Path encoding in German as a foreign language by Spanish and Danish learners

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In German and Danish, both satellite-framed languages, Path is mostly encoded outside the verb. However, while German features a wide variety of linguistic devices to encode Path (PPs, directional adverbs, combinations of both PP and directional adverbs, and particle or prefix verbs), Danish encodes this component more systematically by means of combinations of particles/adverbs and PPs. Conversely, in Spanish, a verb-framed language, Path is generally encoded in Path-verbs.

Based on these differences, I investigate how Spanish and Danish learners of German express Path in this language, from the beginner to the advanced level. Furthermore, I discuss to what extent the two learner groups differ from L1 German speakers with regards to the encoding of Path and whether the Danish learners encounter less difficulties than the Spanish ones. Finally, I also examine which difficulties can be interpreted as crosslinguistic influence and/or are related to the complexity of Path encoding in German. To this end I use a twofold methodology: oral descriptions of the cartoon Canary Row and written descriptions of 42 video-clips showing 14 different types of Path.

The poster will focus on the Spanish learner group (n=40). The results show that, generally speaking, the Spanish learner group manages to encode Path in German. Nevertheless, transfer phenomena and difficulties are observed, as suggested by the incorrect use of some prepositions or transitive constructions, case marking mistakes, and the lack of distinction between verbal particles and prefixes in contrast to directional adverbs. The first preliminary data for the Danish learners, which are currently being elicited, show that Danish learners encode Path more correctly than Spanish ones. However, their Path descriptions also show interesting deviations from German patterns.

Keywords: German L2, Crosslinguistic influence, Lexicalization patterns.