Exploring English 'through': A contrastive study with Italian and Ladin from a typological and cognitive perspective

Spatial prepositions often have no direct equivalents across languages, and their meanings can become even more complex when they extend beyond spatial relationships to abstract concepts. Furthermore, prepositions are inherently polysemous, with a single form often having multiple meanings (Taylor, 1993; Tyler & Evans, 2003). Moreover, the same form can function across different syntactic categories (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 1985). Although English prepositions and adverbs have been studied extensively, not all have received equal attention, such as the preposition, adverb, and particle *through,* which warrants further crosslinguistic investigation.

This paper analyses the English *through* from typological, contrastive, and cognitive perspectives, comparing three typologically different languages, English, Italian, and Ladin, a lesser-explored Rhaeto-Romance language. Focusing on motion events, English is classified as satellite-framed and high-manner salient, whereas contemporary standard Italian is considered verb-framed and low-manner salient (Iacobini, 2009; Talmy, 2000b). Ladin is low in motion verb types but highly path-salient, with a complex adverbial system (Irsara, 2015; 2020). More specifically, this study examines whether the semantic range of English *through* is reflected in *Animal Farm* (Orwell, 1945/2024) and *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* (Bach & Munson, 1970/1973), and in their translations into Italian (Bach & Munson, 1970/2014; Orwell, 1945/2021) and Ladin (Bach & Munson, 1970/2000; Orwell, 1945/2004). Given that *through* has no single direct equivalent in typologically distinct languages, the paper examines how its different meanings are rendered and whether the verb phrases align with typological classifications of satellite- or verb-framed languages. Therefore, using qualitative corpus analysis, the original English texts are compared with their Italian and Ladin translations, focusing on segments containing *through* and its equivalents. This analysis is framed within Talmy's (2018; 2000a; 2000b) typological framework of factive and fictive motion.

The hypothesis is that the semantic complexity of the English function word *through* will be evident, and that the satellite-framed nature and high-manner salience of English will also be represented, compared to its translations into the differently framed Italian and Ladin (Cifuentes-Férez, 2014; Molés-Cases, 2019; Slobin, 1996; 2003). It is expected that path descriptions will be more explicit and salient in English than in Italian and Ladin, whose oral multidimensional adverbial system may not be fully represented in the written translations. Talmy's (2018; 2000a) cognitive treatment of fictive motion is expected to deepen our understanding of *through* in the novels analysed. Overall, the translator's voice is likely to be evident in the translation of the *through*-segments, as different choices may be made due to the lack of a direct one-to-one correspondence between the languages. Ultimately, the study aims to enhance our understanding of crosslinguistic differences in the representation of motion in narratives, highlighting how typological and cognitive insights can illuminate the different linguistic choices in both major and minority languages. Typology, contrastive linguistics, and cognitive linguistics are key to understanding and appreciating the lexical, syntactic, and semantic dimensions of narrative works and their translations.

References

Bach, R., & Munson, R. (1973). *Jonathan Livingston Seagull: A story*. New York: Avon Books. (Original work published 1970)

Bach, R., & Munson, R. (2014). *Il Gabbiano Jonathan Livingston* (B. Masini, Trans.). Milan: Rizzoli. (Original work published 1970)

Bach, R., & Munson, R. (2000). *Le Gabian Jonathan Livingston* (M. Castlunger, Trans.). San Linert: Uniun Ladins Val Badia. (Original work published 1970)

Cifuentes-Férez, P. (2014). A closer look at paths of vision, manner of vision and their translation from English into Spanish, *Languages in Contrast, 14*(2), 214-250.

Iacobini, C. (2009). The role of dialects in the emergence of Italian phrasal verbs. *Morphology, 19*(1), 15-44.

Irsara, M. (2015). Ladin. In K. Jungbluth & F. Da Milano (Eds.), *Manual of deixis in Romance languages* (pp. 140-166). Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Irsara, M. (2020). Applying typological insights in a minority-language context: Motion event lexicalisations in Ladin, Italian, German and English texts compiled by Ladins. *Glottodidactica. An International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 47*(1), 23-40.

Molés-Cases, T. (2019). Why typology matters: A corpus-based study of explicitation and implicitation of manner-of-motion in narrative texts, *Perspectives, 27*(6), 890-907.

Orwell, G. (2024). *Animal Farm*. Aeons Editions. (Original work published 1945)

Orwell, G. (2021). *Fattoria degli animali: Una fiaba* (F. Cavagnoli, Trans.). Milan: Feltrinelli. (Original work published 1945)

Orwell, G. (2004). *Le lüch di tiers* (M. Castlunger, Trans.). San Linert: Uniun Ladins Val Badia. (Original work published 1945)

Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G. & Svartvik, J. (1985). *A comprehensive grammar of the English language*. London: Longman.

Slobin, D. I. (1996). Two ways to travel: Verbs of motion in English and Spanish. In M. Shibatani & S. A. Thompson (Eds)*, Grammatical constructions: Their form and meaning* (pp. 195-220). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Slobin, D. I. (2003). Language and thought online: Cognitive consequences of linguistic relativity. In D. Gentner & S. Goldin-Meadow (Eds.), *Language in mind: Advances in the study of language and thought* (pp. 157-192). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Talmy, L. (2000a). *Toward a cognitive semantics*: *Concept structuring systems* (Vol. 1). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Talmy, L. (2000b). *Toward a cognitive semantics: Typology and process in concept structuring* (Vol. 2). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Talmy, L. (2018). *Ten lectures on cognitive semantics*. Boston: BRILL.

Taylor, J. R. (1993). *Preposition patterns of polysemization and strategies of disambiguation*. In C. Zelinsky-Wibbelt, C. (1993). *The Semantics of Prepositions: From Mental Processing to Natural Language Processing* (pp. 151-175). Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.

Tyler, A., & Evans, V. (2003). *The semantics of English prepositions: Spatial scenes, embodied meaning and cognition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.