Arrival in Czech and English: A Holistic Spatial Semantics Analysis

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(492 words)

The paper presents a comparative analysis of the semantic frame of arrival in English and Czech, using the verb *come* and *přijít*. While English Manner verbs have received considerable attention in Motion Event (ME) literature, Manner-less verbs such as *come* still require further investigation. Czech has received little research in linguistic research (Martinková, 2018).

The theoretical framework is grounded in Holistic Spatial Semantics (Vesnina, 2024; Zlatev, 2003; Zlatev et al., 2021), as a more nuanced alternative to traditional Talmyan typologies (Talmy, 1991, 2000). Moving beyond lexical semantics of the verb, it emphasizes the meaning of the entire ME construction and importantly distinguishes between bounded (Path MEs) and unbounded (Direction MEs) MEs. For unbounded MEs it adds Frame of Reference (FoR): the Figure moves in direction to the deictic center (Viewpoint-centered, VC), to an object (Object-centric, OC), or to a fixed absolute value (Geocentric, GC).

The paper addresses the following research questions and goals:

1. Which is the more common expression pattern: Direction or Path? What is the dominant FoR (VC, OC, GC)?

2. Provide an HSS analysis of MEs using the verbs *come* and *přijít*. Compare the results and identify similarities and differences.

3. Do the two languages use the same covert expressions?

Using the BNC (Kilgarriff et al., 2004; Kilgarriff et al., 2014) and syn2020 (Křen et al., 2020; Cvrček et al., 2016) I retrieved a random sample of 350 hits for each language. Firstly, I coded individual concordance lines for physical motion to exclude metaphorical (e.g. “the time has come”) and other usage (*she comes across as …*, *přijít o* “to lose sth”). This was followed by an HSS analysis of the most common expression patterns, focusing on Path and Direction (and Frame of Reference). I compared general tendencies in the two languages. Lastly, I identified any covert expressions (Manner and boundary crossing).

Preliminary results show the following:

1. The motion meaning is the most common one in both languages (56% in English, 42% in Czech).

2. Importantly, both verbs can express either Path or Direction. This is not mediated by the verb itself, but by the entire ME construction.

3. Both languages tend to express Direction using the VC FoR.

4. HSS analysis shows different form-meaning mappings for the two languages, specifically:

- the Czech prefix *při-* expresses Direction, but also other non-motion meanings, such as grammatical aspect (*přijít* is perfective, to form the imperfective, one needs to change the root of the verb, e.g. *přicházet*);
- the Czech root *-jít* expresses Motion + Manner, as opposed to the English verb *come* expressing Motion + Direction.

4. English phrasal verbs such as *come over* may express oundary crossing covertly.

Building on intra-typological research (Lewandowski, 2021), the granular HSS approach reveals differences between languages traditionally classified as the same type. The holistic approach demonstrates how construction-level meaning can override verb-specific features (e.g. shifting Path to Direction). Future research may also reveal the relationship between motion and more general features (such as aspect).

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