Acquisition of path encoding in L2 Japanese by speakers of English and Hungarian: Focusing on the variation of path types

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Talmy (1991) proposed a typology of motion event descriptions in which languages are classified into V-languages, which code path in the main verb (e.g., Japanese), and S-languages, which code path outside it (e.g., English, Hungarian). Matsumoto (2018) further pointed out that path-coding patterns vary according to path types within a V-language. Such findings have been applied to L2 studies, mainly to examine difficulties in learning a different typological pattern (e.g., Cadierno 2004, Hendriks & Hickmann 2011). This paper focuses on the variation of path types within a V-language and examines how it poses difficulties for S-language speakers.

Video-based elicitation experiments were conducted to examine the descriptions of motion events by B1-level English-speaking learners of Japanese (J-L2(e); N=13) and Hungarian-speaking learners of Japanese (J-L2(h); N=16). The experiment included 28 short video clips of motion events with one of the 14 paths of motion (2 directional paths (UP, DOWN), 5 source/goal paths (TOWARD, TO, FROM, TO.IN, OUT), and 7 medial paths (THROUGH, ACROSS, ALONG, PAST, VIA.BETWEEN, VIA.UNDER, AROUND)), tested with the two manners, WALK and RUN. These paths are expressed in different ways in Japanese (e.g., by verbs, postpositions, or their combinations), unlike in English, which uses prepositions for all of them).

Table 1 shows the percentages of responses in which each path was described.

Table 1. Indication of 14 paths

	directional paths		source/goal paths				
	UP	DOWN	TWRD	TO	FROM	TO.IN	OUT
J-L2(e)	100%	92.3%	92.3%	100%	92.3%	96.2%	73.1%
J-L2(h)	81.3%	78.1%	87.5%	93.8%	96.9%	81.3%	90.6%

	medial paths						
	PAST	VIA.BTWN	VIA.UNDR	ALNG	ARND	THRU	ACRS
J-L2(e)	**15.4%**	**26.9%**	**26.9%**	**23.1%**	57.7%	42.3%	69.2%
J-L2(h)	**34.4%**	**34.4%**	**34.4%**	**15.6%**	59.4%	65.6%	59.4%

Medial paths tended not to be expressed in both groups, especially medial paths with an unclear boundary-crossing (PAST/VIA.BETWEEN/VIA.UNDER) and ALNG. Japanese expresses these paths by the locational noun and accusative marker -*o*, but the learners expressed them by the locational noun and postposition -*ni* (GOAL/LOC). In contrast, paths describable by path verbs alone (UP, DOWN), path verbs plus postpositions (TO.IN, OUT, AROUND, THROUGH, ACROSS), or postpositions only (TO, FROM, TOWARD) were expressed more frequently.

The results show that S-language speakers learning a V-language need to cope with various path-expressing patterns for different path types, which poses difficulties for them. This can be contrasted with the relative ease with which S-languages are acquired, as pointed out by Yoshinari et al. (2021), suggesting asymmetry between the two language types.

Acknowledgments

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