Deixis is a complex phenomenon in language that covers diverse linguistic features related to social aspects of the communicative context, time and space. Deictic information within event lexicalisation can enable us to gain a more detailed understanding about how the event occurred, e.g. the respective positions of event participants and witnesses. Cross-linguistic differences in this domain are of particular research interest since they are often a source of multiple difficulties in language use, such as negative transfer in second language acquisition or loss in translation. In this paper we first discuss the role that deixis plays as a component of motion event lexicalisation that unlike Path, is not absolutely obligatory but rather features with varying frequency across languages due to different degrees and types of deictic lexicalisation. We will discuss both closer and more distant language types (English, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Serbian) in order to show the effects of some key lexicalisation differences and their practical effects. For instance, the Spanish verb venir ‘come’ cannot be used in utterances such as (1) “Vendré a tu casa mañana por la tarde” ‘I will come to your house tomorrow evening’, because the addressee is not allowed to be the deictic centre in that language. The verb ir ‘go’ is the only verb allowed in this context: (2) Iré a tu casa mañana por la tarde. The only situation in which (1) is possible is when the speaker is present in the house of the addressee at the utterance time. We shall discuss how this feature of Spanish plays out in the acquisition of Spanish as an L2 by speakers of L1 French, German and Italian that allow both the addressee and the speaker to be the deictic centres.

Similarly, in the domain of translation, we will show that the deictic information often goes missing in English translation of Serbian original motion lexicalisation. Serbian makes extensive use of deictically prefixed manner verbs and it is the deictic component that is most likely to be absent in translation. For instance, we will discuss the consequences of translating expressions such as (3) Otrčao je uz stepenice (‘From the speaker/scene- ran.pst.3sg.m. be-cop. up stairs’) as just ‘He run up the stairs’. We can infer the position of the speaker-viewer based on the speaker’s statement Serbian, which we would not be able to do based on the English translation (Filipović 2007, forth.). Finally, we situate our empirical findings within the previous and current research on cross-linguistic influences in motion lexicalisation in general (e.g. Alonso-Alonso 2016, Cadierno 2004, Hijazo-Gascón 2015, forth., Slobin, 2004, Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2009, Matsumoto 2003) deixis in particular (Liste-Lamas 2015, Yoshinari 2015). We conclude with proposals of directions for future research in this area and we show how our findings lead to the development of applied language typology – a research field that straddles language typology and practical consequences of typological contrasts, resulting in recommendations for improvement of language-related professional practice (Filipović, forth.).


