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Benjamin Fagard, Alexandru Mardale

► **To cite this version:**

Benjamin Fagard, Alexandru Mardale. Motion verbs in Romanian: Language contact and language renewal. Romance motion verbs in language change, De Gruyter, pp.23-46, 2024, 10.1515/9783111248141-002 . halshs-04857383

**HAL Id: halshs-04857383**

**<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-04857383v1>**

Submitted on 28 Dec 2024

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Motion verbs in Romanian: Language contact and language renewal

Benjamin Fagard, Lattice (CNRS, ENS|PSL & Sorbonne Nouvelle)

Alexandru Mardale, INALCO – SeDyL (CNRS, IRD)

Fagard, Benjamin and Mardale, Alexandru. 2024. Motion verbs in Romanian: Language contact and language renewal. In Katrin Pfadenhauer & Evelyn Wiesinger (eds), *Romance motion verbs in language change: Grammar, lexicon, discourse*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 23-46. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111248141-002>

## Abstract

Motion events and motion verbs have been extensively studied in some languages, e.g. English, German, French, Italian. In the past decades, after the pioneering studies of Talmy and Slobin, a vast literature has appeared on this subject, showing both the global adequacy and the limits of the now well-known Talmyan model, opposing Satellite-framed and Verb-framed languages. In this paper, we investigate the case of Romanian, with an elicitation study and a diachronic corpus study. Our aim is to verify the Verb-framed nature of Romanian, and measure the influence of language contact in its troubled history.

## Keywords

motion event, motion verb, elicitation, corpus, diachrony, language contact

## 0 Introduction

This paper aims to contribute to the study of motion event descriptions, a blooming field since Talmy's seminal works on the subject (Talmy 1985; 1991). Some languages have received much attention, and there are a variety of studies on the verbalization of motion events in English, French or German, for instance, with various approaches and methodologies; Romanian, however, has been the object of much fewer studies.

After a brief state of the art (Section 1), we describe the way speakers of Present Day Romanian verbalize motion event descriptions, on the basis of experimental data (Section 2). We then go on to study the emergence of lexical paradigms of Romanian motion verbs, on the basis of a diachronic corpus study (Section 3). Since one important factor in the evolution from Latin to Romance is the influence of language contact, we take this factor into account by including texts translated from Slavic and Hungarian, as a clue pointing to possible evidence of language contact.

## 1 State of the art

### 1.1 The verbal description of motion events from a crosslinguistic perspective

Talmy's description of motion event verbalization has evolved from his dissertation (Talmy 1972) to posterior versions. We build here mainly on Talmy (1991), and take motion event verbalizations as potentially involving four semantic components: FIGURE, MOTION, PATH & GROUND, as well as co-events, e.g. MANNER or CAUSE. The main claim is that languages will have a predominant lexicalization pattern with PATH expressed either in verb roots – with other semantic components expressed elsewhere – or in satellites to the verb – the verb slot then remaining free to express other semantic components, typically MANNER.

Languages of the first type, with PATH expressed in the verb, are called verb-framed

languages (VF); languages of the second type, with PATH expressed in a satellite, are called satellite-framed languages (SF). Examples (1–2) illustrate this contrast with the case of Romanian and Serbian (2): in (1), PATH is contained in the main verb *a ieși* ‘to exit’ and MANNER is left unexpressed; in (2), PATH is contained in the satellite *pre* ‘over’ and MANNER is contained in the verb *skočiti* ‘to jump’.

1. *o domnișoară iese dintre brazi*<sup>1</sup>

a.F.SG lady exit.PRS.3SG from.in pine.tree.PL

‘a young lady walks out of a grove (lit. exits from pine trees)’  
(TR\_RM\_06\_27)

2. *dečak preskače kamen* (Serbian)

child.NOM.SG over.jump.PRS.3SG stone.ACC.SG

‘a child jumps over a stone’ (TR\_SB\_02\_63)

The VF vs SF opposition can be observed for descriptions of the same event (i.e. video-clip, see Section 2.1), as illustrated by examples (3) and (4).

3. *copilul intră în apă*

child.DET.M.SG enter.PRS.3SG in water.ACC.SG

‘the child enters into the sea’ (TR\_RM\_01\_59)

4. *dečak utrčava u more*

child.NOM.SG in.run.IMP.F.PRS.3SG in sea.ACC.SG

‘a child was running into the sea’ (TR\_SB\_06\_59)

This highlights an important feature opposing languages in the spatial domain, as shown earlier for Germanic and Romance (Frauendienst 1935; Tesnière 1959; Malblanc 1961). The claim that languages can be categorized as either SF or VF still largely stands, though it has been refined and enriched by the contributions of various authors. It has been shown, for instance, that the predominance of one strategy is not always overwhelming; Modern Greek has thus been described as a *double framing* language (Soroli/Verkerk 2017). Other languages have been claimed to belong to a third type, given that the difference in status between the morpheme expressing MANNER and that expressing PATH is not obvious: thus, Jaminjung is described as *equipollent* (Schultze-Berndt 2000). The case of serial verb constructions can be seen as especially problematic for the VF vs SF dichotomy (Lamarre 2013; Shi/Wu 2014).

One of the reasons behind the good fortunes of this theoretical framework might be that this dichotomy has various corollaries which have been shown to be quite consistent crosslinguistically, such as the fact that SF languages more frequently express MANNER, and have larger paradigms of MANNER verbs (Slobin 2004), despite the existence of counter-examples (Iacobini 2010).

In a series of experimental studies, one of the authors of this paper has, with various coauthors, tested this framework on various languages. These studies have confirmed that the predictions of this theoretical framework are largely borne out crosslinguistically, as speakers of Polish, German, Swedish, for instance, overwhelmingly use SF patterns in contexts which are described by speakers of French or Italian with VF patterns. As a matter of fact, the SF/VF opposition entails

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<sup>1</sup> By default, all examples are in Romanian.

a quantifiable difference which clearly opposes languages expressing PATH in a satellite and those expressing PATH in the main verb (Fagard/Zlatev/Kopecka/Cerruti/Blomberg 2013).

However, these studies have also shown that there are interesting counterexamples (Fagard/Stosic/Cerruti 2017), and limitations, such as the importance of interindividual variation even within a given language with a clear type, the fact that some languages express both MANNER and PATH in verbs of seemingly equivalent status, as in Thai (Zlatev/Yangklang 2004; Fagard/Zlatev/Kopecka/Cerruti/Blomberg 2013), and the fact that some languages seem to be in-between types, as they display partly lexicalized satellites, such as Serbian (Fagard/Stosic/Cerruti 2017).

The question addressed in this paper, however, is not so much that of the adequacy of the framework as the context in which a language may shift from one type to the other, a subject already explored in various publications (e.g. Xu 2006; Stolova 2008; Iacobini/Fagard 2011). Our focus, in this context, is on the importance of various forms of language contact (see Section 1.3). As we show in the next sections, indeed, Romanian is a Verb-Framed language (Section 1.2.), which has been in prolonged contact both with Satellite-Framed and Verb-Framed languages (Section 1.3.). Our question is thus the following: what impact did this have on its evolution?

## 1.2 Motion event descriptions in Romanian

There have been a number of studies on space and motion in Romanian. Important milestones include a study focusing on motion verbs (Reinheimer 1965), one on verbal semantics (Evseev 1974), and a series of papers on motion event descriptions (Dragomirescu/Geană 2011; Dragomirescu 2013).

In this section, we briefly describe the main features of spatial descriptions in Romanian, on the basis of these papers and of a previous study comparing elicited data in Romanian, Italian and French (Fagard/Mardale 2020), which confirmed the VF status of Romanian, as described in Dragomirescu/Geană (2011) and Dragomirescu (2013).

As in other VF languages, Romanian descriptions of motion events typically imply the encoding of PATH in the main verb, with MANNER either entirely left out (5) or expressed in an adverbial (6) or a dependent verb (7).

5. *o femeie iese din pădure traversează un drum și trece în dreapta*  
a.F woman exit.PRS.3SG from.in wood cross.PRS.3SG a.M road and  
pass.PRS.3SG in right.DET.F  
'a woman exits from the woods, crosses a road and goes to the right'  
(TR\_RM\_11\_48)

6. *a plecat pe jos*  
aux.PRS.3SG leave.PST.PRT.SG on foot  
'[s/he] left on foot' (created example)

7. *a ieșit șchiopătând*  
AUX.PST.3SG exit.PST.PRT.SG limp.PRS.PRT  
'[s/he] limped out' (created example)

MANNER expression in the main verb, conversely, is possible but unnatural except in non-boundary crossing context, i.e. when the verb designates an *activity* rather than translocative motion (8–9).

8. *a plutit spre mal*

AUX.PRS.3SG float.PST.PRT.SG toward shore  
'[s/he] floated ashore' (created example)

9. *a zburat acolo, departe*

AUX.PST.3SG fly.PST.PRT.SG there far  
'it flew off there, far away' (created example)

Romanian is thus, as noted e.g. in Reinheimer (1965) and Dragomirescu (2013), very close to other Romance languages, despite interesting specificities such as the existence of lexical pairs. These lexical pairs include one verb of Latin origin and another one with similar semantics but stemming from contact with neighboring languages. Examples of such lexical pairs are e.g. *a ajunge* (from Latin) and *a sosi* (from Greek) 'to arrive', or *a pleca* (from Latin) and *a porni* (from Slavic) 'to leave' (Dragomirescu 2013). There are indeed a few motion verbs which originate from Slavic, Greek or other neighboring languages; however, the lexicon of motion verbs – like the lexicon of Romanian in general –, is mostly of Latin origin (see Fagard/Mardale 2020).<sup>2</sup>

Though Romanian is clearly a VF language, it does not of course exclude the possibility of intralinguistic variation, as illustrated in (10–13), which correspond to the descriptions of the scene described in (5) above, by other Romanian speakers (see Section 2.1. for methodological details). It is noteworthy that, despite a good measure of interindividual variation, almost all descriptions of this scene respect the VF features. They generally provide PATH information in the main verb, without MANNER (11–12); one description includes MANNER in the verb, presenting the scene as an event without translocation (13).

10. *un personaj iese dintr-un desiș trecând o potecă și îndreptându-se spre altceva*

a.M character exit.PRS.3SG from-a.M thicket pass.PRS.PRT a.F path and head.PRS.PRT-REFL toward something.else

'a character exits from a thicket, crossing a path and heading elsewhere' (TR\_RM\_8\_48)

11. *femeia care caută continuă drumul prin parc traversând un drum*

woman.DET.F who search.PRS.3SG continue.PRS.3SG road.DET.M through park cross.PRS.PRT a.M road

'the woman who searches [something] moves on through the park, crossing a path' (TR\_RM\_2\_48)

12. *o tânără trece o cărare printr-o pădure*

a.F young.F pass.PRS.3SG a.F road among a.F forest

'a young woman crosses a path in the woods' (TR\_RM\_7\_48)

13. *o domnișoară se plimbă prin pădure*

a.F lady REFL stroll.PRS.3SG through forest

'a young lady strolls through the woods' (TR\_RM\_6\_48)

Only one description seems to deviate from the typical VF pattern, with MANNER in the main verb and PATH in a dependent verb (14).

14. *o femeie se plimbă prin pădure traversând poteca*

a.F woman REFL stroll.PRS.3SG through wood cross.PRS.PRT path.DET.F

'a woman strolls through the forest, crossing the path' (TR\_RM\_1\_48)

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<sup>2</sup> In this study, we asked participants to describe a series of video-clips, as explained below (Section 2.1).

We take a closer look at Romanian motion event descriptions in Section 2.

### 1.3 Language contact and the emergence of Romanian

The details of the interactions between Romanian and other languages in the critical period from Latin to the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries are obscured by the absence of direct sources. Indeed, the absence of texts in the Middle-Ages (and their scarcity even in following centuries) stands in stark contrast to the situation found in most other Romance languages. This is all the more unfortunate that the importance of language contact in the transition from Latin to Romanian is well-known, with borrowings from Slavic, Hungarian, Turkish, among others, linked to the history of the Balkans (see e.g. Iorga 2018). Besides, the relevance of language contact for motion-event descriptions has been shown in other contact situations, e.g. Celtic and Germanic (see Rottet 2021).

The field of language contact has grown exponentially since the pioneering works of Weinreich (1953) and Haugen (1953). Within this field, translations have been studied both as evidence and as a source of language contact (see e.g. Steiner 2008). In this respect, the aim of the present paper is limited: we merely wish to present a first assessment of the possible effects of the complex linguistic reality of Romanian on the paradigm of motion verbs. As noted by Siemund (2008: 3), “predicting the outcome of a language contact situation remains an immensely challenging task.”

## 2 Motion events in Romanian: language system and language use

In this section, we try to provide a global description of the way native speakers of Romanian typically verbalize motion events, based on elicited data which were presented briefly in Fagard/Mardale (2019). The choice of language elicitation aims to take into account the difference between *language system* and *actual language use*: as noted by Slobin (2004), who describes it as *narrative construction*, speakers use their language, i.e. the syntactic structures and lexical paradigms which constitute it, to create personal narratives. These are only partly constrained by the language system: this explains why speakers can use constructions they might themselves consider unacceptable; it also explains, in the long run, the mere possibility of language change.

### 2.1 Data elicitation – Methodology

We elicited data from 11 native speakers of Romanian, in the cities of Alexandria and Bucharest and the small town of Vama Veche (South and South-East of Romanian, using an elicitation tool specifically designed for studies of motion description (*Trajectoire*, see Ishibashi/Kopecka/Vuillermet 2006). It contains a series of video-clips showing persons walking, running or jumping, mostly in natural settings, i.e. in settings that were chosen to minimally evoke a given society or culture. We focus on the 55 target clips depicting motion events. These video-clips vary according to four parameters, PATH (beginning/middle/end), DEIXIS (toward/away from the camera/sideways), MANNER (walking/running/jumping) and BOUNDARY-CROSSING (clear/unclear/none).

Participants were not told what the study was about. They were asked to briefly describe each scene after viewing it. Descriptions were audio-recorded, and later transcribed and analyzed as follows.

Our data comprise all descriptions of the target video-clips, with a total of 591 valid descriptions.<sup>3</sup> All transcriptions were semi-automatically lemmatized, PoS-tagged and glossed. They were then manually coded for MANNER and PATH: we

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<sup>3</sup> The total number of descriptions in our data should be  $55 * 11 = 605$ ; however, in some cases, informants failed to describe a scene.

systematically identified both the expression of MANNER and PATH and the items encoding them (lemma and PoS).

As a result, we were able to compare the frequency and locus of expression of MANNER and PATH in our data, both as a whole and for each speaker, with that of other languages for which Trajectoire data were gathered, be they SF or VF. We describe our results in the next subsection.

## 2.2 Data analysis

In order to analyze the data thus elicited, we identified and classified all motion verbs and spatial grams, including prepositions and adverbs. We distinguished Path, Manner and Deixis, and assigned one of several values for each category. The operationalization of our coding scheme is laid out in Subsections 2.2.1–2.2.3.

### 2.2.1 PATH

As noted by Dragomirescu (2013), Romanian motion verbs may incorporate various semantic features, including PATH or MANNER. For the purpose of this study, we define PATH as the focus on a portion of a translocative motion event. The focus may bear on one of three distinct portions of the PATH: the initial phase (SOURCE), the final phase (GOAL) or an intermediate phase (MEDIAN).

Some verbs clearly imply a focus on the SOURCE, for instance *a ieși* ‘to exit’ or *a pleca* ‘to leave’. Others imply a focus on the GOAL, such as *a veni* ‘to come’, *a se îndrepta* ‘to head for’. There are also MEDIAN motion verbs, e.g. *a trece* ‘to pass’. Some MANNER verbs imply a focus on GOAL (*a ateriza* ‘to land’) or SOURCE (*a decola* ‘to take off’) (see Evseev 1974: 82; Dragomirescu/Geană 2011), but most may trigger a focus on either section of the PATH (*a fugi* ‘to flee’).

Each of the three PATH values (SOURCE, GOAL, MEDIAN) may thus be expressed in – or brought into focus by – the verb. They may also be expressed in the prepositional phrase (PP) and/or in an adverb, with various combinations. For instance, the PATH may be expressed in the verb only, as is the case for the SOURCE in (7) above. It may be expressed in both verb and PP, as in (1) and (5) above, and as is the case for the GOAL in (15).

15. *copilul intră în apă*  
child.DET.M enter.PRS.3SG in water  
‘the child walks into the water’ (TR\_RM\_11\_59)

In such cases, it is important to establish the contribution of each element to the global semantics of the utterances. Thus, in (15), the preposition *în* ‘in(to)’ is in fact underspecified, and takes on a goal meaning only as a result of its combination with the verb *a intra* ‘to enter’. As a rule, prepositions and adverbs in Romanian have an underspecified GOAL/LOCATION meaning, except for those combined with *de*, which then take on a SOURCE meaning. The semantic analysis of (16) is thus distinct from that of (15): in this case, both the verb *a ieși* ‘to exit’ and the preposition *din* ‘from’ have an intrinsic SOURCE meaning.

16. *a ieșit din apă pe mal*  
AUX.PRS.3SG exit.PST.PRT.SG from.in water on shore  
‘[He] walked out of the water on to the shore’ (TR\_RM\_9\_31)

In most cases, the global meaning is not ambiguous, i.e. SOURCE verbs combine with SOURCE prepositions, as in (16), GOAL verbs combine with GOAL/LOCATIVE prepositions, as in (15), and MEDIAN verbs combine with MEDIAN/LOCATIVE prepositions, as in (17).

17. *o femeie trece prin fața unui copac*  
a.F woman pass.PRS.3SG by front.DET.F a.M.GEN tree  
'A woman walks past a tree (in front of it)' (TR\_RM\_11\_40)

In Romanian, speakers tend to combine SOURCE PPs with SOURCE verbs more consistently than is the case for GOAL PPs and GOAL verbs (see Papahagi 2020). In some cases, however, the combination of verb and PP does leave room for doubt, for instance when a verb expressing neither SOURCE nor GOAL combines with a noun phrase, as in (18), in which the verb *a coborî* 'to go down' expresses DIRECTION. In such cases, we analyzed the NP as a general LOCATION rather than a MEDIAN. The same goes for combinations with PPs, as in the case of *se plimbă prin pădure* 'strolls in the forest' (example (13) above).

18. *o tânără coboară niște trepte*  
a.F young.F go.down.PRS.3SG some stair.PL  
'A young woman walks down a few steps' (TR\_RM\_6\_22)

Another unclear case is the combination of a MANNER verb with a LOCATION/GOAL preposition, as in (19–20). In such cases, the resulting meaning may be either LOCATION or GOAL (Aurnague 2019).

19. *un băiat aleargă pe nisip*  
a.M boy run.PRS.3SG on sand  
'A boy runs on the sand' (TR\_RM\_6\_42)  
20. *el sare de pe plajă pe stâncă*  
he jump.PRS.3SG from on beach on rock  
'He jumps from the beach onto the boulder' (TR\_RM\_8\_62)

We coded the V+PP constructions as expressing respectively LOCATION (in (19)) and SOURCE + GOAL (in (20)). The GOAL reading in (20) seems to arise from the presence of the SOURCE PP *de pe plajă* 'from the beach'.

Some verbs are only marginal with respect to motion event descriptions, such as *a se opri* 'to stop', which indicates that motion is discontinued. Following Reinheimer (1965), we coded such verbs as belonging to the paradigm of motion verbs.

### 2.2.2 DEIXIS

DEIXIS, which is a focus on or the inclusion of the speaker's perspective, routinely appears in motion even descriptions. It may then be analyzed as an independent semantic feature, or (following Talmy 1991) as linked to PATH. In our study, we coded it as a distinct semantic feature, believing that the inclusion of DEIXIS in typological studies of motion may offer a potential for interesting discoveries (see Morita 2022).

Though deictic items may have several values, mainly ITIVE and VENTIVE (respectively proximal and distal deictic verbs, corresponding to English *go* and *come*), we analyzed only VENTIVE uses, given that "the deicticity of itive markers tends to be weaker than that of ventives, to the point of vanishing completely" (Bourdin 2022: 102; see also Wilkins/Hill 1995). We coded as VENTIVE both the spatial uses of the deictic verb *a veni* 'to come' and lexical references to deixis, as in *spre noi* 'toward us' in (21).

21. *o femeie vine din pădure spre noi*  
a.F woman come.PRS.3SG from.in forest toward us  
'A woman comes from the forest toward us' (TR\_RM\_10\_51)



We also coded as VENTIVE references to the camera or the screen, as in (22).

22. *un copil fugе spre cameră îndreptându-se spre mare*  
a.M child flee.PRS.3SG toward camera head.PRS.PRT.REFL toward sea  
'A child flees toward the camera, heading for the sea'  
(TR\_RM\_1\_63)

### 2.2.3 MANNER

The Trajectoire stimulus was not specifically designed to elicit the expression of MANNER of motion, and does not make it possible to elicit verbs such as *a se târî* 'to crawl' or *a zbura* 'to fly'. However, MANNER is included as a distinctive feature in the series of video-clips, along with POINT OF VIEW and PATH, as explained in Section 2.1. We thus coded the elicited data for MANNER, and explain our coding scheme below.

As has been shown in several studies, MANNER is not always well defined in research on motion event descriptions (see e.g. Stosic 2019). Given the secondary nature of the MANNER feature in the elicitation tool, we settled for a simple coding of this feature, distinguishing only between motion verbs with no MANNER feature – generally PATH verbs, such as *a pleca* 'to leave' – and motion verbs with a MANNER feature. The latter include a variety of verbs, e.g. those implying a particular gait (23), velocity (24), or non-linear motion (25).

23. *o femeie umblă printr-o poiană*  
a.F woman stroll.PRS.3SG through-a.F meadow  
'A young woman strolls through a meadow' (TR\_RM\_7\_40)
24. *iese din mare și aleargă spre plajă*  
exit.PRS.3SG from.in sea and run.PRS.3SG toward beach  
'[He] comes out of the sea and runs toward the beach'  
(TR\_RM\_4\_31)
25. *personajul merge într-o peșteră și ocolește o stâncă și intră în peșteră*  
character.DET.M go.PRS.3SG in.a.F cave and go.around.PRS.3SG a.F rock and enter.PRS.3SG in cave  
'A character walks into a cave and goes around a rock and enters another cave' (TR\_RM\_8\_60)

We also coded as such adverbials implying a MANNER feature, e.g. *în pas alert* "briskly", *cu grijă* "carefully".

## 2.3 Results

### 2.3.1 PATH, MANNER and DEIXIS

We expected Romanian to behave like a typical VF language, despite possible influences from Slavic and other SF languages, since part of the paradigm of motion verbs do not derive from Latin (Sala 1988; 1999; Brâncuș 2005). We thus expected to find mostly utterances with explicit PATH and no MANNER, and some utterances with MANNER and no PATH, but only for descriptions of unbounded motion events. For complex motion events combining a marked manner of motion and boundary-crossing, we expected to find either the choice of one feature over the other, or the distribution of PATH and MANNER over different clauses.

The results clearly confirm this tendency: in our data, Romanian behaves like other VF languages, as described in Fagard/Zlatev/Kopecka/Cerruti/Blomberg (2013), Fagard/Stosic/Cerruti (2017) and Fagard/Mardale (2019), with a more limited paradigm for MANNER than SF languages.

As in other VF languages for which data were gathered with this elicitation tool,<sup>4</sup> there is a strong opposition between two scene types. In scenes with marked gait, i.e. those in which someone is seen running or jumping, informants overwhelmingly do express MANNER (87% of descriptions), sometimes leaving PATH out, as in example (19) with the verb *a alerga* ‘to run’. In all other scenes, informants favor the expression of PATH, often leaving out MANNER, as in examples (15–16) with the verbs *a ieși* ‘to exit’ and *a intra* ‘to enter’ (only 31% of these descriptions include MANNER). When expressing both PATH and MANNER, participants sometimes ascribe each type of information to a different clause, thus overcoming the boundary-crossing constraint, e.g. *iese [...] și aleargă* ‘he exits... and runs’ in example (22), or *merge [...] și ocolește [...] și intră* ‘goes... and goes around... and enters’ in example (23). Indeed, in Romanian, this opposition seems even stronger than it is in Italian and French, two other Romance and VF languages (see Fagard/Mardale 2019).

Conversely, PATH is almost always expressed in the descriptions of the Trajectoire stimuli, for both scene types; and DEIXIS is hardly present in our data, appearing only in 5% of all utterances.

### 2.3.2 Motion verbs: Synchronic analysis

The paradigm of motion verbs found in our corpus is limited, on account of the specificity of the actions shown on the elicitation tool. However, we did find more than 20 distinct motion verbs and verbal phrases. As expected for a VF language, PATH verbs are more frequent than MANNER verbs. Table 1 lists PATH verbs, MANNER verbs which contextually take on a PATH meaning, and other MANNER verbs.

Table 1: PATH and MANNER verbs in our data.

PATH verbs	MANNER verbs with contextual PATH meaning	MANNER verbs with no PATH meaning	relative frequency (% of descriptions)
<i>a ieși</i> ‘to exit’, <i>a intra</i> ‘to enter’, <i>a trece</i> ‘to cross (e.g. the street), to pass’, <i>a merge</i> ‘to go’	<i>a sări</i> ‘to jump’, <i>a se plimba</i> ‘to stroll’	<i>a alerga</i> ‘to run’	> 10
<i>a veni</i> ‘to come’, <i>a traversa</i> ‘to cross’, <i>a se îndrepta</i> ‘to head (for)’, <i>a coborî</i> ‘to go down’, <i>a urca</i> ‘to go up’, <i>a pleca</i> ‘to leave’, <i>a se întoarce</i> ‘to go back’, <i>a se duce</i> ‘to head (for)’	<i>a fugi</i> ‘to flee’	<i>a păși</i> ‘to pace’, <i>a umbla</i> ‘to stroll’	> 2
	<i>a ocoli</i> ‘to go around’		> 1

<sup>4</sup> This clear opposition is found mostly in VF languages, but is present also in Serbian (Fagard et al. 2017) and, to a lesser degree, in German (Fagard et al. 2013).

<i>a se apropia</i> ‘to approach’, <i>a ajunge</i> ‘to reach’, <i>a se îndepărta</i> ‘to leave, to go away’, <i>a se opri</i> ‘to stop’, <i>a apărea</i> ‘to appear’, <i>a intersecta</i> ‘to cross’, <i>a porni</i> ‘to start, to leave’, <i>a se ascunde</i> ‘to hide’, <i>a se întâlni</i> ‘to meet’	<i>a călca</i> ‘to step’	<i>a se arunca</i> ‘to throw oneself’, <i>a se grăbi</i> ‘to hurry’, <i>a țopăi</i> ‘to hop’, <i>a face jogging</i> ‘to go jogging’	<1
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In our data, the most frequent verbs with any PATH meaning (be it intrinsic or contextual) are those with a semantic feature of boundary crossing: *a ieși* ‘to exit’ and *a intra* ‘to enter’, along with less frequent verbs such as *a trece* ‘to pass’. Several manner verbs contextually take on a path meaning, e.g. *a sări* ‘to jump’, *a se plimba* ‘to stroll’. The case of *a merge* ‘to go’ is more complex, as it is originally a MANNER verb which eventually took on a semantic feature of DEIXIS (itive); as explained in Section 2.2.3., we take it to have a PATH meaning with only contextual deictic implications.

The frequency of MANNER verbs is lower than that of PATH verbs in our data; this is not necessarily representative of their use in everyday Romanian, given the way our elicitation tool was designed.

### 2.3.3 Motion verbs: Diachrony and language contact

Among the motion verbs listed in Table 1, most are of Latin origin, as was the case for verbs found in a comparable analysis of French, Italian and Piedmontese (see Fagard/Zlatev/Kopecka/Cerruti/Blomberg 2013; Fagard/Mardale 2019). This seems to confirm the analysis of Romance motion verbs and their evolution as described in Stolova (2015: 74), who found only a few cases of borrowing. As explained in Fagard/Mardale (2019), we found a difference in the rate of borrowing for PATH verbs and MANNER verbs. For the latter, there seems to be more borrowing. However, the difference is limited, and not statistically significant; moreover, there is an opposite trend in terms of relative frequency (Table 2).

	MANNER	PATH	Total
Latin origin	8 verbs (67%) / 144 occ. (97%)	13 verbs (65%) / 345 occ. (77%)	21 (489 occ.)
Slavic origin	4 verbs (33%) / 5 occ. (3%)	7 verbs (35%) / 105 occ. (23%)	11 (110 occ.)

Table 2: Latin and Slavic motion verbs in our corpus.

Most non-Latin motion verbs in Romanian are of Slavic origin, and counterparts can often be found in neighboring Slavic languages. This is the case of *a (se) grăbi* ‘to hurry’ (Old Slavic, Slavic *grabiti* ‘kidnap’, e.g. Bulgarian *grabja (se)*), *a ocoli* ‘to go around’ (Old Slavic, cf. Russian, Bulgarian *okol* ‘circle’), *a porni* ‘to leave, to start, to put in motion’ (Old Slavic *porinonti*, Slavic *porinati* ‘to urge’, Ciorănescu 2001: 622), *a se opri* ‘to stop’ (Old Slavic *oprěti*, on *per-*, see Miklosich 1886: 247), *a coborî* ‘to go down’ (Old Slavic, Slavic *pogori* ‘down’, Ciorănescu 2001: 220, cf. Old Romanian *a pogorî*), *a țopăi* ‘to hop’ (onomatopoeic, with Slavic origin or correspondence, Ciorănescu 2001: 797). From Hungarian, Romanian took *a se întâlni* (*în+tâlni*, see Hungarian *találni* ‘to meet’). A more recent trend brought in French lexemes, or English ones having presumably transited through French: *a*

(*se*) *intersecta* ‘to intersect, to cross’ (French *intersecter* ‘to intersect, to cross’), *a traversa* ‘to cross’ (French *traverser* ‘to cross’), *a face jogging* ‘to go jogging’.

The fact that several MANNER verbs were borrowed from SF languages could be due to their much higher salience in these languages, as has been reported, conversely, for English PATH verbs of Latin origin borrowed from VF French, such as *to enter*, *to traverse* (Old French *entrer* ‘to enter’ and *traverser* ‘to put across > to hinder / to cross’). Conversely, many PATH verbs were inherited from Latin; some of them lost their MANNER component through semantic shift (Stolova 2015: 5764): Romanian *a merge* ‘to go’ (Latin *mergo* ‘to immerse, to sink’), or French *aller* ‘to go’ (Latin *ambulo* ‘to stroll’). This could be due to the cognitive salience of PATH (Koch 2001: 1171). However, these elements are too limited in number for us to make a strong claim as to the possible dynamics of the changes in the paradigm of Romanian motion verbs. In order to overcome this limitation, we searched for occurrences of these verbs in a historical corpus of Romanian, comparing texts written directly in Romanian with texts translated into Romanian within the same time period. This study, presented in Section 3, is, to our knowledge, the first such attempt.

### 3 Motion verbs and language contact: a corpus study

We ran a diachronic corpus study (16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> c.), including the earliest available Romanian texts, in order to evaluate the validity of our hypothesis that motion verbs were borrowed from Slavic, which was the official language (both in churches and administratively speaking) at that time, and that most of these verbs were MANNER of motion verbs, on account of the SF nature of Slavic languages, which have large paradigms of MANNER verbs (see Hasko/Perelmutter (eds) 2010). We describe our methodology in Section 3.1., and our results in Section 3.2.

#### 3.1 Methodology

The aim of this part of our study was to analyze the dynamics of lexical paradigm renewal for Romanian motion verbs: can we find out when and how MANNER verbs of non-Latin origin came to be part of the Romanian lexicon?

Our hypothesis was the following: we expected to find verbs of foreign origin, more specifically Slavonic, in the most ancient texts; we also expected to find evidence of Slavonic influence in both text types, i.e., original and translated, but perhaps stronger in translated texts, and possibly to see their number and frequency increase with time, as a result of the continued Slavic influence. We also expected lexical borrowings to appear first in contexts in which they display a low degree of syntactic integration, i.e. rather as independent verbs with no arguments and no (or few) adjuncts.

As we show in Section 3.2. below, our results are, on the whole, in line with these expectations.

##### 3.1.1 Corpus

Our diachronic corpus (16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> c.) is based on that compiled by and presented in Hill/Mardale (2021). We distinguished two main text types: (a) texts written directly in Romanian; (b) texts translated from other languages, either Slavonic or Hungarian. The rationale for this corpus design is that texts written directly in Romanian are traditionally considered to be closer to the reality of Romanian as it was spoken at the time, while translations are viewed as containing a more archaic version of the language (though this is a somewhat too clear-cut view, as explained in Hill/Mardale 2021). We also wished to observe a possible influence of the source

text on the translations, in terms of type and token frequency of borrowed motion verbs.

The (in)availability of texts suiting our purpose lead us to adapt slightly this initial strategy. The resulting corpus is presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Diachronic corpus.

Title	Author	text type	date	corpus size	abbreviation
<i>Documents and notes</i>	Collective authorship	written directly in Romanian	1521–1600	26 330 tokens	Documente
<i>Evangelical mass</i>	Coreși	translated from Slavonic	1581	177 552 tokens	Coreși
<i>Palia de la Orăștie</i>	Coreși (son, ed.)	translated from Hungarian	1582	63 899 tokens	Palia
<i>Moldavian Chronicle</i>	Ureche	written directly in Romanian	1642–1647	53 830 tokens	Ureche
<i>Cazania</i>	Varlaam	translated from Slavonic	1643	149 661 tokens	Varlaam
<i>Didahii</i>	Ivireanu	written directly in Romanian (but with a Greek model)	1709–1716	122 960 tokens	Ivireanu
<i>Moldavian Chronicle</i>	Neculce	written directly in Romanian	1732–1744	127 327 tokens	Neculce

### 3.1.2 Analysis

In order to establish the evolutionary dynamics of the paradigm of motion verbs in Romanian, from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, we first compiled a list of motion verbs from various sources. We combined lists found in the literature (Section 1.2) with the verbs presented in Section 2.

We systematically controlled for the presence of the most frequent items in the resulting list, which comprises 68 verbs. Of these 68 verbs, we found 46 in the corpus. We then checked, for each occurrence, whether its use was spatial or non-spatial (including metaphorical uses). We also classified the verbs, semantically (PATH / MANNER / DEIXIS / OTHER) and etymologically (Latin / Slavic or Hungarian / Other), and compared this classification with text types, according to the metadata presented in Section 3.1.1. The results of our analysis are presented in Section 3.2. below.

### 3.2 Results

The results of our corpus study partly confirm our expectations. In this Section, we present qualitative results for the Latin stock (3.2.1.) and the borrowed motion verbs

(3.2.2.), then go on to present quantitative results (3.2.3.).

### 3.2.1 Latin stock

Motion verbs of Latin origin appear in both text types: not only in texts which were written directly in Romanian, but also in those translated from other languages, as in (26).

26. Atunce **alergă** și să dusă la Petr apostol și la Ioann

then run.PRS.3SG and REFL lead.PRS.3SG to Peter apostle and to John

“Then she ran and went to Peter the apostle and John” (Varlaam, 17<sup>th</sup> c., p. 63)

The Latin stock is the most important one by far. The oldest Romanian texts, both original and translated, mainly contain words of Latin origin, as is the case in Modern Romanian; this holds true for motion verbs, and remains true throughout the corpus, i.e. for later centuries.

PATH verbs are mostly of Latin origin, for instance *a intra* ‘to enter’ or *a ieși* ‘to exit’ (27), but this is also the case for MANNER verbs, e.g. *a sălta* ‘to jump’ from Latin *saltare*, same meaning (28).

27. Avram era de 75 de ani, când au **ieșit** din Haran.

Abraham be.PST.3SG of 75 of year.PL.ACC when AUX.PRS.3PL exit.PST.PRT from.in Haran

“Abraham was 75 years old when he left Haran” (Palia, 16<sup>th</sup>, ch. 12)

28. Și tot **sălta** giuca și să pleca să închina lui Rareș

and always jump.PRS.3SG dance.PRS.3SG and REFL bow.PRS.3SG DET.3SG.M.DAT Rareș

“And he kept hopping, dancing and bowing to Prince Rareș” (Neculce, 18<sup>th</sup> c., 7)

In some cases, the motion verb seems to have been formed later but with elements from the Latin stock, e.g. *a străbate* ‘to go through’ (prefix *stră-* from Latin *extra* ‘out of’, and *a bate* ‘to beat’ from Late Latin *batt(u)ere*, same meaning), or *a călători* ‘to travel’ (cf. *călător* ‘traveler’, on *cale* ‘path, way’ from Latin *callis* ‘path’, with the agentive suffix *-tor*, also of Latin origin), illustrated in (29).

29. cei ce **călătoresc** și să află în nevoie.

DEM.M.PL REL travel.PRS.3PL and REFL find.PRS.3PL in need

“those who travel and find themselves in need” (Antim, 18<sup>th</sup> c., § 158)

### 3.2.2 Slavic borrowings

Besides motion verbs of Latin origin, our corpus reveals that Slavic borrowings also appear in the oldest texts, i.e. the 16<sup>th</sup> century, e.g. *a se grăbi* ‘to hurry’, *a năvăli* ‘to rush’, *a coborî* ‘to go down’. They appear in translations from both Slavic and Hungarian (30).

30. Scoală-te și **grăbește după cei bărbați**

wake.IMP.PRS.2SG-REFL.2SG.ACC and hurry.IMP.PRS.2SG after DEM.M.ACC.PL man.ACC.PL

“Get up and follow these men” (Palia, 16<sup>th</sup> c., 73)

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, we found a striking difference across text types. In translated texts, we found motion verbs both of Slavonic origin (31) and of Latin origin (27). In texts written directly in Romanian, we found only motion verbs of Latin origin, and no instance of borrowed motion verbs.

31. Care lucru vădzînd Iosif **năvăli pre fața tătîni-său** plîngînd și sărutînd pre el

REL thing see.PRS.PRT Joseph rush.PST.3SG DOM face.DET.F.SG father.GEN.SG-POSS.M.SG cry.PRS.PRT and kiss.PRS.PRT to PRO.M.ACC.SG

Seeing this, Joseph threw himself into his father's arms, crying and embracing him (Palia, 16<sup>th</sup> c., 83)

A possible explanation is that the corpus of texts written in Romanian is too limited for the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Given the overwhelming majority of motion verbs of Latin origin (as shown in Table 3 above), this might not be significant and should be controlled for on a larger corpus, if at all possible given the scarcity of texts written directly in Romanian at that period, among those that have survived to this day. Another possible explanation would be hypercorrection on the part of translators.

### 3.2.3 Quantitative results

Our results show that the Slavonic influence continues to have an impact on the lexicon of Romanian motion verbs during the whole period under consideration (16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> c.). This is illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4: Corpus frequency (‰) of the motion verbs included in our queries (including spatial and metaphorical uses).

origin	verb	16 <sup>th</sup>	17 <sup>th</sup>	18 <sup>th</sup>	total
Latin	<i>a veni</i> 'to come'	3.5	2.4	1.2	7.2
	<i>a ieși</i> 'to exit'	1.4	0.7	1.5	3.6
	<i>a merge</i> 'to go'	1.9	0.5	0.9	3.2
	<i>a (se) întoarce</i> 'to return'	0.7	1.1	0.8	2.5
	<i>a (se) duce</i> 'to lead, to go'	1.9	0.8	0.4	2.3
	<i>a trece</i> 'to cross, to pass'	0.5	0.6	0.9	2.0
	<i>a fugi</i> 'to flee'	0.3	0.4	0.9	1.5
	<i>a pleca</i> 'to leave'	0.5	0.4	0.3	1.9
	<i>a (se) arunca</i> 'to throw (oneself)'	0.5	0.3	0.1	0.9
	<i>a apropia</i> 'to come closer'	0.5	0.3	0.1	0.9
	<i>a călca</i> 'to step'	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.7

	<i>a alerga</i> 'to run'		0.1	0.2	0.3
	<i>a ajunge</i> 'to reach'	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.3
	<i>a umbla</i> 'to stroll'		1.0	0.2	0.3
	<i>a apărea</i> 'to appear'	0.5	0.1	0.5	0.2
	<i>a intra</i> 'to enter'	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2
	<i>a călători</i> 'to walk'	0.8	0.1	0.7	0.2
	<i>a (se) îndrepta</i> 'to head'		0.1	0.2	0.2
	<i>a cădea</i> 'to fall'	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.2
	<i>a sări</i> 'to jump'		0.4	0.6	1.0
	<i>a străbate</i> 'to run through'	0.8	0.4	0.3	0.8
	<i>a păși</i> 'to pass'	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.7
	<i>a se plimba</i> 'to stroll'			0.7	0.7
	<i>a sălta</i> 'to jump'		0.2	0.4	0.6
	<i>a muta</i> 'to move'	0.1	0.1	0.7	0.3
	<i>a ascunde</i> 'to hide'	0.1	0.9	0.9	0.3
	<i>a se ivi</i> 'to appear'	0.7	0.2	0.1	0.1
	<i>a depărta</i> 'to leave'	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.7
	<i>a înota</i> 'to swim'		0.2		0.2
	<i>a urma</i> 'to follow'			0.1	0.1
Slavic and other	<i>a coborî</i> 'to go down'			0.5	0.5
	<i>a grăbi</i> 'to hurry'	0.9	0.3	0.2	0.3
	<i>a întâlni</i> 'to meet'			0.3	0.3
	<i>a năvăli</i> 'to rush'	0.2	0.9	0.2	0.4
	<i>a ocoli</i> 'to go around'		0.4	0.3	0.3
	<i>a opri</i> 'to stop'	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.6
	<i>a porni</i> 'to leave'	0.3	0.1	0.4	0.5



<i>a sosi</i> ‘to arrive’	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.5
<i>a zbură</i> ‘to fly’	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.1

Thus, in texts of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, we still find verbs like *a (se) grăbi* ‘to hurry’ or *a năvăli* ‘to rush’ (32–33), but also verbs not present in our 16<sup>th</sup> century corpus, e.g. *a coborî* ‘to go down’ (34–35).

32. mulțime ce **năvălia la Măria Sa** pentru să asculte cuvântul lui Dumnedzău  
crowd REL rush.PST.3SG to highness POSS.F.ACC.SG for COMP listen.SUB.PRS.3SG  
word.DET.M.NOM.SG DET.M.GEN.SG God

A crowd rushing to his highness in order to listen to God’s word (Varlaam, 17<sup>th</sup> c., 177)

33. iar Saraciu sluga lui Dumitrașco-vodă **au năvălit** degrabă **la beciul** suptu scara

but Saraciu.DET.M.NOM.SG servant.DET.F.SG DET.M.GEN.3SG Dumitrașcu-prince  
AUX.PRS.3SG rush.PST.PRT quickly to cellar.DET.ACC.M.SG under  
stair.DET.F.ACC.SG

“But Saraciu, prince Dumitrașcu’s servant, immediately rushed to the cellar under the stairs” (Neculce, 18<sup>th</sup> c., 150)

34. ei s-au răzlețit de Duca-vodă, de la Brașov, și **s-au coborît în Țara Muntenească** de ș-au găsit giupînesele acolo

PRO.M.NOM.3PL REFL-AUX.PRS.3PL separate.PST.PRT from Duca.prince from at  
Brașov and REFL-AUX.PRS.3PL go.down.PST.PRT in country.DET.F.ACC.SG  
Walachian.ADJ.SG.F COMP REFL-AUX.PRS.3PL find.PST.PRT bride.DET.F.ACC.PL  
there

They left the prince Duca in Brașov and came down to Wallachia where they met with their wives (Neculce, 18<sup>th</sup> c., 52)

35. **Coborîtu-s-au** și doi hatmani leșești cu oști pe Prut **în gios**

go.down.PST.PRT-REFL-AUX.PRS.3PL also two hetman.PL Polish.M.PL with  
army.ACC.PL on Prut in down

“Two Polish hetmans also went down to the South with armies, along the Prut river” (Neculce, 18<sup>th</sup> c., 68)

From a statistical perspective, there is a significant effect of the variable “century”, with the number of occurrences of borrowed motion verbs increasing from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> c. ( $\chi^2 = 5$ ,  $p < .5$ ). A possible explanation for this effect might be that the lexicon is gradually enriched as a result of the copists’ work on translations from Slavonic and Hungarian.

As expected, this effect is found both in texts written directly in Romanian and in translations. A possible explanation for this effect might be that the clerks writing in Romanian and those translating from Slavonic or Hungarian are actually the same people.

One other significant result is that, at least in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, we found more occurrences of motion verbs of Slavonic and Hungarian origin in the texts written directly in Romanian (a statistically significant effect, with  $\chi^2 = 16.1$ ,  $p < .1$ ). A possible explanation for this effect could be the tendency for translators to avoid

using words from the source language.

## Conclusion

In this paper, we presented a study of Romanian motion verbs, combining the analysis of elicited data and diachronic corpus data.

Our elicitation study confirmed the VF status of Romanian. We also showed that, while most motion verbs are of Latin origin, quite a few were borrowed, mainly from Slavic. This result in turn raised the question of how contact with neighboring languages led to such borrowing, an issue which we went on to investigate with a diachronic corpus study.

The results of this diachronic corpus study, aiming to explore in further detail the impact of language contact, indicate that this influence is circumscribed in the oldest texts (16<sup>th</sup> c.), in which Slavic borrowing is limited, as far as the paradigm of motion verbs is concerned. However, the number and frequency of motion verbs borrowed from Slavic increases in later centuries (17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> c.). Contrary to our expectations, the main difference between texts written directly in Romanian and those that were translated into Romanian is that the former seemingly display more instances of borrowing, possibly an effect of hypercorrection on the part of translators.

Given the limitations of our corpus, however, these results should be seen as preliminary. We eagerly await the availability of a large diachronic corpus of Romanian, which would make it possible to replicate this study on a wider selection of texts, in order to verify our findings.

## Abbreviations

ACC	accusative
ADJ	adjective
AUX	auxiliary
COMP	complementizer
DAT	dative
DEM	demonstrative
DET	determiner
DOM	differential object marking

F	feminine
GEN	genitive
IMP	imperative
IMPF	imperfective
M	masculine
NOM	nominative
PASS	passive
PL	plural

POSS	possessive
PRO	pronoun
PRS	present
PRT	participle
PST	past
REFL	reflexive
REL	relative
SG	singular

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