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Research Article

The Meaning of Albanian Verbs *Lëviz* (Move) *Eci* (Walk) *Vrapoj* (Run) and *Hidhem* (Jump) *An Experimental Study*

Linguistics

Keywords: human locomotion, lëviz (move), eci (walk), vrapoj (run), hidhem (jump).

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Abstract

This paper will focus on the verbs that describe movement of humans. It is an area of activity which all humans experience and it can be organized according to three patterns related to movement on land: Albanian 'Eci' (walk), 'Vrapoj' (run) and 'Hidhem' (jump). Walking is the default motor pattern for humans; it is the typical way in which people move. Other ways of moving, such as running and jumping, happen less frequently, because normally we do not run or jump to go to a place. The paper presents an experimental study on these verb categories and its main purpose is (a) to examine the features which define the motor patterns mentioned above in the Albanian verbs 'Eci' (walk), 'Vrapoj' (run) and 'Hidhem' (jump) in addition to the general category 'Lëviz' (move).

Introduction

The semantic nature of motion verbs is very complex. The semantic analysis of motion Albanian verb lexicon gives us a strong linguistic and typological basis to examine the semantics of motion verbs from an experimental point of view but it should be considered simply as a tool which can help us to represent the results of linguistic analysis but it cannot represent what happens in the speaker's mind (Sandra & Rice, 1995). If we want such analysis to be considered as giving us the meanings of the words, then we must provide experimental evidence for that. That is why we must make use of native speakers and well-designed experiments, if we really want to understand what, in fact, happens in the speakers' minds.

In this study, native speakers of Albanian language were asked to define the verbs *lëviz (move)*, *eci (walk)*, *vrapoj (run)* dhe *hidhem (jump)*, and to provide a list of their characteristic features (i.e. different kinds of manner information which make it possible for an action to be expressed by these verbs). The purpose of the study is to find out what the speakers think with regard to the meaning of these verbs. We also tried to find out if, in their definitions, native speakers of Albanian would mention the semantic differences identified in the literature on verbs of motion.

We predict as follows: 1) It is expected that our speakers will define the verb *lëviz (move)* as a verb which expresses both translational and self-contained motion; the Figure can move without changing its overall location or it can change its location. 2) the verb *eci* (*walk)* will be described as the most common pattern, with focus on how the Figure uses the legs/feet to move from one place to another (i.e., translational motion); 3) the native speakers of Albanian will define the verb *vrapoj (run)* as expressing translational motion with rapid movement of legs/feet; and 4) with regard to the verb *hidhem (jump)* we expect our participants to confirm that it expresses self-contained and translational motion and the figure typically tries to push off from the ground.

In order to provide consistency in the names of semantic features appearing in the participants' definitions, we took into account the following important components expressed in a motion verb: From Leonard Talmy (2000) and Slobin (2000) we took the essential components of a motion event, namely: Figure, Ground, Path, Motion, Manner and Cause as well as the types of motion: self-contained in during which an object keeps its same, or "average," location and translational motion during which an object's basic location shifts from one point to another. Ibarretxe-Antuñano (2006a), Özçaliskan (2004) provided us with other specific manner details (e.g., rate or speed of motion, use of legs and/or arms, etc) and path details (e.g., horizontal axis, vertical axis, motion away from/towards, etc.).

Methodology

A total 60 native speakers of Albanian language, respectively16 for *lëviz (move)*, 16 for *eci (walk)*, 14 for *vrapoj (run)* and 14 for *hidhem (jump)* participated in this study. All of them were students in "Marin Barleti" University, Tirana, Albania and their age varied between 22 to 31 years old. All participants volunteered to participate.

The question that we asked to all participants was; *'Çfarë do të thotë lëviz / eci / vrapoj / hidhem*?', dmth., *'cilat janë veçoritë që përcaktojnë veprimin e të lëvizurit / të ecurit / të vrapuarit / të hedhurit?*', lit. What is the meaning of move / walk / run / jump? In other words, which are the features defining the action of moving / walking /running / jumping?' Each participant was asked about only one of the four verbs and they were instructed to write the answers on the blank papers they were given. They were also told that there was no time limit for completing this task.

Results and Discussion

With regard to the four verbs in the focus of our study, the answers given by the participants included semantic information about the type of motion (self-contained and translational motion), whether the verb was agentive or not, information about the Figure (human, non-human), Manner (whether the figure uses its legs, feet, arms; information on whether the figure pushes off ground). Their answers also contained information about such manner categories as 'Rate' and 'Forced Motion' and also for different kinds of trajectories (any, vertical, horizontal). The data for each verb are presented in tables.

Lëviz (move)

Table 1.1 shows the semantic characteristics that participants gave in their answers when defining the verb *Lëviz (move)* as the percentage of participants who included each feature.

Lëviz (move)	%
Translational Motion	42.86%
Agentive Motion	17.89%
Non-human Figure	3.57%
Human Figure	7.14%
Self-agentive Motion	3.57%
Self-contained Motion	21.40%
Any path	0.00%
Manner	3.57%
TOTAL	**100%**

Table 1.1. Semantic information included in definitions for *Lëviz (move)*

According to our prediction, native Albanian participants thought that this verb expresses both translational and self-contained motion. In their definitions they also mention that this verb is self-agentive and is used for human and non-human figures describing movement in a particular manner.

Eci (walk)

Table 1.2 illustrates that our participants generally define the verb *Eci (walk)* as a special way of movement through the use of legs/feet to go to a certain place; the characteristics 'Use of legs, feet' and 'Translational Motion' were mentioned most often by our participants. It is important to underline that a high percentage (41.18%) mentioned 'Translational Motion'. Furthermore, participants also described this verb as showing a slow rate of movement and they often mentioned to humans and animals in their definitions: Participants also describe the verb *Eci (walk)* as self-agentive.

Eci (walk)	%
Use of legs/feet	29.41%
Translational Motion	41.18%
Rate	5.88%
Human Figure	5.88%
Any path	5.88%
Non-human Figure	5.88%
Self-agentive Motion	5.88%
TOTAL	**100%**

Table 1.2. Semantic information included in definitions for *Eci (walk)*

Vrapoj (run)

It is interesting to notice that in their definitions five participants defined the verb *vrapoj (run)* in terms of *walking*. Table 1.3 shows the semantic characteristics that our participants included in their definitions for this verb and the total percentage of participants who mentioned each feature.

Vrapoj (run)	%
Rate	41.18%
Use of legs/feet	17.65%
Translational Motion	32.35%
Use of arms	0.00%
Human Figure	2.94%
Any path	2.94%
Non-human Figure	0.00%
Push off ground into air	2.94%
TOTAL	**100%**

Table 1.3. Semantic information included in definitions for *Vrapoj (run)*

As shown in the table, participants in their definitions most frequently mentioned the feature of 'Rate' but they also talked about translational motion when they wrote that *Vrapoj (run)* shows that the figure changes its location. These are in line with our predictions that these two features would be the most frequently mentioned for this verb.

Hidhem (jump)

Table 1.4 provides the semantic information that our participants included in their definitions for *Hidhem (jump)* and the percentage of participants who mentioned each feature in their definitions.

Hidhem (jump)	%
Push off ground into air	27.03%
Vertical path	21.62%
Forced motion	10.81%
Use of legs/feet	27.03%
Human Figure	0.00%
Use of arms	0.00%
Avoid an obstacle	2.70%
Horizontal path	5.41%
Rate of Motion	2.70%
Translational Motion	2.70%
TOTAL	**100%**

Table 1.4. Semantic information included in definitions for *Hidhem (jump)*

As we observed with the verb *Vrapoj (run)*, our participants tried to describe one motion verb by making use of other motion verbs. One of the participants used the verb *Eci (walk)* in his definition for the verb *Hidhem (jump)*. In terms of most frequently mentioned characteristics, our participants have included 'Push off ground into air', 'Vertical path, 'Forced Movement and 'Use of legs/feet'. Some participants also mentioned barriers and the possibility to avoid them. One participant wrote that *Hidhem (jump)* shows that the Figure changes its location ('Translational Motion'). So, we can say that translational motion might be a defining characteristic of *Hidhem (jump)* for native speakers of Albanian.

Conclusions

As we predicted, the verb *Lëviz (move)* expresses both kinds of movement: translational and self-contained motion; *Eci (walk)* most frequently is described as a verb which expresses the default motor pattern humans when the want to move from one place to another. With regard to the verb *Vrapoj (run)* participants have defined it as a verb denoting translational motion in the course of which humans move their legs and, finally, the verb *Hidhem (jump)* is a motion verb, the typical feature of which is that the figure pushes off the ground.

It is important to underline that, in their definitions, our participants did not mention manner information about how the figures move their arms while they walk or sometimes while they run and jump. This may imply that native speakers of Albanian might pay minor attention to additional manner details of walking, running or jumping. Besides, it was observed that in their definitions, our participants frequently mentioned 'Translational Motion', which might suggest that the Figure's change of location is more important for the semantics of these Albanian verbs. Finally, one of the findings was that, unlike in their definitions for the verbs *Lëviz (move)*, *Eci (walk)* and *Vrapoj (run)*, only one Albanian participant mentioned that *Hidhem (jump)* expresses change of location. Consequently, we may argue that translational motion seems to be a defining feature for the Albanian verb *Hidhem (jump)*.

An interesting finding is that our participants defined the verb *Vrapoj (run)* and *Hidhem (jump)* by using other motion verbs. The verb *Eci (walk)* with the explicit mention of a faster speed was used for defining the verb *Vrapoj (run)*; an interpretation for this might be that *Vrapoj (run)* is fast way of walking. When defining the verb *Hidhem (jump)* our participants mentioned the verb *Eci (walk)*. This suggests that *Hidhem (jump)* might be considered a particular way of moving which can happen while walking, and thus, this might explain why our participants defined the Albanian verb *Hidhem (jump)* as a translational motion verb.

On the whole, this experimental study offers the first insights into native Albanian speakers' representations of these four basic verbs of human locomotion. In addition, it examined how the different types of semantic information identified in relevant literature can be used for examining speakers' definitions of these motion verbs.

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