

Telic motion constructions of French and the notion of tendentiality

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It is quite commonly accepted that verb-framed languages (Talmy 1985, 2000) have few or no dynamic constructions denoting a telic (bounded) motion, that combine an atelic motion verb –typically a manner verb– with a spatial/locative PP (see e.g., Levin & Rappaport Hovav 2019, Vandeloise 2008/2017). Even when the existence of such constructions is acknowledged (e.g., *Max a couru dans le pré* with the interpretation ‘Max ran into the meadow’), they are not subject to in-depth analysis because of their supposedly marginal status. However, some studies maintain that these constructions of French are not as marginal as usually claimed, in spite of this language being verb-framed (e.g., Laur 1991, Fong & Poulin 1998, Kopecka 2009). A crucial question that should be answered concerns the semantic properties of the atelic motion verbs of French licensing such constructions or descriptions. Based on previous publications having partially addressed this issue (in particular Aurnague 2011), the present contribution will recall some observations and proposals already made, while trying to complete and extend them.

Some theoretical points will be first clarified, among which the concepts that are used for analysing the expression of movement and motion in French. Then, four features will be brought to light, which seem to underlie (separately or jointly) the semantic content of atelic motion verbs giving rise to telic dynamic descriptions: speed, opposition to a force, direction or linear oriented motion, and carrying along by a force. Finally, the emergence of telic motion descriptions of French will be analysed as a consequence of the interaction of (atelic) verbs and spatial or locative PPs within a construction, the notion of tendentiality –usually lexicalized in the verb’s meaning– operating as a major semantic determinant of these constructions (Sarda 2019).

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