bóng lên trời”(The balloon floated up the sky).

Directional complement verbs as lên in “Bong bóng bay lên trời” or prepositions, positional nouns in Vietnamese. For this reason, Vietnamese can be categorized as a satellite-framed construction. On the other hand, Vietnamese patterns with Spanish, that is, path properties may be realized in verbs.

(4) Nhưng hấn không vào nhà mà ra han bờ sông

Figure Motion+Path    Motion+Path Ground

#### 3.2. Directions of the path verbs in Vietnamese

Nguyen Lai (2001) explains that the path verbs in Vietnamese denote three directions as follows:

1. Directions of space : Humans' interactions associated with the external world generally give rise to spatial perception which has symmetrical features, such as “lên”(to rise), “xuống”(to fall), “ra”(to exit) and “vào”(to enter).
2. Directions of time : The directions of time are concerned with the temporal perception based on the alternation of entities. When expressing the directions of time, the path verbs must follow other verbs such as “làm”(to work) or “tìm”(to find).
3. Directions of Psychology : The directions of psychology refer to humans' reactions in terms of thinking, feeling, or emotion to the changes of entities. That is, the directions of psychology refer to the recognition or evaluation of humans in terms of feeling, emotion or perception regarding the changes of situations, entities or events that are associated with state, appearance or mood.

These directions normally denote three dimensions of directions, which are the positive, neutral and negative dimensions through the conceptualization of path verbs such as “lên”(to rise), “đi”(to go), and “lại”(to return). Syntactically, this group of path verbs accompanies descriptive adjectives, such as “đẹp”(beautiful), “khỏe”(healthy), “nghèo”(poor)...and so on. The first dimension expresses the trend of entities which improve such as “đẹp ra” (beautiful-to exit) means become more beautiful, and “khỏe ra” (healthy-to exit) means become healthier.

#### 4. Typology of path motion in Japanese language

Japanese language uses post-position particles (助詞 -じょし) to denote the direction of an action and who is performing the action. They consistently come after the word that they modify. In Japanese, noun phrases are in most cases accompanied by postpositional particles. It is widely accepted that these postpositional particles can be divided into two subclasses: case markers such as the nominative が and accusative を, and postpositions such as “から(from) and “へ(to).

Consider next Japanese postpositions, as shown in next examples.

[Direction] post-position ~へ

(5a) 左 へ まがる (turn to the left)

[Goal] post-position ~へ

(5b) 駅 へ 行く (go to the station)

[Goal: with a path verb] post-position ~に

(5c) 駅 に 行く (go to the station)

[Source] post-position ~から

(5d) 家から駅へ歩いて行く (walk from my house to the station)

In this paper, following Beavers (2008), I treat –made as a general limit-marker. The following examples show that –made can take any kinds of entities as event participants.

(5de) ジョンは駅まで歩いた (John walked until station)

If the sentence used a postposition, まで made with a manner verb, the sentence becomes grammatical. However, as Yoneyama, M. (1997) points out, まで-phrase does not always indicate a goal like に or へ does, and the activity in the sentence will be interpreted as either completion or incompleteness.

When we analyze the difference in path motion between Vietnamese and Japanese, it is helpful to consider which contain prepositions or postpositions. Consider first the following examples in Vietnamese.

The contrast between Vietnamese preposition and Japanese language post-position indicates that Vietnamese language preposition have their own meaning, whereas Japanese postpositions are dependent on the verb. The difference between prepositions and postpositions seems to be related to the fact that Vietnamese is a equipollently-framed language (EFL) and Japanese is a verb-framed language (VFL).

#### 5. Conclusions

Based on Talmy’s (1985, 2000) dichotomous typology of lexicalization patterns of motion events, Vietnamese language is categorized as a Equipollently-framed language (EFL) that expresses path/trajectory of moving entity with what encodes manner of motion with a manner verb in the main verb position. On the other hand, Japanese is classified as a Verb-framed language (VFL) that expresses moving entity’s path/trajectory of motion with its main verb and encodes manner of motion outside the main verb or not at all. However, even though both native speakers use different ways to express manner of motion, the amount of the manner of motion expressions were almost same, six out of eight questions. Similarly, although Japanese has more ways to express manner of motion than does Spanish as another V-framed language, there was no difference in the amount of manner of motion expressions in seven out of eight questions. Japanese learning appears to acquire Japanese motion event expressions in most part, however some learners were still not aware of two grammatical rules: boundary-crossing constraint and ungrammaticality of the use of a manner verb as the main verb with goal postpositions に (ni) and へ (e). In this article, we have examined motion events in Vietnamese and Japanese. The above discussion demonstrates that path has to be reexamined on the basis of the concept of lexicalization.

We also have to pay attention to the difference between prepositions and postpositions. While Vietnamese prepositions can have their own meanings, Japanese postpositions are dependent on the verb. Further, we have to take into consideration the fact that there are two types of rules in Vietnamese which guarantees a motional reading: Path Compensation.

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