

[Movement as an activity vs. movement as an event: Czech translation correspondences of English *walk* in locative inversion constructions]

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[Abstract] *The article shows that the verb ‘kráčet’ predominantly appears as a translation correspondence of ‘walk’ used in subject-verb inversion constructions lacking overt directionality of movement. In these situations, the movement has the status of an activity. The verb ‘jít’ and its derivatives predominantly appear as translation correspondences of ‘walk’ used in subject-verb inversion constructions involving overt directionality of movement. In these situations, the movement represents an event. The verbs’ propensity to be employed in the types of motion situations in question is underlain by differences in the degrees of the salience of their manner and path schemata.*

[Keywords] *subject-verb inversion constructions; Czech translation correspondences; verbal semantics; motion activity; motion event*

[1] Introduction

This article discusses Czech translation correspondences of the English verb *walk* in locative inversion constructions, narrowing down the scope of investigation to the nearest Czech equivalents of *walk*, namely the verbs *jít* and *kráčet*. Consider, by way of illustration, the following two examples:

(1) He called something to an assistant and into the office *walked* Eichenkranz junior.

Tam zavolal na sluhu a do kanceláře *vešel* malý Eichenkranz.

(2) Beside him, making scarcely a sound, *walked* James, Sirius, Lupin, and Lily, and their presence was his courage...

Po boku mu téměř nehlučně *kráčeli* James, Sirius, Lupin a Lily a jejich přítomnost mu dodávala odvalu...

The locative inversion construction has been the subject of extensive research (e.g. Bolinger, 1977; Bresnan, 1994; Levin and Rappaport Hovav, 1995; Birner, 1996; Dorgeloh, 1997; Dušková, 1998; Culicover and Levine, 2001; Chen, 2003; Kreyer, 2005; Weibelhuth, 2011; Holler and Hartmann, 2012; Adam, 2013). This type of construction exhibits a number of specific features: (a) the subject appears in the post-verbal position; (b) the subject-initial position is taken up by a locative adverbial; (c) the main verb is intransitive: the class of intransitive verbs admitted into the LIC is rather limited, mainly to certain verbs of stance (*be*, *stand*, *lie*, etc.) and certain motion verbs (typically very general in their meaning, e.g. *come* and *go*, and verbs of manner of motion, e.g. *walk*, *run* and *roll*); (d) transitive verbs are allowed only when detransitivized via passivization. The locative inversion construction is subject to some other restrictions, but in view of the research focus of this article, the above listing will suffice to characterize the construction's main specifics.

As regards the construction's main characteristics in view of its discourse functions and stylistic potential, the locative inversion construction (a) fulfils the function of presentational focus: the fronted locative sets a scene onto which the inverted subject referent is brought; (b) creates vividness (colourfulness) in the presentation of the situation; and (c) has an expressive stylistic potential.

The subject-verb inversion constructions under analysis include three types of motion situations. As will be shown, the type of motion situation has implications for the status of the movement (whether it is a motion activity or a motion event), which, in turn, affects Czech translation correspondences of *walk*.

The analysis is based on the data retrieved from InterCorp, a synchronic multilingual parallel translation corpus compiled at Charles University in Prague (version 16, released in 2023). The research draws on a sub-corpus of English fiction and non-fiction texts (42,653,741 text positions), aligned with their Czech counterparts. English was either the language of the original or a translation from Czech. The results were manually checked to ensure the alignment of the sub-corpus and to exclude unwanted patterns.

[2] Types of motion situations

English subject-verb inversion constructions in the sub-corpus analyzed include non-boundary-crossing situations and boundary-crossing situations. In the former, the walking movement need not be directed. In the latter, the walking movement is inherently directed. The sub-corpus thus includes the following three types of situations:

- non-boundary-crossing situations not involving directed movement
- non-boundary-crossing situations involving directed movement
- boundary-crossing situations (inherently involving directed movement)

First, consider an example of a non-boundary-crossing situation not involving directed movement.

(3) Behind Jack *walked* the twins, carrying a great stake on their shoulders.

As can be seen, the movement lacks overt directionality. The fronted locative (*behind Jack*) does not encode a path (an axial sequence of spatial points) but merely locates the movement in space. In other words, the locative serves as a (mere) spatial setting for the movement.

Now consider an example of a non-boundary-crossing situation involving directed movement:

(4) And *walking* towards them, through the candles, was a tall figure, dressed in a simple white robe.

The movement has overt directionality by virtue of the semantics of the directional locative *towards them*, which encodes a path (an axial sequence of spatial points).

A third type of motion situation, traditionally termed a boundary-crossing situation, involves “overcoming a physical boundary that a moving Figure encounters” (Filipović, 2007, p. 37), cf.:

(5) “... the objective results that count,” I said, and into the staff room *walked* Milada.

Here, the movement is inherently directed because the mover crosses a boundary separating two environments. Note, too, that a path in boundary-crossing events includes two segments only: outside a place and inside a place. That is, the path lacks an intermediary phase and thus has a bipolar structure (cf. e.g. Beavers, 2002).

At this point in the discussion, it is important to note that the presence or absence of a path in a motion situation has implications for the status of the movement. In concrete terms, it has a bearing on whether the movement has the status of an activity or that of an event. A brief specification of the two types of movement will be offered in the following sub-section.

[3] Status of the movement: an activity or an event

Pourcel (2010) argues that a distinction must be drawn between motion activities and motion events. Motion activities lack overt directionality, whereas motion events “necessitate directionality by virtue of entailing a change of locational grounds” (p. 424). In motion activities (*Helen is jogging*), emphasis is placed on the type of motion itself (typically its manner), whereas the notion of directionality, or path, is not salient. In motion events (*Helen jogged to the store*), by contrast, the notion of directionality, or path, is salient, “whereas manners are merely instrumental to following the course of the motion path” (p. 424).

From this, it follows that the status of the movement depends on whether it includes overt directionality or not. If the movement is not directed, as is the case in non-boundary-crossing situations lacking overt directionality (ex. 3), the movement has the status of a motion activity. If the movement is directed, as is the case in non-boundary-crossing situations involving overt directionality (ex. 4) and in boundary-crossing situations (ex. 5), the movement has the status of a motion event.

The status of the movement has a direct bearing on Czech translation correspondences. As will be shown, the verb *jít* and its derivatives almost invariably appear (with two exceptions) as translation correspondences of *walk* in situations involving overt directionality. The verb *kráčet*, by contrast, almost invariably appears (with one exception) as a translation correspondence of *walk* in situations lacking overt directionality. Viewed from the perspective of the status of the movement, *kráčet* is overwhelmingly used when a walking movement is presented as a motion activity, whereas *jít* is overwhelmingly used when a walking movement is presented as a motion event. This fact can be accounted for by appealing to the semantics of the verbs in question, which will be the topic of the following section.

[4] The semantics of *walk*, *jít* and *kráčet*

According to Kersten (2003), *walk* belongs to a class of verbs like *run* or *hop* that encode intrinsic motion. These verbs describe “the motions of the parts of an object with respect to the object itself, and provide no information about the motion of that object with respect to an external frame of reference” (p. 920). That is, the body functions as an internal frame of reference (Jackendoff, 1987). Note, however, that Kersten’s intrinsic motion is not to be equated with Talmy’s (2000) self-contained motion or Levin’s (1993) body-internal motion, in which “an object keeps its same, or ‘average,’ location” (Talmy, 2000, p. 35) – as is the case in oscillation or wiggle. With regard to the semantics of English *walk* and its nearest Czech equivalents *jít* and *kráčet*, the notion of intrinsic motion captures the fact that these verbs encode motion situations which, as opposed to verbs of self-contained motion, involve the actor’s change of location,

yet need not include an external frame of reference. Kersten's theory is comparable to Rappaport Hovav and Levin's (2001) theory of event co-identification, which takes the actor's physical activity and the event of the traversal of the path as identical because temporally co-extensive. On the whole, it appears adequate to apply Rappaport Hovav and Levin's division and view the semantics of *walk*, *jít* and *kráčet* as representing a composite structure including two discernible components: the mover's physical activity involving movements of his body, i.e. a manner component, and translocation, i.e. traversal of the path.

In the semantics of the verbs under scrutiny here, these two components display varying degrees of salience, which, as will be shown, has a bearing on the verbs' propensity to appear in (non)directed movements. As shown in Kudrnáčová (2019), the conceptualization of the movement in *walk*, *jít* and *kráčet* differs in several aspects. What follows is a brief overview of differences that are relevant for the present discussion.

- a. The verbs *walk* and *kráčet* profile the recurring changes in the relative positioning of the legs over time and their force-dynamic contact with the ground. Both verbs thus foreground the quantization of the movement (its segmentation into individual steps). Each step, being bounded on each side by the contact of one of the feet with the surface, represents a delimited unit, a discrete quantum of walking. It should be added, however, that the profiling of leg movements is more pronounced in *kráčet* than in *walk*, i.e. that the two verbs do not profile the quantization of the movement to the same degree. In *jít*, the relative backgrounding of the manner of the movement (note in this connection that *jít* is a highly polysemous verb) carries with it a relative backgrounding of the quantization of the movement. The consequence is that the notion of translocation comes to the fore.

In summary, the translocational component is weakest (and the manner component is strongest) in *kráčet*. In *jít*, by contrast, the translocational component is strongest (and the manner component is weakest). In *walk*, the two components are more or less balanced, i.e. the verb occupies an intermediate position between *kráčet* and *jít* (in actual fact, this means that Czech lacks an exact lexical equivalent of this verb).

- b. Differences in the quantization of the movement between *walk* and *kráčet* on the one hand and *jít* on the other manifest themselves in differences in the verbs' potential to encode a goal-directed movement. In contrast to sequential (because quantized) *walk* and *kráčet*, the suppressed quantization of the movement in *jít* fosters the orientation towards achieving a spatial goal, which has a marked impact on the types of path phrases in which these verbs appear.
- c. By profiling aspects of the bodily pattern of the movement, the verbs *walk* and *kráčet* foreground the mover's body, which predisposes these verbs to be used in situations in which the mover is brought into focus.

- d. Both *walk* and *kráčet* have the potential to bear reference to the human mover's experiential self. In *walk*, however, reference to the mover's experiential self is relatively weaker because it only follows from the status of the mover as a participant carrying out a movement with a specific manner. The verb *jít* is neutral in this respect. Due to the relative backgrounding of the bodily pattern of the movement, *jít* is used in situations presenting the movement in a more matter-of-fact way.

In summary, then, the manner component in *jít* is considerably weak, which makes it possible to foreground translocation. In *kráčet*, by contrast, the manner component gains in strength, which makes it possible to background translocation. In *walk*, the two components appear to be balanced.

As the following section will demonstrate, the differences in the degrees of the salience of path and manner schemata have a direct bearing on the verbs' propensity to be employed in the types of motion situations in question, i.e. in non-boundary-crossing situations lacking overt directionality or in non-boundary-crossing situations involving overt directionality, or in boundary-crossing situations.

[5] Non-boundary-crossing situations lacking overt directionality: movement as an activity

The analyzed sub-corpus contained 23 instances of *walk* used in non-boundary-crossing situations lacking overt directionality, i.e. involving non-directed movement. As regards their Czech translation correspondences, *kráčet* appeared in 19 instances, *jít* appeared in 2 instances. The verb *chodit*, the non-unidirectional counterpart of the verb *jít*, and the verb *obcházet*, the non-unidirectional counterpart of the verb *obejít* ("walk around"), appeared in 1 instance each. First, consider an example with *kráčet*:

(6) Behind him *walked* his opposite, a huge man, shapeless of face, with large, pale eyes, and wide, sloping shoulders; and he walked heavily, dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags his paws. His arms did not swing at his sides.

Za ním *kráčel* jeho opak, obr s beztvarym obličejem, s velkýma bledýma očima, s širokými schýlenými rameny; a kráčel neohrabaně, nohy trochu vláčel, asi tak jako medvěd vláčí tlapy. Paže se mu podle těla nekývaly, nýbrž mu podle něho volně visely.

The reasons why *kráčet* overwhelmingly appears in situations in which the locative encodes a setting of the movement, not its path, are obvious. In this verb, the manner of movement receives prominence, which makes it possible to weaken the link between the movement and the traversal of the path. Deprived of overt directionality, the movement is presented as a physical activity of the mover, not as a continuous (albeit self-induced) progression in space along a sequence of points.¹ Put another way, the movement is presented as a specific form of the mover's *dynamic existence*. What comes to the fore,

then, is the very fact of the presence of the mover on the scene (note in this connection the very detailed description of the mover's appearance and of the way he moves in the above example).

Admittedly, focus on the mover is a characteristic feature of all types of subject-verb inversion constructions. It should, however, be stressed at the same time that the overwhelming use of the verb *kráčet* in motion situations lacking overt directionality is motivated by semantic factors. As mentioned above, *kráčet* foregrounds the bodily pattern of the movement and, as such, bears reference to the mover's body. Deriving from the theory proposed by Sheets-Johnstone (2012), Kudrnáčová (2019) has observed that this verb also has the capacity to bear reference to the mover's experiential self. By this, it is meant that the verb has the capacity to present the movement "through the lens of the human actor as an executor of the movement and its experiential perceiver" (p. 70). In doing so, the verb "imposes an internalizing perspective on the movement" (p. 70). Put another way, the verb imposes a more subjective-like perspective on the movement. Cf.:

(7) Then Gandalf and Beregond taking up the bier bore it away towards the Houses of Healing, while behind them *walked* Pippin with downcast head.

Pak vzali Gandalf s Beregondem máry a nesli je k Domům uzdravování a Pipin *krácel* za nimi se svěřenou hlavou.

As regards the verb *jít*: as mentioned above, this verb appears in 2 instances of the type of situation in question. Interestingly, both uses cannot be regarded as "exceptional" because they are both motivated by semantic considerations. They are thus worth discussing.

(8) Great beasts drew it, Orcs surrounded it, and behind *walked* mountain-trolls to wield it.

Táhla je veliká zvířata, obklopovali skřeti a vzadu *šli* horští obři, aby je rozhoupali.

As mentioned above, the verb *jít* (*šli* is the past tense form of *jít*) foregrounds the notion of translocation. In spite of the absence of a directional locative (*behind* encodes a mere spatial setting of the movement, not a path), the use of *jít* is motivated here – note the presence of the infinitive of purpose *to wield it* (*aby je rozhoupali* in Czech). Generally speaking, purpose can be seen as a non-spatial goal of the movement (i.e. a goal that transcends the movement *per se*) and, as such, it represents what may be called a "non-spatial directionality" of the movement. Assigning a purpose to the motion amounts to assigning (non-spatial) directionality to it. In other words, the verb *jít* as used here bears indirect reference to the directionality of the movement by virtue of the presence of a goal of the movement.

The use of *jít* in ex. (9) appears to be motivated, too. Cf.:

(9) I'm looking at the ground from the back of a mule. Alongside *walks* another mule and another follows behind.

Hledím na zem ze hřbetu muly. Vedle *jde* ještě jedna mula a za ní další.

Note that, as mentioned above, the verb *jít* is, due to the relative backgrounding of the bodily pattern of the movement, typically used in situations that are presented in a more matter-of-fact way. It does not seem to be a coincidence that this verb is used in ex. (9) to encode animal movement. The reason should probably be sought in the fact that humans simply disregard animals' selves or take them as nonexistent. Symptomatically, then, when animal movement is rendered by means of *kráčet*, the presentation of the movement is marked (or “unusual”) as is the case in the following example:

(10) I lifted the two buckets and walked down to the inn, and **behind me** *walked* the little horse, and behind the horse the goat, and then the cat, and though I trod carefully, the water splashed out of the buckets onto my rubber boots...

A tak jsem zvedl dvě putýnky a sestupoval ke stavení, za mnou *kráčel* koník, za ním koza a kočka, tak jsem opatrně našlapoval, voda z putýnky mi špláchala na gumové holínky...

Now consider the following example:

(11) In the mountains the Eagles shall house, and hear the voices of those who call upon us. But in the forests *shall walk* the Shepherds of the Trees.

Orli budou sídlit na horách a uslyší hlasy těch, kteří k nám volají. V lesích však *budou chodit* Pastýři stromů.

Here, the movement does not involve traversal of a single path but involves a multiplicity of paths. Note that precisely this type of movement is encoded in the verbs *chodit* and *obcházet*, non-unidirectional counterparts of the verbs *jít* and *obejít* (“walk around” – the prefix *obe-* added to the stem *jít* encodes movement around a place/object), respectively.²

[6] Movement as an event

In non-boundary-crossing situations involving directed movement and in (inherently directed) boundary-crossing situations, the presence of a directional locative ensures that the notion of translocation comes to the fore. The consequence is that the movement is not presented as a specific form of the mover's dynamic existence (as is the case in non-boundary-crossing situations lacking overt directionality), i.e. it does not have the status of an activity, but instead has the status of an event. Not surprisingly, then, the verb *jít* features as a translation correspondence of *walk* in the overwhelming majority of instances of these two types of motion situations.

At this point, a remark concerning the status of the mover is in order. Foregrounding the notion of translocation does not mean that the mover is backgrounded. It should be realized that presentational focus placed on the mover is ensured by constructional means – recall that bringing the mover into focus is one the essential features of subject-verb locative inversion constructions.

[6.1] Non-boundary-crossing situations involving directed movement

The analyzed sub-corpus contains 5 instances of this type of motion situation. The verbs *jít* and *přicházet* (an imperfective form of *přijít* “come”), i.e. verbs foregrounding translocation, appear in 4 instances. Cf. an example with *jít* (*šla* is the past verb form of the verb) in ex. (12) and an example with *přicházet* in ex. (13):

(12) *Walking* across the meadow towards me was Nadia, wearing a man’s raglan coat bought round about the time I was born.

Po louce k chatě *šla* Nad’a v pánském raglánu, koupeném tak někdy v letech, kdy jsem se narodil.

(13) And no need, for *walking* across the room toward him now was Molly, Molly Lane!

A taky to nebylo potřeba, protože pokojem teď k němu *přicházela* Molly, Molly Laneová!

The verb *kráčet* appears in one instance of this type of situation, cf.:

(14)... and *walking* down the hall, holding the hand of the housemaid, was Sarah’s child in his nightshirt.

Ustoupila stranou a tam uprostřed haly, drže se za ruku služky, *kráčel* v noční košilce Sarin synek.

Note that the directional locative *down the hall* encodes a path whereas the Czech locative *uprostřed haly* (“in the middle of the hall”) encodes a spatial setting of the movement. In the Czech translation the movement is deprived of overt directionality; therefore, the use of *kráčet* here cannot be taken as an exception to the verb’s overwhelming propensity to be used as a translation correspondence in subject-verb inversion constructions encoding non-directed movement.

[6.2] Boundary-crossing situations

Boundary-crossing situations include bipolarity of the path and thus are inherently directed. Out of 20 instances of boundary-crossing walking situations found in the sub-corpus, 18 of them employed perfective derivatives of *jít*, namely the verbs *vejít* (“walk into”) and *přijít* (“come”). Needless to add, the bipolarity of the path precludes the use of the imperfective and hence processual verbs *kráčet* and *jít*.³ Cf. the following illustrative example (*vešel* is the past tense form of *vejít*):

(15) Then, on the third Friday, just as I was forking my penne with gorgonzola and walnut sauce, in *walked* the lopsided man and the chap with the moustache.

A třetí pátek – právě když jsem si nabodával na vidličku penne s gorgonzolou a omáčkou z vlašských ořechů – dovnitř náhle *vešel* ten maník s pokřivenou postavou a za ním chlápek s knírkem.

The perfective derivatives of the verb *kráčet*, namely the verbs *vkročit* (“walk/step inside”) and *nakráčet* (“walk inside”), were each used in one instance of this type of motion situation. Their infrequent use deserves explanation. First, consider ex. (16) with *vkročit*:

(16) “Come in” said the old lady; and in *walked* Mr. Brownlow.
„Dále,“ řekla stará paní, a do pokoje *vkročil* pan Brownlow.

It seems that *vkročit* appears infrequently on account of its semantics. As mentioned, the verb *kráčet* markedly foregrounds the quantization of the movement (i.e. its segmentation into individual steps), and its perfective derivative *vkročit* naturally does so as well. It should be realized at the same time that, as observed by Kudrnáčová (2006), crossing a boundary is a situation in which one spatial point (outside a place) is placed in a direct, sharp contrast to the other spatial point (inside a place). The verb *vkročit* foregrounds the strict bipolarity of the path and, in doing so, backgrounds reference to the path traversed by the mover inside a place. The verbs *vejít* and *přijít* are neutral in this respect.

As regards the verb *nakráčet*, its infrequent use can be explained by appealing to a different factor, namely to the verb’s evaluative status. The verb *nakráčet* encodes a path composed of a series of steps, and thus, when used in a boundary-crossing situation, it does not foreground the bipolarity of the path to such an extent as *vkročit*. However, the verb has a marked evaluative status, which brings it close to the evaluative *march* and which necessitates a specific context (note the description of the mover’s specific appearance and of the way she moves):

(17) Just before lunchtime, into the office *walked* a woman in a tight pencil skirt and patent shoes high as stilts, her straightened hair sleekly pulled back. She was not pretty, her facial features created no harmony, but she carried herself as though she was. Těsně před obědem do redakce *nakráčela* žena v přiléhavé pouzdrové sukni a lakýrkách vysokých jako chůdy, s rovnými vlasy elegantně staženými dozadu. Neměla zrovna ladné rysy ve tváři, ale nesla se, jako by pohledná byla.

[7] Conclusion

The article has shown that the verb *kráčet* predominantly appears as a translation correspondence of *walk* in subject-verb locative inversion constructions denoting situations that lack overt directionality. In these situations, the movement represents a specific form of the mover’s dynamic existence and, as such, has the status of a motion activity. The verb *jít* and its derivatives, by contrast, predominantly appear as translation correspondences of *walk* in subject-verb locative inversion constructions denoting situations that include overt directionality of movement. In these situations, the movement has the status of a motion event. The verbs’ propensity to be employed in the types of motion situations in question is underlain by their semantics. In *kráčet*, the manner

component gains in strength, which makes it possible to background translocation. In *jít*, by contrast, the manner component is considerably weak, which makes it possible to foreground translocation.

It is evident that further research is required to include Czech translation correspondences of other verbs of motion used in English subject-verb locative inversion constructions.

[Notes]

- 1 It is worth noting in this connection that Goddard (2011) describes the semantics of verbs like *walk* or *run* in a chapter devoted to the analysis of physical activity verbs.
- 2 Non-unidirectional verbs (also termed multidirectional or indeterminate verbs) encode motion not in a single direction, i.e. repeated or habitual motion, random or aimless motion, motion involving multiple destinations, or ability (cf. e.g. Mrhačová, 1993; Janda, 2006).
- 3 For a meticulous contrastive analysis of boundary-crossing verbs like *vejít* or *vkročit* cf. Martinková (2018).

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