Complexity of a motion event and satellite-framed and verb-framed patterns in Kupsapiny

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This study reports that Kupsapiny, the Southern Nilotic language of Uganda, has an intermixed system of conflation of motion components exhibiting a split between the satellite-framed system and a parallel system of the verb-framed and a non-verb-framed pattern, depending on the complexity of a motion event. Unlike for motion events of or below a certain complexity ([co-event + deixis (+ ALONG and/or FROM/TO/VIA)]), which this language expresses with a single clause following the satellite-framed pattern, for motion events above the complexity, it uses a multi-verb construction. However, this construction may follow the verb-framed pattern (main verb: path, participle: co-event) or a pattern opposite to this (main verb: co-event, participle: path). Moreover, a clause following the satellite-framed pattern can be embedded in this structure. This suggests that a construction is not necessarily associated with only one of the typological patterns, and that Talmy's typology cannot simply be regarded as a typology of constructions, as in Croft et al. (2010).

Since Talmy's (1985, 1991, 2000) proposal of the typology of satellite-framed vs. verb-framed languages, various cases where a language cannot fit well into one of the typological types have been reported in literature (e.g. Aske 1989, Slobin 2004). In fact, Talmy (2000:64-67) himself is aware that there are such systems as a split system, a parallel system, and an intermixed system. Nevertheless, recently, Croft et al. (2010) proposed the treatment of Talmy's typological findings in terms of constructions. Their claim is that certain constructions, rather than languages, have properties such as verb-framedness or satellite-framedness, and differ in the degree of syntactic integration – satellite-framing constructions are syntactically more integrated than verb-framing constructions.

The present study demonstrates how the patterns of expressing motion events in Kupsapiny shift depending on the complexity of a motion event. When the motion event is made up of a co-event and deixis, optionally with the vector(s) ALONG and/or FROM/TO/VIA, this language follows the satellite-framed pattern, which uses deictic and path vector satellites, as in (1)-(3). Thus, the satellite-framed pattern of this language seems to be determined by the structure of its mono-clausal construction.

(1)   kee-ran-aa-t   neeto.
        TODAY.PAST.3-jump-along-thither   3SG
        'S/he jumped along that way.'
(2)   kee-raan-t-e   neeto   tuttya.
        TODAY.PAST.3-jump-thither-from   3SG   fence
        'S/he jumped that way from (the top of) the fence.'
(3)   kee-raan-aa-t-e   neeto   kot.
        TODAY.PAST.3-jump-along-thither-from   3SG   house
        'S/he jumped along that way out of the house.'

On the other hand, when the motion event is more complex, Kupsapiny uses a multi-verb construction, because there is no slot for any more motion components in the mono-clausal construction. However, the multi-verb construction can follow either the verb-framed pattern of expressing path with the main verb and a co-event with the non-main verb, as in (4), or a pattern opposite to this, as in (5). Furthermore, a clause following the satellite-framed pattern may be embedded in this structure, as in (4) and (5).

(4)   ka-rekto/ka-rekt-aa-t   neeto   ku-ran-aa-t.
        TODAY.PAST.3-descend/PAST.3-descend-along-thither   3SG   PTCP.3-jump-along-thither
        'S/he jumped along down that way.'
        (*lit.* S/he descended/descended along thither, jumping along thither.')
(5)   kee-ran-aa-t   neeto   ku-rekto/ku-rekt-aa-t.
        TODAY.PAST.3-jump-along-thither   3SG   PTCP.3-descend/PTCP.3-descend-along-thither
        'S/he jumped along down that way.'
        (*lit.* 'S/he jumped along thither, descending/descending along thither.')

Thus, a single construction may be shared by different typological patterns. Moreover, a construction may have a complex structure where the satellite-framed pattern is embedded in the multi-verb construction, and could have more than one typological property at the same time.

In sum, although the satellite-framed property of Kupsapiny is determined by the structure of the satellite-framing, mono-clausal construction of this language, the multi-verb construction may or may not show the verb-framed pattern, and the typological characteristics of this language cannot be captured in terms of the typology of constructions. Constructions and typological properties do not always show one-to-one correspondence.