

# ASTROMOTION – Moving to (and through) outer space

Kajsa Törmä  
Umeå University, kajsa.torma@umu.se

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To this day, fewer than 600 people have traveled into outer space. This means that most of us do not have any (embodied) experience of neither turbulent rocket ships nor the lack of gravity outside of our atmosphere. Instead, we conceptualize these experiences by relying on real and imaginary narratives readily available to us thanks to the great cultural interest in outer space. However, outer space is governed by vastly different physical laws than our lives here on earth, largely rendering our embodied experiences moot as we try to imagine what moving through space would be like. Thus, it stands to reason that conceptualizing the experience of moving through space is not entirely straightforward. Consequently, this paper aims to investigate how the physical experience of moving to, through and from outer space is construed in American English.

Motion has been studied extensively in the context of earth, with most studies starting from and building upon Talmy's (2000: 20) definition of a motion event as a figure moving along a path with respect to the ground. Scholars have identified and differentiated between motion with respect to different types of ground, such as AQUAMOTION, AEROMOTION, and TERRAMOTION (Divjak and Lemmens, 2007: 153), but no inquiry has been made into motion with respect to an outer space ground, an experience this author has dubbed ASTROMOTION.

The present study makes use of the Corpus of Contemporary American English (Davies, 2008), looking at motion verb collocates to the nouns space, outer space, and deep space. The primary findings are that control and speed and prevalent properties in the domain of ASTROMOTION; that the nature of space being ground-controlled results in rather complex agent/figure dynamics; and that there are few new coinages in the lexical field of ASTROMOTION. Rather, it is mostly made up of either general motion verbs or relexicalizations from the domains of AQUAMOTION and AEROMOTION.

The construal of outer space is informed by a triad of interacting and overlapping influences: empirical knowledge, embodied experience and imagination. Sometimes the language used is clinical and informed by our scientific understanding of space, noting the exact speed and force necessary to travel through it. Conversely, sometimes we zip and zoom around it effortlessly, or even imagine ourselves beaming over vast and impossible distances. To encompass all of our diverse ideas and imaginations of ASTROMOTION, we have ended up with a large lexical field with many different types of verbs.

## References

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