Are there really lexicalization patterns in motion verbs?

According to Talmy's (1985, 1991) well-known typology of lexicalization patterns in motion events there are three neat and clear-cut types of encoding patterns in verb stems throughout the languages of the world (Talmy 2000: 64-66 admits the possibility of certain forms of mixed types):

- I Conflation of Motion and Manner, e.g., English, German, Russian, Hungarian.

- II Conflation of Motion and Path (For "Path" I prefer the term displacement, introduced by Tesnière 1959 [*déplacement*]), e.g., Spanish, French, Turkish.

- III Conflation of Motion and Figure, e.g., Navajo, Atsugewi.

Talmy's typology has been widely accepted, even if some modifications have been proposed to account for languages which are not fully compatible with one of the types (e.g., Slobin & Hoiting 1994, Croft 2003). However, until now it has never been tested in a large-scale typological sample study with a substantial number of genealogically and areally diverse languages from all continents whether Talmy's predictions actually hold true for a certain number of clearly defined semantic coding domains and how different types are distributed across the languages of the world. (It is known though that Type III is very rare and probably restricted to languages of North America.)

In this paper, I will try to transform Talmy's theory into a set of empirically verifiable hypotheses, which can be tested in a world-wide comparative study with a relatively unbiased sample (114 languages) and as clearly defined and cross-linguistic comparable domains as possible (based on data from two kinds of sources: (a) parallel texts and (b) reference grammars and dictionaries).

The question whether there really are systematic lexicalization patterns in motion events is of high importance for any theory about the structure of the lexicon. If the lexicon behaves fully regularly and systematically, there will be little reason to treat it in a different way from grammar. If it is completely irregular and idiosyncratic (as has been claimed, e.g., by DiSciullo & Williams 1987), there will be no point in doing lexical typology. The biggest challenge for linguistic theory, however, will be if the result is in-between and if there are only weak correlations, because this will require a more radically empirical approach.

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