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Verbs of motion in Runyankore-Rukiga

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Abstract:
The study investigates motion verbs in Runyankore-Rukiga within the framework of Talmy's (1985, 2000) typology on the lexicalization patterns of motion events in languages. Using both primary data (native-speaker-generated) and secondary data (from books and dictionaries), the findings were analysed qualitatively, revealing six primary semantic features that dominate motion events in Runyankore-Rukiga, namely: Figure, Ground, Path, Manner, Cause, and Motion. A combination of these semantic features with the motion verbs results in simple and complex motion events. The study further reveals that a conflation of Motion and Path in the main verb predominates in Runyankore-Rukiga both in simple and complex motion events. However, there are also instances of the verb combining Motion with Manner, particularly in simple motion events. Runyankore-Rukiga verbs such as *ija* (come), *reeta* (bring), *twara* (take), and *gyenda* (go) are categorised as deictic, though a vast majority of motion verbs are non-deictic. Lastly, the study evinces a Verb-framing typology for Runyankore-Rukiga much like the other Bantu languages such as Swahili, Zulu, and Gikuyu.

Introduction

The paper explores morphosyntactic aspects of motion verbs in Runyankore-Rukiga. Talmy's (1991, 2000) typology classifies languages in terms of whether PATH is lexicalized within the verb or whether it is expressed as particles (satellites). The former gives rise to verb-framed languages and the latter, satellite-framed languages. For instance, in *Yaashohora munju arazina* 'She left the house while dancing', the Runyankore-Rukiga motion verb *shahora* 'leave' conflates both the

Motion and the Path. The Manner of motion is conveyed through a different verb *arazina* 's/he is dancing'. In the sentence, *the baby crawled out of the house,* however, the verb 'crawl' conflates both Motion and Manner. The path (out) is expressed as a satellite. Satellite-framed languages include Germanic languages such as English, Dutch, and Norwegian. Verb-framed languages, on the other hand, include Romance languages such as Italian and Spanish as well as Bantu languages such as Swahili.

The paper aims to find out whether Runyankore-Rukiga (RR) motion verbs exhibit tendencies similar to what is predicted of Bantu languages (verb-framed) or whether they have features of both the verb-framed (VF) and satellite-framed (SF) languages. Though most of the studies on motion events are cross linguistic, involving inter-typological variation (see e.g., Berman and Slobin 1994; Hickmann et al. 2018; Hickmann, Taranne, and Bonnet 2009; Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2004; Slobin 1996, 2000, 2004, 2006) or intra-typological variation (see e.g., Chen and Wu 2023; Fagard et al. 2017; Goschler and Stefanowitsch 2013; Lewandowski and Mateu 2016; Łozińska 2019; Łozińska and Pietrewicz 2018), there are a number whose focus is on the variables within a single language (see e.g.; Cardini 2012; Matsumoto and Kahumburu 2025; Schaefer 1985; Seidel 2007; Sitoe 2001). The present paper similarly focuses on a single Bantu language that is Runyankore-Rukiga [nyn-cgg].

The paper is structured as follows: in Section 2, the theoretical foundations of the concept of motion events are explored, including the semantic components that define these events. Talmy's bipartite language typology as well as Slobin's equipollent approach are also examined in this Section. In Section 3, a brief background on Runyankore-Rukiga is presented, coupled with an analysis of the categories of motion verbs as well as a brief review of a few related studies in Bantu. The method is presented in Section 4. Data are presented and discussed in Sections 5 and 6, respectively, which then lead to the conclusion in Section 7.

Theoretical consideration

Talmy (2000) defines a motion event as consisting of an entity (Figure) moving with respect to another entity (reference object). A motion event is therefore characterised by the Motion itself, a Figure, a Path, a Ground, Manner, and Cause. A Figure is the entity that moves (in this case) or one that is **located** with reference to **another entity**. It is the central actor around which the description of the movement revolves. For instance, in the English sentence *the dog ran quickly*, the dog is identified as the Figure. The **other entity** referred to above, which is the reference object with regard to the Figure, is called the Ground. It provides context or background for the Figure's movement. In English, for example, the sentence *the cat jumped off the table* designates the table as the Ground. A Path is the trajectory upon

which the Figure moves with respect to the Ground. It covers the route taken by the Figure. An example in English would be: *she walked across the street*. The phrase across the street specifies the Path taken. The Manner of motion captures the way in which the Figure moves, detailing the style, speed, or technique associated with the movement. This element enriches the description of the motion event and provides deeper insights into the dynamics of movement.

Slobin (2000) identifies subtypes of Manner in English as including motor pattern words such as jump and skip; rate of motion, e.g., in walk, sprint; attitude such as stroll, wander; encoding instrument such as ski, skateboard, etc. He, however, states that these categorizations do not seem to influence the lexicalization patterns described in the subsequent sections. In English, the sentence *the child ran* incorporates the verb run to depict the Manner of the movement. The Cause explains the motivation or reason behind the motion. This element is important for understanding the context in which the movement occurs. An English example would be: *the boy threw the ball*, where "the boy" serves as the Cause for the throwing of the ball. Lastly, Motion refers to the presence of movement in the said event. Talmy (2000) explores two types of motion, namely: trans-locational and self-contained motion. In the former, the location of the Figure changes in the time period under consideration. There is therefore a shift in the location of the Figure. Persohn (2018) adds that trans-locational motion involves the movement of a Figure along a trajectory irrespective of whether the Figure in question has a source (the initial location of the Figure) or a goal (the final location of the Figure) or not. In a self-contained motion, an object keeps its basic location, and any movement that takes place does not involve a shift in position. Motions that involve dilation, rotation, etc., would be part of this category. Both types of motion will be explored in RR in the present paper.

Talmy's (1991, 2000) bipartite classification of V-framed and S-framed languages is partly based on how the motion events are mapped onto the morphosyntactic structures available in languages. Talmy foregrounds Path as an integral aspect of a motion event and thus uses its position in the clause to identify two possible patterns that define the V-framed and S-framed typology. When a verb expresses both the motion and a co-event such as Manner or Cause, the core information of the semantic domain of the motion event (Path) is rendered through directional particles, 'satellites'. Languages with this sort of typification are categorised as S-framed languages primarily because the path element is 'framed' within these so-called satellites.

For instance, in (1) the fact of Motion is conflated with the Manner in the verb 'float'. It both shows movement and the manner of motion. The path is expressed through the preposition into. Languages with Germanic ancestry such as

English express motion events in the manner described in (1) and are thus regarded as S-framed.

(1)
The paper floated into the room

The V-framed languages have the core information of motion allocated to the verb. Manner or cause is expressed through other elements or sometimes omitted. Consider the Basque example in (2) as adapted from Ibarretxe-Antuñano (2004).

(2)
eta erlauntzatik erle guztiak
and beehive: ABS[1] bee all:ABS:DET:PL
irten ziren hegaka
exit: PERF AUX flying
'… and all the bees flew out from the beehive'

The Basque verb irten 'exit' conveys the Motion and the Path. Manner, meanwhile, is expressed through an adverb, hegaka 'flying'. The earlier example in RR, repeated here as (3), also shows a typical V-framed construction

(3)
Yaashohora munju arazina
y-aa-shohor-a mu-nju
3SG-PST-exit-FV LOC-house
a-ra-zin-a
1-PROG-dance-FV
'She left the house while dancing'

The verb *yaashohora* 'she exited' conflates motion with path. The manner is expressed through a different verb, zina 'dance'.

It has been argued that whereas the highlighted dual typology works for many languages, including African languages, it is possible that there are languages that do not faithfully conform to it. These languages would neither be classed as V-

[1]List of abbreviation: 1SG - first person singular ;2SG– second person singular; 3SG – third person singular; ABS – absolutive; DET – determiner; PL – plural; PERF – perfective; AUX – auxiliary; PST – past tense; FV – final vowel; LOC – location; AUG – augment; SM – subject marker; OM – object marker; POSS – possessive; NPST – near past; IMP- imperative; PROX – proximal; CMPL – completive; CONS – Consecutive; RCP – reciprocal; APPL – applicative; NOM- nominaliser; REFL - reflexive

framing nor S-framing. Slobin (2004; 2006) suggests a third type of lexicalization pattern that would mostly account for the motion events in languages that have serial verbs, though not necessarily limited to them. He refers to this category as equipollently framed. The framing in this category is such that both the Path and Manner aspects of the motion events are mapped equally onto the morphosyntactic structure of the language. Slobin argues that the equipollent languages have three subtypes based on their morphological attributes. First are the serial verb languages. In these languages, it is not always evident which verb in the series is the main verb. Language families such as Niger-Congo, Sino-Tibetan, and some Austronesian fit within this category. Second are bipartite verb languages in which the motion verb consists of a path morpheme and a manner morpheme that are equal in status. Some Austronesian languages such as Tsou have such features. The last subtype is the generic verb languages, such as the Australian Jaminjung, which has a lexicon of 24 function verbs. In motion events, a deictic verb is combined with satellite-like elements that encode both path and manner. In this arrangement, neither the path nor the manner is the main element in the clause.

In the next section, we seek to explore, among other things, the position taken in the literature by scholars who have investigated lexicalization patterns of motion events in languages related to RR.

Contextual Background

Runyankore (JE.13, [nyn])[2] is a Bantu language of the Nyoro-Ganda group, mostly spoken in southwestern Uganda by approximately 4.4M people (Eberhaud et al., 2026; Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2024). Relatedly, Rukiga (JE.14, [cgg]), also spoken in the same region and having a speakership of approximately 2.95M people (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2024) has a lexical similarity of between 84-94% with Runyankore (Eberhaud et al., 2026). Since these two languages have a high mutual intelligibility, they are often grouped as Runyankore-Rukiga and studied as one language (see e.g., Asiimwe 2014, 2024; Ndoleriire 2020, among others).

Runyankore-Rukiga is characterized by a rich morphological and syntactic structure, typical of Bantu languages. It is an agglutinative language where meaning is built through the addition of prefixes, infixes, and suffixes to root words, a feature common in Bantu grammar (Maho, 2009). This structure facilitates the expression of complex grammatical relationships, including tense and aspect (e.g., Asiimwe 2024). In addition to its grammar, the language's extensive vocabulary is deeply embedded

[2]Combinations of a letter and digits after the name of a language show the code of the language in the updated version of Guthrie's referential system (Maho, 2009). The ISO code is a 3 letter standard language identification nomenclature as used by the ethnologue (Eberhaud et al., 2026). We have used both criteria for language identification in this paper

in cultural expressions such as proverbs, idioms, and oral traditions, which reflect the values and beliefs of its speakers.

The role of Runyankore-Rukiga extends beyond daily communication to cultural preservation and education. It is used in storytelling, traditional ceremonies, and religious practices, thus maintaining the cultural identity of the Banyankore and Bakiga people. Efforts have been made to promote its use in formal education, especially at the primary and secondary school level, and to document its grammar and vocabulary in dictionaries and linguistic studies. These initiatives show the language's importance as both a tool for communication and a repository of cultural heritage.

There are several notable studies in Runyankore-Rukiga (see e.g., Asiimwe and Van der Wal 2025; Asiimwe 2014, 2024b, 2024a; Ndoleriire 2020) most of which have touched on the verb. Within this context, therefore, a study of motion verbs finds justifiable grounds. More importantly, however, despite the abundance of literature on lexicalization patterns of motion events outside African languages (see cited works in the introduction), a sizeable number of studies have explored the subject in question in languages within Africa. Sitoe (2001) documents the verbs of motion in Changana (Tsonga S.53, [tso]). He adopts Talmy's (1985) semantic typology, which foregrounds the concepts of Motion Event, Path, Manner, Cause, etc., but makes slight adjustments to their interpretations and uses these to categorize motion verbs within a morphosyntactic model. This gives rise to 12 configurations involving different combinations of semantic features such as Agent, Cause, Path, Motion, etc., appearing within the structure of a sentence expressing a motion event in Changana. This results in motion verb categories such as limit verbs (those with bounded Path); Deictic verbs (those with a reference to the deictic centre), which are further categorised as ventive (towards the speaker) and itive (away from the speaker); non-deictic verbs (no reference to the deictic centre), among others.

Similar studies that have explored the nature of motion verbs in Bantu, particularly focusing on 'come' and 'go' verbs, include Botne (2006) in Bamileke-Dchang/Yemba [ybb]; Bamun [bax]; Lamnso' [lns]; Duala [dua]; Chimwera (P.22, [mwe]); Chindali (M.301,[ndh]); Kihunde (JD.51, [hke]) and Zulu (S.42, [zul]). Devos (2014) similarly analyzed 'come' and 'go' verbs in Sakati (P.311, [nte]), and so is Persohn (2018) in Nyakyusa (M.31, [nyy]). Whereas our study is not specific to 'come' and 'go' verbs, part of the aim of this study is to give a general categorization of motion verbs in RR (including *come* and *go* verbs) akin to Sitoe's (2001) approach of Changana..

Some studies have investigated motion verbs in Bantu languages using Talmy's V-framed and S-framed typology. Bantu languages are generally deemed

to be V-framing, conflating Motion and Direction/Path in the verb and having Manner expressed optionally (Schaefer & Gaines, 1997). Schaefer (1985), however, found that Tswana exhibits a lexicalization pattern that is context-dependent; that is, if the motion event is complex and location-confined, e.g., *the boy is running in the compound*, the fact of Motion is conflated with the Manner in the verb, hence S-Framing. In less complex motion events, the Motion and Path are combined in the verb, thus V-framing. Similarly, Gaines (2001) identifies two classes of motion events – complex and simple motion events. Simple motion events conflate Motion and Direction/Path and optionally encode Manner as a separate particle (complementizer); or a conflation of Motion and Manner and optionally encode Path as a separate particle, all within the same clause. He notes, however, that the former (Motion + Direction/Path) was prevalent in nine out of the ten Bantu languages under study. Complex motion events, on the other hand, conflate Motion with Manner/Cause or Motion with Direction/Path in the verb in the main clause and present Manner or Path via satellites in the subordinate clause.

Considering the reviewed literature in the preceding paragraphs, a number of notable observations stand out. Sitoe's (2001) approach, though extensive, presents some interesting positions that are likely to inform the current study. The adoption of Talmy's semantic features of Motion, Path, Manner, etc., as well as the categorization criteria of motion verbs into deictic/non deictic, ventive/itive has been adopted in the present study. 'Come' and 'go' verbs are equally explored in the present study, though not with the specificity with which Botne (2006), Devos (2014) and Persohn (2018) have approached their work. Findings from these studies, however, will be comparable to the current findings in RR. The idea that motion events can be simple or complex prominently features in Schaefer and Gaines (1997); Schaefer (1985) and Gaines (2001); and such an approach would be considered in the current work as well. As to whether RR is V-framing like most Bantu languages (Schaefer & Gaines, 1997) or exhibits equipollent traits like Tswana (Schaefer, 1985) or leans towards S-framing is a matter that we are yet to find out.

Method

The data used in this study comes from two major sources. Firstly, since one of the authors is a native speaker of RR, he used his native speaker competence to generate the requisite data. This data was then presented to three native speaker respondents, all linguists and experts in the language, for verification. This was the primary source of data. Secondly, we carefully selected documented materials from which examples of motion verbs as used in various contexts were taken (document analysis). Specifically, one Ordinary Level (O' level) Runyankore-Rukiga Course

book, five Advanced Level (A' level) Runyankore-Rukiga books, as well as six Runyankore-Rukiga textbooks used at the university were sampled[3]Additionally, two Runyankore-Rukiga dictionaries were also used for data collection. By combining these sources, that is, the educational texts, dictionaries, and native speaker insights, the study ensured a rich dataset for a thorough qualitative study.

The data collection process for this study was designed to systematically gather authentic linguistic data from diverse sources. The author wrote down as many motion verbs as he could think of. He then further wrote down sample motion event sentences using the motion verbs identified. Additionally, a review of each documented source was conducted for motion verb usage, focusing on narrative passages, dictionary entries, and oral stories rich in spatial descriptions. A Motion Verb Template was then used to extract and record sentences involving motion verb forms, semantic components (e.g., Figure, Path, Manner), etc. Both the self-generated data and the data from the secondary sources were presented to the three respondents for verification. Corrections involving the orthographic representation of the data, sentence and word ambiguities, authenticity of the motion verbs, and the motion event sentences were made. The data were then glossed into English and analysed at different levels. The motion events were analysed based on the semantic features earlier highlighted, that is, whether the motion events are simple or complex and the frequencies of each. The motion verbs were categorized as deictic (itive/ventive) or non-deictic, transitive or intransitive, etc. These were then discussed in depth.

Results

5.1 Semantic features in Runyankore-Rukiga Motion events

The Runyankore-Rukiga motion events in 4-9 show the different semantic features as depicted in Talmy's (2000) typology. The different manifestations of these features will be explained with a focus on how they contributed to the overall meaning of the motion events.

(4)
Omwana agyenzire aha ishomero
o-mw-ana *a-gyend-ire*
AUG-1-child 3SG-go-PST
a-ha *e-i-shom-er-o*
AUG-16AUG-5-school-APPL-NOM

[3]See Appendix 1 for these sources

'The child went to school'

The child (*omwana*) in (4) is considered to have moved from one point to a goal (school), which typifies a Figure. The child is the actor upon which the central action of movement revolves. *omwishiki* (girl) in (5), *ekinyonyi* (bird) in (6), *embwa* (dog) in (8) and *omushaija* (man) in (9) are also Figures of their respective motion events.

(5)
Omwishiki ariyo naatambura omu maisho g'enju
o-mu-ishiki *a-ri=yo*
AUG-1-girl 1.SM-PROG=16
na-a-tambur-a *o-mu*
PROG-3SG.SM-walk-FV AUG-18
ma-isho ge-n-ju
6-front 6.POSS-AUG-9-house
'The girl is walking in front of the house'

Enju (house) acts as a reference point in front of which a girl is walking. The house therefore becomes the Ground; that is, it provides context or the background upon which the girl's movement is gauged. In (4), (6), and (9), the Ground e*ishomero* (school), *ekyashuri* (nest), and *enju* (house) double up as the Goal of motion.

(6)
Ekinyonyi kitaahire omukyashuri
e-ki-nyonyi *ki-taah-ire*
AUG-7-bird 7-enter-NPST
o-mu-ky-ashuri
AUG-18-AUG- 7-nest
'The bird entered the nest'

The verb *kitahiire* (entered) shows the Path of motion. There is a Ground (*ekyashuri*)(nest) and a Figure (*ekinyonyi*)(bird). By entering its nest, the bird crosses a boundary signifying a trajectory/route (Path) followed. In (7), the verb *arikwabuka*

(is crossing) shows the Path followed by the man. Though the road is considered a Ground, it also acts as a boundary that the man crosses, that is, from one side of it to the other.

(7)
Omushaija arikwambuka oruguuto
O-mu-shaija *a-riku-ambuk-a*
AUG-1-man 1. SM-PROG-cross-FV
o-ru-guuto
AUG-11-road
'The man is crossing the road'

The motion event in (8) indicates the manner of motion through the verb *neyekurura* (it is crawling). This shows how the Figure moves. Within Slobin's (2000) subtypes of manner, crawl would be regarded as a motor pattern. In (9), the verb *guhirikire* (threw) also indicates the Manner of motion.

(8)
Mbwa eriyo neyekurura
e-n-bwa *e-ri=yo*
AUG-9-dog 9.SM-be=16
n-e-ye-kurur-a
PROG-REFL-crawl-FV
'The dog is crawling'
((9)
Omuyaga guhirikire omuti
o-mu-yaga *gu-hirik-ire*
AUG-3a-wind 3a-throw-NPST
o-mu-ti
AUG-3-tree
'The wind threw the tree (down)'

The wind (*omuyaga*) is the Cause in (9). It shows the agent that has made the movement possible. It also places the movement itself, that is, why, for instance, the tree fell.

(10)
Fani erikwetorora
fani *e-riku-e-toror-a*
9.fan 9-PROG-9. REFL-spin-FV

'The fan is spinning'

In all the seven examples (4-10), there is the presence of movement of the Figure. This is what we refer to as Motion. The movement of the Figure in (4-9) would be considered as translocation, that is, the location of the Figure changes along a trajectory-which may be explicitly stated as in (6) and (7) or implied as in (8). In (10), however, the Figure moves, but there is no change in location. This is the type of motion that Persohn (2018) refers to as self-contained. Both types of motion were evident in the study, though the latter was less frequent than the former.

5.2 Simple Motion events

According to Schaefer and Gaines (1997); Schaefer (1985) and Gaines (2001) simple motion events involve either a conflation of Motion and Path/direction while Manner is ignored or a conflation of Motion and Manner leaving out Path in the motion event within an independent clause. In (6), the verb *kitahiire* (entered) shows Motion. Additionally, it shows that the Figure follows a trajectory that leads to a boundary being crossed, that is, from outside to inside the nest. It therefore combines the fact of Motion and the Path in a **V= Motion + Path** format. This is typical of simple motion events. In (7), the verb *arikwambuka* (is crossing) also combines the fact of Motion with Path. In (11), the verb *agarukiire* (returned) also conflates the fact of Motion with the Path, but this type of Path is regarded as a return Path. A Figure crossed a boundary into a Goal (coop) which, at some point in the past, was the Source of motion; that is, there was movement out of it. The verb *atemburukire* (descended) in (12) combines Motion with Path (down the tree). The Path in this case always shows the direction of Motion. This is different from other verbs such as *egaruka* (return), *kuanjura* (to crawl), etc

(11)
Enkoko egarukire omukiju
e-n-koko *e-garuk-ire*
AUG-9-hen 9.SM-return-N.PST
o-mu *ki-ju*
AUG-18 7-coop
'The hen returned to the coop'

(12)

Omwana atemburukiire omumuti
o-mu-ana
AUG-1-child
a-temb-ur-uk-ire
1. SM-descend-REVRS-REVRS-NPST
o-mu mu-ti
AUG-183-tree
'The child descended from the tree'

In (13), the verb *arikwaruka* (is running) not only indicates the Motion but also the Manner. The Path is not explicitly stated, but implied. We can assume that the running was through a trajectory, though the speaker felt no need to include that in the utterance. This too defines a simple motion event. Similarly, in (8), (9), (10) and (11) the verb combines Motion with Manner and has an implied Path within the same independent clause; hence the motion events being simple.

(13)
Omwana arikwiruka
o-mu-ana *a-ri-ku-iruk-a*
AUG-1-child 1. SM-PROG-INF-run-FV
'The child is running'

(14)
Embwa erikwanjura ahansi yemeza
e-n-bwa *e-ri-ku-anjur-a*
AUG-9-dog 9. SM-PROG-INF-crawl-FV
a-ha-nsi y-a e-meeza
AUG-16-floor 9-POSS AUG-9.table
'The dog is crawling under the table'

In (14), the verb *erikunjura* (is crawling) conflates the fact of Motion and Manner. However, there is a bounded Ground *ahansi yemeza* (under the table) which has locative properties. The same is seen in (5), repeated here as (15), where the Figure *omwishiki* (girl) is described as walking *omumisho ge'nju* (in front of the house), which shows location. Since *ahansi yemeza* (under the table) and *omumaisho g'enju* (in front of the house) are complements and not part of a subordinate clause bearing either the Path or the Manner, both (14) and (15) do show a simple motion event.

(15)
Omwishiki ariyo naatambura omumaisho g'enju

o-mu-ishiki *a-ri=yo*
AUG-1-girl 1.SM-PROG=16
ni-a-tambur-a *o-mu*
PROG-3SG.SM-walk-FV AUG-18
maisho *ga-e-n-ju*
6-front 9.POSS-AUG-9-house
'The girl is walking in front of the house'

A different type of simple motion event involves an agent/force that deliberately initiates an action. These are called caused Motion. In such a case, there is an agent that initiates the action and a patient. The verb conflates Motion with Cause. Examples (16), (17), and (18) illustrate the same.

(16)
Omushija asindikire eyibaare
o-mu-shaija *a-sindik-ire*
AUG-1-man 1. SM-push-NPST
e-i-baare
AUG-5-stone
'The man pushed the stone'

(17)
Omwana agwisize ekitabo
o-mu-ana *a-gw-is-ize*
AUG-1-child 1. SM-drop-CAUS-NPST
e-ki-tabo
AUG-7-book
'The child dropped the book'

(18)
Maama areesire amate omunju
Maama *a-rees-ire*
Mother 1. SM-bring-NPST
a-ma-te *o-mu* *e-n-ju*
AUG-6-milk AUG-18 AUG-9-house
'Mother brought milk into the house'

The verbs *asindikiire* (pushed) (16), *agwisize* (dropped) (17), and *areesire* (brought) (18) conflate Motion with Cause. For every caused motion, there is an agent, the causer, and a theme. Since the motion events are expressed with a single clause, these types of Motion fit within the profile of a simple motion.

5.3 Complex Motion events

Motion events that have the verbs conflating the fact of Motion with either Manner or Path/Direction in the main clause and have Path or Manner expressed in the subordinate clause are regarded as complex (Gaines, 2001; Schaefer, 1985; Schaefer & Gaines, 1997). The following are examples of such constructions.

(19)
Ente ekataaha omu ekirugu neyiruka
e-nte *e-ka-taah-a*
AUG-cow 9-PST-enter-FV
o-mu-e-kirugu *ni-e-iruk-a*
AUG-18-AUG-kraal PROG-9.SM-run-FV
'The cow entered the kraal while running'

(20)
Omukazi akacwekanisa oruguuto naazina
o-mu-kazi *a-ka-cwekanis-a*
AUG-1-woman 1. SM-PST-cross-FV
o-ru-guuto *ni-a-zin-a*
AUG-11-road PROG-1.SM-dance-FV
'The woman crossed the road while dancing'

The main clause in the motion event construction in (19) has the verb *ekataaha* (entered), combining the fact of Motion with Path. A subordinate clause bearing the verb *eyiruka* (running) shows the Manner of motion. Similarly, in (20) *akacwekanisa* (crossed) is the main verb in the independent clause. Motion is conflated with Path. The Manner *naazina* (is dancing) is part of the subordinate clause. Both (19) and (20) show complex motion events. It was observed that in these complex motion events, the more frequent construction involved the verb conflating the fact of Motion with the Path in the main clause and the Manner being expressed in the subordinate clause. Having the verb in the main clause combining Motion and Manner and the Path expressed in the subordinate clause appeared unnatural, almost impossible.

5.4 Deictic Motion

Deictic verbs make a reference to the deictic centre. The Speech Act Participant (SAP) (addresser and the addressee) is in most cases the deictic centre. The deictic verbs are further divided into ventive 'come' and itive 'go' verbs. Below are samples of motion events whose main verbs are deictic in nature

(21)

Johana aijiire aha duka
Johana *a-ij-ire*
1. Johana 1. SM-come-NPST
a-ha *duuka*
AUG-169. shop
'Johana came to the shop.'

(22)
Sarai akareeta ebyokurya
Sarai *a-ka-reet-a*
1. Sarai I.SM-PST-bring-FV
e-bi-o-ku-ry-a
AUG-8-AUG-INF-eat-FV
'Sarai brought the food'

In (21) and (22), the verbs *aijiire* (came) and *akareeta* (brought), respectively, show Motion that is directed towards the deictic centre. As opposed to *ija* (come), the verb *reeta* (bring) is a caused motion. The second category of deictic 'go' verbs is illustrated in (23) and (24)

(23)
Agyenzire aha duuka
a-gyenz-ire a-ha duuka.
1SM-go-NPST AUG-16 9. shop
'He/she went to the shop.'

(24)
Twara egi ntebe hari.
Twar-a *e-gi* *n-tebe*
IMP.take-FV DEM-9. PROX. 9. chair
hari
16. LOC
'Take this chair there'

The verb *agyenzire* (she/he went) indicates movement away from the speaker and so does *twara* (take). Like *akareeta* (he brought) in (22), *twara* is a caused motion

5.5 Non-deictic Motion

Non-deictic verbs show motion that is not directed at the SAP. The verbs *agyenzire* (went) in (4), *naatambura* (is walking) in (5); *kitaahire* (entered) in (6);

arikwambuka (is crossing) in (7); *neeyanjura* (it is crawling) in (8); *guhirikire* (threw) in (9); *erikwetorora* (is spinning) in (10) and *arikwiruka* (is running) in (13) all indicate motion that is not directly towards or away from the speaker, that is, no reference is made to the deictic point. They are therefore regarded as non-deictic motion. Among these motion verbs are those that conflate Motion and Path, such as (6) and (7), as well as those that conflate Motion and Manner, e.g., (10) and (14). There are also non-deictic motion verbs that are caused by an agent or a force. *Guhirikire* (threw) in (9); *asindikire* (pushed) in (16), *agwisize* (dropped) in (17) are a few examples of these.

Discussion

Semantic features in Runyankore-Rukiga Motion events

We have identified six semantic features in RR, namely: Figure, Ground, Path, Manner, Cause, and Motion. We will briefly discuss how each of them contributes to motion events in Runyankore-Rukiga.

The Figure is an entity which moves in relation to some reference point. Syntactically, the Figure mostly occupies a subject position in RR constructions. This way, the Figure acts as an unmarked topic which controls the events of the entire clause (Kako, 2006; Suozzi & Maggiolini, 2025). A Figure also bears certain semantic roles. For instance, the child (*omwana*) in (4) is an agent that initiates the action of going. The same is true for *omwishiki* (the girl), who is described as walking. A Figure can be human, as in the case of *omwana* (child), *omwishiki* (girl), and *omushaija* (man) in (4), (5), and (7), respectively but can also be animals, such as *ekinyonyi* (bird), *embwa* (dog) and *enkoko* (chicken) in (6), (8), and (11), respectively. Figures can also take the form of inanimate entities such as *omuti* (tree) in (9) and *fani* (fan) in (10). As opposed to the animate objects that were categorized as agents for initiating an action, *omuyaga* (the wind) in (9) and the fan play the semantic role of force. Note that the tree in (9) is a Figure, but it does not occupy the subject position; instead, the wind (causer) does so.

Schaefer (1985) points out that there are some kinds of motion that involve a Figure confined in a specific location. For instance, in (5), the girl who walks in front of the house embodies motion that is confined to the front of the house. The same location-confined motion is seen in (14) as the dog is deemed to be crawling under the table. The Figure (child) in (13), however, does not seem to be confined to a location. It should, however, be noted that in some cases, such as in imperatives (see, e.g., (24), the agent (Figure) is not explicitly stated but implied. The addressee in such a case therefore becomes our Figure.

The Ground provides a contextual background to not only the Figure but the

motion event in question. Syntactically, the Ground occupies the object position. In (5), the event of motion of the girl is given a locational context when *enju* (house) comes into the picture. The same applies to the event of motion of the child and the Ground (school) in (4), the event of motion of the bird and its Ground, *the nest,* in (6), the event of motion of the man and its Ground, *the road,* in (7), etc. In (5), (7) and (14), the Ground is neither a Source (the location from which the motion of the Figure originates) nor the Goal (the endpoint of the motion). According to Sitoe (2001), in such a case, these Grounds (house, road, and the table respectively) would be regarded as the Centre. In other instances, however, the Ground acts as a Source, e.g., the tree in (12). Such a Motion that has the Ground doubling as the Source is considered to be a source-oriented motion (Sitoe, 2001). A goal-oriented motion, on the other hand, has the Ground also acting as the Goal, as with *ishomero* (school), *akyashuri* (nest), *enju* (house) and *omukiju* (coop) in (4), (6), (9) and (11) respectively.

Though the Ground is a useful reference point for the Figure, it is possible to have a groundless motion event. For instance, in (8) the crawling of the dog is not given any locational context, nor is the spinning of the fan in (10) nor the running of the child in (13). Talmy (1985) and Sitoe (2001) consider the groundless motion such as in (10) as being self-contained due to their rotary nature which does not result in a change of location. Notice that this is different from the locationally confined motion earlier mentioned, which allows for trans-locational movement but within the context of a Ground; e.g., as a dog crawls, its location changes, but this only happens under the table (Ground). Groundless motion events are grammatically well-formed and frequent in the language. In some deictic motions, the Ground is interpreted as being the same as the environment of the SAP. For instance, in (22), Sarai brings the food possibly to the speaker. The movement of the Figure therefore is gauged with respect to the environment of the SAP, which in this case doubles up as the Ground. In an itive motion such as (24), however, the distal demonstrative *hari* (there) acts as the Goal, but the shared environment of the SAPs, though implicit, is regarded as the Ground.

In RR, the Path taken by a Figure can or cannot be boundary-crossing. For instance, in (6), the verb *kitaahire* (entered) shows that the bird which was outside the nest crossed a boundary as it got into the net. The verb conflates the fact of motion with the Path. Whereas the motion in (7) is expressed in the progressive aspect *arikwabuka* (is crossing), thereby limiting us to only one boundary crossed, that is, from outside the road into the road; in reality, it would be expected that the man was crossing the road from one side to another. In this case, therefore, there would be a double boundary-crossing Path. Similarly, in (18), the mother who was possibly fetching milk away from the house brought it into the house. In this deictic motion, the Path is not explicitly expressed by the verb 'bring,' but by the fact that

it signals a ventive motion and, with the combination of the locative marker *omu* (in) and the Ground *enju* (house), it is evident that the Figure crosses a boundary to reach the deictic centre, which is located inside the house. Note that unlike in languages such as English that have prepositions which show the Path of spatial motion such as *into*, in Runyankore-Rukiga, the same is mainly performed by locative markers, albeit within the context provided by the motion verb and the Ground

A return Path (Persohn, 2018) similarly shows rather implicitly that a boundary has been crossed. In (11), for example, the hen is deemed to have returned to the coop, meaning that earlier on, it must have moved from inside the coop to the outside of it and then at the point of the utterance, the hen again moves from outside of the house into the house. In both cases, it is evident that a boundary has been crossed. Neutral[4] Verbs such as go, leave, arrive, etc., when used with locative markers, show boundary crossing Path. In (4), for instance, the child *agyenzire aha ishomero* (went to school). As the utterance is made, the child, who was probably at home at some point in time, was in school at another time. The child must have followed a route, crossed a boundary, and got to school. This clearly defines a Path. Based on this argument, therefore, the phrases *kugaruka aha kiju* (to return to the coop) in (11) and *kwija aha duuka* (to come to the shop) in (21) all have a combination of a verb and a locative marker (Path particle), which shows a motion event with boundary-crossing Path

There are also motion events that show the Path of motion with no clear boundary crossing. In (12), the verb *atemburukire* (descended) combines Motion with Path (down the tree). The Path in this case shows the direction of Motion. There is no overt boundary crossed. This type of path was mainly seen in vertical motion events.

Slobin (2006) explores subtypes of Manner such as those indicating rate of motion, motor pattern, force dynamics, as well as attitude. The verb *naatambura* (*is walking)* in (5), *arikwiruka* (is running) in (13), and *neeyanjura* (is crawling) in (14) would be considered manner verbs indicating the rate of motion, with *arikwiruka* (is running) indicating a higher velocity than *naatambura* (is walking) and *neeyanjura* (is crawling). They are all intransitive verbs but can take an oblique such as *ahansi y'emeeza* (under the table) as in (14). The verb *neeyanjura* (is crawling) in (14) can also be considered as a member of the motor pattern category. *Erikwetorora* (is spinning) not only shows self-contained motion (Persohn, 2018) but also manner. In the context of the fan, it also falls in the category of rate of motion. In (12), the verb *atemburukire* (descended) conflates Manner of motion with direction; that is, the

[4]+
These are verbs that neither conflate Motion with Manner nor with Path

motion is downwards. Besides indicating caused motion, *guhirikire* (threw) also indicates the manner in which the motion took place. The same is true for *asindikiire* (pushed) (16), *agwisize* (dropped) (17), and *areesire* (brought) (18). Notice that the motion events in all these examples fall under the simple motion category, meaning that the verb does not only conflate the fact of Motion with Manner, but it does so within a single independent clause.

Verbs of causation allow for an agent/force at the subject position and a patient at the object position. It has been observed that most entities that play the semantic role of agent double up as the Figure. This, though, does not apply to motion events that involve verbs of causation. When, because of *omuyaga* (wind), a tree is thrown down, the wind, which is a causer, is considered to be a force, and the tree becomes the patient. In this case, therefore, the patient, which takes the object position, is our Figure. *Eibaare* (the stone) in (16) that is pushed, *ekitabo* (book) in (17) that is dropped, and *amate* (milk) in (18) that is brought are Figures, and they all occupy the object position and play the semantic role of theme/patient. Though Talmy (2000) proposes a general structure of motion events that has the Figure, the Motion (+Manner/Path/Cause), the Path/Manner, and the Ground in that order, it is evident that this is not true for Runyankore-Rukiga in motion events with verbs of causation.

Types of motion in Runyankore-Rukiga

It is evident that in the Runyankore-Rukiga simple motion events, there is both a (V= Motion + Path; _) and a (V= Motion + Manner; _) verb configuration within the independent clause. However, our data shows a higher frequency for the former. This has traits of V-framing languages (this will be explored further under lexicalization patterns within this section). A closer look at the structure of the simple motion events shows that most verbs in our data are either intransitive or have been used intransitively. The verb *garuka* (return) in (11) has been used intransitively and is followed by the noun phrase *kiju, which* is preceded by the locative marker *omu*. Notice that there is no Path particle within the clause, which confirms the fact that the verb *garuka* (return) conflates Motion with Path. The oblique of this intransitive construction is a locative (Ground), which gives locational context to *the returning hen.* There is a reason the oblique is not a directional/path particle. This is because the verb already has the Path/direction embedded in it. The oblique does not show manner, probably because it is not mandatory. The same argument of (11) holds for (12) in *atemburuka* (descend) *omu muti* (from the tree), in which the oblique functions as a locative. In (14) and (15), though the verb conflates the fact of Motion with Manner, the oblique (under the

table in 14) and (in front of the house in 15) function as locatives (Ground) providing the background for the movement of the figures, the dog and girl respectively.

It becomes obvious that in Runyankore-Rukiga, simple motion events whose intransitive predicate bears motion verbs conflated with either Path or Manner normally take an oblique component that functions as a locative. The locative itself is composed of a locative marker, e.g., *omu* preceding the noun phrase. Whereas in (11) and (12) the Path is explicitly encoded in the verb and the locative primarily functions as a Ground, in (14) and (15), Path is not completely ignored but can be deciphered through the locatives. A dog that crawls under the table implies a certain Path followed by the dog. The same is true for the girl who walks in front of the house. The *crawling* and *walking* take a trajectory that is not explicit, but that can be implied from the oblique constituents. Even in the absence of an oblique constituent as in (11), in the intransitive verb *kwiruka* (run), as explained in 5.2, the Path is implied.

Transitive verbs of causation such as *kuhirika* (throw down) (9), *sindika* (push) (16) and *gwisa* (drop) (17) have no oblique position but an object which doubles up as the Figure. Even in these caused simple motion events, there is an implicit reference to Path, e.g., when a stone is pushed, it is expected that it rolls along a particular trajectory and so is an object that is thrown or dropped. The prominence of Path in motion events in Runyankore Rukiga points to a V-framing Bantu typological trait noted by Gaines (2001) and Schaefer and Gaines (1997) and which will be explored further in later paragraphs in this section.

Gaines (2001) echoes Schaefer and Gaines (1997) in noting that in complex motion events, several Bantu languages such as Swahili, Tswana, Zulu and Gikuyu express Motion and Path/Direction in verbs in the main clause and relegate Manner to the subordinate clause. Runyankore-Rukiga too exhibits similar tendencies. In (19) and (20), the verbs *ekataaha* (it entered) and *akacwekanisa* (s/he crossed) conflate the fact of Motion with Path in the main clause, respectively. Manner is expressed in the subordinate clause through the verbs *iruka* (run) and *azina* (dance). The verbs *kutaaha* and *kucwekanisa* are intransitive and therefore take an oblique constituent, which in this case is a combination of the allophonic locative markers *omu* and *oru* and the noun phrases *orugo* (kraal) and oru*guuto* (road), respectively. The resultant locatives act as the Ground for the motion event.

The subordinate clause in (19) is introduced by the preverbal affixes *e,* which is a noun class marker, and the progressive aspectual marking *ni.* The latter gives the verb its circumstantial meaning (while running). In (20), the progressive marker *ni* introduces the act of dancing and, similar to the *i* of (19), it gives the verb *kwazina* its circumstantial meaning. Such a manifestation of subordinate clause construction in Runyankore-Rukiga is not an isolated case. In complex motion event

constructions, the subordinate clause in Gikuyu is signalled by a combination of preverbal prefixes denoting the personal pronoun and the tense marker (Gaines, 2001). For instance, in (25) (adapted from (Gaines, 2001)), the consecutive prefix *gi* gives the verb *teng'era* a circumstantial meaning (while running).

(25)

Muthuuri nangirire nyumba agiteng'eraga	
mu)thuuri	*n,)a-ng,)r-ire*
man	3SG-move. into-CMPL
nyu)mba	*a-g,)i-teng'er-aga*
house	3SG-CONS-run-IMP

'The man entered the house while running'
'The man ran into the house' *(original gloss slightly modified)*

Whereas languages like Swahili sometimes make use of a separate circumstantial marker *akiwa* (while) in place of the consecutive preverbal prefixes, the same is not observed in Runyankore-Rukiga. Zulu language, however, has similar circumstantial markings as Gikuyu and Runyankore-Rukiga. Gaines (2001) notes that Zulu has an interesting syntactic phenomenon that allows the locative to appear in the subordinate clause and the verb that would have been in the subordinate clause appearing in the main clause alongside the *main* verb. This, however, is possible only if the verb in the main clause is intransitive. Such a construction is not possible in Runyankore Rukiga and would be deemed ungrammatical. See, e.g., (26).

(26)

**Ente ekataaha neyiruka omurugo*	
e-nte	*e-ka-taah-a-*
AUG-cow	9-PST-enter-FV
ne-i-ruk-a	*o-mu-rugo*
9-PROG-run-FV	AUG-18-AUG-kraal

*'The cow entered while running into the kraal'

Another construction that would appear unnatural in Runyankore Rukiga is a complex construction that has the verb conflating Motion with the Manner in the main clause and Path expressed in the subordinate clause. See (27)

(27)

?*Omukazi akazina aracwekanisa oruguuto*

o-mu-kazi	*a-ka-azin-a*
AUG-1-woman	1. SM-PST-dance-FV
a-ra-cwekanis-a	*o-ru-guuto*
1. SM-PROG-cross-FV	AUG-11-road

'The woman danced as she was crossing the road'

Gaines (2001) reports that of the four reviewed Bantu languages (Gikuyu, Swahili, Tswana and Zulu), it is only Gikuyu that allows for the verb in the subordinate clause to combine the fact of Motion with Path while having the verb in the main clause conflating Motion and Manner.

Runyankore-Rukiga has several ventive and itive deictic motion verbs. Their interpretations vary depending on the contexts. The verb *-ija* (come) lexicalizes reference to the deictic centre. Though there is no specificity in the goal, a general interpretation would be that the motion will be towards the speaker; that is, the goal would be somewhere in the proximity of the deictic centre. Most times, the location of the deictic centre is included as a verb complement, such as in *aha duuka* (at the shop) (21). Other times, the adverbs of place such as *hanu* (here) are used to show the location of the deictic centre. It is also possible to use the verb *ija* (come) with no overt mention of the location, e.g., in the imperative *ija* (come). It is assumed that the addressee can easily find their way to where the deictic centre is even without any additional information as to the latter's specific location. Other times, the place adverbial is replaced with a time adverbial as in *ija hati hati* (come fast/ come now now). Again, in this case, the urgency is given prominence as opposed to the location of the deictic centre, which is assumed to be known to the addressee. Similar to the Nyakyusa ventive verb *isa* (come) (Persohn, 2018)*ija* fails to indicate the source of the motion

Another ventive verb is seen in (22). The causative transitive verb *reeta* (bring) shows that an object is brought to the deictic centre or to a location in close proximity to the deictic centre. Similar to the verb *ija,* the verb *reeta* in and of itself does not pinpoint the exact location of the deictic centre but relies on locative phrases and adverbials for the same. In addition to its motion-related function, the verb *reeta* has acquired metaphorical attributes. Consider (28) below.

(28)
Wayereetera ebizibu
O-aa-e-reet-er-a
2. SM-PRF-REFL-bring-CAUS-FV
e-bi-zibu
AUG-8.OM-problem
'You are in trouble' lit 'You have brought yourself problems'

Unlike objects, problems cannot be physically transported from a source to the deictic centre, which in this case is the person in question. Its usage in (28) therefore has a metaphorical sense to it; that is, if one finds themselves in trouble by their own making, then it is equated to bringing problems to themselves like you would an object. Verbal verbs being grammaticalized or having extended and non-motion meanings is common in Bantu, as in the case of the Swahili and Nyakyusa verbs such as *kuja* (come), *leta* (bring), and *isa* (come) (Persohn, 2018) respectively.

One of the itive motion verbs in Runyankore-Rukiga is *gyenda*, which shows motion away from the deictic centre. In (23), someone is said to have gone to the shop. It is assumed that the source of this motion is the deictic centre. However, Persohn (2018) argues that the itive 'go' need not necessarily be deictic because it is not obvious that the source is the deictic centre. Backed by the Nyakyusa data, he claims that whereas the motion is away from the deictic centre, sometimes it is not obvious that its source is the deictic centre. He adds that with the right contextual information, however, it is possible to give the 'go' verbs a deictic reading. We are of the view that though it is possible to give the verb *gyenda* a non-deictic reading as in (4), it is largely an itive verb. This draws from the earlier position that the goal of *ija* need not be the deictic centre but the location in proximity with the deictic centre. Relatedly therefore, the source of *gyenda* need not be the deictic centre but be in the vicinity of the deictic centre. Similar to the verb *reeta*, the verb *twara* (take) is causative and one whose source of motion is the deictic centre. It too has metaphorical non-motion meanings.

Having explored the deictic verbs in Runyankore-Rukiga in the preceding paragraphs, it is evident that most Runyankore-Rukiga motion verbs are non-deictic. These verbs simply denote the fact of motion in combination with either the Path or the Manner but have no direct reference to the deictic centre

Runyankore-Rukiga's typological classification

Part of the objective of this paper was to analyze the Runyankore-Rukiga data and place the language within the tripartite typological classification of V-framing, S-framing, or equipollently framed. To do this, we will highlight a number

of observations that stood out in our discussion thus far.

Firstly, it was noted that despite the main verbs in Runyankore-Rukiga simple motion events taking the shape of both a **V= Motion + Path;** _ and a **V= Motion + Manner; _,** it is clear from the data that the former predominated. Since a **V= Motion + Path;** _ typifies the V-framing category, this is an indicator that Runyankore-Rukiga leans towards the V-framing languages.

Secondly, in complex motion events, a combination of **V= Motion + Manner;** _ in the main clause and **V= Motion + Path; _ in** the subordinate clause was not evident from the data. A construction of that nature (see e.g., 27) appears unnatural to a native speaker of Runyankore-Rukiga. Despite Gikuyu allowing both a **V= Motion + Path;** _in the main clause and a **V= Motion + Manner;** _ in the subordinate clause and vice versa, it is still considered a V-framing language. The exclusive preference for the **V= Motion + Path;** _ in the main clause and the **V= Motion + Manner;** _ in the subordinate clause in Runyankore-Rukiga is therefore a strong indicator that it falls within the V-framing category.

Lastly, following Gaines (2001); Schaefer (1985); Schaefer and Gaines (1997) among others, who place most Bantu languages as V-framing, it is fair to consider Runyankore-Rukiga, being Bantu, to fall within the same category. This paper therefore takes the position that, based on the data presented and our analysis, and in light of Talmy's (2000) language typology based on their lexicalization patterns, Runyankore-Rukiga is a V-framing language.

Conclusion

This paper sought to explore motion verbs in Runyankore-Rukiga based on Talmy's (2000) typology of motion verbs. Runyankore-Rukiga motion events primarily have six major semantic features, namely: Figure, Ground, Path, Manner, Cause, and Motion. Motion events are categorized as simple and complex, while the motion verbs can be broadly divided into deictic and non-deictic. As for the lexicalization patterns, Runyankore-Rukiga exhibits both a **V= Motion + Path;** _ and a **V= Motion + Manner;** _ in simple motion events, though the former is more frequent. In complex motion events, the study revealed that RR prefers the **V= Motion + Path;** _ in the main clause, and **V= Motion + Manner;** _ in the subordinate clause. These findings are indicators that, like most of the other Bantu languages, Runyankore-Rukiga is a Verb-Framed language.

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