

Typology of motion event in Tunisian Arabic

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The study of motion event examines the way a language linguistically encodes this particular semantic domain. The main objective of this typology is, on one hand to examine the systematic relations between the different semantic elements in a spatial event (path, goal, manner etc.) and, on the other hand, to classify the languages according to the morphosyntactic tools used to encode the notion of path (Talmy 1991). Talmy's typology relate to means on the *path* of movement. They are two main path categories firstly, *verb-framed languages* where path is expressed in the main verb in a clause (enter, exit, ascend, etc), and secondly, *satellite-framed languages* in which path is expressed by an element associated with the verb (go in/out/up, etc.).

According to Talmy's typology, Semitic languages and thus Tunisian Arabic are defined as verb-framed languages. This assertion however, immediately evokes a certain number of questions. Do all the Semitic languages present the same strategies? And within Semitic languages themselves, to which "Arabic" are we referring (literal or dialectal, but in this case, of which country, which region?) and when this is the case, we will see that we apparently cannot classify Tunisian Arabic in verb-framed languages. Indeed, the strategies which Tunisian Arabic presents for the expression of motion event do not correlate with Talmy's typology.

We cannot classify Tunisian Arabic as a satellite-framed language because the verbal prefixes do not in fact express path but rather aspect or manner. We can neither classify this language as verb-framed because it uses other strategies. Indeed, this language expresses Path by means of a "series" of two verbs, one encoding the path and the other encoding the manner. Tunisian Arabic also uses a sequence verb + active participle, which does not appear in the category of verb-framed language described by Talmy. Finally, we will see that Tunisian also expresses path using a single verb (without satellite or another constituent associated to it). It is a phenomenon of "fusion" which again demonstrates a loophole in talmy's typology.

Tunisian Arabic represents other patterns which do not go into the typological classification of the languages proposed by Talmy and Slobin. Other options allow the language to distribute the spatial information in participles, complex predicates, juxtaposed or coordinated prepositional groups etc. The morphosyntactic criteria are not enough to report the various strategies used by this language in the expression of motion. The interaction between the semantic of the various constituents of a spatial event and pragmatics (inference) seems to be necessary for a study of the typological strategies of Tunisian Arabic and the languages on general.

References

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