Riding, Driving and Traveling – Swedish Verbs Describing Motion in a Vehicle in Crosslinguistic Perspective

Åke Viberg
Uppsala University
Department of Linguistics and Philology

1 Introduction

This paper will discuss a small but central group of motion verbs in Swedish from a crosslinguistic perspective: the verbs describing motion in a vehicle. Data will be drawn primarily from two translation corpora.

The lexicalization of motion verbs involves a variety of basic semantic parameters which can take a number of values. Typologically Path (to/from, up/down, in/out etc) has been the center of attention (Talmy 1985, Bohnemeyer et al 2007) and this is indeed the most basic one, but there are many other parameters that are relevant (see Viberg 1992, 2006a for an overview of Swedish motion verbs).

An important characteristic of subjects that refer to human beings is their propensity for self-propelled motion. This feature is acquired early by infants (Spelke et al. 1995). Unlike a ball that starts moving because it is hit by something, human beings have an inner source of energy, which can make them move. Bodily locomotion verbs more or less by definition describe self-propelled motion. But even motion by other types of subjects such as natural forces (the wind, rain, etc) can be conceptualized as self-propelled, which makes this a parameter that is not limited to bodily locomotion. The most basic type of self-propelled motion for humans is walking, which is expressed in Swedish with the verb gå described in an earlier paper (Viberg 1999a). A smaller but rather central group of motion verbs which typically take a human subject describe motion in a vehicle such as ride and drive in English. Vehicle and means of transportation in general represent a basic parameter that has traditionally been subsumed under Manner. This paper will be concerned with the semantic differentiation between the basic Swedish verbs rida, köra, åka, fara och resa as well as with their patterns of polysemy which extend beyond the motion field. Interestingly, the concepts of Force and Control are central as organizing principles for most of them (the exception is resa) and for this reason Swedish driva, the cognate of English drive, is also included in the discussion. The paper will primarily be concerned with verbs that describe motion in a vehicle in general and not with verbs that specifically refer to
In this paper, Swedish will be compared to a selection of closely related languages on the basis of data from two translation corpora. The analysis of Swedish is also based on the monolingual corpora in the Swedish Language Bank (Språkbanken). (Examples from these corpora have been translated by me.) One of the translation corpora is the English Swedish Parallel Corpus (ESPC) prepared by Altenberg & Aijmer (2000), which contains original texts in English and Swedish together with their translations. The texts are divided into two broad genres: Fiction and Non-fiction with several subcategories. The original texts in each language contain around 500,000 words. The other corpus is more restricted and will be referred to as the multilingual pilot corpus (MPC). It is being compiled by the author and consists at present of extracts from 10 novels in Swedish with translations into English, German, French and Finnish (totally around 250,000 words in the Swedish originals). For some of the texts, there are also translations into Danish and Dutch. As an illustration of the types of data this article is based on, examples from the corpus are shown in table 1. I will use some of the examples to introduce the major semantic parameters that will be treated in this paper.

One basic contrast is the differentiation between verbs profiling the control of a means of transport, such as riding and driving, versus the profiling of being transported, such as traveling and voyaging. The verb *rida* ‘ride’ is not as frequent as the other verbs but has been included since verbs with an equivalent meaning have extended their meaning in some of the other languages. This is most striking in Dutch, where *rijden* still can be used about riding a horse but is also frequently used with reference to driving and traveling in a car (and other vehicles). The basic Swedish verb used to express the driving of a car or other vehicle is *köra* ‘drive’ and this contrasts with *åka* and *fara* which profile the sense of being transported. Usually, the meanings do not mutually exclude one another: driving strongly invites the inference that the driver is being transported but not necessarily since you can drive certain vehicles with a remote control (in particular model cars). The verbs *åka* and *fara* can be used even when the subject refers to the driver but the control of the vehicle in this case is backgrounded. These verbs cannot be used when the control is strongly profiled as in “Do you know how to drive?” This contrast is not upheld lexically in several languages.

German tends to use the verb *fahren*, the cognate of Swedish *fara*, both to express driving and traveling, whereas Danish tends to use *køre*, the cognate of *köra* ‘drive’ with both of these meanings. Finnish *ajaa* has both of these uses, too. Compare examples (2) and (4) in table 1. A further semantic contrast is shown in example (5). Swedish *köra* can be used as a verb of transportation in a vehicle, where the displacement of the object of the verb is profiled. Danish *køre* and Dutch *rijden* can cover this sense as well.
Verbs of traveling contrast with verbs describing self-propelled motion, the basic form of which is walking (for human beings). Languages differ with respect to whether there is a (more or less) obligatory contrast between walking and being transported in a vehicle. In Swedish, the verb gå ‘go’ can only be used with reference to walking (when the subject is human), and this leads to a frequent error even among many rather advanced learners of Swedish as a second language who can say Jag gick med tåget/bilen till
Uppsala ‘I went by car/train to Uppsala, where åka must be used. One source of contrastive data for Swedish verbs of traveling is the Swedish grammar intended for Swedish as a second language, which has been translated into 18 languages (Viberg et al. 1984–). Examples (6)-(7) are taken from various versions of the grammar (op. cit. §15.5).

(6) Swedish: Min fru måste åka tunnelbana till jobbet.
English: My wife has to go to work by underground.
Greek: I jinéka mu prépi na pái me ton elektrikó sti ðuliá.
Rumanian: Soţia mea trebuie să meargă cu metroul la service.
Turkish: Karim işine tunnel ile gitmek zorundadı

(7) Swedish: Men min arbetsplats ligger så nära att jag kan gå.
English: But my office is so close that I can walk.
Greek: Enó i ðikí mu ðuliá íne tóso kondá pu boró na páo me ta pódia.
Rumanian: Locul meu de muncă este însă așa de aproape, încât pot să merg pe jos.
Turkish: Ama benim işyerim çok yakındır, ben işime yürüyerek gidibilirim.

Data from a pedagogical grammar are not as reliable as data from corpora but the general picture appears to be correct. The verbs used to express the meanings of Swedish gå and åka and the other Swedish verbs discussed so far are shown in table 2. As can be observed, the verb corresponding to ‘go’ is also used to describe motion in a vehicle in English, (Modern) Greek, Rumanian and Turkish. In Greek, it is also used to express transportation in a vehicle. Thus, there is no obligatory contrast corresponding to that between gå and åka, even if specific verbs describing motion in a vehicle exist and are used to various degrees. (The Swedish verb resa is translated with such a verb except in Turkish.) In addition, all four languages have a separate verb that can be used when the subject refers to the driver operating the vehicle. In general, it can be concluded that verbs describing motion in a vehicle have many language-specific (but not necessarily unique) features in Swedish. In the following, these verbs will be looked at one by one in greater detail.
Self-propelled motion on foot

Swedish: gå
English: go/walk
Greek: πάω
Rumanian: a merge
Turkish: gıtımek/yürtmek

Motion in vehicle – being transported

Swedish: åka/fara, resa
English: go, travel
Greek: πάω, ταξιδέω
Rumanian: a merge, a călători
Turkish: Gıtımek

Motion in vehicle – operate vehicle

Swedish: köra
English: drive
Greek: οδηγό
Rumanian: a conduce
Turkish: sürmek

Transportation in vehicle

Swedish: köra
English: drive
Greek: πάω
Rumanian: a conduce
Turkish: sürmek/götırmek

Table 2. The basic verbs for expressing self-propelled motion and motion in a vehicle in Swedish and four other languages (based on Viberg et al 1984-, §15.5)

2 From Horse to Automobile: The Verb ‘Ride’

The verb *ride* is a common Germanic verb with cognates in all the major Germanic languages. In Swedish, the verb has the form *rida*. The meaning ‘move sitting on top a horse and controlling its movement’ is still the dominant meaning in Swedish, where *rida* has not been extended to cover motion in a vehicle such as a car or a bicycle. These meanings are primarily covered by *åka*, whose meaning to a great extent overlaps with the present-day extended use of *ride* and its cognates, in particular in Dutch, as we have seen, but also to a certain extent in English. Since there are many interesting parallels to Swedish *åka*, a sketch of the meaning patterns of English *ride* is given in figure 1. This figure, like all the following figures of the same type, primarily shows sense relations in present-day English (or Swedish in sections below). Diachronic relationships are reflected only to the extent that
they are stated explicitly in the text. (Unlike the following figures, this one is not based on any systematic corpus study.)

Figure 1: The meaning patterns of English *ride* (somewhat sketchy).

The common Germanic prototype of ‘ride’ seems to combine three major components (i) sitting on top a horse (ii) controlling the movement of the animal (iii) displacing oneself in this manner. Various secondary meanings focus parts of the prototypical meaning. With a vessel as subject, the notion
‘on top of (the waves)’ is focused, and in this case rida can be used in Swedish as in (7).

(7) the boat riding a run of wave prow up. DT
eftersom båten red på en våg med stäven i vådret,

Another case, where sitting on top is rather prominent is ride on a bike, but in this case rida cannot be used in Swedish but only cykla ‘cycle’ or åka cykel (see 8).

(8) Her upper lip was puffy, like the kind of scrape children get falling off bicycles when they first learn to ride. SG
Hennes överläpp var svullen.Det liknade den sorts blessyr små barn brukar få då de ramlar omkull när de lär sig cykla.

The notion of control, which is closely related to ‘on top’ (CONTROL IS UP), is focused in a number of metaphorical uses such as The politician tried to ride on popular discontent, which has a close Swedish equivalent. There is also a verb such as topprida ‘ride on top’, which is used metaphorically (Så länge valuta- och räntemarknaderna topprider den svenska demokratin P95). The most important set of extensions focuses on the fact of traveling, keeping the manner component in the background. Already in Middle English, ride could take on the extended meaning ‘to be conveyed in a wheeled or other vehicle drawn by a horse’ (OED). From this, there was a short step to riding in a train or a car, once these means of conveyance had been invented. With this extension, the meaning of ride is approaching the central meaning of the Swedish verb åka, non-self-propelled motion. In most cases where ride is used with reference to traveling in a conveyance, åka is used in Swedish as illustrated in (9) and (10).

(9) The dogs ride, the poor walk, or go by bus. FW
Hundarna åker bil; de fattiga går eller åker buss.

(10) He refused to speak or even look Andrew in the eye as they rode to the fourth floor. AH
Han vägrade säga något eller ens möta Andrews blick när de åkte upp till fjärde våningen.

The use in (11), which is restricted to items of clothing according to Cambridge International Dictionary of English(CIDE), also has a parallel in the use of Swedish åka (my translation):

(11) His T-shirt rode up, when he bent over. CIDE
Hans T-shirt åkte upp, när han böjde sig framåt.

If the interpretation sketched here is correct, there are two prototypical clusters in the meaning pattern of English ride. One is centered on the original prototype ‘ride on a horse’, and the other is emerging around the meaning in present-day English ‘ride in a conveyance’. This latter meaning
has no counterpart in Swedish, but as we have seen rijden ‘ride’ has extended even further in Dutch.

3 Driving

According to Buck (1949), many of the words for ‘drive’ in Indo-European languages were originally used in the context of driving cattle (in front of oneself, as opposed to ‘lead’). Another source is words with the opposite meaning, ‘lead’, which according to Buck applies to Romance words for driving such as Rumanian conduce, French conduire, Spanish conducir. The human agent in this situation acts as an outside force causing the cattle to move. Thus not only the idea of riding in a car as a passenger, but also the notion of controlling and driving a car were originally modeled on the guidance of domesticated animals. Other words for ‘drive’ have developed from ‘strike’ or ‘push’, both of which are centered on Force (see Viberg 1999b for striking). As will be demonstrated in this section, Force or Power/Control is also central in the meaning of verbs used about driving a car or other vehicle in modern Swedish and English.

3.1 The Swedish Verb Köra: ‘Drive (a Vehicle)’

When the operation of a vehicle (typically a car) is profiled köra is used in Swedish. The profiling is particularly clear when a vehicle appears as direct object as in (12).

(12) Swedish: Ska du köra ambulans om du inte är nykter? PCJ
      English: "Do you drive an ambulance even when you're not sober?"
      German: „Willst du denn den Krankenwagen fahren, wenn du nicht nüchtern bist?“
      French: –Tu vas conduire ton ambulance même après avoir bu ?
      Finnish: –Voitko ajaa ambulanssia, vaikka et ole selvä?

English and French in this case have special verbs (drive, conduire), whereas German and Finnish has one and the same verb corresponding to köra ‘drive’ and åka ‘ride in a car etc.’. The contrast can be signaled by using different constructions. To profile ‘driving’, the vehicle appears as direct object as in (12) marked with the accusative in German and with the partitive in Finnish (alternating with the accusative in other examples). When the operation of the vehicle is not profiled as in (13), åka can be used even when the subject actually refers to the driver. In German and Finnish, the vehicle is marked as an instrumental (prep. mit ‘with’ in German and adessive case –llä(-llä) in Finnish.) If the subject of the verb refers to the driver of the vehicle, the choice between köra and åka is a question of profiling, since the driver simultaneously is being transported in the vehicle (in most cases).
As illustrated earlier in (5), köra can also be used as a verb of transport describing the movement of the object by driving a car or other vehicle. In this case, köra alternates with skjutsa which usually refers to human passengers and frakta which tends to refer to goods of various types. Examples (14) and (15) are from the ESPC. There are several further types of transportation verbs in Swedish referring to specific types of cargo or vehicles (see Viberg 1981, 59-62).

The uses of köra involving a vehicle are the most frequent ones in present-day Swedish. The verb can, however, be used with reference to other types of forced motion. As is indicated in figure 2, the notion of causing something to move with force is the general (schematic) meaning of köra, which is shared by most uses. One set of uses describes how something held in the hand is set into motion, usually in a forceful way.

The verb köra can also be used to describe how people or animals are driven away, usually verbally with a sharp order or (in the case of cats and similar animals) with a specialized interjection such as shoo! (Swedish schas!, which can be derived as a verb schasa ‘shoo’ vb.). (17) and (18) are taken from the ESPC.

The dominant meaning of köra in present-day Swedish is related to operating and traveling in a vehicle. However, the verb has a number of other uses that share a schematic meaning which can be expressed
approximately as “Forcefully cause to move”. In a way, the meanings related to operating a vehicle are set off from the rest of the meanings.

![Diagram showing the meanings of the verb köra]

**Figure 2: Meaning patterns of the verb köra.**

### 3.2 The Cognates English *Drive* and Swedish *Driva*

As shown above, *drive* is the most frequent English translation of köra, which in its turn is the most frequent translation of *drive* in the ESPC. However, the relationship is not completely symmetrical. Even if köra is the most frequent equivalent of *drive*, there is a second equivalent that is relatively prominent, namely the Swedish cognate *driva*. In the ESPC, köra
accounts for 102 (53%) and *driva* for 35 (18%) of the equivalents of the 192 occurrences of *drive* in the English texts. Swedish *driva* expresses the application of force in various ways. The following example with a human object is parallel to example (18) with *kör*:

Subject-centered motion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human</th>
<th>MOVE AROUND AIMLESSLY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>drifted around in the old town.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical object</th>
<th>MOVE DRIVEN BY EXTERNAL FORCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Båten/Dimman</td>
<td>drifted towards the shore.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Object-centered motion: CAUSE TO MOVE IN FRONT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human</th>
<th>Natural force</th>
<th>Emotion/Mental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Herden</td>
<td>Vågorna drev båten i land.</td>
<td>Hungern/Hans nyfikenhet drev honom att återvända.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The wind/waves drove the boat ashore.</td>
<td>Hunger/His curiosity drove him to return.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Control the activities in a business

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human</th>
<th>Cause to be moved in a ridiculous direction</th>
<th>Cause a mental object to move through a psychological barrier</th>
<th>Cause someone to move into a psychological state</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hon</td>
<td>Alla drev med honom. Everybody made fun of him.</td>
<td>Vi lyckades drive igenom våra krav. We succeeded in pushing through our demands.</td>
<td>Hon drev sin syster till nervsammansbröt. She drove her sister to a nervous breakdown.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: The polysemy of Swedish *driva*.

(19) Swedish: Utan förskoning *drev* hon ut dem i snön, KE
   English: *She drove* them out into the snow without mercy,
   German: Ohne Erbarmen *trieb* sie alle hinaus in den Schnee
   French: Sans se laisser apitoyer, elle les *fit sortir* dans la neige
   Finnish: Loviisa *ajoit* ilman armoa ryöväränt hankeen
Swedish *driva* can be used with both human and more abstract subjects as demonstrated in figure 3, which accounts for the major meanings of *driva*. A relatively common subject of *driva* is a Natural force such as Wind or Waves, which typically can drive a ship or other Natural phenomena such as clouds and mist. In Novels 81, examples are found such as (somewhat shortened): *Vinden drev båten långsamt framåt* ‘The wind drove the boat slowly forwards’ and *Vinden drev dammet längs gatorna* ‘The wind drove the dust along the streets’. Related to this use is (20) from a popular science text (ESPC):

(20) Denna självreglerande process sker aktivt och *drives* av den fria energi som kommer via solljuset. The self-regulation of the system is an active process *driven* by the free energy available from sunlight. JL

Both English *drive* and its Swedish cognate can also be used about psychological forces causing mental processes as in (21).

(21) Vad jag tror är att Byrons inre främling var lynnigare än min och att den *drove* honom till större överdrifter och större ånger. SCO What I think is that Byron’s inner stranger was more capricious than mine, and *drove* him to greater exaggerations and greater regrets.

With a human subject, *driva* can be used with both concrete and abstract objects, for example a business or enterprise as in (22)

(22) Tillsammans med min hustru Louise *driver* jag Åkerbloms Fastighetsförmedling. HM2 I *run* Åkerblom’s Real Estate with my wife.

Swedish *driva* can also be used intransitively with the moving Theme as subject as in (23) and (24). In this use, *driva* describes non-self propelled motion or motion without a clear aim. The most direct equivalent appears to be *drift* in English. Similar to many of the motion-in-vehicle verbs, *driva* alternates its meaning from exerting force (in its transitive uses) to lack of control (in its intransitive uses).

(23) Jag hade drömt att Rustica *drev* redlös med tidvattnet mot Stromas klippor. BL I had dreamt that Rustica, disabled, was *drifting* with the tide towards the cliffs of Stroma.

(24) Zigenarna, som de kallar ‘los egipcianos’, är förbjudna att i fortsättningen *driva* omkring i riket. BTC The gypsies, whom they call “los egipcianos”, will in the future be forbidden to *wander about* in the kingdom.
It has only been possible to exemplify a few of the many different uses of *driva*. Figure 3 does not provide a complete account either but should suffice to show that the various meanings are interrelated in a systematic (but not completely predictable) way.

4 The Swedish Verbs of Travelling: Åka, Fara, Resa

As noted above, the Swedish verb gå cannot be used with a human subject when a vehicle is involved, since gå implies that the motion takes place on foot. There are basically three alternatives apart from verbs that incorporate a specific vehicle, namely the verbs åka, fara and resa which will be considered in this section. The major translations of these verbs in the Multilingual Pilot Corpus (MPC) are shown in table 3, which will be commented on below.

4.1 The Verb Åka and Non-Self-Propelled Motion

According to Buck (1949), Swedish åka is a late reflex of an Indo-European root *a- with the primary meaning ‘drive’, which is reflected in Greek στέγω ‘lead’ and Latin agere ‘drive, carry on, act, do’. In Medieval Swedish, the verb aka covered both driving and traveling (Söderwall gives two senses: 1) köra, föra på vagn eller i släde; 2) åka). In present-day Swedish the verb is restricted to traveling. Thus, there is a development from ‘driving’ to ‘traveling’.

Today, åka is the dominant expression for ‘traveling in a vehicle’ in Swedish. The MPC languages all have a verb with a corresponding meaning but the degree to which such a verb is used varies a great deal, as can be observed in table 3. In English, the most frequent translation is the nuclear motion verb go, whereas the most frequent verb indicating the means of transportation is drive, which more directly corresponds to köra.

The English verb that most directly expresses the meaning that the subject is being transported by some means of transportation is ride as in examples (9) and (10) in section 2. One characteristic of åka is that it can be used as a verb of departure as in (25).

\[(25)\] Swedish: Gudrun hade satt fram kaffebröd innan hon åkte. KE
English: Gudrun had put out bunloaf before she had left.
German: Gudrun hatte Kaffeegebäck hingestellt, bevor sie gefahren war.
French: Gudrun avait sorti des petits gâteaux avant de partir.
Finnish: Gudrun oli pannut pöydälle kahvileipää ennen kuin lähti.

In (25), hon åkte ‘she traveled’, which does not have any explicit specification of Place, implicitly indicates ‘from here’ (i.e. the focus place) similar to expressions like she left (or she went). The other languages (except German) in this case use a verb of departure. As can be observed in table 3, this tendency is most pronounced in Finnish, where lähteä ‘leave’ is actually
The prototypical meaning: TRAVEL IN A VEHICLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translation into</th>
<th>Nuclear 'go’/’come’</th>
<th>Departure 'leave'</th>
<th>Directional</th>
<th>Means of transportation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>åka N</td>
<td>go 31 leave 10 return 1</td>
<td>drive 11 travel 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>come 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>gehen 2 komme 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>fahren 57</td>
<td>fliegen 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>aller 9 partir 15 rentrer 6</td>
<td>conduire 1</td>
<td>voyager 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>venir 5 s’en aller</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>descendre 3</td>
<td>passer 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finnish</td>
<td>mennä 9 lähteä 32</td>
<td>ajaa 15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tulla 2</td>
<td>matkustaa 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fara N</td>
<td>go 11 leave 3 cross 2</td>
<td>drive 11 travel 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>fahren 27 reisen 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>partir 5 Various 8</td>
<td>voyager 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finnish</td>
<td>mennä 1 lähteä 6</td>
<td>ajaa 12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ylittää 1</td>
<td>matkustaa 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resa N</td>
<td>go 6 leave 2</td>
<td>travel 7 drive 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>reisen 10 fahren 4</td>
<td>fliegen 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>venir 1 partir 8</td>
<td>parcourir 1 voyager 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>s’en aller 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finnish</td>
<td>lähteä 1</td>
<td>matkustaa 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Major translations of the Swedish verbs åka, fara and resa in the Multilingual Pilot Corpus (MPC) used as verbs of traveling.
the most frequent translation of åka. Particularly in French, there is a tendency to use a directional verb unmarked for any type of manner such as descendre ‘move down’ and passer ‘pass’. In spite of the fact that there exist verbs indicating means of transportation in all the MPC languages, there are remarkable differences with respect to the frequency with which they are used as translations of åka. French only in two cases uses such a verb. German, on the other hand, with very few exceptions uses fahren as a translation of åka. Finnish uses ajaa ‘drive, travel’ to a certain extent but the verb of departure lähteä ‘leave’ is actually the most frequent translation. In English, the most frequent translation is the nuclear verb go. The nuclear verb meaning ‘go’ is used relatively frequently as a translation also in French and Finnish but not to the same extent. As shown in Viberg (2006a), the use of åka with reference to motion in a vehicle is clearly dominant in Swedish, accounting for close to 90% of the occurrences in novels, for example. Still, åka has an interesting pattern of polysemy which is shown in figure 4. All the uses of åka share the schematic meaning non-self-propelled motion. This is true even when the subject is non-human as in (26). A verb in the passive or (in French) reflexive form appears as a translation.

(26) Swedish: fönstren åker upp, MA
   English: the windows are flung open
   German: die Fenster werden aufgerissen
   French: les fenêtres s'ouvrent,
   Finnish: ikkuna avataan

Many of the uses of åka imply a lack of control on the part of the subject, which is closely related to the notion non-self-propelled motion. This is evident when the subject refers to a body part as in (27).

(27) Swedish: Ibland gapade han lätt och ögonlocken åkte ner. KE
   English: his mouth occasionally dropping open and his eyelids drooping.
   German: Manchmal gähnte er flüchtig, und die Augendeckel fielen ihm zu.
   French: Par moments, il bâillait un peu et ses paupières se fermaient.
   Finnish: Häntä haukotutti ja hänen silmä-luomensa lursahtelivat

The notion of lack of control is even more prominent in a set of partly idiomatic phrases sharing the meaning ‘End up in an unpleasant situation’ such as åka dit ‘be caught (by the police)’ shown in (28).

(28) Swedish: Vi skulle åka dit direkt. MA
   English: We'd be locked right up.
   German: Wir sollten direkt hinfahren.
   French: On serait coincées illico.
   Finnish: Me jääsimme heti kiinni.

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There does not seem to be any general equivalent to åka used in this sense. These uses of åka are very colorful and it seems that translators, correctly, concentrate on rendering the correct associations of such expressive uses of words. (See Viberg 2006a for more examples of English translations in ESPC).

Figure 4: The meaning pattern of åka.

The schematic meaning non-self-propelled motion is shared by practically all uses of åka. The exceptions are expressions such as åka skidor ‘ski’ and åka skridskor ‘skate’, where the means of transportation require bodily
activity. However, the sense of lack of control is totally absent when åka refers to motion in a vehicle. In the majority of cases, traveling in a vehicle is an intentional act. In this respect, the more specialized uses represent a further step away from the historically more active basic meaning (‘drive’ etc.)

4.2 The Verb *Fara* and Rapid, Violent Motion

The Swedish verb *fara* is a verb with cognates in most of the modern Germanic languages, which originally had a very general meaning as a motion verb. The verb *fara* is still the most frequent motion verb in modern Icelandic (Pind 1991) and the same applies to one the most conservative Swedish dialects Eldalian (Älvdalska), where *färå* ‘go, travel, move’ is the most frequent motion verb, slightly more frequent than *kumå* ‘come’ (Steensland 1986). In modern standard Swedish, it can be used as an alternative to åka but is less frequent in this use and is perceived as somewhat formal and/or old-fashioned by many speakers, although there is variation on this point since the verb appears to be in more general use in certain regional varieties of Swedish. The following account is based on printed texts. In its use as a motion-in-vehicle verb as in (29) it has a translation pattern that is similar to that of åka as can be observed in table 3, which accounts only for this use of *fara*.

(29) Swedish: Wallander *för* hem, HM
    English: Wallander *drove* home.
    German: Wallander *fuhr* nach Hause.
    French: Puis il reprit sa voiture et *rentra chez lui*.
    Finnish: Wallander *ajoit* kotiin.

In addition to this use, *fara* has a number of other uses which form a rather complex pattern of polysemy shown in figure 5. Several of these specialized meanings are realized as phraseological units of various types with idiosyncratic semantic and/or formal properties which are more or less lexicalized and will not be described in detail but they all share the schematic meaning ‘travel fast and/or violently and without (full) control’. With a human subject, the motion may be self-propelled as in (30) and (31), but lack (or low degree) of control is usually prominent.

(30) Swedish: Jävlar! Han *för* upp ur stolen, PCJ
    English: Heck! He *leaped* out of the chair –
    German: Verdammt! Er *spring* auf,
    French: Merde! Il *saut* hors de la chaise.
    Finnish: Hitto! Hän *hyp* tuolista,

(31) Swedish: Runt i förrådet *för* han och hotade, MN
    English: He *charged* round and round the shed, growling out threats:
    German: Er *ließ* im Schuppen herum und stieß wilde Drohungen aus,
With a bodypart as subject, the use of *fara* describes an uncontrolled and rapid movement of the limb:

(32) “Ärnäsan” ryckte till som om han ertappats med något olagligt och högerhanden *for* in under slängkappan i en van gest. ARP
Fastighetsförmedling. HM2
‘Scarnose’ jumped as if he had been caught out doing something illegal and, out of habit, his right hand *dived* in under the cloak.

A variety of non-concrete subjects are also allowed. However, the progression from concrete subjects that can be perceived by the external senses to more abstract subjects is continuous and does not justify the postulation of metaphorical shifts between incompatible domains. Certain emotive, physiological reactions can be clearly localized spatially as in (33).

(33) En rysning *for* längs ryggraden.
A shudder *ran* down his backbone.

Subjects belonging to the semantic class Verbal communication such as ‘word’, direct quotes etc can be conceived of both as mental objects and as sounds which at least have sources (and partly also targets or receivers) that can be located in physical space. All the MPC languages use motion verbs as translations of *fara* (34) but the basic meaning varies a great deal.

(34) Swedish: Svordomarna *for* ur mun på henne, MF
English: oaths *pouring* out of her mouth,
German: Sie *stieß* Flüche aus,
French: Les jurons *s'envolèrent* de sa bouche,
Finnish: Hänen suustaan *pulppusi* kirosanoja,

The step is therefore rather short to purely mental subjects such as in (35).

(35) Swedish: och för ett ögonblick *for* tanken att han kunde ha rätt genom hennes huvud. MF
English: and the thought that he might be right *raced* through her mind.
German: und für einen Augenblick *schoß* ihr der Gedanke durch den Kopf, daß er recht haben könnte.
French: espace d'un instant, la pensée qu'il pouvait avoir raison lui *traversa* l'esprit.
Finnish: ja hetken Hanna *ajatteli*, että hän saattoi olla oikeassa.

In metaphorical uses such as in (35), where the subject refers to a mental concept such as ‘thought’, the association to violence or rapidity is still

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present and it is also reflected in the translations except for in Finnish, where ajatella ‘think’ is used.

Non-prototypical vehicle
Kalle for på skidor.
Charlie went on skis.

TRAVEL IN VEHICLE
Kalle for till Paris.
Charlie went to Paris.

Subject: Vehicle
Bussen for iväg.
The bus left.

TRAVEL FAST & VIOLENTLY & WITHOUT CONTROL

Subject:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human</th>
<th>Bodypart</th>
<th>Physical object</th>
<th>Perceptual activity</th>
<th>Mental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Human subject:

Self-propelled motion
Kalle for omkring. Charlie rushed around.

Limb movement
Kalle for med handen över pannan. Charlie passed his hand over his forehead.

Perceptual activity
Kalle for med blicken runt väggarna. Charlie passed his eyes around the walls.

Inner speech
Fan också, for det genom mitt huvud. Shit! It flashed through my head.

Attack
Kalle for på Olle. Charlie flew at Olle.

Treatment
Kalle for hårt fram med sina anställda. Charlie gave his employees a rough time.

Uncontrolled, abstract motion

Verbal communication
Kalle for med osanning. Charlie told lies.

Figure 5: The meaning pattern of fara.

With a human subject, the verb has a number of specialized meanings which are given at the bottom of the figure (without any intention of showing in
detail how these meanings are interrelated.) The majority of these meanings refer to various types of self-propelled but relatively uncontrolled and violent actions such as: *Kalle för på Olle* ‘Charlie flew at Olle’ and somewhat more abstractly: *Kalle för hårt fram med sina anställda* ‘Charlie gave his employees a rough time.’ There is also a metaphorically based expression shown in (36) where the human subject is completely out of control: *fara väl/illa av.* This is one of the few cases where English can use the cognate verb *fare well/badly from,* although this is a slightly archaic use in English.

(36) Då begrep Mattis att den stackarn inte *for väl av* för mycket larm, och han teg motvilligt. AL
At last Matt realized that too much noise would not do the poor fellow any good, and he fell into unwilling silence.

The metaphor is a variation on the theme *LIFE IS A JOURNEY* and the event structure metaphor (Lakoff 1993). What the phrase *fara väl/illa* conjures up is someone drifting through life meeting good or bad things without being able to control the flow of events. In the translation, the human being is even formally the object that ‘the noise’ would ‘do’ something to.

The frequencies of the various uses of *fara* in the tagged version of the Parole corpus are shown in table 4. Travel in Vehicle is dominant and accounts for roughly 55%. This is parallel to *åka* except that the dominance was more pronounced for that verb, 89%. The verb *fara* actually has a more complex meaning pattern than *åka* and the analysis presented here is not exhaustive.

Historically, the meaning pattern of *fara* in present-day Swedish is the result of specialization. Once *fara* had a more general meaning as a motion verb, but today the meaning ‘travel in a vehicle’ is clearly dominant. The rest of the uses of the verb to a great extent form a large set of phraseological units that share a schematic meaning ‘travel fast & violently & without control’ which is also metaphorically extended to various mental and other abstract phenomena.
Table 4: Uses of *fara* in the Swedish Parole corpus. (*A few of these have a non-human subject.)

### 4.3 The Verb *Resa*

The verb *resa* is primarily used about a journey covering a relatively long distance and/or requiring special preparations. Its most direct equivalent in English is the verb *travel*, but the nuclear verb *go* is also quite frequent as a translation for this meaning. As can be observed in (37), all the MPC languages have at least one special verb that corresponds relatively directly to *resa* and this is the most frequent translation of *resa* as a verb of traveling except in French according to table 3. In French, verbs of departure dominate as translations. (There are, however, only 20 occurrences of *resa* as a verb of traveling in the MPC.)

(37) **Swedish:** Han *reser* runt i världen HM  
**English:** He *travels* all over the world  
**German:** Er *reist* in der ganzen Welt umher  
**French:** Il *voyage* dans le monde entier  
**Finnish:** Hän *matkustelee* ympäri maailmaa

What is notable about *resa* is that it has two prototypes that synchronically seem to be completely unrelated apart from referring to motion. As an intransitive verb it means ‘travel’ as we have just seen. However, used as a transitive verb, *resa* means ‘raise’, ‘cause to go up’, ‘cause to stand up’.

(38) **Sedan tog han Robert Åkerblom i armen och reste honom upp. HM2**  
Then he took Robert Åkerblom by the arm and *helped him to his feet.*

This meaning is closely related to the meaning of the reflexive form of this verb *resa sig*, which means ‘stand up’, ‘rise’ and is very frequent as a
postural verb. In many cases it is interchangeable with *ställa sig up* ‘stand up’ but it may also be used about rising from a lying to a sitting position as an alternative to Swedish *sätta sig upp* ‘sit up’. The reflexive forms of *resa* are usually translated by one of the expressions *rise, get up or stand up* in English and to the corresponding expressions in the other languages.

(39) Swedish: Johan *reste sig*. KE  
   English: Johan *got up*.  
   German: Johan *stand auf*.  
   French: Johan *se leva*.  
   Finnish: Johan *nousi*.  

The use as a postural verb is actually the most frequent use in present-day Swedish, much more frequent than the transitive form and than *resa* as a verb of traveling. The postural meaning can be extended to inanimate subjects and then describes apparent motion as in (40).

(40) Swedish: Det väldiga matsalsbordet *reser sig* över mitt huvud, IB  
   English: The huge dining-room table *towers* above me  
   German: Der gewaltige Eßzimmertisch *erhebt sich* über meinem Kopf,  
   French: L’immense table de la salle à manger *s’élève* au-dessus de ma tête,  
   Finnish: Ruokasalin valtava pöytä *kohoaa* pääni yläpuolelle,  

Transitive *resa* can be extended to building (*resa ett tempel* ‘erect a temple’) and related types of production as in (41).

(41) Vid Gamla Uppsala och Vendel *restes* högar över bygdekungar, medan andra jordades i sina skepp. AA  
   At Gamla Uppsala and Vendel mighty burial mounds *were raised* over the local kings, while others were interred in their ships.  

No closer semantic relationship, however, is perceived between *resa* as a verb of traveling and the other meanings of *resa*. One possibility would be to regard this as a case of homonymy, but there are no formal signs of this since all the inflected forms are shared. Whatever solution is chosen with respect to homonymy, it is justified (at least synchronically) to count two unrelated prototypes for the meaning of *resa* as in figure 6.
The transitive and reflexive forms of the verb have a number of secondary meanings only some of which are represented in the figure, since it would take us too far from the topic of this paper to account for these meanings in detail. With certain mental nouns as object, the meaning of the verb is ‘move a mental object up to a conscious level’ (a variation on the metaphor CONSCIOUS IS UP. See Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 15).

(42) Mannen, en framgångsrik, betrodd och uppmärksammad Herrens tjänare, reste onaturliga
The man, a successful and trusted servant of the Lord who people made much of, placed

(43) När man letar utmärkande drag hos ett helt folk hittar man idel motsägelser, varje påstående reser opposition. IU Lit. ‘raises opposition’
Fumbling after characteristics of a whole people one finds nothing but contradictions, every statement calls up its opposite.
Thus, as was the case with the other verbs of traveling åka and fara, the use of resa as a verb of traveling is isolated from the rest of the uses of the verb which form a semantic network. In this case, however, there is a complete split.

5 The Motion-in-Vehicle Verbs in Swedish FrameNet

The account so far has been focused on individual verbs. In this section, the place of the motion-in-vehicle verbs in a general model of the lexicon will be discussed based on FrameNet. Unless otherwise stated, only the meanings related to the use of the verbs as motion-in-vehicle verbs will be considered. According to the approach to semantics known as frame semantics (Fillmore 1985), verbs (and other relational words) evoke frames – schematic structures of recurring situations. This theory is the foundation of FrameNet, a comprehensive lexical semantic database of English (see Fillmore et al 2003 for a general description). The following is based on material from: http://framenet.icsi.berkeley.edu. The motion frame is defined in the following way: Some entity (The me) starts out in one place (Source) and ends up in some other place (Goal), having covered some space between the two (Path). A simple example would be: Peter (Theme) fell off the roof (Source). The frames that inherit the general Motion frame add some elaboration to this simple idea. Inheriting frames can add Goal-profiling (arrive, reach), Source-profiling (leave, depart), or Path-profiling (traverse, cross), or aspects of the manner of motion (run, jog). Source-profiling is characteristic of what was referred to above as the verbs of departure.

Another elaboration is represented by the frame Self_motion in which the central frame element is the Self_mover, a living being which moves under its own power in a directed fashion, i.e. along what could be described as a Path, with no separate vehicle. A typical example in Swedish would be Per (Self-mover) gick till stationen (Goal) ‘Per walked to the station’. In Swedish, the subject of gå in contrast to English go always is a Self-mover, if it refers to a human.

FrameNet provides an interface to the syntactic realization such as the argument structure of verbs. This is shown for köra ‘drive’ in table 5. In its basic meaning, köra evokes the frame Operate_vehicle. The words in this frame describe motion involving a Vehicle and someone who controls it, the Driver. Some words normally allow the Vehicle to be expressed as a separate constituent. Example: Tim [Driver] DROVE his car [Vehicle] all the way across North America [Path]. The syntactic realization of the frame elements can be described with respect to Phrase types (NP, PP...) and grammatical functions (subject, object, adjunct...). As can be observed in table 5, the subject slot can be filled by the frame elements Driver or and Vehicle. (The passive allows further options but these follow from general syntactic rules.) The object slot can be filled by Vehicle, Passenger or Cargo.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammatical Relations</th>
<th>Phrase Structure</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>(Particle)</th>
<th>(NP)</th>
<th>(PP)n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Maria | köarte | in | bilen | i garaget |

‘Maria drove (‘in’) the car into the garage’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame elements</th>
<th>Driver</th>
<th>Vehicle</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Maria | köarte | hem | barnen | från skolan |

Lit. ‘Maria drove home the kids from school’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame elements</th>
<th>Driver</th>
<th>Passenger</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Maria | köarte | hem | möblera | i sin volvo |

Lit. ‘Maria drove home the furniture in her Volvo’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame elements</th>
<th>Driver</th>
<th>Cargo</th>
<th>Vehicle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Bilen | köarde | ner | i diket. |

Lit. ‘The car drove down into the ditch’

| Vehicle | Goal |

Table 5: Frame elements of köra and their syntactic realization.

Frame elements:
- Driver: The being, typically human, that controls the Vehicle as it moves
- Vehicle: The means of conveyance controlled by the Driver
- Cargo/Passenger: The goods or people being moved by a Driver in a Vehicle

The frame elements evoked by the verbs åka and resa are shown in table 6. In FrameNet, there is a frame Ride_vehicle defined as “a Theme is moved by a Vehicle which is not directly under its power”. When åka is used as a motion-in-vehicle verb, a human subject is normally interpreted as an intentional agent. For that reason, another frame element is preferred: Passenger defined as a person being moved by a Driver in a Vehicle. Theme is reserved for the case when the subject refers to a person who is totally out of control (or to an inanimate argument). A vehicle can be specified directly after the verb åka in Swedish. Since the vehicle in this position is realized as a bare noun, it can be regarded as a particle. When the noun is modified, it usually appears as an adjunct in a prepositional phrase (e.g. i sin pappas bil ‘in his dad’s car’). The verb resa evokes the Travel frame: „a Traveler goes on a journey, an activity, generally planned in advance”. The vehicle can only be specified as an adjunct in a prepositional phrase with med ‘with’ (e.g. med tåg ‘by train’).
As shown in table 7, the verbs åka, fara and resa can all evoke the Departing frame defined as: „An object (the Theme) moves away from a Source”.

FrameNet is well suited to model the interface between semantic (conceptual) structure and syntax (in particular the argument structure). The account given in this section does not deal with phenomena that apply to motion verbs in general, in particular the wide range of frame elements evoked by the general motion frame such as Source, Path, Goal and Distance. In FrameNet such elements are inherited from the more general frame. Some general problems remain to be solved, in particular the
description of the interaction between motion verbs and spatial verbal particles (see Viberg 2007 for a brief discussion). As has been observed several times above, French tends to use directional verbs without any indication of manner, where Swedish uses a motion-in-vehicle verb in combination with a spatial particle.

6 Conclusion

The verbs describing motion in a vehicle form a (sub-)field in the larger semantic field of motion verbs. This paper has dealt with patterns of differentiation, i.e. field internal contrasts between the verbs in the field, and with patterns of polysemy of the individual verbs which extend into a number of other semantic fields.

The differentiation pattern was studied from a contrastive perspective. It is instructive to look at the differences that were found from two different angles: inventories and usage patterns. The comparison of the inventories describes the number of semantic contrasts that can be expressed. All the languages studied had verbs describing motion in a vehicle but varied with respect to the number of field internal contrasts that were lexicalized as different verbs. Thus, there were interesting differences even with respect to the inventories. The study of the usage patterns in the corpora, however, presented much more dramatic differences. As a translation of åka and fara, English tended to use the nuclear verb go which is completely unmarked for manner of motion, whereas Finnish favored a verb of departure (lähteä ‘leave’) and French primarily used directional verbs or verbs of departure. Such findings with respect to differences in usage patterns are among the key results of corpus-based contrastive studies. One limitation of the present study is that primarily one direction of translation was studied: from Swedish into other languages but it is not to be expected that these differences will completely disappear if the study is extended to include originals in the other languages translated into Swedish. (In other studies, this type of comparison has already been done especially for English/Swedish.)

The study of the patterns of polysemy of the Swedish motion-in-vehicle verbs pointed to an interesting general trend. In several cases, the semantic extension proceeded from power and control towards passivity and/or lack of control. Perhaps this finding can be related to the rapid change of the means of transportation that has taken place the last 150 years or so, from the control of domestic riding and draft animals with a will of their own to the use of more and more automated cars and modern passenger traffic. In old times, traveling tended to require greater amounts of control and effort (cf. French travail ‘work’, which is closer to the original meaning than its English cognate travel). More detailed comparisons with other languages are required to decide whether the development in Swedish represents a general trend or is more language specific. What is perfectly clear already from the present study is that there has been rapid semantic restructuring resulting in
differences between the closely related Germanic languages. Verbs like Dutch *rijden* and Danish *køre* still have a form that is very close to Swedish *rida* and *köra* in spite of their wide semantic extensions. One of the interesting results of the study of rather closely related languages is the observation that semantic change can proceed relatively rapidly.

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