

## More on Fictivity

Leonard Talmy  
Department of Linguistics      Center for Cognitive Science  
University at Buffalo, State University of New York

### 1. introduction

cognitive pattern of fictivity : within the cognition of a single individual,  
a discrepancy between two cognitive representations of the same entity  
a. a "factive" representation, assessed by the individual as more veridical  
b. a "fictive" representation, assessed by the individual as less veridical

e.g., The fence goes from the plateau down into the valley.  
the representation of factive stationariness from: our general knowledge about fences  
the representation of fictive motion from:  
the literal meanings of certain morphemes and the construction they are in

the factive/fictive parameter applies mainly to entities / properties  
arrayed over physical spatial extent

in this talk:

- a. survey of a range of fictive motion types  
both as a review and as a framework in which to place additional types and subtypes
- b. relating the surveyed fictive types to metaphor

### 2. the emanation category of fictive motion

something intangible emerges from a source, moves along a straight line, and impinges on a distal object

#### 2.1 orientation paths

an intangible emanation emerges from the front of an object that bears a front,  
moves along a straight line, and impinges on a distal object

##### 2.1.1 demonstrative paths

the Source object is linear with a point-type front; the emanation is coaxial with the linear object

- (1) The arrow on the signpost pointed toward / away from / into / past the town.

##### 2.1.2 prospect paths

the Source object has a planar (face-type) front; the emanation is perpendicular to this plane

- (2) The cliff wall faces toward / away from / into / past the valley.

#### 2.2 radiation paths

radiation emanates steadily from an energy source, moves along a straight line,  
and impinges on a distal object

This emanation type has only one conceptual form viable for the sun (or fire/flashlight etc.)

from the sun to an object:

- (3) a. The sun is shining into the cave / onto the back wall of the cave.  
b. The light is shining from the sun into the cave / onto the back wall of the cave.

\*from an object onto the sun

- (4) \*The light is shining from my hand onto the sun.

\*from some third location:

- (5) \*The light shone out onto the sun and my hand from a point between us.

\*not moving but stationary:

- (6) \*The light hung between the sun and my hand.

### 2.3 shadow paths

the shadow of an object moves from that object to the silhouette on a surface

- (7) a. The tree threw its shadow down into / across the valley.  
b. The pillar cast / projected a shadow onto / against the wall.  
c. The pillar's shadow fell onto / against the wall.

### 2.4 sensory paths

a sensory emanation moves in one direction or the other between an Experiencer and an Experienced:

Experiencer as Source:

- a Probe emerges from the Experiencer, moves along a straight line, and impinges on the Experienced

Experienced as Source:

- a Stimulus emanates from the Experienced, moves along a straight line, and impinges on the Experiencer

#### 2.4.1 Experiencer is non-agentive -- permits both fictive directions

A. the verb is lexicalized to take the Experiencer as subject

- (8) a. I can hear/smell him all the way from where I'm standing.  
b. I can hear/smell him all the way from where he's standing.  
(9) a. We can be seen by the enemy from where they're positioned.  
b. We can be seen by the enemy from where we're standing.

B. the verb is lexicalized to take the Experienced as subject

- (10) a. Even a casual passer-by can see the old wallpaper through the paint.  
b. The old wallpaper shows through the paint even to a casual passer-by.

#### 2.4.2 the Experiencer is agentive -- only permits Experiencer as Source

- (11) a. I looked into / toward / past / away from the valley.  
b. \*I looked out of the valley (into my eyes). <where I am located outside the valley>

### 2.4.3 lateral motion of the sensory emanation from an agentive Experiencer

(12) I slowly looked toward the door. / around the room. / away from the window.

lateral motion followed by axial motion of the line of sight

(13) I slowly looked down into the well.

### 2.5 communication paths (= the "conduit metaphor")

a Message (as Figure) moves through space from an Informer (as Source) to an Informee (as Goal)

A. basic constructions with Informer / Informee as subject

(14) Informer as subject

- a. I shouted the news down into the mine shaft to the workers below.
- b. She whispered (the answer) to him / into his ear.
- c. He smiled / nodded (his agreement) to them.

(15) Informee as subject: I heard the bad news from her.

B. the fictively moving Figure is a Message, not a Stimulus

the Informee is the recipient of an intellectual Message for interpretation,  
not the Experiencer of a perceptual Stimulus

(16) a. Figure = (intellectual) Message

He told a bit of news to her. / She heard a bit of news from him.

b. Figure = (perceptual) Stimulus

\*He told a sneeze to her. / \*She heard a sneeze from him.

C. deviations from the prototype

a sentient Informee may be lacking:

(17) I shouted the news down into the mine shaft, but no one was alive to hear it.

a sentient Informer may be lacking:

(18) a. His movements signaled / shouted / telegraphed his intentions to me.

b. The condition of the tree bark told / informed me which pest had attacked it.

D. the direction of the fictive motion is only from Informer to Informee, not the reverse

(19) a. He imparted the information to me. b. \*I interpreted the information to/into him.

cf. I read additional meaning into his words.

-- which only involves content that the Informer did not intend in his Message

## 3. A Unifying Principle and an Explanatory Factor for Emanation Types

### 3.1 The Principle that Determines the Source of Emanation

= the "active-determinative principle" -- for fictive emanation between two objects

The object that is taken to be the more active or determinative of the two is conceptualized as the Source of the emanation.

the sun is brighter than one's hand, thus is more active,  
hence it is the Source of radiation

an Agent is more active than an inanimate object,

hence an agentive Experiencer is the Source of sensory emanation

a pole determines its shadow (if you move the pole, the shadow moves, but not vice versa),  
hence it is the Source of a shadow path

either a probe or a Stimulus can be conceptualized as the more active,

hence, either can be the Source of a non-agentive sensory path

But the problem then is: what factors determine a conceptualization of activeness

### **3.2 The Possible Basis of Fictive Emanation and its Types**

= an individual's experience of his/her own agency in the course of development

one's agency is both active and determinative,

and one's body is the source point of motion leading to distal effects

by this "Agent - distal object pattern":

An Agent that intends to affect a distal object must either move to it with her/his whole body,  
reach to it with a body part, or cause (as by throwing) some intermediary object to move to it.

The model-relevant characteristics of this form of agency:

the determining event, the act of intention, takes place at the initial locus of the Agent,

and the ensuing activity that finally affects the distal object progresses through space from that initial locus to

## **4. pattern paths**

the fictive conceptualization of some configuration as moving through space

(20) As I painted the ceiling, (a line of) paint spots slowly progressed across the floor.  
[cf. As I painted the ceiling, (a line of) ants slowly progressed across the floor.]

fictive emanation involved no factive motion of any object, and so needed the active-determinative principle  
to determine the direction of fictive motion

a pattern path does require the motion of some object in its context,

and this determines the direction of the fictive motion (not the active-determinative principle)

## **5. frame-relative motion**

what is factively stationary in a global frame can be depicted as fictively moving in a local frame

### **5.1 where, factively, the observer is moving and the observed is stationary**

(21)

A. *global frame: fictive motion absent*

I rode along in the car and looked at the scenery we were passing through.

B. *local frame: fictive motion present*

I sat in the car and watched the scenery rush past me.

[cf. I sat in the movie-set car and watched the backdrop scenery rush past me.]

C. *shift in mid-reference from global to local frame, and from factive to fictive motion*

I was walking through the woods and this branch that was sticking out hit me.

[cf. I was walking through the woods and this falling pine cone hit me.]

D. *lacking: part global - part local frame with part factive - part fictive motion*

\*The scenery and I rushed past each other.

[cf. The truck driver and I rushed past each other.]

## 5.2 where, factively, the observer is stationary and the observed is moving

(22)

A. *global frame: fictive motion absent*

a. The stream flows past my house.

b. As I sat in the stream, its water rushed past me.

B. *local frame: blocked attempt at fictive motion*

a. \*My house advances alongside the stream.

b. \*As I sat in the stream, I rushed through its water.

## 5.3 an account for why a moving observer can be fictively stationary, but not vice versa

proposal: stationariness is basic for an observer

hence, a moving observer can be conceptually reframed as stationary, i.e., put into that basic state

but an already stationary observer cannot be conceptually removed from that basic state

## 6. advent paths: site arrival

depiction of a stationary object's location in terms of its arrival at the site it occupies.

the stationary state of the object is factive; its depicted motion is fictive

A. *with active verb form*

(23) a. The palm trees clustered together around the oasis.

[cf: The children quickly clustered together around the ice cream truck.]

b. The beam leans / tilts away from the wall.

[cf: The loose beam slowly leaned / tilted away from the wall.]

NB: a verb can be lexicalized soely with a fictive site-arrival sense, and lack a factive sense:

The beam slants / slopes away from the wall.

\*The loose beam slowly slanted / sloped away from the wall.

other examples: taper (The stalactite tapers to a point. / \*slowly tapered to a point from abrasion.

jut out: The rock juts out into the bay. / \*gradually juttred out into the bay.

B. *with passive verb form*

(24) Termite mounds are scattered / strewn / spread / distributed all over the plain.

[cf. Gopher traps were scattered / strewn / spread / distributed all over the plain by a trapper.]

## 7. access paths

depiction of a stationary object's location in terms of a path  
that some other entity might follow to the point of encounter with the object.

though not specified, the fictively moving entity is generally conceived as a person,  
some body-part of a person, or the focus of one's attention,

- (25) a. The bakery is across the street from the bank.  
[cf. The ball rolled across the street from the bank.]  
b. The vacuum cleaner is down around behind the clothes hamper.  
[cf. I extended my arm down around behind the clothes hamper.]  
c. The cloud is 1,000 feet up from the ground.  
[cf. The balloon rose 1,000 feet up from the ground.]

## 8. coextension paths

depiction of the form/orientation/location or properties of a spatially extended entity  
in terms of a path over the entity's extent

A. form / orientation / location of an entity

a. linear entity

- (26) a. The fence goes / zig-zags / descends from the plateau to the valley.  
[cf. I went / zig-zagged / descended from the plateau to the valley.]  
b. This road meets the highway. / The two roads meet at that location.  
[cf. The two lawyers met at that location.]

b. planar entity

- (27) The field spreads out in all directions from the granary.  
[cf: The oil spread out in all directions from where it spilled.]

NB: examples of this kind are significant: they show that what moves fictively  
is not restricted to being a point -- as if like a moving visual focus in scanning --  
but, as here, can also be an expanding circle

B. properties of an entity: difference represented as change

property differences statically arrayed in space depicted as property change in moving through that space

- (28) a. gradient difference: singular mass subject  
The soil reddens toward the east.  
[cf: (1) The soil gradually reddened at this spot due to oxidation.  
(2) The weather front advanced toward the east.]  
b. discrete differences: plural subject  
The wells get deeper the further down the road they are.

## 9. guide paths

successive portions of a stationary extended entity are depicted as directing the path of a moving entity or the successive portions of another stationary entity

(29) both guide and guidee move factively

- a. He led me down into the old mine.
- b. I followed him down into the old mine.

(30) guide moves fictively, guidee moves factively

- a. the path leads (you) / takes you / brings you down into the old mine.  
The path led / took / brought me down into the old mine.
- b. I followed the path down into the old mine.

(31) both guide and guidee move fictively

- a. The new road follows the old railway tracks into the city.
- b. \*The old railway tracks lead the new road into the city.

## 10. action paths

some aspect of an action -- other than any factive movements -- is conceptualized as moving through the space that the action occurs in

### 10.1 action-focus paths

where a Patient is distributed through space --or some associated dimension -- and an Agent's action on the Patient engages only a portion of it at a time this fictive type indicates the path that the current locus of action follows relative to the Patient's configuration  
it is fictive because no physical material follows that path,

#### 10.1.1 concrete action

- (32) a. I washed the dishes from the top of the stack down to the middle.  
b. I washed half way down the stack of dishes.  
c. I washed through 2 thirds of the clothes.  
d. I washed 2 thirds of the way through the clothes.  
(cf. another fictive type: I'm 2 thirds of the way through washing the clothes.)

#### 10.1.2 impalpable action

A. *read*: look at a locus of written material and interpret its meaning successively while moving one's line of sight laterally in the direction of a line of writing

the Figure here: the fictively moving locus (= the action focus)

the Ground here: either the extended physical material or its associated meaning

(33) with the extended physical written material as Ground

- a. I read along in the book.
- b. I read up to page 105.

(34) with the associated contents as Ground

- a. I read past the first love scene and a little beyond.
- b. I read through the murder episode.

## B. dimensionality

the physical dimensionality can be conceptualized as:

linear: I read along in the book.

planar: I read across / down the page.

volumetric: I read a little ways into the book. / I read through the whole book.

the contentful dimensionality is

usually only linear: I read up to / down to the first murder.

\*I read over to / across to the first murder.

but planar possible?: ?I read around the unpleasant parts in the narrative.

apparent conceptualization here: Content occupies a plane.

The succession of contents in one's consciousness follows a linear path on this plane.

If one sees unpleasant contents ahead, one can detour around it.

## C. idealized linear continuity

perhaps based on the conceptual continuity,

the physical medium can be idealized as a linear continuity

despite line and page breaks in a book, flipover on a record

(35) a. I read down to the middle of the book.

b. I listened up to the middle of the second side of the record.

## D. the Agent "moves" the action focus

conceptualization: the Agent directs the action focus along its path

over the stationary physical/contentful medium

not: the action focus remains stationary as the physical/contentful medium moves past it

(36) a. I read through the / past the murder scene.

b. \*I read during the murder scene / while the detective was getting murdered.

while this conceptualization may be logical for reading: eyes scanning over stationary page

it holds as well for an unmoving person listening to a moving record:

(37) a. I listened up to / through the derogatory jokes on the comedy record.

b. \*The material on the comedy record played past me up to / through the derogatory jokes.

## 10.2 action-component paths

in the action complex expressed by a basically nondirectional predicate, this fictive type

either selects or posits certain components as moving Figures,

and names the Vector and Ground of their motion

this construction forces the conceptualization of components in motion

otherwise not readily in awareness or so conceived



## A. types of moving components

### (38) tangible components as the moving Figure

- a. He lives out of a suitcase.  
Figure = garments, toiletries, etc.
- b. She clothes the poor from her own wardrobe / out of her own closet.  
Figure = garments

### (39) intangible components as the moving Figure

- a. She rules the country from her palace.  
Figure = influence, chain of command, flow of power, edicts
- b. They conquered the land from horseback.  
Figure = military might
- c. He is the kind of mathematician who works best off of a blackboard / out of a notebook.  
Figure = mathematical ideas from their written representations to his consideration

### (40) both tangible and intangible components as the moving Figure

- a. He works out of his garage.  
Figure1 = items he makes and sells that leave garage to contacts outside  
Figure2 = initiatives that begin in garage and are communicated to contacts outside

## B. constraints on direction and Ground -type of action components

### a. direction only from Agent's Ground (to Patient's Ground), not the reverse

#### (41) a. in permitted direction

from Agent's Ground: She ruled the people from her palace.

#### b. in nonpermitted direction

from Patient's Ground: \*She ruled the people from their cottages.

to Agent's Ground: \*She ruled the people into her palace.

attempted Figure: information, feedback, reports to ruler, obedience, tribute

### b. in permitted direction: only from Agent's Ground as Source, not to Patient's Ground as Goal

#### (42) a. from Agent's Ground as Source

She rules from her palace.

#### b. to Patient's Ground as Goal

\*She rules even into the smallest huts of her toiling peasants.

?She rules into / to the farthest corners of her kingdom.

## 10.3 action-condensate paths

the factive conceptualization of an Agent affecting a Patient becomes a fictive conceptualization of a "condensate" of the action moving through space from the Agent to the Patient

this process was called "reification" in Talmy (2000), as in:

#### (43) a. I called Sue. / I gave Sue a call.

b. Sue was called by me. / Sue got a call from me.

#### (44) *job* is lexicalized as an action condensate:

a. I hired him. / I gave him a job.

- b. He was hired (by me). / He got a job (from me).
- c. I fired him. / I took his job away from him.
- d. He was fired. / He lost his job.
- e. He was employed by me for 2 years. / He had his job with me for 2 years.
- f. He can't remain employed. / He can't keep / hold a job.

## 11. fictivity and metaphor

the factive/fictive parameter applies mainly to entities / properties arrayed over physical spatial extent

aspects of a target domain that are (known / believed to be) nonspatial

but that are metaphorically treated as spatial are amenable to the factive/fictive distinction

either the factive-fictive parameter and the nonmetaphoric-metaphoric parameter

are orthogonal and can intersect each other

or fictivity is a type of metaphor that can systematically embed in other types of metaphor

"metafactive" and "metafictive": terms for such an intersection or embedding

### 11.1 emanation in metaphor

here exemplified: shadow paths in metaphor

- (45) a. meta-factive: The investigation threw cold water over his business plans.
- b. meta-fictive: The investigation cast a shadow over his business plans.

### 11.2 pattern paths in metaphor

- (46) a. metafactive: A sense of bliss spread out over his consciousness.
- b. metafictive: Numerous small bursts of enlightenment spread out over his consciousness.

### 11.3 frame relative motion in metaphor

unclear what might be factive and what fictive in the time progression metaphor

- (47) a. We are approaching Christmas. b. Christmas is approaching.

if observer is analogized to driver and time to scenery (I drove through the scenery):

(a) is factive, (b) is fictive

if observer is analogized to someone stationary and time to river (The river flowed past me):

(a) is fictive (b) is factive

but something in the metaphor is probably fictive because a constraint on fictivity applies:

- (48) a. The truck driver and I rushed past each other.
- b. \*The scenery and I rushed past each other.
- c. \*Christmas and we are approaching each other.

### 11.4 advent paths in metaphor

- (49) a. metafactive: I distributed a number of choice points throughout my plans.

b. metafictional: Prime numbers are distributed throughout the integers.

### 11.5 access paths in metaphor

- (50) a. metafictional: The cost of health insurance has recently risen way above my means.  
 b. metafictional: The cost of a sports car has always been way above my means.

### 11.6 coextension paths in metaphor

the metaphors below are spatialized thus: difference is represented as distance  
 a systematic set of differences is represented as a path along a demarcated distance

- (51) a. metafictional: The color of the spotlight changes through the spectrum from violet to red.  
 b. metafictional: The colors that are present in the painting go through the spectrum from violet to red.

NB: a verb can be lexicalized to represent a metafictional coextension path:

- (52) The colors in the painting range through the spectrum from violet to red.

### 11.7 guide paths in metaphor

- (53) a. metafictional: My detective's intuition led me to the widower's door. / to an understanding of the crime.  
 b. metafictional: A trail of clues led me to the widower's door. / to an understanding of the crime.

### 11.8 action paths in metaphor

here exemplified: action-focus path

- (54) a. metafictional: She rushed toward a Masters in psychology.  
 b. metafictional: She studied toward a Masters in psychology.

NB: the metaphoric domain seems to be that of "accomplishment"  
 rather than of pure "temporal progression"

because -- unlike Christmas -- the Masters' location in time and its speed of "approach"  
 are not fixed but depend on the Agent's actions

## References

Note: the following work is accessible on my website:

<http://linguistics.buffalo.edu/people/faculty/talmy/talmyweb/index.html>

Talmy, Leonard. 2000. *Toward a Cognitive Semantics*, volume I: *Concept structuring systems*. i-viii, 1-565. Cambridge: MIT Press. Chapter 2: "Fictive motion in language and 'ception'".