The Associated Motion Video Stimuli: A tool for examining Associated Motion within and across languages

Associated Motion marking is a crosslinguistically widespread grammatical means for specifying that the foreground action described by a verb has a motion event as its background. Associated Motion markers thus offer speakers practical formats for expressing complex meanings like ‘(come and) eat’ or ‘talk (while going)’, as in example (1) from Acazulco Otomi (Oto-Manguean, Mexico), where the prefix $ar$- adds a secondary motion event to the primary event of throwing designated by the verb:

(1) $ar$- $'u$ $t'i$ $a$ $tsibi$ $ya$

3.REAL.IPFV.AND-throw.into LOC fire DEF.PL.PROX

‘They throw them into the fire (going).’

While grammaticalized specification of background motion was previously considered a crosslinguistically rare phenomenon, recent areal and typological surveys have demonstrated that Associated Motion systems are widespread in the languages of the world, with markers often specifying direction and timing of motion and – more rarely – shape of path and moving argument (Belkadi 2015, Dryer 2021, Guillaume 2016, Ross 2021). Compared to the semantic parameters known to play a role in motion-event typology in general, the parameters identified in Associated Motion appear to be more restricted, but it is unclear whether the types of motion meaning languages code are truly more restricted when motion is coded as background information, or whether this apparent restriction depends on the paucity of relevant data. Because Associated Motion has only recently attracted attention as a comparative concept, broader crosslinguistic investigations into its semantic typology have generally depended on descriptions in and examples from published sources, where Associated Motion is typically only sparsely described, and where data have been collected in miscellaneous ways.

To contribute to our developing understanding of the semantic typology of Associated Motion, we constructed the Associated Motion Video Stimuli (AMVS), a video-elicitation tool consisting of 68 short videos presenting combinations of foreground events (such as picking flowers or playing music) with accompanying motion events (such as coming or going), e.g. playing music while coming. Constructed as a semantic grid varying parameters previously identified as playing a role in Associated Motion systems, the AMVS is designed to facilitate identification and comprehensive description of Associated Motion within individual languages and to enable comparison of Associated Motion systems across languages. Besides the established parameters direction, temporal relation, moving argument and shape of path, the stimulus set varies parameters known to play a role in motion-event typology more broadly (boundedness, boundary crossing, manner) as well as psychological, social and cultural parameters that help the investigator clarify relationships with purposive constructions and determine the anchors for contrasts in deictic direction.

We illustrate the usefulness of the AMVS as a tool for describing and comparing Associated Motion systems across languages by presenting and comparing data from two previously undescribed varieties of Nahuatl, Cuacuila Nahuatl and Tequila Nahuatl (Uto-Aztecan, Mexico) as well as pilot data from Huehuetla Totonac (Totonacan, Mexico) and San Pablito Otomi (Oto-Manguean, Mexico).

Abbreviations


References


