



## The Concept of Path in Telic Events with Verbs of Manner of Locomotion

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### Abstract

The paper deals with the types of path in telic (end-bounded) motion events expressed by means of verbs which encode a manner of locomotion. It shows that the character of path is linked in principled ways with the character of telic motion. Deriving from verbal semantics and the semantics of noun phrases designating a locus, it identifies four types of the construal of the path, with each type displaying a specific internal structure.

### Keywords

Manner verbs; telicity; atelicity; path; scalar vector; bipolar vector; extent

### Introduction

The present paper looks into the types of path in telic (i.e. end-bounded) motion events with verbs which encode a manner of locomotion. It demonstrates that the different construals of path are an outcome of the interplay of two factors, namely, the semantics of verbs and the semantics of path phrases, which encode the locus. As to the semantics of verbs: what plays a significant role is a lexical semantic structure of a verb and that verb's potential to express (a)telicity. These two aspects of verbal semantics are closely related. In addition, there are principled connections between the (a)telicity of a verb and its internal temporal structuration (i.e. its inherent lexical aspect). As to the semantics of path phrases: prototypically, they take the form of prepositional phrases. Prepositionless phrases represent variants of their prepositional counterparts; they are significantly less frequent. The character of the path is determined (or, rather, co-determined) by the semantics of the preposition and the semantics of the nominal expression.

The analysis presented here is primarily focused on telic (end-bounded) motion events expressed by means of verbs of manner of locomotion. Atelic motion events are taken into consideration when necessary, to contrast them with telic motion events.

### 1. The Vendlerian Classification of Verbs

Vendler (1967) proposed the now classic categorization of verbs based on time schemata. He identified four classes of verbs, namely, states, activities, accomplishments and achievements. States lack internal phasal structuration (e.g., 'knowing geography' does not consist of phases following one another). By contrast, dynamic verbs (activities, accomplishments and achievements) involve internal phases. Activities do not proceed toward a terminus (goal), i.e. they do not include a 'climax' (*walk, swim, push a cart*, etc.), whereas accomplishments (*run a mile, build a house, write a novel, deliver a sermon*) "proceed toward a terminus which is logically necessary to their being what they are" (Vendler 1967: 101). In contrast to activities and accomplishments, achievements occur at a single moment of time (*reach the top, recognize someone, be born, win the race*).

Verbs which proceed toward a terminal point are commonly termed 'telic' because they include *telos* (aim, goal). Verbs which do not include *telos* are termed 'atelic'. The terms used to refer to the telicity of events vary, depending on the frame in which the interpretation is set, e.g. 'bounded events' (Declerck 1979), 'terminative events' (Verkuyl 1993) or 'delimited events' (Tenny 1994).

Both activities and accomplishments can combine with the progressive. There is, however, a major difference. Consider:

Activity:

*He ran. x He was running.*

The sentence with the progressive passes an entailment test (cf. Dowty 1979): it entails that "He ran".

Accomplishment:

*He ran to the store. x He was running to the store.*

The sentence with the progressive does not pass an entailment test: it does not entail that "He ran to the store".

Achievements are incompatible with the progressive (\**He was reaching the top*) because they designate punctual events, i.e. "events effectively without duration" (Quirk et al. 1985: 208).<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, some achievements do have duration. Defining achievements in terms of their limited duration is thus, in some cases at least, not quite adequate.<sup>6</sup>

In sum, the basic notions on which the Vendlerian classification is based are the following: stativity/dynamicity, telicity and punctuality. By virtue of their nature, states exclude telicity and dynamicity. Activities are dynamic, atelic (they do not include *telos*, i.e. they are not directed at achieving a certain aim) and are not punctual (*walk, swim*). Accomplishments are dynamic, telic (they include *telos*) and are not punctual (*walk to the store, run a mile*). Achievements are dynamic, punctual (as mentioned, the punctuality of a verb should be understood as underlain by its 'internal

<sup>5</sup> Some achievements can combine with the progressive - in this case the repetition of an event is implied, not its gradual progression. For example, *He was knocking at the door* implies a series of knocks.

<sup>6</sup> To give a clear example, consider 'nodding one's head'. This event does take some time because two (relatively long) kinetic phases are involved (cf. the use of *slowly* in *He slowly nodded his head*). A closer look reveals that the crucial factor distinguishing achievements from accomplishments is not their short duration but their internally compact character. By this it is meant that achievements encode events which must go through all their phases for them to be what they are meant to be. In other words, the presence of all the phases is a requirement that must be met (that is, if the head went down but not up, we would have 'bowing one's head', not 'nodding one's head'), cf. Kudrnáčová (2002).

compactness') and are either telic (*reach the top, walk into the store*) or atelic (*jump*).<sup>7</sup>

## 2. Manner Verbs vs. Result Verbs

The internal structuration of verbs in terms of their inherent temporal contour is linked in principled ways to their lexico-semantic structure. It cannot be overlooked that the potential unboundedness of a motion event is underlain by an inherent processuality (in the sense 'non-resultativity') encoded in the verb. Inherent processuality is, in actual fact, an attribute of verbs termed 'manner' verbs by Rappaport Hovav and Levin (1998). Manner verbs can be exemplified by the verbs *walk, run, jog* or *swim*. These verbs lexicalize the type of activity (the type of process) and abstract (when not complemented by a path phrase) from the resulting location. By contrast, 'result verbs' (*come, enter, leave, arrive*) lexicalize the result and abstract from the type of the activity (the type of process) which leads to the desired aim (cf., e.g., Rappaport Hovav and Levin 1998 and Talmy 1985).

Processuality encoded in manner verbs tends to correlate with atelicity (with the absence of *telos*, i.e. a goal towards which the activity is directed). By the same token, resultativity encoded in result verbs tends to correlate with telicity (i.e. with the presence of *telos*). For example, *walk* in *He walked* is an atelic verb, whereas *come* in *He came* is a telic verb (in this sentence the spatial reference point representing the resulting location is borne by the context, i.e. the verb is used deictically).

Needless to say, atelic motion verbs can combine with path phrases which encode the desired spatial end-point. In this case, the verbs change their categorial status and shift into the telic class. Consider, for example, the telic motion situations expressed in *He ran to the park, He walked into the kitchen, He swam across the river*.

As is well known, apart from prepositional phrases expressing a resulting location (e.g., the *to*-path phrase, the *into*-path phrase or the *across*-path phrase) telicity can be coerced by punctual temporal adverbials. By the same token, atelicity can be coerced by a durative temporal adverbial. Consider the telic meaning of *The plane descended in several minutes* with a punctual temporal adverbial and the atelic meaning of *The plane descended for several minutes* with a durative temporal adverbial (on the dual classification of the verb *descend* see esp. Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1992: 261).

The correlation between the 'manner' status of a verb and its atelicity (and between the resultative status of a verb and its telicity) is a mere tendency. The absence of reference to a concrete manner of motion is not a guarantee that a given verb belongs to a result class. For example, the verb *approach* is inherently atelic, in spite of that fact that it does not specify the manner in which the motion is carried out. Therefore, the sentence *He approached the house* does not entail that the mover reached the house. The expression *the house* thus functions as a mere point of orientation, not as a resulting end-point.

Or, to provide another example, the verb *go* lexicalizes a process (not a result) although it does not provide information about the manner of motion. Rappaport Hovav and Levin's view that this verb belongs to the 'result' class must therefore be rejected (cf. Rappaport Hovav and Levin 1998: 102). Certainly, it cannot be denied that 'going somewhere' can be carried out in many different ways (the sentence *He went to town* may

thus be used to encode a situation in which one walked or used some means of transportation). Nevertheless, the verb *go* is atelic because it lexicalizes a process, not a result. When a resulting location is to be expressed, an appropriate path phrase must be used. Consider motion situations in (1), which do not specify resulting locations (i.e. which encode the events as unbounded processes), and motion situations in (2), which specify resulting locations:

[1] *He went.*  
*He went along the river.*  
*He went towards the river.*

[2] *He went to the door.*  
*He went into the kitchen.*  
*He went across the field.*

## 3. Path

A path is a one-dimensional piece of space that has a direction (on this see esp. Jackendoff 1996). That is, directionality converts a static piece of space into a path.

Four types of the construal of the path in telic motion events are identified below; each type displays a specific internal structure.

### 3.1 Path as Scalar Vector

A motion event whose path is encoded in the prepositional phrase with the preposition *to* (as is the case in, e.g., *He walked to the store*) represents a canonical motion situation whose path has the character of a scalar vector. It is oriented and has a certain magnitude (i.e. it covers a definite stretch of space), which are the two constitutive attributes of vectoriality.

Note, however, that the magnitudinal character of the path is of a very special kind in that it can only be posited in relative, not absolute terms. The reason must be sought in the fact that the resulting location (expressed by the nominal expression in a *to*-prepositional phrase) has a relative position in that it is posited via reference to the starting point. This means, too, that the changing positions of the mover on the path have a relative status in that they can only be specified via reference to some other points in space (via reference to the end-point of the motion). That is, they can only be specified in relative, not absolute terms.

The path expressed in a *to*-path phrase (*He ran to the store*) is end-bounded, with the end-point being represented by the nominal expression. Naturally, the path can only be bounded if it is delimited at both its poles, i.e. if it is delimited by the starting point of the motion and its end-point. In *He ran from the kitchen to the bathroom* both the starting point and the end-point are explicitly expressed. In *He ran to the store* the starting point is not expressed directly but is borne by the context. That is, the starting point can be expressed directly in a given sentence or is inferred from the context.

From the facts adduced thus far it follows that it is the *to*-prepositional path phrase that "measures out" the motion event over time, not the spatial end point. Using Tenny's terminology, the bounded path expresses "the implicit scale in the measuring-out of the event" (Tenny 1995: 38).<sup>8</sup> That is, it is the path that is the bearer of the boundedness and scalarity of the event, not the spatial end-point denoted by the nominal expression *the store* (cf., e.g., Tenny 1995). In other

<sup>7</sup> Atelic achievements are also termed 'semelfactives' (Smith 1991).

<sup>8</sup> As Tenny observes (2000: 299), *to the park* is an indirect argument.

words, the spatial end-point does not function as a "measuring-object" (which is, as mentioned above, in line with its relative position).

The scalar character of the *to*-path classifies this type of path as a sub-type of incremental theme. This point needs a somewhat lengthy explanation.

The term 'incremental theme' is used by Dowty (1991) to designate a patient participant whose quantity increases (as in 'writing a letter') or decreases (as in 'eating an apple') in the course of the activity. The incremental theme undergoes a change of state "in distinguishable separate stages, i.e. subevents" (Dowty 1991: 568). Dowty's 'incremental theme' corresponds to Krifka's 'gradual patient' (Krifka 1992). According to Krifka, there is a homomorphic mapping between objects and events: every individual part of the entity is mapped onto a corresponding part of the activity. In other words, there is a correlation between the successive changes in the state of the entity and the successive stages of the activity. When applied to motion events, this means that "the progress of the event can be measured in increments of distance traveled" (Tenny 1995:38). That is, the path in motion events like *He walked to the store* represents an incremental theme (on the event-path homomorphism see esp. Jackendoff 1996 and Krifka 1998).

The scalar (incremental) character of the vector as encoded in the *to*-path phrase thus makes it possible to express a situation in which only a certain portion of the path was traversed - cf. the use of the expressions *halfway* or *partway* in

[3] *He ran partway (/halfway) to the store.*

The possibility of using these modifiers serves as evidence of the incremental nature of the path. Tenny (1995, 2000) observes that the use of *partway* (*halfway*) attests to the fact that the *to*-path measures out the motion event over time, which implies that the motion event involves a gradable progression. Deriving from the scalar character of this type of motion event, we may say that the modifiers *partway* and *halfway* specify the 'degree' to which the telic motion event took place.<sup>9</sup> The modifiers *halfway* and *partway* grasp the fact that a given motion covered only a certain portion of the distance between the starting point and the end point. In this respect, then, they render the motion as end-bounded, which explains why these modifiers cannot be used with the progressive, cf.:

[4] \* *He was partway (/halfway) running to the store.*

[5] \* *He was running to the store partway (/halfway).*

The fact that only a certain portion of the path was traversed can also be expressed by means of the expressions of the *half of the distance* or *almost the whole distance* type. Consider:

[6] *John ran half of the distance to the store.*

[7] *John ran almost the whole distance to the store.*

In this connection a remark concerning the expression *all the way* is in place. Consider first:

[8] *John ran all the way to the store.*

<sup>9</sup> One may not only 'run to the store partway', but also, e.g., 'close the door partway'. Parsons (1994: 121-122) analyzed 'partway closed' as formed through the direct application of the predicate operator *partway* to *closed*. In other words, the result is that the door is partway closed, not that it is closed. *Partway* and *halfway* in directed motion events operate in the same way.

As can be seen, *all the way* does not grasp the fact that the distance to the store was covered in its entirety. The sentence means that the whole distance to the store was covered by running, and not by, let us say, walking.

At this point in the discussion, let me add a remark concerning the difference between the path encoded in the *to*-phrase and the path encoded in the *towards*-phrase. The path expressed in the *to*-path phrase has a scalar character (cf. the argumentation offered above), which differentiates this motion event from a motion event whose path is not bounded but merely oriented (as is the case in the motion event whose path is expressed by means of the *towards*-phrase). Consider the contrast between

[9] *He walked to the store.*

and

[10] *He walked towards the store.*

The event in (9) is telic (bounded), whereas the event in (10) is atelic (unbounded). That is, although the latter motion event is oriented, it does not have a definite magnitude because the spatial point encoded in the nominal expression in the *towards*-path phrase represents a mere point of orientation, not the end-point of the motion (the same is valid for the variant encoded in *He walked in the direction of the store*). On the correlation between a bounded event and a bounded path (and between an unbounded event and an unbounded path) see, e.g., Tenny (1994), Jackendoff (1996) or Krifka (1998); on some of the implications following from the telicity of the motion whose path is encoded in the *to*-path phrase and from the atelicity of the motion whose path is encoded in the *towards*-phrase see also Kudrnáčová (2008: 27-28 and 97-101).

### 3.2 Path as Bipolar Vector

The path expressed in the *into*-path phrase represents a bipolar variant of the path expressed in the *to*-path phrase. Consider the difference between (11) and (12):

[11] *He ran to the store.*

[12] *He ran into the store.*

The path expressed by means of the *into*-prepositional phrase has a bipolar structure in that it lacks an intermediate phase (on this see Kaufmann 1989 and Beavers 2002). Its two segments are construed as extreme positions, i.e. they are placed in sharp opposition. This means, among other things, that the motion is presented as penetration into a place (on this see Kudrnáčová 2006). The upshot is that the graduality of the motion is suppressed - cf. the questionability of the use of the progressive in *He was running into the store for three seconds*.

By contrast, the path expressed by means of the *to*-prepositional phrase is construed as including an intermediate phase (cf. Beavers 2002), which makes it possible to profile the graduality of the motion - cf. the possibility of the use of the progressive in, e.g., *He was running to the store for two minutes*.

### 3.3 Path as Extent

Consider first:

[13] *He jumped the fence.*

[14] *He swam the lake.*

[15] *He swam the English Channel.*

[16] *He climbed the ladder.*

[17] *He climbed Mount Everest.*

In these motion events the path is specified by the expressions *the fence*, *the lake*, *the English Channel*,

*the ladder* and *Mount Everest*. Closer scrutiny reveals that this type of path is construed as an extent, not as a vector. Let me offer an explanation. Both the extent of motion and the vector of motion have a certain magnitude, i.e. they both include a definite amount of space passed over. That is, they both represent a definite stretch of space consumed in the course of the motion. There is, however, a difference between the two types of path. The path construed as the extent of the motion is pre-determined, so to say, by the 'extent' (in the sense 'the bounded one-dimensional magnitude') of the entity expressed by the nominal expression in the direct object position. Put in plain words, the 'width' ('length' or 'height') of an entity (*qua* a place) encodes the distance that is traversed. That is, the path as an extent is a distance between the spatial boundaries of an entity. To put it another way, the entity's magnitude determines the magnitude of the motion (naturally, the 'magnitude' of both the entity and the motion is linear, i.e. one-dimensional).

From the facts adduced so far it follows that the entity functions, using Tenny's terminology (e.g., Tenny 1995), as a 'measuring-object' and, as such, it takes up the direct object position. Recall that if the path is construed as a vector, the spatial end point does not function as a measuring-out object. It has a relative status (related to this is the relative value of the mover's positions on the path, cf. the argumentation offered in section 3.1). This is also the reason why the location representing the end-point is expressed in an oblique path phrase.

At this point in the discussion it should be added that the direct object position in motion events in which the path has the character of an extent can also be taken up by an expression of measurement:

[18] *He ran a mile.*

[19] *He has only walked five metres.*

As with the path determined by the magnitude of entities (places), the path encoded in *a mile* (*five metres*) represents a (one-dimensional) magnitude which determines the (one-dimensional) magnitude of a given motion.

Owing to an absolute construal of the path (the path represents an extent of the motion), the graduality of the motion (the segmentation of the motion into individual kinetic quanta) is, to a certain degree at least, suppressed. Symptomatically, the use of the progressive, which takes "a snapshot of an event in progress whose temporal boundaries are not in view" (Jackendoff 1990: 101), requires a specific context. Consider, e.g., the motion situations encoded in *He was swimming the Channel*, *He was climbing Mount Everest*, *He was running a mile*. The progressive is significantly less conceivable when a durative temporal adverbial is used:

[20] *He was running a mile for three minutes.*

[21] *He was swimming the Channel for six hours.*

[22] *He was climbing Mount Everest for several days.*

### 3.4 Path as both Vector and Extent

Consider first:

[23] *He jumped over the fence.*

[24] *He swam across the lake.*

[25] *He swam across the Channel.*

[26] *He climbed up the ladder.*

[27] *He climbed up the hill.*

[28] *He walked across the street.*

In these motion events the path is construed as both vector and extent. The path is an extent in that its

magnitude (in the sense 'one-dimensional end-boundedness') is pre-determined by the spatial boundaries of a given entity (*the fence*, *the lake*, *the Channel*, *the ladder*, *the hill* and *the street*). At the same time, the path involves vectoriality in that it is explicitly oriented – note the use of path phrases employing prepositions encoding the orientation of the motion (*over*, *across* and *up*). Needless to say, the orientation of the motion in these motion events cannot be put on a par with the orientation of the motion events encoded in, e.g., *He jumped to the window* or *He swam to the other end of the lake*. As discussed above, in the latter type of motion events (i.e. in motion events whose path is construed as a vector), the entity expressed by the nominal expression does not represent the (one-dimensional) magnitude of the motion. It merely marks the end-point of the motion by virtue of its position with respect to the starting point of the motion.

It is evident that sentences in which the entity marking the spatial boundaries of the motion is in the direct object position (e.g., *He jumped the fence*, *He swam the English Channel*) have a somewhat different meaning than sentences in which the entity marking the path of the motion forms part of a prepositional phrase (*He jumped over the fence*, *He swam across the English Channel*). Although both the prepositionless and the prepositional variants allow a telic reading, the former may imply that the movement is "considered a significant achievement" (Dixon 2005: 300). To illustrate the difference between the two variants, Dixon (ibid.) points out the contrast between, e.g., *She swam the English Channel* and *She swam across the millstream*.

An explanation along similar lines is offered by Schlesinger (1995). Consider the difference between

[29] *Jill jumped the fence.* (Schlesinger 1995: 177)  
and

[30] \**Jill jumped the stool/the gutter.* (Schlesinger 1995: 177)

As opposed to 'jumping the fence', 'jumping the stool (/the gutter)' is not considered to be a feat, hence it requires a path preposition.

A different explanation is offered by Taylor (1995). Taylor does not evaluate the contrast between constructions with a preposition and their prepositionless counterparts as a semantic one but as "an idiomatic property of individual lexical verbs" (1995: 210).

Admittedly, certain manner of motion verbs do not allow the omission of a preposition:

[31] *The child crawled across the floor.* (Taylor 1995: 211)

[32] \**The child crawled the floor.* (Taylor 1995: 211)

However, given the fact that the omission of a preposition may be accompanied by a change in the verb's status in terms of its (a)telicity, Taylor's claim loses (some of its) validity. Let us consider the motion event expressed in *He walked the street*. As opposed to the motion event encoded in, e.g., *He swam the lake* the former event does not yield a telic reading. These motion events thus cannot be put on a par with one another. Consider also:

[33] *He walked the street for an hour.*

\* *He walked the street in an hour.*

[34] *He swam the lake in twenty minutes.*

\* *He swam the lake for twenty minutes.*

*The street* in (33) does not represent an entity (construed as a place) whose spatial boundaries mark the temporal boundary of a given motion. In other words, the atelicity (end-unboundedness) of this motion event is correlated with the unboundedness of the place representing the path of the motion (this correlation is, needless to say, an outcome of event-path homomorphism).

### Conclusion

The paper looks into the character of path in telic (end-bounded) motion events with verbs of manner of locomotion. These verbs lexicalize a specific manner of motion and are atelic. When used with an appropriate path phrase, they shift into the category of telic verbs (these encode events that have a climax). The paper demonstrates that the character of the path is linked in principled ways to the semantics of the motion verb (in terms of its graduality, scalarity and boundedness) and to the semantics of the path phrase (the character of the path is determined - or, rather, co-determined - by the semantics of the preposition and the semantics of the nominal expression).

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