The many ways of falling down a cliff: culture-specific and language-specific ways of expressing path in Jaminjung and Kriol

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The many ways of falling down a cliff: culture-specific and language-specific ways of expressing path in Jaminjung and Kriol

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1. INTRODUCTION[1]

In a cross-linguistic study of motion expressions, Talmy's (1985) typology of LEXICALISATION PATTERNS dividing languages into satellite-framed and verb-framed types depending on whether the path component in a motion event can be expressed in a satellite (e.g. *go* ***out***) or in the verb itself (*exit*), has been the subject of numerous revisions and additions. One concerns the notion of PATH SALIENCE, i.e. the distribution pattern of various path elements in discourse, as introduced by Ibarretxe-Antuñano (2009), based on Slobin (1996).

This paper aims to give an overview of path salience for two Australian Aboriginal Languages. Jaminjung is a highly endangered non-Pama-Nyungan language spoken by approximately fifty people in north-west Australia. Kriol is an English-lexified creole with about 20,000 speakers of different varieties. Both languages are structurally very different, but are spoken within the same cultural area across northern Australia. Therefore, a comparative study of the two languages has the potential to reveal to what extent language structure and cultural background respectively influence distribution patterns in discourse.

Concerning lexicalisation patterns of motion event descriptions (Talmy 1985), Jaminjung might best be described as an EQUIPOLLENTLY-FRAMED LANGUAGE (Slobin 2006) in that it expresses the manner (*galu-galu* in 1[2]) as well as the path (*yirr*) component of a motion event description in coverbs forming complex predicates with an

[1] I would like to gratefully acknowledge financial support from the Gerhard Laves Scholarship and (for work on Jaminjung) the DoBeS program of the Volkswagen Foundation for enabling me to spend two months doing fieldwork in Katherine, Timber Creek and Ngukurr in Australia in 2010. The data for this paper comes from materials collected during this fieldwork, a corpus of Jaminjung consisting of roughly 35 hours of audio and video recordings compiled by Eva Schultze-Berndt between 1994 and 2008, as well as published Kriol sources, such as Sandefur, (1982), and unpublished Kriol materials (e.g. by Denise Angelo and others) .In addition, I would like to specifically thank Nancy Roberts, Nancy Carson, Margaret McDonald, Jerry Jones, Judy Marchant, Eileen Medil, Doris Roberts and Josefine Jones for generously sharing their knowledge of Jaminjung with me, and Janet Rogers, John Joshua, Irene Andrews, Marlene Andrews, Carol Robertson and Lesley Murrmurranbuy who worked so patiently with me on Kriol.

[2] The abbreviations used in this paper are: 1 = first-person, 2 = second-person, 3 = third-person, ABL = ablative, ALL = allative, ALSO = additional, AUX = auxiliary, DAT = dative, LOC = locative, NEG = negative, NOW = 'now, then' (clitic), PL = plural, PROX = proximal demonstrative, PRS = present-tense, PST = past-tense, RDP = reduplication, SFOC = sentence focus, SG = singular, SUBJ = subject, TR = transitive marker, <u>*taunwei*</u> = Kriol is marked in Jaminjung examples in cases of code-switching with underscore, and vice versa.

inflecting verb (*–ruma*). However, while such languages are reported to have a roughly equal distribution pattern of expressing manner and path in discourse (Slobin 2006:70), this is not found in Jaminjung (Schultze-Berndt, 2007).

(1) *malara* ***galu-galu*** *a* ***yirr*** *ga-ram* *gardag-ngunyi*
frog RDP-footwalk ah move.out 3SG-come:PRS tin-ABL
'The frog comes right out of the tin.' (DH10_A11_05_0020, MM)

A classification of Kriol in Talmy's typology is rather more straightforward. The language follows a SATELLITE-FRAMED pattern, like its lexifier English, in expressing the path of motion in a satellite, using the preposition *pas* in example 2 for instance, rather than just in the main verb. Furthermore, manner is encoded in the verb (*draib*) itself.

(2) *det men bin* ***draib*** ***pas*** *garrim ka langa im haus*
That man AUX.PST drive past with car LOC 3SG house
'The man drove past the house with his car.' (DH10_A15_21_0019, MA)

The encoding of path is obligatory in any motion event (Slobin 1996), however, languages differ regarding the degree of detail with which the path component is expressed in discourse (Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2009). Jaminjung employs a variety of strategies to encode path in motion descriptions. Restricted path information is encoded in a closed-class inflecting verb (IV) (*-ruma* in 3), and optionally in an open–classed uninflecting coverb (*burl*), and in any ground encoding specifying source (*ngiyi jarriny*), passed ground or goal of motion. Furthermore, path can be expressed as a direct object in a transitive ground-denoting IV (e.g. *-unga* 'leave').

(3) *ngiyi-ngunyi majani burl-burl burru-ruma-ny jarriny-ngunyi*
PROX-ABL maybe RDP-emerge 3PL-come-PST hole-ABL
'From here they maybe came out, out of the hole.' (ES97_A03_01.294, IP)

Kriol also encodes some path information in the verb phrase (*kam* in example 4) and might employ adverbial suffixes (*-at*) or prepositions (*pas* in 2) and ground encodings, such as prepositional phrases (*det woda*), or direct objects of transitive locomotion verbs, such as *bolorim* 'follow', to specify path.

(4) *dei* *bin* ***kam-at*** *brom* *det* *woda*
3PL:SUBJ AUX.PST come-out ABL:from that water
'They came out from the water.' (DH10_A15_05_0123, JoJo)

In this paper I examine two different types of datasets, one consisting of all motion event descriptions in a corpus of Frog Stories collected for cross-linguistic comparison (labelled FMD 'Frog Motion Dataset' hereafter), and one including narratives, route-descriptions and natural discourse for a narrower view on the two languages alone (CMD 'Complete Motion Dataset').

2. PATH SALIENCE

Taking a cross-linguistic approach, I will examine the notion of path salience. Firstly, a distinction can be made regarding ground specifications in discourse. In Section 2.1, I will discuss the distribution of MINUS-GROUND AND PLUS-GROUND EXPRESSIONS (Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2009, Slobin 1996) in the two languages under consideration. In minus-ground expressions, motion verbs stand alone or with a satellite (such as *fall* and *fall down* in English, and *caer* 'fall' in Spanish). Plus-ground expressions on the other hand, are motion verbs accompanied by some ground element (*fall down into the river*, and *caerse al río* 'fall to the river') (Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2009:406).

Secondly, the notion of a COMPLEX PATH or JOURNEY (Slobin 1996) is taken into account in Section 2.2. Such extended path descriptions include, for example, more than one ground in a single verb phrase as in (5) where there is a source (*from its hole*), a goal (*into the field*) and an element passed along the trajectory (*past the sleeping cat*) which are combined into a single verb phrase. Additionally, I examine the degree of detail of other elements of path encoded in the verb phrase (*ran out* and *into*), adverbs and prepositions or locational nominals.

(5) *The mouse ran out from its hole into the field past the sleeping cat.*

Thirdly, PATH AND EVENT GRANULARITY (i.e. how many different aspects of a complex journey are mentioned by speakers in a comparable motion event description) is considered in 2.3, examining the amount of detailed description of a motion event. Granularity is independent of the number of path components accompanying a single verb, and is concerned with the total number of detailed path descriptions in the linguistic encoding of a motion event in discourse (Slobin 1996). A combination of these three areas of analysis results in a cline of path salience along which languages can be placed according to the amount of detail in which path is expressed (Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2009: 404).

In Section 2.4 structural and cultural factors relating to path salience are closely examined and evaluated in light of the observations made for Jaminjung and Kriol. It becomes clear that, while the languages exhibit great structural differences in the encoding of path in motion events in discourse, they show similar patterns concerning event granularity. I come to the conclusion that an analysis of path salience combining structural and elaboration (i.e. path granularity) features fails to account for the patterns observed in Jaminjung and Kriol, and should therefore be kept separate.

2.1. Ground Specifications in Discourse in Jaminjung and Kriol

Languages can be distinguished in terms of using minus-ground and plus-ground phrases (Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2009:405, Slobin 1996). For Jaminjung a minus-ground expression is exemplified in (6). Here the path coverb *buru* specifies the trajectory of motion, but no ground is expressed. Example (3) above on the other hand is plus-ground where the path is expressed in the reduplicated coverb *burl* and the source is encoded in an ablative-marked landmark (*jarriny*) as well as a deictic (*ngiyi*). In

Jaminjung, ground-encoding coverbs also form parts of plus-ground expressions such as *bu* 'enter water' in example (8) below.

(6) *yawayi,* *nga-ngga* *biyang ...* **buru**
yes 1SG-go.PRS now return
'Yes, I'm going now, ... back.' (ES96_A08_02.034)

For Kriol, a minus-ground expression is exemplified in (7) where manner is expressed in the verb *flai* and path in the adverbial suffix (i.e. satellite) *–wei*. A specific ground, however, is not articulated. Example (4) above on the other hand is a plus-ground expression where the path is expressed both in an adverbial suffix (*-at*) as well as in a ground-encoding PP (*brom det woda*).

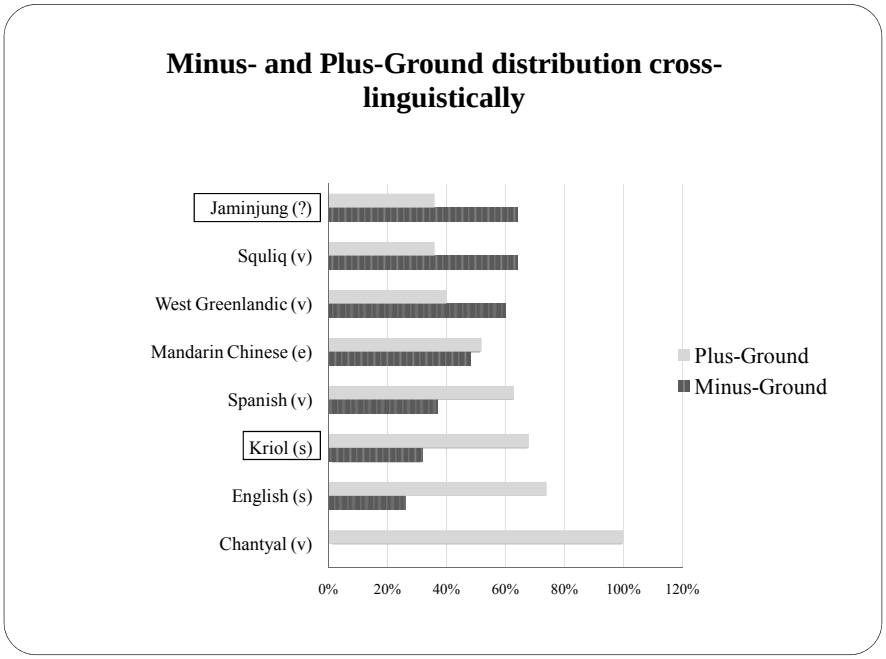
(7) *wal* *det* *mugmug* *bin* ***flai-wei*** *na*
well that owl AUX.PST fly-away NOW
'and the owl flew off then' (DH10_A15_18_0114, speaker CR)

In Figure 1 results for Jaminjung and Kriol ground distribution are placed among other languages for cross-linguistic comparison. All data here comes from Frog Story narrations only. The chart shows that Jaminjung occupies the extreme end of the cline in expressing ground explicitly in only 36% of all cases, just like Squliq. This distribution frequency appears to be typologically rather rare in comparison to Ibarretxe-Antuñano's (2009) study which found that the majority of languages encode plus-ground constructions more than 50% of the time.

Kriol speakers prefer[3] using plus-ground constructions in discourse (68% of all tokens in the data set). Generally, it has been suggested that there is a tendency in satellite-framed languages to express ground more often than in verb-framed and equipollently framed languages (Slobin 1996:201). This hypothesis is not generally confirmed in Ibarretxe-Antuñano's (2009) study where verb-framed languages such as Squliq and Chantyal are found at both extreme ends of the cline. Satellite-framed languages appeared to cluster towards the plus-ground encoding side. Therefore, the preference of speakers of Kriol for plus-ground expressions is expected. However, within Ibarretxe-Antuñano's collection of satellite-framed languages, Kriol is placed at the very bottom, expressing ground less than other languages of this type.

[3] A Mann-Whitney U test was conducted for a statistical analysis to ensure that the tendencies observed for Kriol and Jaminjung were not due to speaker variation, but statistically significant. The test revealed just that – a highly significant difference between speakers of Jaminjung and Kriol ($Z = -3.13$. $p = .002$).

Figure 1
Minus- and Plus-Ground distribution in Frog Story narrations only (Ibarretxe-Antuñano, 2009: 406)



2.2. Complex Motion Expressions

Complex path expressions in Jaminjung consist of one or more path coverbs (or a path and a manner coverb) plus one or two ground NPs. In example (1) above a manner and a path coverb combine in a complex predicate with a source-encoding NP. In both datasets, such constructions were rather rare, accounting for just 11% of all motion event descriptions in the CMD and 10% in the FMD. Even rarer still were occurrences of more than one ground in a single motion event description as in example (8). They amount to only 3% in the CMD and 1.5% in the FMD. Generally, speakers tend to focus on either source or goal or passed ground in a motion event description, disregarding all other components.

(8) *wirib=gayi,* *ga-dba-ny=ni* ***gugu-bina*** *bu,*
dog=ALSO 3SG-fall-PST=SFOC water-ALL dive

balarraj-giyag*,* *gurrany* *gani-ngawu,*
cliff-ABL NEG 3SG>3SG-see.PST
'The dog too, he fell, into the water, from the cliff, he didn't see it.'
(ES96_A01_04.297/299, DR)

In Kriol, complex path constructions are much more frequent in discourse than in Jaminjung. A complex path expression in Kriol includes a verb of motion with an adverbial suffix, as in (4) above, or a preposition or spatial adverb as in (9), and one or more ground-encoding NPs. Such constructions are in fact the preferred strategy of

motion event encoding in the FMD where 52% of all motion expressions were complex paths. Even though this percentage was much lower in the CMD (31%), it is also the highest frequency of all possible path detail encodings. Complex paths with two grounds were again very rare, only accounting for 2% and 2.5% of motion expressions in the FMD and CMD respectively.

(9) *det dog tu imin jamp ontop la det bigges log*
That dog too 3SG:AUX.PST jump on+top to:ALL that big log
'And the dog as well jumped onto the big trunk.' (DH10_A16_06_0125, LM)

From a cross-linguistic perspective Jaminjung and Kriol are among those languages that regularly express more than one path element per verb. Kriol stands out in Table 1 that it displays a strong preference for two+ path elements rather than just one, whereas Jaminjung shows a very similar pattern to a verb-framed language such as Turkish.

Table 1
Path elements per verb in frog stories cross-linguistically (adapted from Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2009: 407)

		Number of Path Elements per Verb		
Language	**Path Elements per verb**	**One**	**Two or +**	**Total**
Basque (v)	Several	32 (61%)	20 (39%)	52
Turkish (v)	Several	24 (75%)	8 (25%)	32
Spanish (v)	Usually one	42 (95%)	2 (5%)	44
West Greenlandic (v)	One	96 (98%)	2 (2%)	98
Jaminjung (?)	Several	136 (69.5%)	60 (30.5%)	158
Kriol (s)	Several	79 (40%)	119 (60%)	198

2.3. Path and Event Granularity

Motion event granularity refers to the frequency of path complements mentioned in discourse independent of the availability of complex path clauses (discussed in Sections 2.1 and 2.2). Here we are concerned with the degree of detail in which an event is described irrespective of the detail of path expressions within a single motion event phrase.

To explore granularity Ibarretxe-Antuñano (2009) (following Slobin 1996) uses the cliff scene of the Frog Story as a base as it is a particularly motion-rich episode in the picture book.

In the scene, a deer picks up a boy with its antlers, runs with him towards a cliff and finally drops him over the edge. A dog runs alongside the deer and both the dog and the boy fall down together and eventually land in a pond below the cliff. Slobin (1996) segmented this scene into six sub-scenes (Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2009:409):

1) deer starts to run
2) deer runs, carrying the boy
3) deer stops at cliff
4) deer throws the boy (off the antlers/down)
5) boy and dog fall
6) boy and dog land in water

According to Ibarretxe-Antuñano (2009:408-409), high event granularity for a language is assumed, somewhat arbitrarily, when always or mostly more than three of the six segments above are mentioned. From a cross-linguistic perspective, this is the case for Arrernte and Ewe, for example, as well as Germanic languages and Thai. The other end of the scale is occupied by verb-framed languages such as Tagalog and French. For Jaminjung and Kriol, at least three segments are mentioned in six of the seven tokens of the cliff scene investigated. Therefore, both languages show elaborated path granularity in 85% of all cases, as displayed in Table 2 below. Thus, although Kriol is a satellite-framed language and similar to English, it exhibits the same pattern as Jaminjung which uses very different strategies of encoding path.

Table 2
Path Granularity in the Deer Scene based on Ibarretxe-Antuñano (2009: 409)

Language	**+ 3 segments**[4]
Tagalog (v)	17%
Romance (French, Portuguese, Spanish) (v)	30%
Malay (v)	50%
Slavic (Polish, Russian, Serbo-Croatian) (s)	76%
West Greenlandic (v)	80%
Jaminjung (?)	**85%**
Kriol (s)	**85%**
Germanic (Dutch, English, Icelandic, Swedish, German) (s)	86%
Chinese (e)	92%
Basque (v)	93%
Arrernte (v)	100%
Squliq (v)	100%
Chantyal (v)	100%

It becomes obvious that the languages clearly show different behaviour concerning the structural encoding of path at the clause level in discourse. However, a look at extra-linguistic factors relating to path granularity reveals that speakers of Jaminjung and Kriol show the same patterns. I argue that this is due to a shared cultural space. I will discuss this approach in more detail in Section 2.4.

[4] Percentages are calculated by dividing the number of speakers who mention three or more segments by the total number of speakers.

2.4. Factors for Path Salience

Some language-specific factors appear to influence structural expression for path salience, but there are also extra-linguistic patterns. Structurally, the availability of a variety of different linguistic devices for encoding motion components is expected to lead to high path salience patterns. Similarly, the existence of so-called 'dummy verbs' is expected to trigger more elaborate path encodings in discourse. For the two languages under investigation, it can be said that both have rather elaborate linguistic devices for the expression of motion events, such as path and manner coverbs and case-marking on grounds in Jaminjung and adverbial suffixes and prepositions marking source or goal in Kriol, for example. Additionally, both languages use semantically 'generic' verbs (such as the IVs in Jaminjung and verbs such as *go* and *kam* 'come' in Kriol) which could be dubbed 'dummy verbs'. Therefore, other means of expressing motion components are expected to be more frequent. However, for Jaminjung, instances with no explicit encoding of path outside the inflecting verb account for 39% of motion events in the CMD and 47.5% in the FMD. For Kriol on the other hand, only 6% of motion verbs appear on their own in the FMD and in 9% in the CMD in the expected pattern.

Generally, as discussed above, although both languages exhibit the 'right' factors for high path salience, Jaminjung appears to be generally only a medium-path salient language with relatively low frequency of explicit ground encodings, but a higher dissemination of other path elements such as coverbs or implicit encodings. Kriol, however, generally shows high path salience on the levels of explicit ground and complex path encodings.

However, path granularity should be considered separately from these structural features. I believe that the final factor influencing path salience – cultural systems – identified by Ibarretxe-Antuñano provides the right background for understanding why Kriol and Jaminjung show such major differences on path encoding frequency at the clause level, but behave exactly the same in terms of the detail offered in the description of motion events. It can be argued that languages displaying a high level of path event granularity in larger chunks of discourse are more likely to be used by speakers in cultural systems in which space and motion play a more important role than by speakers of languages which do not (Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2009:411).

I claim that the shared cultural space of both languages is the reason for such behaviour. While frequency of path encodings appears to have its roots in the general structure of motion event expressions in the individual languages, event encodings in larger chunks of discourse appear not to be affected by this and might therefore have their origins in cultural systems. For other Australian languages such as Warlpiri and Arrernte it has been claimed that cultural factors are linked directly to the way space and motion are described, displaying detailed attention to motion, paths, journeys, and orientation in space (Bavin 2004:18-19, Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2009:411, Simpson 2002:298-299, Wilkins 2004:143-144). The traditional lifestyle of Jaminjung and Kriol speakers as hunters and gatherers points towards a similar significance for motion and orientation.

The observed high salience of motion event encodings beyond the clause level appears to be connected with a need to explicitly describe the traditional country or

routes travelled within it to find food and water. However, this does not necessarily have anything to do with frequent path encodings at the clause level as argued by Ibarretxe-Antuñano (2009) as my analysis of Jaminjung shows. As shown in Table 2 above, speakers of verb-framed Arrernte express more than three segments of the cliff scene 100% of the time. Therefore, a preference for detailed event encodings can be observed for three typologically different Australian languages spoken in the same cultural realm. These observations however, do not entail that all languages that were identified by Ibarretxe-Antuñano (2009) as high path granularity languages are spoken in hunter-gatherer type societies (e.g., speakers of Basque, Chinese and Germanic languages were also found to employ detailed elaboration of path beyond the clause level). However, these languages also show high path salience concerning ground-encodings and complex paths at the clause level. With reference to the two languages analysed here, however, there is a remarkable mismatch for Jaminjung between event granularity and clause-level path salience. This is not the case for Kriol.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

My analysis of Jaminjung and Kriol is based on three complementary areas. Firstly, an investigation of the combination of explicit ground encodings and verbs placed Jaminjung among languages preferring minus-ground expressions in discourse. Kriol is the opposite with a preference for plus-ground encodings. Secondly, the distribution of complex paths encoding more than one path element in a single VP was analysed. For both languages, the combination of two explicit ground elements within one VP is a very rare construction. However, when considering other path elements within a motion event verb phrase, Jaminjung encodes path in great detail (52% in the FMD and 60% in the CMD). Kriol is analysed as being a highly path-elaborate language since in 76% of the CMD and in 84.5% of the FMD path was explicitly expressed. Generally, these structural features place Jaminjung in a middle region of the path salience cline and Kriol towards the plus-end.

Ibarretxe-Antuñano (2009) also includes an analysis of the degree of detailed path description beyond the clause level into her typological analysis of path salience by looking at encoding of the cliff scene in the Frog Story. However, I argue that this part of the investigation needs to be kept separate from the two levels of analysis mentioned above. Contrary to path encoding frequency at the clause level, Jaminjung is considered as highly elaborate as Kriol, with 85% of speakers of both languages expressing three or more segments of the cliff scene in the Frog Story.

Throughout this paper, I argued that for an analysis of path salience the frequency of detailed path encodings at the clause level in discourse is a highly useful tool to compare and contrast typologically different languages. It is necessary to consider all the different parts of path elements within a VP, including, but not limiting oneself to, explicit ground encodings. As Jaminjung and Kriol show, there are other kinds of path elements such as path coverbs or adverbial suffixes that need to be taken into consideration. Similarly, the existence of certain types of semantically 'limited' verbs ('dummy verbs') appears to give rise to a higher rate of occurrence of path

elaboration. Path event granularity, on the other hand, needs to be viewed separately.

To sum up, whereas structurally path salience points to major differences between Jaminjung and Kriol, the elaboration of segments in a given motion event appears to be very similar for the two languages. Considering that they are spoken within the same cultural area, this suggests the influence of a culture-specific pattern. My analysis raises doubts about Ibarretxe-Antuñano's (2009) study of path salience combining structural elements and elaboration patterns and suggests that these measurements should be kept separate.

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