

## THE GRAMMAR OF VERBS OF MOVEMENT

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1. Let me begin by making a bit more specific the somewhat vague title of this paper. As is not uncommon practice the title gives merely a hint of the current interest of the researcher. In my own case I am interested in the description of sets of verbs linked by a similar meaning and how such sets behave in the two languages Spanish and English. The theoretical model that I have followed is the one developed in recent years by Fillmore<sup>1</sup>.

I am not unaware that Fillmore's proposals have been modified frequently enough as to make it dangerous to take them as a framework for grammatical description. However, this is not the first time that some of his insight in linguistics have been applied to the teaching of certain areas of English. It suffices to mention the suggestions put forward by Bowers and Wilkings<sup>2</sup>.

2. It is well known that Fillmore's case grammar was born as a reaction against the failure of TG Grammar to distinguish the semantic roles of noun phrases in relation to their verbs from the position the noun phrases occupy in syntactic configurations. It would be irrelevant to discuss now Fillmore's position with respect to the two offshoots -interpretative and generative semantics- triggered off by the dissatisfaction expressed by Chomsky in his section in *Aspects* on the boundaries between syntax and semantics; and in particular with reference to the impossibility of finding a mechanism for expressing the fact that in the pair of sentences 'John strikes me as pompous' and 'I regard John as pompous', the relationship between 'me' and 'strikes' and that between 'I' and 'regard' is the same<sup>3</sup>. The important point to make, however, is that Fillmore's theory has its place in the general trend towards a wider framework for the description of language. In recent years more and more aspects that were previously considered outside the scope of linguistic description have been included in grammatical statements. Among them those connected with presuppositions and speech act conditions are particularly relevant. In the description of sentences attempts have been made to incorporate information about what sentences mean as communicative acts. Within this tendency to describe sentences as performances of acts of communication Fillmore developed one side of the function of language, the propositional

constituent, leaving the development of the modality constituent to others.

To put it briefly, the deep representation of a proposition is a Predicate and an unordered set of argument slots. The Predicate is defined in terms of the number of arguments, two-place Predicates, three-place Predicates, etc.; and a set of rules would map out the arguments into the elements of the sentences, the relationship of these elements with the verb would show the 'case' or 'role' structure of the Predicate of which the verb in question is the realization.

Thus

'John resembles a horse'

is a realization of a three-places Predicate where two arguments only are present phonetically, having the roles respectively of 'stimulus'/'instrument' (John) and 'object'/'theme' (horse). The third argument is to be identified as the speaker of the sentence and has the role of 'experiencer' and it can be made explicit in 'to me J. resembles a horse' or when using another verb that reflects a similar Predicate structure as in:

'John reminds me of a horse'

3. Before attempting a description of verbs of movement we have to introduce some qualifications. In the first place we are going to deal only with verbs of movement which express 'concrete motion' (change of locus) as against those expressing 'abstract motion' which would imply change in possession or change in condition<sup>4</sup>.

Now, we can consider a number of factors which Fillmore gives as universal and which are to be included in any statement that can be made about sentences containing a verb of movement of this type. In the first place we have to mention a 'source' of the movement and a 'goal' of the movement. Sometimes we may find a third case, the 'path' of the movement. In the second place we have to include in our statements references to the location of the participants and this location can be made with reference both to the time of the utterance, 'speech or coding time' and with reference to the time of the activity expressed by the verb and other time pointers in the sentence, 'event time'. In other words the notion of deixis is basic in dealing with verbs of this type. The factors just mentioned would fall under place, person, and time deixis. This notion of deixis turns out to be much more complicated when the distinction between exophoric and endophoric reference is added. The first term has been introduced in the discussion of deixis to refer to deictic elements whose specification includes reference to the speaker; and the latter to identify deictic phenomena whose point of orientation is not the speaker or the speech event but rather an element in the sentence or discourse itself<sup>5</sup>.

Having these seemingly universal concepts in mind we may try to describe the behaviour of the group of verbs of movement in English and Spanish. The problems that the learner is to

face, can be classified into two main groups. In one of them, those connected with obvious contrasts between the two languages should be grouped. In Spanish there would be the tendency to lexicalize while in English the tendency will be to use a compound verb phrase. Thus 'come in', 'come back', 'come through' etc. and 'entrar', 'volver', 'atravesar' etc. The other group of problems would arise from two facts that materialize when two languages in contact are contrasted. The first is the tendency to impose literarity and in the second place the tendency to transfer the functions of one particular linguistic item to the corresponding item in the target language. This is so especially when there exist as in our case pairs of items which show a sort of parallel distribution. Thus from the fact that in the two languages occur pairs such as 'go'/'come': 'ir'/'venir'; 'llevar'/'traer': 'take'/'bring' there follows the danger of this parallel relationship linking the two members of the pair being transferred from one language into the other. However, as we will see in a minute this is simply not true. The relationship holding between 'come' and 'go' is not exactly the same as that between 'venir' and 'ir'. I think the best way to bring this fact out is by applying the universal factors just mentioned and describing the verbs in terms of them.

4. If we take the accepted definition given for 'come' and 'go' and 'venir', 'ir': 'movement to' and 'movement away from speaker', we may assume that there exists the possibility of the two pairs of verbs being used in the same situations in both languages. Both 'come' and 'venir' could be described as goal oriented, meaning that we assume, when using this verb, that the point of destination is known. For their part 'go' and 'ir' could be described as source oriented, where the assumption is that what is known in this case is the point of origin. This corresponds exactly to a recent description of the meaning of 'ir' and 'venir': "Si confrontamos ir-venir quedará más claro: con ir se describe un movimiento hacia un lugar en el que no se está. Con venir se describe un movimiento en el que se hace referencia a un lugar en el que ya se está"<sup>6</sup>

However, the moment that the second participant (the addressee) is included in our statement the parallel situation no longer holds. There exists in English the possibility of taking as a reference the position of the addressee while in Spanish this is not possible. Thus we have the use of the form of the verb 'go' in Spanish against the form of the verb 'come' in English when answering a call:

'Voy' against 'Coming'.

And this difference is not only true in situations in which the movement takes place at the same time as the sentence is uttered. That is to say when action takes place at 'speech time', but also when the reference is to 'event time', that is to say when the activity expressed by the verb takes place at the time expressed in the sentence:

I came to see her but she wasn't in

In Spanish the choice between 'Vine a verla' or 'Fuí a verla' would be made according to the speaker being at the goal at speech time or not, while in English the sentence can be interpreted both ways, the speaker not necessarily being at goal at speech time. The same situation will be found if the reference is to future time:

I'll come to your office tomorrow

can be used whether the speaker or the addressee are in the office at speech time or not. Whereas in Spanish there would be a choice between 'vendré' or 'iré' depending on the location of the speaker at speech time.

We can conclude, then, that in exophoric deixis a parallel in the use of 'go'/'come' and 'ir'/'venir' exists only in those cases in which the speaker or sender is taken as the point of reference. The position of the speaker at goal can refer both to event time or speech time.

The parallel use is no longer possible from the moment the point of reference is changed to the addressee. In English we can go on using 'come' when it is the addressee who is at goal both at speech and at event time. This as we have seen is not possible in Spanish where forms of 'ir' must be used.

4.2. Now, we can find contexts in which neither the sender/speaker nor the addressee are necessarily taken as points of reference. Of these contexts the most typical is reported speech. Here the point of reference can be removed from the participants present, -whether implicitly or explicitly- in the outer clause to the participants of the inner or dependent clause.

Peter promised her that he would come to the party

In this case we have the possibility of 'venir' being used in Spanish as well:

Le prometió que vendría

Empezó a temer que jamás vendría

This use, however, is not to be confused with the one that occurs in clauses depending likewise on a verb of saying but where the reference is the speaker/sender:

El sábado estuvo el fontanero en casa y me dijo que vendría hoy

This sentence can be uttered in a situation where neither the sender nor the addressee are at goal. The condition working here for the use of 'venir' is that the speaker of the outer sentence was at goal at event time, last Saturday. The answer to this statement, however, is not acceptable with 'venir'.

\*¿Crees tú que vendrá?

but ¿Crees tú que irá?

This use of 'come'/'go' in reported speech contexts can be transferred to literary discourse which can be considered as an expanded reported speech. In this case the whole piece of narration can be taken as embedded to a verb of saying and, in consequence, the reference can be made either to the participants in the embedded sentence or the participants in the outer speech act, i.e. the narrator and the reader. Thus the possibility is offered of changing in a very subtle way the point of view. This use could be called more properly 'narrative' as the narrator is taken implicitly as the point of reference and by the choice of 'come' a vivid dramatic effect is added to the narration very similar to the use of the so-called historic present. Thus in the following examples taken from a work of fiction<sup>7</sup> and which could be multiplied indefinitely:

When... Louise du Tronchay came at last to work in the hospital of Loudon... (p.13)

Quando Louise de Tronchay llegó para trabajar en el hospital de Loudon... (p.11)

People of all ages and of every class came flocking to ask her about God,... (p.13)

Gentes de toda edad y de todas las clases sociales acudían en multitud a preguntarle acerca de Dios... (p. 11)

And to make matters worse, the foreigner had not come alone (p. 22)

Para peor, el forastero no había llegado solo (p. 19)

Even if Grandier had never come to Loudon (p. 29)

Aún en el caso de que Grandier no hubiese asomado nunca por Loudon (p. 26)

When she would come to St Peter's for her weekly confession (p. 33)

Hasta el momento en que ella fuera a la iglesia de San Pedro a su confesión semanal (p. 31)

The city was filled with inns and boarding houses for the accommodation of the pilgrims who came to beg the image for health (p. 28)

La ciudad se hallaba colmada de mesones y posadas para acomodo de los peregrinos que iban a arrodillarse ante la imagen a fin de implorar salud (p. 26)

She comes loaded with presents (p. 25)

Llega cargada de presentes (p. 22)

In Spanish the use of 'venir' in these contexts would sound odd as none of the conditions for its use are fulfilled. Here as we can see from the translations the dramatic effect of immediacy is conveyed by the use of lexical verbs such as 'llegar', 'acudir', 'asomar por' etc.

Finally in close connection with the narrative use of 'come' we have what Bolinger would describe by the notion of 'bringing-into-existence' which allows constructions such as

"came the dawn, up stood the witness, on came the storm, away flew my handkerchief, etc.", while other verbs are not acceptable in such constructions, thus: \*up gave the enemy, \*sailed the ship, \*there will help another attempt...<sup>8</sup>

Examples of 'come' with the meaning of 'bringing-into-existence' are, as has been mentioned, very similar to those in the narrative use. An important difference is, however, that the variation with 'go' is not possible as we can see in the following examples. Again, in Spanish the idea is expressed by a lexical verb, especially by 'llegar'.

When the time came for him to choose a vocation (p. 70)

Cuando llegó el momento de manifestar la vocación (p. 68-69)

Why did Notre Dame des Ardilliers come to seem, almost suddenly, so vastly superior to Notre Dame des Recouvrance? (p. 28)

¿Por qué Nuestra Señora de Ardilliers surgió tan súbitamente apareciendo a los ojos de las gentes con virtudes superiores a las de Nuestra Señora de la Salud? (p. 26)

And then the day came when she made the slip of the tongue (p. 40)

Entonces llegó el momento en que desató su lengua (p. 37)

Instead of trying to come to terms with his enemies (p. 25)

En vez de procurar llegar a un acuerdo con sus enemigos (p. 22)

5. As a conclusion I would suggest that in connection with the problem of learning the area of language we have been considering presents a situation that could be described as a mirror-image of the problems that the learning of the vowel subsystem causes to English or Spanish learners. For the English speaker learning the subsystem of Spanish vowels is a convergent phenomenon as the number of symbols to represent referents is greater in his language than in the target language. Thus for him the possibilities of error are fewer than for the native speaker of Spanish who, when confronted with the vowel system of English, would not only find it difficult to discriminate the different sounds but would make serious mistakes when selecting the appropriate term. This being a direct consequence from the fact that for him this is a divergent phenomenon<sup>9</sup>.

Contrariwise, if we move on to the area of the use of the verbs of movement we find that for the Spanish speaker this use is a convergent phenomenon, that is to say he would be faced with fewer possibilities of making mistakes in the selection of the right choice. However, he would miss important subtleties included in the meaning of these verbs. For example he will not notice the difference implied in the choice between:

May I come with you?

and May I go with you?

The use of 'come', apparently, implying a movement into the house of the addressee while 'go' would suggest simply 'just up to your house'.

Or, again, he would miss the dramatic change of the narrator's point of view in the narrative use of 'come'.

The Spanish speaker, then, would not find great difficulty in understanding but if he is not on his guard he will fail to translate into his own language the added meaning that the selection of 'come' implies.

On the other hand the English speaker learning Spanish will be prone to gross errors as for him this phenomenon is divergent and he may select one symbol that has not got a realization in the target language. The result would be ungrammatical sentences such as:

\*¿Quieres que venga a tu casa?

or similarly

\*Si quieres puedo traer a María a su casa.

These difficulties would, I think, be obviated if the teacher becomes sensitive to the problem and consequently looks for an explanatory description of it, and this is what a contrastive study may be expected to offer. And later on, as a second step, he attempts to devise means for training his students in that particular area. But this is of course quite a different matter and having come to this point we must bring this talk to an end.

#### REFERENCES

1. Fillmore has devoted several articles to discuss this topic, the most relevant are: "Deictic categories in the semantics of 'come'", in *Foundations of Language* (1966), 2: 219-227 and "How to know whether you're coming or going", in *Studies in Descriptive and Applied Linguistics: Bulletin of the Summer Institute in Linguistics V* (1972), 3-17.
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3. N. Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, (1965): 162.
4. See: Y. Ikegami, "A set of basic patterns for the semantic structure of the verb", in *Linguistics* (1973), 117: 15-58.

5. See: R.D. Brecht, "Deixis in embedded structures", in *Foundations of Language* (1974), 11: 489-518.
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7. A. Huxley, *The Devils fo Loudon*, Penguin 1971; Spanish translation, Planeta 1972.
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9. For a discussion of these notions see J.B. Carrol, "Linguistic Relativity, Contrastive Linguistics and Language Learning", *I.R.A.L.* (1963), 1,1: 1-13, 16-19.