Framing vs. Unframing Path-coding:
Insights from Hungarian Learners' Expressions

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This study compares data from native Hungarian speakers (H-L1) and B1-level Hungarian learners whose native language is Japanese (H-L2(j)). The aim is to identify the characteristics of learners' path-coding in motion event descriptions and to understand how their expressions differ from those of L1s.

Talmy (1991) proposed a typology of motion event descriptions, distinguishing between verb-framed (V-languages like Japanese) and satellite-framed (S-languages like Hungarian) languages. Hungarian, as a prototypical satellite-framed language, expresses path notions such as UP and TO.IN through elements linked to the verb root. While Talmy argues that paths provide a temporal frame for events, Matsumoto (2017) critiques this view, highlighting exceptions. Eguchi (2025) discusses the tension between Hungarian preverbs and case affixes/postpositions as illustrative of this issue. These elements, distinguished from satellites (adverbials), are collectively categorized as "head-external" elements. He reformulates Talmy's typology into "Head Path-coding Languages" and "Head-external Path-coding Languages," which this study adopts.

This study investigates these influences by examining how learners encode horizontal complex trajectories with either two or three path segments: Source (/S/), Medial (/M/), and Goal (/G/): (1) Source-Medial (/S-M/ scene), (2) Medial-Goal (/M-G/ scene), and (3) Source-Goal (/S-G/ scene). Additionally, one motion event with three path segments was analyzed: (4) Source-Medial-Goal (/S-M-G/ scene). Previous research has given limited attention to how such trajectories are encoded (see Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2009, Bohnemeyer et al. 2007). The study employs the experimental set from Experiment C of the MEDAL project, focusing on differences between H-L1 and H-L2(j).

First, examining the main verbs, H-L1s used manner verbs in 86.2% of cases, whereas H-L2(j)s used them in only 35.1% of cases, with 59.5% of their expressions relying on deictic verbs. There was no significant difference in the rate of path mention between H-L1 and H-L2(j) (H-L2(j): 75.6%, H-L1: 83.0%). However, there was a notable difference in the frequency of path expression per clip (H-L2(j): 0.88 times, H-L1: 1.41 times). This suggests that H-L1 tends to express each path component at least once, often through double-coding with preverbs and case affixes, whereas H-L2(j) does not. Among the 74 clauses produced by H-L2(j), only 29 included a preverb. Moreover, out of these 29 instances of preverb usage, 24 were in combination with a deictic verb. These findings indicate that H-L1 tends to treat each path as a telic event and prefers using preverbs, while H-L2(j) tends to use a combination of preverbs and deictic verbs as path verbs. This suggests that the preference for deictic verbs among learners is not merely a direct transfer from Japanese but rather an influence from Japanese as a Head Path-coding Language, where path verbs are primarily expressed within the head.

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