Encoding SENSORY PATH in French, Russian and Thai: a contrastive parallel-corpus study

One of the linguistic strategies to encode sensory experiences is the usage of directional markers (such as verbs of motion, adpositions or case morphemes) - in which case, perception is conceptualized as a 'directional relationship' (in terms of Huumo 2010). By way of illustration, in (1) a visual experience is expressed as directed from the EXPERIENCER, whereas in (2) - towards them. Lakoff (1993) and Talmy (1996) observed that one and the same sensory event can be construed in two opposite directions (EXPERIENCER→ (1) versus EXPERIENCER← (2) , on rationale for this schematization see Aquilina (submitted)). Such bidirectionality has been captured in the term SENSORY PATH (Talmy 1996), which will be used in what follows.

Apart from vision, SENSORY PATH has been attested for other distal sensory modalities such as hearing and olfaction (Huumo 2010). In a study on anglophone contemporary fiction, Aquilina (submitted) has shown that the directionality pattern of SENSORY PATH varies greatly in vision and hearing: with EXPERIENCER→ preferred in visual expressions and EXPERIENCER← - in auditory ones. The observed asymmetry is explained, in line with Enghels (2007, pp. 56-59), by an extra-linguistic factor of different degrees of control over the stimuli in vision versus hearing. The few previous studies on SENSORY PATH have been limited in terms of explored (i) languages (Finnish in Huumo (2010) and English in Aquilina (submitted)) and (ii) sensory modalities (olfactory expressions examined (qualitatively) only by Huumo (2010)) .

The present paper explores linguistic expression of SENSORY PATH across three sensory modalities (vision, hearing and olfaction) and three languages: French, Russian and Thai. These languages have been shown to be typologically distinct as they encode directionality of motion in different morphosyntactic devices (e.g. Zlatev and Yangklang 2004; Slobin 2004). Our research aims are as follows. First, we put to test previous findings on variation of **favoured directionality patterns** across the three sensory modalities (see §2). Second, we examine **saliency** of SENSORY PATH expressions, understood as their relative frequency, for each of the three languages. Finally, we explore whether the **morphosyntactic devices** used to express directionality in motion for each language map to the devices used in SENSORY PATH expressions (French: sole finite verb of the clause and prepositions, Russian: preverbs and prepositions, Thai: verb within a serial verb construction).

To address these research questions, we have built a parallel corpus of 4 popular fiction novels (see Appendix), written within the broad genre of speculative fiction. The texts were selected based on their (i) dynamic storyline, supposedly rich in sensory descriptions (Caballero & Paradis 2020) and (ii) availability in the three languages of the study. While reading each text in its original language, we manually extracted all encountered sensory expressions (be they directional or not). Then, we identified equivalents for the extracted examples in the target languages. Addressing the first research question, our preliminary results for French and Russian confirm the aforementioned asymmetries in the encoding of vision and hearing, with olfaction favouring EXPERIENCER← pattern.

Appendix

(1) She threw a quick look at a tree.
(2) A tree came into her view.

	Source language	Year	Genre	Translated versions
Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (J.K.Rowling)	English	1997	fantasy	FR: Harry Potter à l'école des sorciers; trans. Jean-François Ménard
				RUS: Гарри Поттер и философский камень; trans. Igor Oransky
				THA: แฮร์รี่ พอตเตอร์กับศิลาอาถรรพ์ [hɛ:rî: pʰɔ̂:ttɤ: kàp sìʔla: ʔa:tʰǎn] trans. Sumali Banrungsuk
Hitchhiker's Guide to Galaxy (Douglas Adams)	English	1979	comic science fiction	FR: Le Guide du voyageur galactique, trans. Jean Bonnefoy
				RUS: Автостопом по Галактике, trans. Jurij Arinovich
				THA:คู่มือท่องกาแลกซีฉบับนักโบก [kʰû:mɯ: tʰɔ̂:ŋ ka:lɛ̂:ksi: cʰəbàp nákbò:k] trans. Thaenthai Prasertkul
Metro 2033 (Dmitry Glukhovsky)	Russian	2005	post apocalyptic fiction	FR: Métro 2033; trans. Denis E. Savine
				THA: Metro 2033; trans. Ayuri Chiwarunothai
La planète des singes (Pierre Boule)	French	1963	science fiction	RUS: Планета обезьян; trans. F. Mendelson
				THA: พิภพวานร; trans. Wilas Wasinsangworn

Table 1. A parallel corpus of contemporary speculative fiction texts translated into French, Russian and Thai.

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