Space-oriented Accusative versus Dative Symbolic Constructions in German and its Portuguese Counterparts: a Cognitive Approach

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"The languages of the world differ widely in their treatment of space."

Miller and Johnson-Laird (1976:376)

0. This paper deals with apparently polysemic space-oriented constructions in German in which the same subject, the same verb and the same preposition are used for the representation of a static locative relation, as well as for the depiction of goal relation Lyons (1977).

In fact, the only difference between the above mentioned "two-way preposition" symbolic structures, which lies on the opposition between accusative and dative complements within the prepositional phrase is associated with different spatial construals in the cognitive view Smith (1993, 1995).

However, extending the study to a parallel Portuguese *corpus*, we wish to go beyond the motivation – based explanation of morphological cases to focus on different image-schematic gestalts Johnson (1987) and their transformations (Lakoff 1987; Gibbs 1995) that underlie different space conceptualizations in both languages.

1. Before analysing the subject of the present paper, we will start with a definition of "polysemy" ¹. According to Lyons (1977:551) a polysemous item is "a single lexeme with several related senses". He goes on to say it that seems to be the case of some locative prepositions (p. 695)..." In many languages the same preposition or the same case is used for both

¹ see also Lakoff (1987:12)

the locative-relation and the goal-relation (cf. French "à" for AT and TO; Latin "in" for IN and INTO, and for ON and ONTO."

Notice, however, that he distinguishes two types of polysemic occurrences, namely either with the same preposition or with the same (morphological) case. No mention of examples with the same preposition and a different case are to be found elsewhere.

Pertaining to the semantics of morphological cases, cognitive-oriented Wierzbicka (1988:3) states that grammatical constructions are motivated by semantic distinctions: ..."every grammatical construction is a vehicle of certain semantic structure." In fact, according to cognitive premisses language is an integrated system, where everything contributes to convey meaningwords, grammatical constructions and illocutionary devices (including intonation).

It is a fact that, on reuniting both views presented above in a single perspective, which in this context are not incompatible, we arrive at a complex formula [polysemic preposition + different construction] that leads us to believe, already at this stage, that the constructions to be studied are, in fact, only apparently polysemic, since each construction type is assumed to have its own unique meaning, as clearly stated by Langacker (1991:338): "All valid grammatical constructs have some kind of conceptual import".

2. An introduction to the mayor theoretical principles of cognitive linguistics is now briefly sketched, c.f. Geeraerts (1997: 7-10). Cognitive linguistics, undertakes the study of linguistic categorization by means of the lexicon and, not so frequently, of grammatical constructs. The categorization function by which language imposes a structure on the world can be viewed from three different perspectives according to the same author (ibidem): "The internal structures of the categories taken separately, the larger conceptual structures that combine several individual categories into coherent mental models and the relationship between form and meaning."

In fact, in cognitive linguistic analysis, <u>meaning in perspective</u> is considered to be the primary linguistic phenomenon, due to the view that language constitutes a way of organizing knowledge that reflects the needs, interests and experiences of individuals and cultures. Thus, spatial representations are mental construals because, as stated above, the world is not something given, but something construed by human cognition. As Taylor (1995 b:4) so accurately equates: "It is the construals of the world that are properly regarded as the object of linguistic semantics."

- 2.1 We shall now establish as our goal the study of the relatively rare "two-way-preposition" constructions² with accusative and dative in the following examples:
 - (1) Die Jungen wanderten [mit dem Hund] in den Bergen
 - (2) Die Jungen wanderten [mit dem Hund] in die Berge
 - (3) Sie fuhren [mit dem Hund] im Park
 - (4) Sie fuhren [mit dem Hund] in den Park
 - (5) Die Kinder liefen [mit dem Hund] im Wald
 - (6) Die Kinder liefen [mit dem Hund] in den Wald

First, an attempt will be made to interpret them in the light of different semantic approaches in order to find out which shall prove to be more adequate for the analysis.

There are (at least) two distinct ways of considering meaning matters in semantics, namely the two-level model represented by Bierwisch and followers and the one-level model (or network model) defended by Langacker and others (Taylor 1995^a). The two-level model sharply distinguishes between semantics and cognition, between lexical and encyclopaedic knowledge, positing a unitary meaning at the semantic level and relegating multiple senses to the non-linguistic conceptual level of interpretation. Thus, the unitary meaning of the locative expressions

² Smith (1993:534) uses this designation to represent prepositions which can govern either the accusative or the dative case.

could be reduced to a generic formula that, in principle, would apply to sentences (1), (3) and (5) (Herweg 1998 apud Taylor 1995^a:12):

which can be read as follows: The location of x (the located object, or trajector) in PLACE [y] where PLACE [y] is defined as the space that y (the reference or (landmark object) occupies.

It is for us impossible to accept that such a stative formula can represent the above mentioned examples due to the fact that all of the verbs represent a dislocation in space. Thus, several *loci* are clearly implied, even if they are inserted in an abstract spatial setting.

At this stage, however, we must emphasize that there is an abstract model that depicts with extreme precision goal-oriented examples by means of an archisemenic formula of displacement (Wotjak 1994:79):

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" [ADESSE LOC/01 [] n, LOCP<sub>1</sub>] ti &

[ADESSE LOC/01 [] n, LOCP<sub>2</sub>] ti + k&

[ADESSE LOC/01 [] n, LOCP<sub>3</sub>] ti +l."
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in which the representation of an entity \underline{n} , placed at three different places $LOCP_1$, $LOCP_2$, $LOCP_3$ at three different sequential moments ti, ti + k and ti + l is clearly pictured . As far as our *corpus* analysis is concerned, the only problem resides on the fact that it is too schematic, since it could represent the whole of the above mentioned examples but it could also illustrate any other sentences with different verbs and different prepositions

A much more precise explanation is certainly to be found in the experientialist Cognitive approach in which lexical and grammatical constructs are indissociably bound with encyclopaedic knowledge. Thus, the analysis will take into account not only the relation between form and meaning, but also the combination of several individual categories with different image-schematic bases into cognitive domains, which constitute coherent cognitive models.

- 2.2 Following Langacker (1991), Smith (1993,1995) considered the constructions under analysis to be relational predications which depict interconnections between entities, namely the relation between a *trajector*, a figure in a relational profile, and a *landmark*, a salient entity in the profile other than the *trajector*, which provides a point of reference with respect to which the trajector moves or is located, as illustrated in the following examples:
 - (7) "Er verschloß die Mappe sorgfältig in seinem Schreibtisch" (our emphasis)
 - (8) "Er verschloß die Mappe sorgfältig in seinen Schreibtisch" (our emphasis)

Smith (1995:312)

The verb *verschließen*, due to the fact that in the cognitive perspective world knowledge and linguistic knowledge are indissociable³, is naturally understood as representing a path along which the entity moves as it is locked up in the desk. The accusative construction in (8) highlights the fact that the trajector is moving along a path which crosses into the landmark, where as the dative example (7) focuses on the final position of the trajector, as well as on the landmark as a container which hides the trajector.

Although we certainly agree with the above exploration, we shall try to go deeper into the subject investigating the image-schemas underlying the construal of the symbolic structures under analysis. In fact, according to Langacker (1991:399) they "play an important role in structuring cognitive domains (...) that support the characterization of basic grammatical constructs."

2.3 As a starting point, it is claimed that data in question conceive a spatial dislocation of a trajector in relation to a landmark. However,

³ Langacker (1987:5):"Cognitive grammar therefore equates meaning with conceptualization..."

examples (2), (4) and (6) depict the displacement of the trajector into a landmark, where as (1), (3) and (5) conceptualize the displacement of the trajector inside the landmark. Futhermore, it is clear that in all the construals the conceptualization of the landmark *Berge*, *Park* and *Wald* is grounded in the pre-conceptual image-schema of a container (Johnson 1987)⁴. Following the outlined analyses, figure 1 below represents the space-restrained trajectory of examples (1),(3) and (5), founded upon the superimposition of the container schema with the path schema (Johnson 1987)⁵:



Figure 1

In contrast, in the spatial construals of examples (2), (4) and (6) the path schema interacts successively with the blokage⁶/ removal of blockage and container schemas (Johnson 1987), picturing the trajector's progression through the exertion of force into clearly container-shaped landmarks, *Berge, Park* and *Wald*_that act as represented in figure 2 below:

⁴ Johnson (1987:22): (i) "The experience of containment typically involves protection from, or resistance to, external forces." ...(iii)The contained object gets a relative fixity of location (IV) the relative fixing of location within the container means that the contained object becomes either accessible or inaccessible to the view of some observer."

⁵ Johnson (1987:28) "This image schema consists of three elements (a source point A, a terminal point B, and a vector tracing a path between them) and a relation (specified as a force vector moving from A to B)."

⁶ Johnson (1987:43) "Blockage: in our attempts to interact forcefully with objects and persons in our environment, we often encounter obstacles that block or resist our force....It can try to go over the obstacle, around it, or even through it, where is sufficient power to do so."

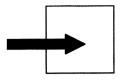


Figure 2

It must be emphasized that more traditional semantics, as far back as 1977, had already acknowledged, but never developed, the importance of the container notion for the study of certain prepositions Lyons (1977:699):

"The notion of containment, or interiority is obviously a very basic notion; and there may be grounds for introducing it into the analysis of meaning of such preposition as <u>above</u>, <u>below</u>, etc;"

Furthermore, the same author has also pointed out the relevance and importance of the "action-schema of the Journey" for the semantic analysis:

"... What we may or may not refer to as the action-schema of the journey involving a source, a goal and, optionally, a path is of very general applicability in the semantics and grammatical analysis of languages."

Now, the time has come to emphasize that the key for the semantic analysis of the above examples relies on different image-schematic arrangements. Thus, the dative construction is grounded in the superimposition of container and path schemas, whereas the accusative construction is grounded in the successive interconnection of path/blockage/removal of blockage and container schemas.

3. The German examples are now to be equated with the parallel Portuguese constructions starting off from the hypothesis that space conceptualization is, at least to some extent, different in German and in Portuguese due to the fact that language is itself a *cultural* entity, i.e. linguistic structures are conventional and acquired through social interac-

tion. In fact, cognitive linguistics recognizes "cultural knowledge as the foundation not just of lexicon, but central facets of grammar as well" Langacker (1994:31).

At this point, since cognitive grammar is founded directly upon the basic semiological function of language, namely to symbolize conceptualizations by means of phonological structures, we can distinguish three types of structures, namely, semantic structures (conceptualizations), phonological structures and symbolic structures (established through the symbolic relation between a semantic and a phonological structure). Furthermore, Langacker (1987:88) states that: " a semantic structure is a conceptual structure that serves as a semantic pole of a linguistic expression." Thus, it can be concluded that grammatical/symbolic structure more generally constitutes the conventional symbolization of semantic structure.

- 3.1 A closer look at the Portuguese constructs parallel to the German examples will certainly provide enough evidence for establishing the relation between cultural knowledge, lexicon and grammar:
 - (9) Os rapazes passearam [com o cão] nas montanhas
 - (10) Os rapazes foram passear [com o cão] até ás montanhas
 - (11) Eles andaram de carro [com o cão] no parque
 - (12) Eles foram andar de carro [com o cão] até ao parque
 - (13) As crianças correram [com o cão] na floresta
 - (14) As crianças foram correr [com o cão] até à floresta

However, before analysing the difference in space construals in Portuguese, we shall remark that, in the first place, the Portuguese preposition *in* is polysemic according to Batoréo (1996:384):

"The Iberian languages present another type of polysemy that is related either to the spatial insertion of a surface or to the spatial insertion of the interior of an area or volume, using the same preposition <u>en/em</u> "(our translation).

Furthermore, in our opinion, the use of em in sentences is ambiguous

since it establishes a space insertion of the trajector within a bounded landmark, but not necessarily an enclosed one⁷.

On focusing on the lexicalization patterns, on the one hand, we are struck by the fact that the lexical item *passear* is not as specific as *wandern* because, as widely proven by Almeida (1995), the Portuguese language, differently from the German, must not necessarily lexicalize specific action, adopting frequently a generic perspectivization. On the other hand, it stands out that *andar de carro* is conceived as a complex lexicalization pattern, different from the German that lexicalizes it exclusively at verbal level in *fahren*.

However, the most important difference lies on the fact that European Portuguese at conceptual/semantic level does not construe sequential interconnections ⁸ of the container schema with the path/blockage/renoval of blockage schemas and, consequently, does not acknowledge the following symbolic structures as representations of a displacement towards a goal (but exclusively as displacement actions within bounded landmarks):

- (15) Os rapazes passearam [com o cão] nas montanhas
- (16) Eles andaram de carro [com o cão] no parque
- (17) As crianças correram [com o cão] na floresta

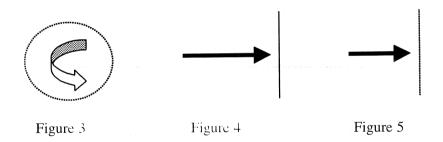
Coming back to (10), (12) and (14), it stands out that the lexicalization of the path schema by means of the periphrastic construction " $ir + infinitive + at\acute{e}$ ", in which ir itself (that is the trajectory) is emphasized is a consequence, in our opinion, of the lacking opposition of stative and non-stative modes in verbal lexicalizations.

⁷ Mandler (1996:378) argues that: "Although containment and support sound like universal spatial primitives, Bowermann (1989) suggests that this may be a somewhat provincial view. Some languages make no distinction at all (as in Spanish *em*), and other make a three-way distinction." For more information on cross-linguistic study of space conceptualization of containment cf. Bowermann (1996a:149-159; 1996b: 393-396). 8 "Johnson (1987:7)..." that image-schemas are often experienced together, one superimposed on the other in an experiential gestalt structure."

Last but not least, the landmarks in Portuguese are not configurated in a clear way, i.e. anyway not as metaphorically container-shaped entities. This is also confirmed by the alternative construal of the scene with para which uniquely posits a vague goal different from a not so vague one lexicalized by $at\acute{e}$:

- (18) Os rapazes foram passear [como cão] para as montanhas
- (19) Eles foram andar de carro [com o cão] para o parque
- (20) As crianças foram correr [com o cão] para a floresta

To sum up, in the context of *passear/andar de carro/correr* European Portuguese lexicalizes, on the one hand, the representation of an internal trajectory, based on a dynamic reading of the container schema ⁹ by means of a construction with *em*. On the other hand, it lexicalizes (external) goal-oriented trajectories, inspired on the path schema, by means of the constructions with *até* or *para* as depicted respectively in figures 3, 4 and 5 below:



Notice that the dotted circle in Figure 3 is intended to reproduce the fact that *em* in Portuguese is not be identified with a sharply delineated enclosed area with a clear boundary separating an interior section from a exterior one.

⁹ Cienki (1997:6) "A properly common to almost all image schemas is that they can be realized in either a static or a dynamic fashion."

It must also be emphasized that in both Figures 4 and 5 the landmark configuration is vaguely depicted but at different degrees.

4. We shall draw some final remarks stating, once more, that the German and Portuguese languages have a large inventory of grammatical markers and constructions that are language-specific, conventional and cultural transmitted. Thus, "grammatical framing is not only a typological feature that gives us the range of case markings possible in a given language; it is also a constitutive feature of a point of view, of presenting events and participants, in particular ways." Duranti (1997:336) (our emphasis).

The use of *in*-constructions with dative and accusitive case assignments in German in connection with *wandern/fahren/laufen* representing, respectively, an inner trajectory and an exterior to interior trajectory, reveals two partially, two different gestalts:

- one backgrounded in the superimposition of the container schema with a path schema.
- the other originated in the sequential interconnection of path/ /blockage/removal of blockage/container schemas.

The Portuguese examples also depict two different gestalts through different lexicalization patterns with *em* and *até*:

- One is based upon the superimposition of a culturally configurated container-schema with the path schema.
- The other establishing a vaguely configurated landmark is exclusively founded upon the path schema.

In both Portuguese constructions emphasis is laid on the trajector's progression and not an the landmark configuration, whereas in German both the trajector's path and the landmark configuration are conceived as prominent.

If we accept (as we indeed do) that behind each conceptualization mode, i.e. each language, exists a culturally mediated entity ¹⁰, we can figure out that the conceptualizer in the German constructions with accusative evidences a projection capacity that somehow perceptually follows the trajector's path into the landmarks, i.e. across physical barriers of containers, disclosing interiors¹¹, where as in the parallel Portuguese examples a non-mobile conceptualizer is revealed with a very limited projection capacity though a space dimension populated with vaguely shaped landmarks ¹².

This conclusion seems to be in accordance with the psycholinguistic line of research focusing on the fact that mental operations on image schemas are analogs of spatial operations Johnson (1987:25); Gibbs (1995:358). Thus, some aspects of mental images reflect the operation of visual and spatial representations.

We shall center our attention on the human capacity of mentally picturing a "representational momentum", a designation for an internalized representation of a physical momentum¹³, and namely on the "visual momentum", i.e. the experience of seeing heavy moving things continue to move even when encountering other objects. ¹⁴ No doubt the German constructions with accusative certainly evidence this mental process since they depict the German people's ability to follow in their imagination the path of a moving entity across physical barriers of container-conceived

¹⁰ Langacker (1991: 245): "First and foremost, a speaker apprehends the situation from a specific place within it – from his or her own vantage point and through his or her own eyes – so that phenomenologically his or her conception of it is quite different from that of a detached outside observer."

¹¹ Dewell (1997:21) states that: "Really three-dimensional perception of the object requires lateral or vertical motion by the perceiver, either walking around it to view it from another angle, or reaching out to touch more than one point on its surface." (our emphasis)

¹² Dewell (ibidem): If we look at a stationary object from a fixed single perspective we do not get a true three-dimensional image, at best only a 2 _ -D perception of shape with depth cues."

¹³ This notion was coined by Freyd and Finke (1984) apud Gibbs (1995:358) 14 Gibbs (ibidem)

landmarks and then focus on the point it will come to a rest. In our opinion, it certainly constitutes an example of the path-focus to end-point focus transformation, as explained by Lakoff (1987:443) in the following terms: "Follow, in imagination, the path of a moving object, and then focus on the point where it comes to rest, or where it will come to rest."

To sum up, in the present study emphasis was laid on the decisive role of image-schemas in the meaning coinage of spatial goal-oriented constructions in both languages. Furthermore, on studying those constructions crosslinguistically two different cultural models were featured:

- The German model grounded not only in the superimposition of container and path image schemas but also in the transformation of the path schema construed on the basis of container-shaped landmarks.
- The Portuguese model grounded both in the superimposition and non-superimposition of container and path schemas by means of different lexicalizations patterns construed on the basis of vaguely shaped landmarks.

Further investigation into other symbolic constructs will prove whether the above studied phenomena are recurrent patterns of the German and Portuguese cultural models. We *a priori* believe so, since according to Duranti (1997:337) "Language is not just a representation of an independently established world. Language is also that world."

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