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New Approaches to Slavic Verbs of Motion

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Volume 115

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John Benjamins Publishing Company
Amsterdam / Philadelphia

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INTRODUCTION

Verbs of motion in Slavic languages

Paths for exploration

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Our nature consists in motion.

(Pascal, *Pensées*)

1. Multiple perspectives on the expression of motion

The relation of humans to space is fundamental to our physical functioning, cognition, and linguistic expression. One of the ways that humans relate to space is through motion, i.e., a series of changes in spatial relations such as change of location or orientation (Miller & Johnson-Laird 1976). Motion is an integral part of our daily lives. We are cognitively primed to process motion events and to express our conceptualization of these events through language, which makes the linguistic encoding of motion meanings an important and necessary semantic domain in all world languages. It is, therefore, not surprising that widespread interest has been generated in the expression of motion events, which is currently being closely investigated by theoretical, cognitive, and applied linguists all over the world (e.g., see recent volumes by Aurnague, Hickmann, & Vieu 2007; Han & Cadierno forthcoming; Hickmann & Robert 2006; Levinson & Wilkins 2006; Shay & Seibert 2003).

Despite the universality of motion, there is a growing consensus that there is no universal way of expressing spatial meanings. The specific surface structures and conceptual categories encoding motion events exhibit a high degree of cross-linguistic variation (Berman & Slobin 1994; Bowerman & Levinson 2001). Each human language provides a powerful and diverse pool of resources for its speakers to encode spatial relations and motion experiences – basic as well as refined. Acquisition of spatial cognitive categories by children has been shown to be influenced by language-specific patterns (Bowerman & Choi 2001; Gumperz & Levinson 1996; Slobin 1996), and studies investigating second language acquisition by adult learners have similarly documented the influence of the first

language and the motion-encoding categories acquired in childhood (Cadierno 2004; Hasko 2009; Inagaki 2002; Slobin 2005).

A study of any linguistic domain is most effective when situated *typologically* (Slobin 2003) in a contrastive network of interactive (psycho)linguistic factors. The most prominent and comprehensive typology of the lexicalization patterns and conceptual elements involved in the encoding of motion meanings across languages was put forth by Leonard Talmy (1985, 1991, 2000), who outlined systematic lexicalization patterns and conceptual categories that underlie the encoding of motion events cross-linguistically. An impressive body of studies confirms the robustness of the typological patterns proposed by Talmy (e.g., Hickmann & Robert 2006; Strömquist & Verhoeven 2004; Verhoeven & Strömquist 2001; Slobin 1996). At the same time, fine-grained intra-linguistic studies report that this typology fails to capture important factors in the expression of motion meanings in individual languages. Idiosyncratic variations from the typology have been noted with respect to lexis, rhetorical style, narrative construction, morphosyntax, cultural detailing, functional properties of entities and figures, reference systems, and modality (e.g., Bavin 2004; McNeill 2005; Özyürek & Kita 1999; Shay & Seibert 2003; Slobin 2003). The linguistic encoding of motion events thus emerges as a phenomenon that merits in-depth analysis from both a cross-typological and a language-specific (or at least language group-specific) perspective.

2. Expression of motion in Slavic languages: Goals of the project

The present volume adds to the body of research on motion talk by offering a collection of interdisciplinary studies investigating how motion is expressed within the Slavic language family. As one of the largest families among Indo-European languages, Slavic languages warrant attention and should not be overlooked in the study of the cross-linguistic domain of motion due to the sheer size of the language family. Furthermore, while the linguistic expression of motion has only recently garnered extensive scholarly attention cross-linguistically, the rich lexical system of common verbs of motion has long captured the attention of Slavic linguists. For readers who are unfamiliar with the nomenclature used in the Slavic scholarly literature, it is important to understand that the term *verbs of motion* and the majority of the associated research efforts have largely focused on the study of a small, closed lexical category of paired motion verbs, with different West and East Slavic languages retaining between 9 and 20 pairs (Sussex & Cubberley 2006). This class of verbs of motion is notorious among Slavic linguists for their idiosyncratic

behavior in their lexical, semantic, syntactical, and aspectual characteristics (Forsyth 1970; Isachenko 1960; Stilman 1951; Vinogradov 1960).

In spite of previous work on the topic, the baffling uniqueness of Slavic motion verbs continues to attract scholarly interest. In fact, to date, discussion of the topic has remained rather disjointed – if not erratic – geographically, topically, diachronically, and terminologically. Thus, readers will find that publications on motion structures are dispersed throughout journals, books chapters, and dissertations, which may not only vary in terms of quality and the language of publication but may also be outdated and/or difficult to obtain. Therefore, the goal of this project is to unify a wide breadth of recent studies examining Slavic motion talk from multiple points of view. The contributors to the volume have joined in the discussion of Slavic motion talk from diachronic, theoretical, typological, comparative, cognitive and acquisitional perspectives with a particular focus on verbs of motion, the nuclei of the lexicalization patterns for encoding motion. This interdisciplinary effort is aimed both at accounting for unique semantic and syntactic properties of Slavic motion verbs that have long baffled linguists and learners of Slavic languages and at situating Slavic languages within the larger typological framework (Talmy 1985, 2000; Slobin 2005).

3. Organization and overview of chapters

The volume is organized into three parts that address the main areas of investigation. Articles in Part I, *Diachrony of motion expressions*, question how the expression of motion evolved from Proto-Slavic to the present day, with a particular emphasis on the development of a special aspectual system for motion verbs. Contributions to Part II entitled *Synchronic approaches to aspect* question the place of motion verbs in the aspectual system of modern Slavic languages. Finally, articles in Part III, *Typological approach to the study of Slavic verbs of motion*, seek to situate Slavic languages within the broader context of the cross-linguistic study of motion expressions.

3.1 Diachrony of motion expressions

Investigators of Slavic languages are unusually lucky in that ample evidence of linguistic production is available since the introduction of literacy to the Slavs in 864AD. Old Church Slavic is attested in texts dating since the 10th century; the earliest Old Russian texts date from 11th century (Schenker 1996). In addition, scholars can draw on data from other Indo-European languages in order

to reconstruct the earliest stages of Slavic. Since motion constructions in modern Slavic languages are so rich and complex, it is only natural to ask how they evolved over time. The articles in this section examine the evolution of word order patterns and the evolution of aspectual categories, in order to shed light on diachronic processes involving motion verbs.

Turner investigates word order patterns in clauses that contain intransitive verbs of motion and position. Examples for this study were collected from a number of Early Slavic texts with varying textual organization principles (temporal, spatial, and personal). Turner is interested in determining to what extent the three types of word order generally discussed for modern Russian, i.e., informational, (giving additional information about a referent that is already under discussion), presentational (introducing a new referent), and expressive are applicable to the analysis of medieval data. Turner's study shows that these modern categories are not helpful for analyzing the earlier texts, and that pragmatic considerations, as well as textual organization principles, only partially account for the wealth of word order patterns found in these texts.

In *Indeterminate verbs of motion are determinate*, Nichols discusses the formation of Proto-Slavic indeterminate verbs. In Proto-Indo-European, verb roots were basic and underived. After the breakup of Proto-Balto-Slavic, Slavic shifted from the inherited verb-based derivation to neutral and, in some instances, even noun-based derivation. To illustrate this shift in derivation patterns, Nichols traces the development of the indeterminate category, using the indeterminate motion verb *xoditi* 'to go' as an example. She argues that the vocalism, the *-i-* stem suffixes, and the very indeterminate aspect of these verbs can all be traced to their denominal origin.

The development of the indeterminate category of Slavic motion verbs is further discussed in two companion articles by Greenberg and Dickey. Dickey draws on early Slavic as well as modern South Slavic data for his analysis of the putative category of indeterminate verbs in Common Slavic. While determinate motion as a conceptual category is widespread in the world's languages, the category of indeterminate motion is typologically unusual. The opposition between determinate and indeterminate motion verbs is familiar from modern East and West Slavic languages; however, it is unclear whether this opposition existed in Common Slavic. Dickey examines a variety of Old Church Slavic and Old Russian data to show that verbs such as *xoditi* 'walk', *ězditi* 'ride', *běgati* 'flee', *nositi* 'carry', and other verbs classified as indeterminate could be used in determinate contexts; thus, the determinate/indeterminate opposition is not useful for the earlier stages of Slavic. Instead, Dickey uses semantic and pragmatic analysis of the earliest examples to argue that the putative class of indeterminate verbs of motion in Common Slavic could be interpreted as Manner verbs.

Greenberg uses comparative historical phonological analysis to discuss indeterminate imperfective verb formation in his paper entitled *PIE inheritance and word-formational innovation in Slavic motion verbs in -i-*. He examines verb formation patterns such as the uniquely Slavic **jazditi* 'to go' and **letěti* 'to fly', which are analyzed as including a verbal root, a manner suffix, and a verb-class suffix. These putative indeterminate imperfectives are innovative in form precisely because they add a manner meaning to the range of lexical meanings available to Proto-Slavic motion verbs. Greenberg's analysis is thus in agreement with Dickey's in arguing that unprefixed imperfectives in Common Slavic originated as manner-of-motion verbs.

3.2 Synchronic approaches to aspect

The place of motion verbs within the aspectual system of Russian is a hotly debated topic. Unlike the majority of Russian verbs, which form aspectual pairs, simplex motion verbs are usually said to have three distinctions: two imperfectives (the determinate and the indeterminate) in addition to the perfective (Isachenko 1975; Zaliznjak & Shmelev 2000; Forsyth 1970). The significance, frequency, function, and usage of various aspectual encodings of motion verbs, as well as their very "deviance", have been questioned. The articles in this section utilize typological, semantic, functional and cognitive approaches to explore the aspectual properties of motion verbs.

Janda debates the status of motion verbs as "exceptional" in the aspectual system of Russian. Motion verbs have been viewed as exceptional since they have two stems, the determinate and the indeterminate; in addition, the prefixation of indeterminate imperfectives as a rule yields imperfective (rather than the expected perfective) verbs such as *uxodit'*-IMP 'to leave' formed from *xodit'*-IND.IMP 'to walk'. Using data collected from the Russian National Corpus, Janda shows that not just imperfectives, but also a variety of perfectives can be derived from indeterminate stems, such as *iznosit'*-PF 'to wear out' from *nosit'*-IND.IMP 'to wear'. Examining these perfectives as "exceptions to an exception", Janda applies her Cluster Model of Russian aspect to argue that motion verbs are not only not exceptional, but also actually rather prototypical in the system of Russian aspect: these verbs have generalized the semantic distinction of completable versus non-completable actions at a lexical/morphological level of the indeterminate/determinate distinction.

Kagan's article aims to offer a unified semantic account of the indeterminate imperfective. Kagan treats the indeterminate imperfective as the default aspect in that it can be compatible with virtually any aspectual interpretation.

One potential difficulty with this approach lies in the fact that the indeterminate imperfective is not routinely used to encode single motion events; it is usually associated with multiple motion events with generic, habitual, and iterative meanings. To show that the indeterminate imperfective can indeed encompass any aspectual meaning, Kagan analyzes single motion event sentences, such as *odin raz plaval-IND-IMP bukval'no naperegonki s akuloj* '[I] once swam while being chased by a shark', showing that indeterminate imperfective verbs do not necessarily imply event plurality. Kagan devotes a substantial part of the article to the analysis of "annulled action", or 'there-and-back-again', meaning of the indeterminate imperfective, showing that the "there-and-back-again" part of the journey is not necessary for the indeterminate imperfective to be used. Finally, she argues that restrictions placed on the usage of the indeterminate imperfective stem from the competition between this aspect and the perfective.

Perelmutter uses statistical frequencies and a corpus of examples gathered from the open web to examine the behavior of Russian motion verbs under negation. Negated motion constructions are found to be less detailed than their affirmative counterparts with respect to manner and path of motion. Specific manner verbs (such as *kovylyat'* 'to hobble') and motion verbs that specify movement along the path rather than towards a goal (such as *obplyvat'* 'to swim around') are less likely to appear under negation. In addition, the frequencies of various aspectual markings differ in affirmative and negative clauses. It has been commonly assumed in the literature that imperfective is the default aspect under negation; however, this is not supported by the data. Perelmutter shows that aspectual choice depends on the semantic meanings encoded by the various negated constructions; aspectual choice often depends on the relation between the person who fails to arrive and an observer of motion at the goal of the motion trajectory.

3.3 Typological approach to the study of Slavic verbs of motion

While Slavic languages are placed within the group of satellite-framed languages according to Talmy's typology (Talmy 1985, 2000), the chapters in this section exemplify cases of both inter-typological variation that exists between non-Slavic and Slavic languages and notable intra-typological differences among Slavic languages. The impact of the typological variation on lexicon, syntax, and discourse, as well as such applied fields as translation studies and second language acquisition, is discussed at length in each of the papers with the goal of more accurately positioning the Slavic languages along the typological continuum.

Hasko examines intra-typological differences that exist in the semantic composition of verbs of motion in Russian and another satellite-framed language,

English. This study draws on the elicited speech of adult monolingual speakers of Russian and English as the participants filter their perceptions of visually-portrayed motion scenes into verbalized events during a communicative task of story-telling. Corpus-supported findings allow Hasko to demonstrate that although English has traditionally been viewed as the prototypical satellite-framed language due to its rich manner lexicon, the verb-of-motion repertoire in Russian is characterized by an even wider range of Manner nuances and higher frequency of encoding Manner, along with additional semantic categories that can also be encoded by the verb internally such as Path, aspect, and unidirectionality/non-unidirectionality of motion. She argues that although broad inter-typological differences provide the basis for highlighting systematic distinctions in how speakers of satellite-framed and verb-framed languages linguistically carve out the conceptual domain of motion, finer cases of intra-typological variation are necessary for advancing and fine-tuning the typology.

A similar investigation of the manner-of-motion lexicon is conducted by Kopecka with regard to Polish verbs. Drawing on a corpus of written prose, Kopecka argues that Polish does not exploit the satellite-framed pattern as productively as English. She shows that the lexical repertoire of Polish manner verbs is both smaller and less fine-grained than that of English, and that the combination of manner verbs with path satellites in directed motion constructions is more restricted in the former. Kopecka calls for finer intra- and cross-linguistic research of motion structures, arguing that the diversity of manner verbs and their morphosyntactic combinability cannot be predicted on the basis of the satellite-framed pattern alone and that consideration of other factors independent of motion-event typology may contribute significantly to the semantic granularity of motion expression in a given language.

The position of Serbo-Croatian within Talmy's typology of motion expressions is addressed by Filipović. Using electronic corpus data and extensive dictionary data, she describes the distinguishing characteristics of the motion domain in Serbo-Croatian and argues that prefixes play a crucial role in shaping the discourse of the language. Filipović details multiple spatio-temporal levels of meaning at which prefixes operate and illustrates how prefixes govern the expression of manner, path, and temporal characteristics of motion events. Specifically, she describes the role of prefixes in the morphosyntactic processes of combinatory potential and morphological blocking, which, she opines, determine such central characteristics of Serbo-Croatian motion talk as verb choice (path vs. manner), degree or presence/absence of path and manner elaboration, and frequency of manner verbs in discourse. She concludes by citing implications of her findings for the fields of translation and second language acquisition.

Nikitina discusses the alternation in prepositional phrases that mark endpoints of motion in Russian. While goal arguments of motion verbs have to be marked with directional prepositional phrases (such as *sobaka bežit v prixožuju-ACC* 'the dog is running into the hall'), some lexical verb classes allow the endpoint to be marked with either a locational or prepositional phrase (*postav' vazu na stol-ACC / na stole-PREP* 'put the vase on the table'). The verb classes that allow both markings include change of position verbs, such as *sadit'sja* 'to sit down', and change of state verbs, such as *prjatat'* 'to hide'. Nikitina argues that if an endpoint of motion is encoded by a locational phrase, the event of motion is inferred rather than expressed overtly. In addition to addressing this variation, the paper raises interesting questions regarding the typology of motion expressions: while the existing distinction of satellite-framed vs. verb-framed typology accounts for the directional encoding of motion endpoints, it does not fully account for instances in which the endpoint of motion is not overtly encoded.

Several papers conduct in-depth analyses of the idiosyncratic semantic characteristics of select Slavic verbs of motion or sub-domain of motion. Rakhilina provides a detailed contrastive account of the semantic variation parameters within the domain of rotation in Russian and Polish. She uses corpus-based methodology to focus on the semantics and usage of five Russian and five Polish manner verbs of rotation, four of which are etymological cognates. Her fine-grained analysis illustrates that even close and genetically-related languages, such as Russian and Polish, might show notable variation in comparable semantic fields by privileging different parameters for lexical distinction. Even when the distinctive parameters in both languages seem similar or identical, this may not be the case because the linguistic weight accorded to individual values may vary. In the case of verbs of rotation, for example, the speed of rotation is relevant for Polish verbs, but not for their Russian counterparts.

Similarly, Koptjevskaja-Tamm, Divjak, & Rakhilina undertake a fine-grained typological examination of another semantic sub-domain of motion manner, that of aquamotion. Their corpus-based comparison of verbs denoting aquamotion in the Slavic languages of Russian and Polish with their counterparts in the Germanic languages of Dutch, English and Swedish demonstrates that closely related languages show significant typological differences in their aquamotion systems. They offer an explanation of the historical processes that can create, modify, and/or obliterate lexical variation in individual semantic domains of motion manner and beyond. Both of the aforementioned papers underscore the importance of cross-linguistic the importance of lexical typological description, on the basis that it may be more powerful in revealing inter-linguistic diversity than analysis based solely on the genetic classification of languages.

Neset adds to the semantic analyses of the verb-of-motion repertoire in Slavic languages. Specifically, he disambiguates the semantic behavior of the Russian verb *idti*, which typically encodes unidirectional motion on foot but can also be used in a number of metaphorical senses with an inanimate motion figure. By drawing on the notions of prototype, anthropocentrism, embodiment, and metaphor as grounded in cognitive linguistics, Neset argues that *idti* can be used as a generalized motion verb in metaphors due to its unique position with respect to other verbs of motion in Russian (i.e., due to the fact that *idti* renders prototypical human motion). He further explicates the process of partial source-domain mapping, which takes place when *idti* is used metaphorically (specifically, the exclusion of the specification "motion on foot"), and argues for an affinity between generalized, metaphorical *idti* and "goal-oriented" contexts. Neset's paper demonstrates the value of the cognitive approach to understanding the linguistic categories we use to speak and reason about metaphorical motion and other conceptual domains.

The connection between intra- and inter-typological variability and the field of second language acquisition is mentioned in several papers (Hasko; Filipović) and is examined at length by Gor, Cook, Malyushenkova, & Vdovina. The authors describe a series of experimental studies aimed at determining factors that could lead to different learning outcomes/levels of control over Russian verbs of motion in perception and production by late second language learners and heritage language learners of Russian. Overall, the results of the study lend support to the view that the system of Russian verbs of motion is not fully acquired by even highly proficient second language learners of Russian, both early and later starters. The problems encountered by the learners are traced back to intra-linguistic typological variability of motion expressions in Russian and English. The study provides a detailed comparison of the participants' performance, interpreted within the image-schematic framework developed in cognitive linguistics, and outlines hypothesized sources of difficulty in the use and perception of verbs of motion.

4. Summary

This collection presents a joint, interdisciplinary enterprise into the intriguing domain of motion meanings, informed by a multiplicity of approaches and perspectives. It offers a comprehensive and up-to-date reference for those interested in the study of Slavic motion verbs, their unique semantics, structure, and aspectual behavior. The multifaceted discussion of how motion meanings are encoded in Slavic languages additionally propels the field of typological linguistics forward, as the volume situates the discussion of the semantic categories

idiosyncratic to Slavic languages within a broader framework of typological research. This integration of the two prolific research paradigms (Slavic linguistics and typological linguistics) has been long missing and will hopefully spur a new generation of inter- and intra-typological studies informed by the insights that this collection provides.

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