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Frame-semantic analysis of motion scenarios in English, Japanese, and Spanish

The frame semantic analysis of scenes involving motion in English, Japanese, and Spanish is particularly revelatory of the different information encoding patterns of the three languages. As noted previously by such researchers as Ikegami, Japanese prefers to express events in terms of (change of) the whole scene rather than (change of) an entity. We investigate this tendency particularly with respect to motion, which necessarily describes the change of an entity, and thus should be avoided in Japanese, finding also in Spanish some degree of reconceptualization of motion as state change; this overarching difference is related to the findings of Talmy and Slobin, whose typologies are partly a consequence of conceptualizing motion as discrete state-change (e.g. boundary crossing). To investigate in detail what types of motion and non-motion predicates are used to encode scenes with motion, we will contrast the semantic frames that are involved in chapter 14 of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* by Arthur Conan Doyle versus the corresponding Japanese and Spanish translations, using the large-scale and precise descriptions of frames provided by the FrameNet projects in English, Spanish, and Japanese (Fillmore et al. 2003, Ohara et al. 2004, Subirats and Petruck 2003).

In the scene described below, the primary conceptualizations in English are the fog's motion towards the view-point (*came*) and turbulent circular motion (*rolled*); the Spanish translation describes the motion of the fog with respect to the house (*dieron la vuelta*) and moving forward (*avanzaron*). The Japanese, however, describes the blurring of the scene (*usuboyakete*) and its being engulfed by the fog (*makikom-areteitta*).

E: As we watched it the fog-wreaths **came crawling** round both corners of the house and **rolled** slowly **into one dense bank**, on which ...

S: Ante nuestros ojos, los primeros tentáculos de niebla **dieron la vuelta** por las dos esquinas de la casa y **avanzaron** lentamente, **espesándose**, hasta que...
Before our eyes, the first tentacles of fog gave the turn by the two corners of the house and advanced slowly thickening until that
“Before our eyes, the first tentacles of fog rounded both corners of the house and advanced slowly, thickening until...”

Taken separately, these seem incommensurate, but if we notice that the Eclipse frame (conveying blurring or hiding) describes a state which is dependent on location, we can see that the Japanese is describing a viewpoint implicit in the motion of the obscuring fog in English and Spanish. Such dependencies are easily described by frame semantics.

Frame-semantic contrastive analyses of lexical units in motion scenarios in these languages reveal detail that is not covered by Talmy and Slobin's semantic typologies. The precision and detail allowed by frame semantics lets us investigate other, more subtle tendencies of the languages, including exactly what is expressed in verb-framed languages, when they are not directly expressing motion.

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