

## NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE MEDIATED BY MANNER OF MOTION VERBS

Olesea BODEAN-VOZIAN

Moldova State University

There is typological variation in the way languages encode manner as an element of a motion event. Languages like English view it as relevant, and the lexicalization of the variety of ways to move results in a rich class of motion verbs, contrary to other types of languages, like Romanian, which leave the manner element to be encoded by verbids or adverbs (for these reasons some linguists refer to the first type as *manner-rich* and second type as *manner-poor languages*). Still, several studies contrasting typologically different languages showed that languages of the latter type are not so poor in manner-of-motion verbs. The question then might rather be: which manner components are more likely to be lexicalized?

For research purposes, we distinguish manner in terms of objective elements (medium, speed or intensity) and subjective elements (attitude, intention). The aim of the study is to focus on the manner-of-motion verbs that embed an evaluative or qualitative dimension of motion and to examine the way these verbs encode somebody's perspective in a narrative. The first question in such a case is whose evaluation or point of view is being represented. The second one is how the subjective point of view (narrative perspective) mediated through manner-of-motion verbs in an English narrative (*The Lord of the Rings*, by J.R.R. Tolkien) is translated into Romanian, supposedly a manner-poor or low-manner language.

**Keywords:** narrative, typology, motion events, manner of motion verbs, English, Romanian.

## PERSPECTIVA NARATIVĂ MEDIATĂ DE VERBELE DE MIȘCARE DE MOD

Există o variație tipologică în felul în care limbile codifică modul ca element al unui eveniment de mișcare. Limbile precum engleza îl percep drept unul relevant, iar lexicalizarea gamei de mijloace de redare a mișcării a dat naștere unei clase bogate de verbe de mișcare, contrar altor tipuri de limbi, așa ca româna, în care elementul ce redă modul este codificat de gerunziu sau adverb. Din aceasta cauză, unii lingviști numesc primul tip limbi bogate în verbe de mod (în engl. *manner-rich*), iar al doilea tip – limbi sărace în verbe de mod (în engl. *manner-poor*). Totuși, câteva studii care examinează contrastiv diferite limbi au demonstrat că limbile din tipul 2 nu sunt atât de sărace în verbe de mișcare de mod. În acest caz, apare întrebarea: care componente ale mișcării au cele mai mari șanse de a fi lexicalizate?

În scopuri de cercetare, facem distincție între mod în termeni de elemente obiective (mediu, viteză sau intensitate) și elemente subiective (atitudine, intenție). Obiectivul major al studiului prezent este de a aborda verbele de mișcare de mod care înglobează dimensiunea calitativă sau evaluativă a mișcării și de a examina felul în care aceste verbe codifică perspectiva personajelor în cadrul narațiunii. Astfel, ceea ce ne preocupă este următoarea întrebare: al cui punct de vedere (sau evaluare) este reprezentat? A doua întrebare pe care ne-o adresăm este: cum se traduce în limba română punctul de vedere subiectiv (perspectiva narativă) mediat prin verbele de mișcare de mod din textul narativ englez (*Stăpânul Inelelor* de J.R.R. Tolkien), pornind de la premisa că româna este o limbă săracă în verbe de mișcare de mod?

**Cuvinte-cheie:** narațiune, tipologie, evenimente de mișcare, verbe de mișcare de mod, engleză, română.

*"The narrator, like a tale-telling pilgrim,  
must be regarded as one additional character"*

J. Chance [1, p.50]

Motion is one of the core concepts present in all languages across the globe and has been the topic of a range of research in the last decades, an important contribution to this area being Leonard Talmy's [2-5] theory on lexicalisation patterns in motion events.

A motion event is a situation that involves displacement and consists of a framing event and a co-event. It can be broken down into a series of basic semantic components: the Motion, which points to "the presence per se of motion or locatedness in the event" [3, p.61], the Figure which is conceptualised as moving, the Ground in respect to which the Figure is conceptualised as moving and the Path. The Ground is fixed and may be the Source, route/milestone or Goal/destination of motion. The framing event is the Figure's physical displacement along a certain Path [6, p.11]. The co-event comprises the Manner of motion (Manner is about "what" kind of movement an object is possible of doing [7, p.3]) and Cause of motion. Although the latter two are considered secondary elements, they are essential for a motion event. All mentioned elements can be seen in the next example (based on English):

- (1) They (**Figure**) crept (**Motion + Manner**) back to (**Path**) the lane (**Ground**).
- (2) They (**Figure**) drew (**Motion + Cause**) chairs round (**Path**) the fire (**Ground**).

All these semantic components can be mapped differently across different languages, depending on the lexico-grammatical means available to the speakers (including, the children, who make distinctions between Path and Manner since early age). In other words, languages differ in terms of motion events elements they choose to lexicalize in verbs. Thus, some languages, which are referred to as *satellite-framed languages* (SfLs – English can be considered as the classical representative of this type) encode the Path in a satellite and conflate Motion and Manner in the verb root. Any language belonging to this type “has a whole series of verbs that express Motion occurring in various Manners or by various Causes” [3, p.62]. On the other hand, Romance languages (Spanish being considered as the typical example belonging to this type) predominantly express Path with Motion in the verb root, leaving the Manner to adverbs and gerunds or omitting it at all if irrelevant and they are called *verb-framed languages* (VfLs).

The typological distinction between the two languages could be illustrated with these two examples, based on English and Romanian:

(3) a) *He was slumping along with great yellow boots.*

b) *Venea tropăind cu cizmele lui galbene și uriașe.*

In (3a), the motion verb (*to slump*) conflates the Manner, and the directional satellite expresses the Path (*along*), whereas Romanian (3b) unpacks the English semantic components in the process of translation: it renders the Path in the deictic verb (*a veni*), which shows that the Figure ('He') is moving towards the characters/anchors (evident from the context) and the Manner of motion is conveyed through a gerund (*tropăind*).

Research on MmV revealed that satellite-framed languages have a richer and more expressive Manner verb lexicon (that conflate the displacement and also, the Cause) compared to verb-framed languages. This allows the speakers to describe more specifically the Manner of motion. Moreover, a 'two-tiered' lexicon of Manner verbs is available to them: the neutral, everyday verbs and the more expressive or exceptional verbs [8, p.459] that represent a challenge for translation from source language (SL) into the target language (TL) and backwards. English, for instance, tends to considerably augment the second-tier due to metaphor extension: (4a) *Shadows crept out of corners*, to conversion: (5a) *He tunnelled into green mounds* and verbs borrowed from other classes (light and sound emission): (6a) *He cast back his cloak and flashed out his sword*; (7a) *The River thunders down from Nen Hithoel*. Contrastively, verb-framed languages express Manner less often because the verb normally encodes the Path, and even if they develop lexicons of Manner verbs, they are smaller and their expressivity does not always match that of SfLs. So, in the following examples, the Romanian Manner of motion is not equivalent to the English Manner of motion: (4b) *Umbrele creșteau prin unghere* [the verb fails to render the furtive motion and the locative preposition 'prin' does not show the direction, as the English directional satellite 'out of'] (5b) *Își sfredelea tuneluri în colnicele înverzite* ['to worm' denotes a laboured progress or slow motion, which implies difficulties/obstacles hindering the displacement, while 'a sfredeli' encompasses effort, resilience, intensity, but, contrary to English does not denote the same trajectory as 'to worm', since motion in such a case is helical and not onward, as in the latter] (6b) *Își dădu pelerina pe spate și trase sabia din teacă* [the Romanian translation used a motion verb encoding the Cause – 'a trage', discarding the Manner]; (7b) *Râul se prăvale în jos din Nen Hithoel* [first, the verb conveying the Manner of motion does not create in the readers' mind the same image as the verb 'thunder': the former perceives the river as being only swift, there is no sound emitter, while the latter not only "sees", but also "hears" the movement and second, we could judge where the position of the one who "sees" is: on the edge of the *Nen Hithoel* lake, in front of the river that is to fall down, or, from the river, after the falls. Although the MmV 'a se prăvăli' encodes a movement downwards, the translator added the adverb 'în jos', which is in this case, redundant].

Despite the major impact of Talmy's typology and considerable interest expressed towards it, this theory has been repeatedly revisited. Critique tackled the strict attribution of verb-framing and satellite-framing to languages because both VfLs and SfLs features have been identified in one and the same language, therefore, being necessary to decide over the dominant lexicalization pattern. And we agree that it is seldom the case to find natural languages of pure types and it might be indeed more appropriate to speak about dominant types of patterns in a certain language.

Regardless of the dominant type, and intra-typological variation, we came across means of lexicalisation belonging to the opposite type. Thus, English has Latinized verbs that embed Path and are used in constructions built after the VfLs-type pattern (which is not a typical characteristic of this language): *enter, exit, pass,*

*descend, return, circle, and cross*, but their number is limited and they are usually not employed in colloquial contexts. In such sentences, Manner will be rendered in an adjunct element, contrary to the SfLs pattern:

(8) a) *The black figures **passed** swiftly in.*

b) *Siluețele negre îi **trecură** iute pragul.*

Romanian, on the other hand, has a number of verbs conflating the Manner and Motion similarly to English:

(9) a) *Ar fi **țâșnit** dintre copaci și s-ar fi **repezit** în direcția vocilor.*

b) *He would have **burst** out of the trees and **dashed** off towards the voices*

(10) a) ***Se târi** pe sub mese până în colțul întunecos.*

b) *He **crawled** away under the tables to the dark corner.*

(11) a) *Când a auzit vocile, **a șters-o**.*

b) *As soon as he heard the voices he **slipped** away.*

Also, in spite of the constraint<sup>1</sup> imposed to Romanian as a Romance language, Manner and Motion conflation can happen in boundary-crossing events, but, solely when they involve rapid and instantaneous motion, short Paths, punctual acts and vertical movements, as in the following examples: (12a) *El **a sărit** în apă!* (12b) *He **leaped** into the waters;* (13a) *El **se prăvăli** în apă!* (13b) *He **plunged** into the water;* (14a) *He **slipped** out of the pavilion/* (14b) ***Se furișă** afară din pavilion;* (15a) *Frodo **sprang** out of the wagon/* (15b) *Frodo **sări** din căruță.* In all the other cases, if the narrator wants to make their characters cross a boundary and show the way they do that - leave a closed space, for example - then the Manner of motion will be expressed in a subordinate element and the crossing will be encoded by the verb. That has implications on the text's dynamics (slows down the narration), since sentences look heavier and lengthier:

(16) a) *He **drove** out of the gate*

b) *El **porni ieșind** pe poartă.*

(17) a) *He **rode** through the gate and up the lane like a bolt of thunder.*

b) *El **a ieșit** pe poartă ca fulgeru', **dispărând** pe drumeag spre drumu' principal.*

In our previous studies, we focused on the semantic structure of the Manner component and we emphasized the need to distinguish between the objective (displacement, directionality, medium, motor pattern, velocity, telicity, aspectuality, degree of efforts, means of transport, instruments used, parts of body used) and subjective (attitude, character's state/spirit) elements accompanying the motion, many of them ensuing from a comparison, a positive/negative connotation in relation to the variety of movements performed by the characters.

Based on this, the present study examines the added value of the MmV from the point of view of their role to reflect the narrative perspective in the original narrative and in translation. These verbs were analysed from the standpoint of narrator's evaluation of characters and their movements in a particular situation, by using the information provided by the context itself.

Being aware of the differences in the way narrators tell their stories, our intention was to tackle those differences by examining the content of the narration and comparing if the textual universe of the original was rendered with the same fine-grained approach in the target text and if readers of the translation "viewed" the same motion event as depicted in the source text.

By definition, as an example illustrating the genre, "The Lord of the Rings" has a fixed perspective and an outside narrator. Therefore, throughout the story, the narrator not only sees and knows every detail in the story, but also, looks at the things in a certain way, he relates to the positions, actions, thoughts and feelings of the characters ironically (18) and more empathically (19) or sometimes, being proud of his characters or taking their side (20):

(18) a) *Frodo and Bilbo followed the wizard quickly along the winding path back to the house; behind them, uninvited and for the moment forgotten, **trotted** Sam.*

b) *Frodo și Bilbo îl urmară în grabă pe vrăjitor de-a lungul aleii întortocheate ce ducea spre casă; în urma lor, nepoftit și uitat, **tropăia** Sam.*

(19) a) *He **knelt** for a while, **bent with weeping**, still **clasp**ing Boromir's hand.*

b) ***Rămase** o vreme în **genunchi**, hohotind **aplecat**, cu mâna lui Boromir **încleștată** într-a sa.*

(20) a) *Aragorn **smote** to the ground the captain that stood in his path, and the rest **fled** in terror of his wrath.*

<sup>1</sup> As Aske (1989) pointed out, speakers of verb-framed languages are required by their language *not* to use manner verbs in marking the change of location across boundaries [9, p.1].

b) *Dintr-o lovitură Aragorn **doborî** căpetenia gărzilor ce i se pusese în cale și ceilalți orci o **zbughiră** care-ncotro îngroziți de furia lui.*

A question could be raised in relation to (18): how appropriate was the translation of the English 'trot' into the verb 'a tropăi' in Romanian, since 'trot' conflates the meaning of 'walk' and the manner of 'walking', while 'a tropăi' encodes the noise produced by the movement of feet and the 'walking'. Based on this, could we assume that the 'noise' in the Romanian text can be heard by the characters, whereas in English, the only ear-witness is the narrator, the characters being too busy to hear the big noise, since they were "following the wizard quickly" and completely "forgot" the "uninvited Sam"? One of our assumptions is that in such a case, the translator could have simply selected a motion verb displaying nuances of Manner from the limited range of Romanian MmV available.

Concerning (20), we could also highlight some semantic differences between the motion verbs 'flee' and 'a zbughi'. The former, which lexicalizes both the Source and the Goal (although those are not overtly depicted), describes a durative movement which entails escape from peril, departing from the current location to save oneself and implies an evaluative dimension of the movement, while the second is a verb derived from an interjection and denotes unexpected, rapid and dynamic movement.

The narrator in "The Lord of the Rings" allows his readers to follow closely the scenes through the lenses of his camera, as if they were behind, looking at the characters and feeling their fears (21), anxieties (22) and despair (23). The Manner of motion in (22b) and (23b) seems even more dramatic than the English expressive verbs – the Romanian 'a trage' conveys the degree of effort and its meaning is doubled/highlighted by 'cu de-a sila', which also expresses forced motion, while the expression 'a o rupe la fugă' in (23b), which is stylistically marked, encodes not only the motor pattern and the inchoative character of the action, but reveals the inner state of the character, whereas in (21b), although both verbs render the motor pattern, degree of effort and self-movement, as well as "the spatial configuration of the character in relation to his location" [10, p. 255-256], the translator did not manage to depict the furtive character of motion from (21a):

- (21) a) Frodo **crept** back a few yards towards the lane.  
 b) Frodo **se târî** câțiva pași îndărăt spre drum.  
 (22) a) Gimli had to be **dragged** away by Legolas.  
 b) Gimli **trebui să fie tras** cu de-a sila de acolo de către Legolas.  
 (23) a) Frodo **ran** along the path crying help! help! help!  
 b) Frodo **o rupse la fugă** pe cărare, strigând ajutor! ajutor! ajutor!

In some episodes, the reader's attention is drawn not only to the way motion occurs (24), but also to the Path description (25), which also allows the reader to mentally become a part of the setting described. Being absorbed in a narrative and "seeing the fictional scene as vividly as if one were personally involved in it is an experience familiar to most competent readers" [11, p.202]. So, the readers conceptualize the actions taking place as a spatial scene due to the MmV that evoked impaired or obstructed motion/walking ('stagger'), motion performed with the hands and having a limited scope from the temporal perspective ('grasp') and frictionless/smooth, silent displacement ('slide'):

- (24) a) He **staggered** and fell, **grasped** vainly at the stone, and **slid** into the abyss.  
 b) Gandalf **se clătina**, căzu, **se prinse** cu disperare de piatră și **alunecă** în abis.  
 (25) a) The dale **ran** like a stony trough between the ridged hills, and a trickling stream flowed among the boulders at the bottom.  
 b) Valea **se întindea** împietrită, străjuită de colinele costelive, iar pe fundul ei șiroia un pâraiaș printre bolovani.

The verb 'stagger' in (24a) was rendered through 'a se clatina', and in this case, they coincide from the semantic point of view, because they are both associated with instantaneous movement and do not imply unidirectional, propelled, translational motion, however, they do encode "unsteady movement from side to side" (horizontal motion). Nevertheless, in cases which involve durative actions and displacement, like in the following: (26a) *He pulled himself to his feet, and **staggered** off to see what had become of the ponies / (26b) **Își adună** puterile, se ridică în picioare și **porni împleticit** să vadă ce se întâmplase cu poneii*, the independent directionality of 'stagger', cannot be transposed into Romanian unless an additional Path verb that shows motion inception is used, but the Manner will be expressed through an adverb.



The potential virtual semantic components of the lexeme 'stagger' in (25) show that the lexeme is actualized in the context and specific elements are foregrounded (unidirectional, propelled translocation, while the unsteady displacement is backgrounded). The Romanian verb 'a se clătina' corresponds to this motion of the body in absence of displacement. In (26), 'stagger' actualizes in the context, foregrounding the movement forward. In Romanian, the information conveyed by the motion verb is foregrounded, while the Manner, as a secondary element, is backgrounded.

The particular way of walking due to the psychological state of the person encoded by 'stagger' (and the Romanian subordinate Manner 'împleticit') also configures the Path followed by the character.

In example (25a), the dynamic description of fictive motion is not equal to the visual image depicted in (25b), it is more forceful. Concerning the MmV used in the second clause, although Romanian uses a motion verb conveying the Manner, the latter is a different type of Manner of motion since "flow" in English expresses 'smooth motion', while "a șiroi" in Romanian points to 'rapid motion'.

In some cases, the Romanian translator failed to transpose the English MmV into a native MmV. In such cases, modifiers or other lexical units were employed to make more specific the neutral motion verbs:

(27) a) *The black figures fled from the house.*

b) *Siluețele negre părăsiră casa în goană.*

We assume the intention of the English narrator (27a) was not simply to show the velocity and the time-pressing moment of the action, but also the fear and escape components of the motion verb 'flee', the use of which was motivated by a serious situation depicted in the novel, implying "running away from peril". However, in Romanian, a neutral, inchoative verb was used instead and examining it, we cannot perceive that danger suggested by the narrator. We could, however, consider the adverb 'în goană' as partially compensating the connotation of (27a), since it conveys the meaning of "chasing somebody away in a rushed manner" or "in pursuit of somebody".

Another example when the Romanian translator used a neutral, non-expressive construction and omitted the Manner, thus failing to convey the meaning of the original is the following:

(28) a) *Frodo trotted down the long sloping path.*

b) *Frodo o apucă la vale pe poteca lungă în pantă.*

As it is obvious from the example, English employed an evaluative MmV to depict the character's manner of walking ('trot' expressing moderate speed or slow rate of motion), which was not conveyed in Romanian and the TL reader imagined a totally different picture than the one described by the narrator in the original work. 'Trot', as part of the group of verbs which inherently convey a low speed of displacement, could have been employed in (28a) to show the character's state of mind – perhaps he was reluctant to walk the path. The TL employed an aspectual verb denoting a volitional and controllable action was employed in the TL. The verb 'a apuca' is actually a "hold verb", but, in (28a) it became a motion verb encoding the direction because of being associated with a directional preposition.

It was remarked that Romanian also relied on another linguistic means for encoding Manner of motion, i.e. onomatopoeic verbs of motion: 'a țopăi', 'a izbi', 'a pocni', 'a trăsni', 'țâșni' etc. These verbs are stylistically marked and they belong to the colloquial vocabulary. They produce certain effects not only by indicating upon characters' personal traits, but also, by making the readers hear the story, which actually, impacts their imagination. Additionally, onomatopoeic verbs indirectly depict the narrator: their abundant use discloses a narrator, who is not austere, but rather, witty. It is important to mention that some onomatopoeic motion verbs in Romanian were not onomatopoeic verbs in English:

(29) a) *They danced round him.*

b) *Ei țopăiră în jurul lui.*

(30) a) *He sprang down the steps and away, leaping down the path.*

b) *Țâșni de pe scări și făcu un salt pe cărăruie.*

The use of the motion verb 'a țopăi' in (29b) which is a verb encountered in written and oral colloquial narratives and which confers the text a distinct flavour, implies a chaotic, repetitive movement involving the legs, while the MmV 'dance' (29a) encodes cyclic, dynamic, controlled, elegant movements leading to a change of location. This is an example that could be considered as transposition of cultivated speech into colloquial dynamism. We are aware that dance is emotion in motion and the way somebody gyrates, betrays the psychological state of that person – this is why the Romanian translator depicted the characters' movements

through 'a țopai', despite the fact that Romanian has the equivalent 'a dansa' for the English 'dance', probably because he felt the hobbits were happy and blithely, at least for a short time.

In (30a), the narrator gives much dynamism to the motion event using 'sprang' to describe a self-propelled, upward and forward, mass spring and quick motion implying a lot of energy, along with 'away', which implies a prolonged trajectory "down the path", which was covered by the character 'leaping' (i.e. in leaps, big jumps). The Romanian translator quite appropriately uses the onomatopoeic verb 'a țâșni' (30b) to render the sudden and rushed movement and a violent beginning of translocation. However, the translation fails to depict the movement as a continuous one along a trajectory the reader will follow with his mind's eyes ('away...down the path'), in big jumps, referring to just one leap onto the pathway. The latter example is a good illustration of how the translator can interfere in the positioning of the reader through verbs of motion.

### Conclusions

In this study, we examined the way Manner is conceptualized by two different typological languages, focusing on the subjective dimension of Manner. We adopted a two-fold approach: we looked at the source of evaluation and at the way that subjective point of view was mediated through manner-of-motion verbs in *The Lord of the Rings* and in Romanian.

Altogether, the examples we relied on in our study, given the genre of the narrative, were mostly presenting the perspective of an omniscient narrator, who, like a father, knew everything about his characters' behaviour and thinking.

Comparing the examples of the original and the translation, we could notice that the majority of manner-of-motion verbs in English belonged to the second-tier, i.e. the expressive and literary layer, and contributed to the disclosure of the narrator's attitude towards his characters and described the way they move throughout the narrative. Romanian, in certain cases, contrary to its typological nature, encoded the manner of motion in a way similar to English, but had to employ colloquial expressions, onomatopoeia, and regionalisms to compensate for what it could not easily encode in its verbs to render the nuances of movement. This resulted in a slight change of the register of narration, giving it a touch of familiarity, and thus bringing the narrator closer to his readers.

To check possible shifts of perspective related to motion verbs with subjective Manner components a further research would be needed, eventually considering other narrative genres.

### References:

1. CHANCE, J. *Tolkien's Art. A Mythology for England*. The University Press of Kentucky, 2001.
2. TALMY, L. Figure and Ground in complex sentences. In: *Universals of human language*. Greenberg, Ferguson, Moravcsik, eds. Stanford University, 1978.
3. TALMY, L. Lexicalization patterns: Semantic structure in lexical forms. In: *Language Typology and Lexical Description: Vol.3. Grammatical Categories and the Lexicon*. CUP, 1985, p.36-149.
4. TALMY, L. *Path to realization: A typology of event conflation*. Proceedings of the Berkeley Linguistics Society, 1991, 17, p.480-519.
5. TALMY, L. *Toward a Cognitive Semantics (Vol.I/II)*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000.
6. TREIS, Y., MIETZNER, A. *Encoding motion: Case studies from Africa*. In memory of Ursula Drolc. Special issue of Annual Publications in African Linguistics 5, 2008.
7. WU, D. et al. *Neural substrates of processing path and manner information of a moving event*. *Neuropsychologia*. 2008 January 31, 46(2), p.704-713.
8. SLOBIN, D. Two ways to travel: verbs of motion in English and Spanish. In: M. Shibatani & S.A. Thompson (eds.), *Grammatical constructions: Their form and meaning*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996, p.195-220.
9. ÖZÇALISKAN, S. *Ways of crossing a spatial boundary in typologically distinct languages*. Applied Psycholinguistics, 2013.
10. LEVIN, B. *English verb classes and alternations: A preliminary investigation*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1993.
11. RALL, J., HARRIS, P. In: *Cinderella's Slippers? Story Comprehension from the Protagonist's Point of View*. *Developmental Psychology*. 2000, vol.36, no.2, p.202-208.

Prezentat la 02.10.2015

în cadrul Colocviului Internațional

**Dialogisme et polyphonie dans les langues de spécialité –  
vers une socioterminologie dynamique**