Motion Events in First and Second Language Acquisition

Brief Summary:

In English, one can run across the road (PATH in the PP), while in French one must traverser la rue en courant ‘cross the road by running’ (PATH in the verb). Talmy’s (1985, 1991) typology of motion events distinguishes ‘verb-framed’ languages, such as those in the Romance, Altaic, Semitic and Polynesian families, which usually encode PATH in V, from ‘satellite-framed’ languages, such as those in the Indo-European family (apart from Romance), which usually do so in adpositions, affixes or particles, here considered to be instances of the category P. However, the typology breaks down on closer inspection of multiple languages, as most allow for various types of PATH lexicalization (see Stringer, 2005; Beaver, Levin & Tham, 2010).

The domain of spatial language allows for the investigation of fundamental questions about language and thought: Does the language we speak affect how we conceptualize events in the world? Conversely, in what ways do our conceptualizations of events determine syntactic structure?


See the Section ‘Links to Materials’ for pictorial stimuli, audiovisual stimuli and assorted props.