FICTIVE MOTION: WHERE IT STARTED

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Expresiile de mișcare fictivă, cum ar fi: "Câmpia se întinde de-a lungul râului" sau "Tatuajul rula de-a lungul coloanei vertebrale" sunt adesea folosite de vorbitori în viața de zi cu zi. Diverse științe se preocupă de studierea acestui fenomen. Începând cu sfârșitul anilor 1970, lingviștii susțin că mișcarea fictivă, mai simplu spus, mișcarea stimulată mental de-a lungul unui traseu sau a unei configurații lineare, motivează folosirea anumitor clase de verbe de mișcare în mod figurat. . Motivația mișcării fictive este un subiect mult discutat în lingvistica cognitivă. Acest articol are drept scop prezentarea succintă a ceea ce lingviștii cognitivi numesc mișcare fictivă, apariția, motivația și conceptualizarea ei. Este o sinteză de opinii și experimente effectuate de numeroși cercetători pe marginea acestui subiect.

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People regularly use language about motion to describe static situations in everyday conversations. Surprisingly, this is common practice when people are describing stationary representations. For example, when talking about roads they say *Road A runs along the coastline,* when talking about mountains they say *The mountain range goes from Canada to Mexico* and even when talking about tattoos, people use expressions such as *The tattoo runs along the spine.* These constructions are present in many languages as seen in the studies conducted by a great number of linguists in cognitive linguistics.

In 1980's such constructions as mentioned above were of interest to cognitive linguists because they appealed to the idea that meaning is conceptualization. In particular, Leonard Talmy and Ronald Langacker argued that these constructions invoked an implicit, fleeting sense of motion even though no motion was explicitly expressed. Various names were attributed to this interesting linguistic phenomenon: Langacker called it *abstract motion* (1986), Talmy referred to it as *fictive motion* (1996). Yo Matsumoto called this fleeting sense of motion *subjective motion* to emphasize its subjective nature (Matsumoto 1996).

To start with we would like to shell Langacker's notion of *abstract motion* [3, p.455]. He begins his analyses by distinguishing between two basic classes of verbs, depending on whether they profile a perfective or an imperfective process. [3, p.461]. Perfective verbs are those that take the progressive, but normally do not appear in simple present tense; imperfectives do occur in the simple present but resist the progressive. In perfective, the component states constitute a bounded series and involve some changes through time. By contrast imperfectives are not specifically bounded and all the component states are construed as being identical. [3, p.461] In this regard Langacker says that: "a motion verb can be regarded as a sort of perfective process in which each component state specifies the relation between the mover and his immediate location." [3, p.462] This definition highlights what all verbs of physical motion have in common. However there are motion verbs such as *go* and *run* which are highly pervasive. When used literally they describe how a physical entity changes from one place to another place in space,

Eg: a) *Luca is going to school* or *The dog is running outside*. (features an animate or mobile noun phrase referent (Luca, dog)

but, the verb *go* can be used in instances when it does not refer to spatial domains.

Eg: b) Peter went through the alphabet in 5- 7 seconds;

c) The milk is about to go sour.

The first thought is to treat the examples above as instances of space metaphors. However to describe a metaphor we must in any case characterize both the sources and the target domains, together with the mapping between them. [2, p.207] One way or another we must attribute to *go* a conventionally-established range of values that indicate change in non-spatial domains. In these cases the spatial path is not construed in particular, but is simply viewed as an "ordered sequence of entities within the relevant domain, so that the mover is capable of interacting with each of these entities individually" [4, p.329], for eg.: in *a*, letters are the entities and Peter interacts with a given letter by reciting it; in *b*, the entities are points along a scale for evaluating freshness, and the milk interacts with such an entity by being fresh or sour to a specific degree. [4, p. 333] What Langacker did is to "characterize a schematic concept of ***abstract motion*** where the mover (Peter) or abstract mover (milk) is making contact with an ordered series of points in time." [4, p.334].

Langacker also uses the term "subjective motion" when referring to sentences in which verbs of motion are used but there nothing seems to move or change.

For eg:

d) The roof slopes steeply upward.

e) The roof slopes steeply downward.

f) The hill gently goes up from the bank of the river

g) The hill gently goes down to the bank of the river.

Though no movement takes place in these examples, they intuitively incorporate a sense of directionality and contrast semantically because they imply opposite directions. This is another example where "semantic contrast does not reside in the conceptual content of the expressions, but rather in how that content in assessed" [3, p.465]. Langacker assumes that "the conception of such a configuration requires a certain span of processing time for its full activation, rather than springing instantaneously into full-blown existence So the conception grows progressively more complex with the passage of processing time, until the full configuration is simultaneously active" [3, p.466]. As the mover (roof) "grows" upwards or downwards from its starting point, its leading edge can be thought as moving through space changing through processing time.

Another linguist, namely Leonard Talmy, claims the idea that cognitive processes motivate linguistic forms. As well as Langacker, Talmy argued that constructions such as *The mountain range goes from Mexico to Canada*, where the mountain range evokes a sense or a conceptualization of something moving from south to north. Despite the absence of actual movement such sentences have been claimed to involve *fictive motion* [7, p.98], an implicit mental simulation of movement. (The motion in this case is not "factive" -a term applied by Talmy to more palpable visual representations, it is "fictive"- term applied to less palpable representations). [7, p.101] An individual "sees" the factive representation (the mountain range), but only "senses" its fictive representation (the movement).

"Of these two representations, the *fictive* representation- the one that is assessed and experienced as less veridical- consists of the literal reference of the words, which directly depict the mountain range as moving. The *factive* representation – the one assessed and experienced as more veridical, consists of our belief that the mountain range is stationary" [7, p.102]

What is worth mentioning is the fact the Talmy and other cognitive linguists do not maintain that fictive motion involves vivid imagery whereby the conceptualizer "sees" himself or herself moving point by point along the figure in the scene being described. Instead they take the motion to be relatively fleeting and tacit. [9, 10]

In his work "Towards a cognitive semantics" vol. I, Talmy tries to explain the phenomenology of fictive motion. He sustains that, as observed, speakers of different languages systematically refer to static situations using constructions that refer to motion, which he terms – **constructional fictive motion.** There are differences over the degree to which such expressions

evoke an actual sense or conceptualization of motion - which he calls **experienced fictive motion.** Based on what is conceptualized as moving, Talmy maintains that conceptualization varies across individuals and types of fictive motion. The same individual may deal with the same example of fictive motion differently on different occasions. Fictive motion may be manifested:

- by the named entity (for eg. the mountain range);
- by some unnamed object that moves with respect to the named entity (for eg. a car relative to the mountain range);
- in the mental imagery of the speaker, by the imagistic or conceptual equivalent of their focus of attention moving relative to the named entity;
- by a sense of abstract directedness suggesting motion relative to the named entity;
- or by some abstracted conceptual essence of moving relative to the named entity. [7, p. 105]

The categories described above differ from each other with respect to a certain set of conceptual features. Talmy mentions the main features distinguishing categories of fictive motion in languages:

- factive motion of some elements need not/must be present for the fictive effect;
- the fictively moving entity is itself factive/fictive;
- the fictive effect is observer neutral/observer based:

a) the observer is factiv/fictive;
b) the observer moves/scans.

- What is conceived as fictively moving is an entity/ the observation of an entity.

Further on in his studies Talmy focuses more on one category of fictive motion – namely category of emanation- which is basically the fictive motion of something intangible emerging from a source, and which proved to be unrecognized. In most subtypes "the intangible entity continues along its emanation path and terminates by impinging on some distal object" [3, p.106]. In other words it may be said that an impalpable entity continues along its emanation - abstract but perceptible thing that originates from it- until it hits an object that is away from this particular entity. According to Talmy this category contains particular values of the general fictive features mentioned above:

- Factive motion of some elements need not be present for the fictive effect;
- The fictively moving entity is itself fictive;
- The fictive effect is observer neutral;
- What is conceived as fictively moving is an entity.

The category of emanation comprises a certain number of subtypes such as: "orientation paths", "radiation paths", "shadow paths" and "sensory paths", they are left to be discussed further on.

To conclude we may say that *fictive motion* is a way to impose motion on what is otherwise a static scene. It enables the language user to compute information about the layout of a scene, for instance a mountain range stretching from south to north. The conceptual work on abstract motion revealed many valuable insights about the semantic structure of linguistic forms common in many languages. Some of the work provided rich taxonomies about types of abstract motion [7, p 131], other work was comparative, for example, contrasting English and Japanese [4]. Some work argued that abstract motion was grounded in metaphorical knowledge anchored in motion and space [2, p.205]. Some related works conducted by Fauconnier argued that the understanding of abstract motion expressions was a product of conceptual blending, by recruiting input from domains associated with actual movement. [1, p. 168-172] Nonetheless, the early study on abstract motion laid the theoretical ground necessary for experimental investigations conducted in years to come.

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