

# The Finnish abstract motion construction *mennä V-mA-An* [go V-INF-ILL] 'do something unwished'

## Usage, development and motivation

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This paper addresses the usage, development and motivation of the Finnish *mennä V-mA-An* [go V-INF-ILL] construction. In this construction, the literal motion sense of 'going' has been grammaticalized to evoke an affective meaning: the activity expressed in the construction's infinitival element is considered as unwished (e.g. *Johtaja-t men-i-vät lakkautta-ma-an ohjelma-n* [manager-PL.NOM go-PST-3PL shut.down-INF-ILL show-ACC] 'Managers shut down the show [though they should not have]'). This paper uncovers the different ways the construction is used (for example, projecting the disapproving stance onto a specific element, such as the manner, objective or result of the activity, that the speaker finds especially inappropriate when compared to the desired course of events, or creating an ironic tone for the description of an event) and reveals its lexical profile in modern language. The role of the context in the interpretation of the construction as well as its grammaticalization process are also dealt with. It is argued that the affective meaning of the construction is metaphorically motivated by a previously undiscovered image-schematic pattern "deviant path – erroneous goal". In this schema the trajector is conceived of abstractly deviating from a projected path and ending up at an unwished ending point, and this constitutes a contrast to the desired course of events, the core meaning of the construction. The analysis supports a tenet in cognitive semantics that linguistic structures are often motivated by general cognitive processes such as metaphor and image-schema patterns.

**Keywords:** figurative verb construction, path schema, verbs of motion, motivation in language, Finnish

## 1. Introduction

This paper discusses the usage, development and motivation of one idiomatic verb construction in a non-Indo-European language, Finnish. The construction under scrutiny consists of the motion verb *mennä* ‘go’ and its infinitival complement in the MA infinitive illative case (‘into’). The construction can be concisely characterized as *mennä V-mAAn*, where the *V-mAAn* stands for a verb in the illative case of the MA infinitive. Thus, the construction is partly schematic as, apart from some modal verbs (e.g. \**mennä täyty-mä-än* [go must-INF-ILL]), it can take any odd verb to the infinitive slot. Stefanowitsch (2013, p. 228) observes that some constructions can impose a motion interpretation even onto verbs whose lexical semantics does not include motion sense. In the figurative expression discussed in this paper the construction works the other way around: the motion sense of the verb *mennä* ‘go’ is undermined and the construction highlights the speaker’s negative stance towards the activity described in the construction’s infinitival element (the infinitive verb plus its possible nominal elements, e.g. object, adverbial complement). Consider example (1).<sup>1</sup>

- (1) *Ensi vuode-ksi hallitus on men-nyt lupaa-ma-an*  
 next year-TRA government.NOM be.3SG go-PTCP.NOM promise-INF-ILL  
*jopa veronkevennyks-i-ä...* (hs1995ta\_te 718872)  
 even tax cut-PL-PTV  
 ‘For next  the government has promised even tax cuts [though it should not have].’

In example (1) the activity expressed in the construction’s infinitival element (i.e. the promising of tax cuts) is seen as unwished by the speaker. To illustrate the meaning of the *mennä V-mAAn* construction, consider the first example’s counterpart (1’), a transitive clause without the construction.

- (1’) *Ensi vuode-ksi hallitus on luvan-nut*  
 next year-TRA government.NOM be.3SG promise-PTCP.NOM  
*jopa veronkevennyks-i-ä...*  
 even tax cut-PL-PTV  
 ‘For next year, the government has even promised tax cuts...’

Example (1’) forms a minimal pair with the authentic sentence (1) and, lacking the *mennä V-mAAn* construction, it has a neutral, if not even positive, meaning. In both sentences the meaning is corroborated by the interpretation of the scalar

1. The data will be introduced at the end of the introduction. The code after the example is the example’s ID number in the corpus.



particle *jopa* ‘even’. In the original example (1) the particle sets the tax cuts as the most undesirable measure taken by the government, ‘in addition to all other unwished acts’, whereas in the version without the figurative expression the tax cuts are seen as the climax of all pleasing promises.

As Besnier (1990, pp. 428–429) points out, linguistic affect itself is mostly a metamessage. Accordingly, the *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction expresses whatever activity is described in the construction’s infinitival element but, in addition, adds a strong affective tone of disapproval to it. Due to its unspecific nature, the affective meaning of a linguistic structure is usually difficult to define exhaustively and it is often merely characterized by labels, such as “negative affect” or “positive affect”. In this paper, the formulation “do something unwished” is used as a hypernym for describing the meaning of the *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction because this characterization seems to be schematic enough to cover different semantic nuances the construction may convey.

It is important to notice that the meaning of the *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction is not included in any of the lexical meanings of the verb *mennä* (KS s.v. *mennä*), nor can it be derived outright from the meaning of the infinitive verb. From the cognitive point of view this kind of unpredictable sense is highly interesting. In cognitive semantics grammatical forms are, to a great extent, taken as motivated. It can even be argued that virtually everything is motivated in language (Langacker, 2008, p. 88). It seems that the more complex a linguistic expression (i.e. contains various lexical and grammatical elements), the more likely its structure is motivated. For example, many idioms which are often considered to be beyond analyzability in other paradigms are in a cognitive view seen as motivated instead of being arbitrary (see Lakoff, 1987, pp. 303, 450).

The co-occurrence of a motion verb and an affective meaning is nothing extraordinary. As Stefanowitsch (1999, p. 127) points out, constructions containing the verb *go* and its equivalents across languages often express affective meanings, such as bitterness, frustration, annoyance, disappointment and disapproval. He adds that these kinds of extensions are not arbitrary, but there seems to be an underlying semantic system associated with constructions containing a general motion verb in conjunction with another verb. This holds true with the Finnish *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction, too, as its affective meaning is motivated by a general image-schematic pattern as shown in this paper.

It must be acknowledged that the *mennä* V-*mAA*n phrase, as such, is most frequently used (79.9% in the corpus of written Modern Finnish) not as an affective construction, but in its literal sense where it describes physical motion, i.e. situations where some entity concretely moves to some place and after that carries out the process expressed by the infinitive verb. For instance, in example (2) the

speaker has first gone to the flat and after that examined it. In such a case there is no implication concerning negative evaluation.

- (2) *Men-i-n katso-ma-an asunto-a uteliaa-na ja kieltämättä*  
 go-PST-1SG look-INF-ILL flat-PTV curious-ESS and admittedly  
*suomalaise-n ennakkoluuloise-na.* (aamu1999 446565)  
 Finnish-GEN prejudiced-ESS  
 ‘I went to take a look at the flat as curious and, I admit, as prejudiced as a Finn can be.’

Examples (1) and (2) illustrate that the *mennä V-mAAn* phrase is polysemous. Thus the interpretation between its abstract (affective) and literal (neutral) sense is likely to be triggered by the context where it is used. There are also a number of ambiguities (approximately 17%), i.e. instances where this structure can be given both interpretations. Sentence (3) provides an example of such a case. First of all, it can mean that the speaker has travelled to parliament and then given the testimony there, i.e. ‘concrete movement followed by a testimony’. Second, the example can mean that the very fact that he has testified is considered as unwished, i.e. ‘giving the testimony is unwished’.

- (3) *Usko-n, että häne-n miele-stä-än ol-i väärin,*  
 believe-1SG that he-GEN opinion-ELA-3PX be-PST.3SG wrong  
*että men-i-n todista-ma-an lakivaliokunta-an, Starr*  
 that go-PST-1SG testify-INF-ILL legal committee-ILL Starr.NOM  
*sano-i lehdistötilaisuude-ssa-an.* (kaleva1998\_1999 153020)  
 say-PST.3SG press conference-INE-3PX  
 ‘‘I believe that, in his opinion, it was wrong that I went to the legal committee and gave a testimony,’’ Starr said at his press conference.’

In ambiguous cases our encyclopaedic knowledge rules out one or the other interpretation. It is common knowledge that people have to go to parliament or similar places to give testimonies to various committees and this supports the concrete reading in example (3). In addition, the example’s locative adverbial *lakivaliokunta-aan* [legal committee-ILL] ‘to legal committee’ is in the illative case, which corroborates the interpretation of concrete movement, as it provides an explicit goal for it. Regardless of these factors, example (3) can also be understood as an instance of the affective *mennä V-mAAn* construction. This reading, for its part, is supported by the example’s overt expression of disapproval, *häne-n miele-stä-än ol-i väärin* [he-GEN opinion-ELA-3PX be-PST.3SG wrong] ‘in his opinion, it was wrong’. It can be concluded that *mennä V-mAAn* forms a continuum where one end expresses physical motion – the basic sense of the verb *mennä* – and at the other end only non-motional readings are plausible. The existence of such a

continuum suggests that there is an ongoing grammaticalization process and that the affective *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction exhibits its ulterior stage as physical motion is not implied.

In summary, the Finnish *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction has four interesting qualities which are in the focus of this paper:

1. The kind of meanings the Finnish *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction conveys. Based on analysis of a large corpus data of contemporary Finnish, this issue is addressed in Section 3.
2. Since the *mennä* V-*mAA*n phrase is polysemous, the factors which disambiguate the affective *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction from its literal commensurate counterpart. It would be plausible to presume that the lexemes used in these structures and their contexts trigger one reading at the expense of the other. These factors are uncovered with quantitative and qualitative analysis in Sections 4 and 5.
3. How the affective *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction has developed. In Section 6, data from early written Finnish is analysed to track down how the affective construction has emerged during the last five centuries. This analysis sheds some light on the grammaticalization process of the *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction.
4. Finally, based on the cognitive linguistic hypothesis about motivation in language, this paper also seeks an explanation that could account for the affective meaning of the *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction. In Section 7 cognitive semantics is applied to uncover the motivation of the construction's form and meaning. For further evidence for the suggested explanation, parallel figurative expressions are also briefly discussed.

Before the above-mentioned research issues are addressed, the Finnish MA infinitive and the illative case are introduced in a nutshell in Section 2. In the final part of this paper, Section 8, the main conclusions are summarized.

The Modern Finnish data used in this paper consists of a large volume of written material from *The Finnish Language Bank* (see <https://www.csc.fi/-/kielipank-1>). The material consists of volumes of thirteen Finnish newspapers and other publications, mostly from the late 1990s. These are published in different dialect areas in Finland, which dissipates the possible bias towards a certain dialectal background. The size of the whole data is approximately 60 million words, which makes this corpus the most comprehensive data of Modern Finnish available in digital form. The data can be easily accessed through the Internet and the corpus includes a variety of different types of search tools (e.g. basic and advanced syntax). The occurrences of the *mennä* V-*mAA*n phrases are compiled by using the Query Expression [bf=mennä] [] [] [] [modality=IIIinf]. This formulation

matches all tokens in the corpus which include the verb *mennä* followed by any odd verb in the illative case of the MA infinitive and allows from zero to four arbitrary tokens between these two verbs. The total number of sentences collected in this way is 5,127; 4,096 of these express physical motion, whereas 1,031 matches are instances of the non-motional *mennä* V-*mAAn* construction. In order to save space, some of the given examples have been slightly abridged. The smaller amount of older data used in the analysis of the construction's grammaticalization process (Section 6) consists of 529 sentences from the mid-16th century to the 1930s. This material is compiled from the web-based corpus *Kaino*, which has a large selection of different types of old written Finnish (approximately 12 million words) in an accessible digital form (see [kaino.kotus.fi](http://kaino.kotus.fi)).

## 2. The MA infinitive and the illative case in the Finnish language

Finnish has a productive system of infinitive verb forms. As pointed out by Ylikoski (2003, p. 204), Finnish grammars use the term “infinitive” for certain historical-morphological groupings of different non-finites, not only non-finites functioning as syntactic complements. A common feature of all infinitives is that syntactically they function like NPs in infinitive phrases, but being nominal forms of verbs they describe activities and, due to this, can take a verb's arguments, e.g. objects and adverbials. Three different infinitive types are usually separated in Finnish grammar. Morphologically these differ by their morpheme markers and are called A, E and MA infinitives respectively (ISK, 2004, pp. 146–147, 487–490).

Finnish infinitives have a semi-productive case inflection. The A infinitive has two (lative and translative), the E infinitive two (inessive and instructive) and the MA infinitive six cases, two of which are marginally used (abessive and instructive) and the others are so-called internal cases, i.e. inessive, elative and illative, and an external case adessive. These four last-mentioned cases express relations of containment (‘in’ vs. ‘out of’ vs. ‘into’ vs. ‘at’) in noun inflection. Ylikoski (2003) discusses infinitives and their case markers from a cross-linguistic perspective and notes that Finnish infinitives are usually characterized by presenting a list of their main verbs that take infinitives in a given case as their complements. In other words, the case of the infinitive complement is basically determined by a predominant finite verb, its semantics or case government (“rection”). Regardless of this, it can be generalized that the grammatical cases (e.g. nominative, accusative) in the infinitives do not have their own meanings to same extent as the semantic cases (e.g. illative, elative) which have quite specific meanings (Ylikoski, 2003, pp. 214–215). The case of interest here, the illative, expresses a relation of motion ‘into’ in noun inflection, as in example (4) (see Huumo & Ojutkangas, 2006,

pp. 13–14). However, when the MA infinitive's illative case (i.e. the *V-mAAn*) appears in conjunction with a motion verb it most often conveys the purpose of the action described in its predominant finite verb (ISK, 2004, pp. 491–493). Thus, in example (5) the infinitive verb form *katso-ma-an* [watch-INF-ILL] 'to watch' expresses a reason for the child's crawling. In contrast with this standard behaviour, the *mennä V-mAAn* construction, despite the same form, expresses neither concrete motion 'into' nor a reason for motion, but disapproving evaluation of the activity (example (6)).

- (4) *Lapsi ryöm-i laatikko-on.*  
 child.NOM crawl-PST.3SG box-ILL  
 'The child crawled into the box.'
- (5) *Lapsi ryöm-i katso-ma-an TV:tä.*  
 child.NOM crawl-PST.3SG watch-INF-ILL TV.PTV  
 'The child crawled to watch TV.'
- (6) *Lapsi men-i katso-ma-an kielletty-ä TV-ohjelma-a.*  
 child.NOM go-PST.3SG watch-INF-ILL forbidden-PTV TV show-PTV  
 'The child went and watched a forbidden TV show.'

### 3. Semantic diversity of the *mennä V-mAAn* construction

In the prototypical cases the *mennä V-mAAn* construction manifests the speaker's negative evaluation, but sometimes (1.2% of all examples) it can be used for indicating negative feelings of some other person. In example (7) it is the referent of the subject phrase, the trade union, not the speaker which disapproves of the fact that the service has been purchased from a "wrong" service provider.<sup>2</sup> Example (7) also illustrates that the disapproving evaluation manifested by the *mennä V-mAAn* construction can be explicitly projected into some aspect of the represented situation. In other words, the manner, objective, result or some other dimension of the described activity can be conceived of as unwished. In these cases (21%) the examples contain some element which explicates either the advisable target or result which did not come true, or that the realized one is considered as unwished. In (7), for instance, it is explicated that the cleaning services should

2. The "other" voice can also be expressed explicitly by adverbials such as *häne-n miele-stä-än* [s/he-GEN opinion-ELA-3PX] 'In her/his opinion' in example (3).



have been bought from the town's own cleaning bureau instead of from the external firm.<sup>3</sup>

- (7) *Turu-n yhteisjärjestö KTV katso-o satama-n*  
 Turku-GEN trade union.NOM KTV.NOM look-3SG harbour-GEN  
*menetel-lee-n epäreilusti, kun se on men-nyt*  
 act-PTCP-GEN unfairly when it.NOM be.3SG go-PTCP.NOM  
*osta-ma-an siivouspalvelu-t ulkopolise-lta ei-kä*  
 buy-INF-ILL cleaning service-PL.NOM external-ABL NEG.3SG-CLIT  
*kaupungi-n siivoustoimisto-lta.* (tusa1999 365239)  
 town-GEN cleaning bureau-ABL  
 'The trade union KTV in Turku believes that the harbour has acted in an unfair manner having engaged the cleaning service [against KTV's will] from an external firm instead of from the town's cleaning bureau.'

Interestingly, the *mennä V-mAAn* construction is not used solely for referring to events which are considered unwished, but there are also cases where it is used for referring to positive ones. In these rare pragmatic extensions (2.7%) a positive situation is described by a construction which particularly manifests the speaker's negative feelings, and this causes a semantic dissonance and consequently an ironic interpretation. For example, in (8) the victory of a skiing contest is undoubtedly a pleasant outcome but describing it with the *mennä V-mAAn* construction brings about an ironic interpretation.

- (8) *Kun Kainuu-n Hiihtoseura men-i voitta-ma-an*  
 when Kainuu-GEN Hiihtoseura.NOM go-PST.3SG win-INF-ILL  
*nais-ten viesti-n, lens-i*  
 woman-GEN.PL relay-ACC fly-PST.3SG  
*Kaupi-ssa vitsi.* (hs1995sp 711044)  
 Kauppi-INE joke.NOM  
 'When Kainuun Hiihtoseura went and won the women's relay people had fun [lit. joke was flying] in Kauppi.'

The ironic cases illustrate how the *mennä V-mAAn* construction can be used for expressing polyphony, i.e. the description of the event includes a diversity of points of view and voices. In example (8), by using the *mennä V-mAAn*

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3. In this respect, the construction is parallel to syntactic negation, which also has the capacity to include in its scope only some part of the sentence (ISK, 2004, p. 1536). For instance, the sentence *Minä e-n osta-nut musta-a laukku-a* [I.NOM NEG-1SG buy-PTCP.NOM black-PTV bag-PTV] 'I did not buy a/the black bag' denies only the shopping of a black bag, but not purchasing a different coloured bag.



construction the speaker gives the impression that s/he considers the result of the skiing competition as unwished (the core meaning of this construction), but in fact s/he welcomes it. It is typical that in the ironic usage of the construction the described event is much unexpected. Thus this usage involves a mirative tone (DeLancey, 2001), e.g. in example (8) one would not have anticipated the team Kainuun Hiihtoseura winning the relay. Another characteristic of the ironic usage is that it cannot be used in a negation form because the negation would water down the disapproving statement and thus remove the basis of the ironic description.

#### 4. Lexical profile of the *mennä V-mAAn* construction

As mentioned before, the *mennä V-mAAn* phrase is polysemous and can express physical motion or a disapproving stance towards some activity. Thus it is worthwhile analysing whether there is a corresponding difference in the lexical choice of the non-fixed parts – infinitive verb, the subject and, if the infinitive is transitive, the object lexeme – used in these structures. In order to uncover this, a sample of 1,000 example sentences of both senses were analysed. Table 1a illustrates the twenty most common lexemes used in the infinitive slot of the *mennä V-mAAn* phrase when it is used in its concrete sense and Table 1b shows those in the abstract usage.

Several observations can be made based on Tables 1a and 1b. First, the verbs used in the infinitive slot of the concrete sense of the *mennä V-mAAn* phrase (Table 1a) seem to express mostly concrete activity ('look', 'fetch', 'swim', etc.) and none of them denote purely abstract action. Many of these verbs also indicate activities which are typically carried out in some particular location (e.g. 'vote' implies polling station, 'swim' implies swimming pool, lake or sea, etc.). Thus, the infinite lexemes, for their part, validate the literal meaning of the *mennä V-mAAn* phrase: it conveys concrete motion followed by whatever activity expressed by the infinitive verb. However, the infinitives of the abstract *mennä V-mAAn* construction (Table 1b) can express more abstract activities (e.g. 'spoil', 'lose') and a prominent number of these express speech acts (e.g. 'promise', 'swear'). A comparison of Tables 1a and 1b also shows that there is a greater variation in the choice of the infinitive verb in the affective construction than in the concrete one, as the 20 most frequent lexemes cover only 39.1% of all usage (compared with 48.2% in concrete usage). This reflects the affective construction's productivity: it can be used for picturing almost any activity as unwished. Finally, the infinitives differentiate clearly on the grounds of their affective tone. Whereas the concrete expressions lack affective infinitive verbs, the abstract constructions seem to

**Table 1a.** Verb lexemes most often used in the infinitive slot of the *mennä* V-*mAAn* phrase in the concrete, neutral sense (N = 1000)

Rank	Verb	Occurrences	%
1.	<i>katsoa</i> 'look'	148	14.8
2.	<i>nukkua</i> 'sleep'	46	4.6
3.	<i>hakea</i> 'fetch'	44	4.4
4.	<i>kysyä</i> 'ask'	28	2.8
5.	<i>tehdä</i> 'do'	26	2.6
6.	<i>uida</i> 'swim'	22	2.2
7.	<i>äänestää</i> 'vote'	20	2.0
8.	<i>sanoa</i> 'say'	18	1.8
9.	<i>syödä</i> 'eat'	17	1.7
10.	<i>auttaa</i> 'help'	16	1.6
11.	<i>opiskella</i> 'study'	16	1.6
12.	<i>käydä</i> 'visit'	12	1.2
13.	<i>harjoitella</i> 'practise'	10	1.0
14.	<i>tavata</i> 'meet'	10	1.0
15.	<i>pelata</i> 'play' (a game)	9	0.9
16.	<i>tutkia</i> 'research'	9	0.9
17.	<i>ostaa</i> 'buy'	9	0.9
18.	<i>kuunnella</i> 'listen'	8	0.8
19.	<i>soittaa</i> 'perform'	8	0.8
20.	<i>etsiä</i> 'search'	6	0.6
			Total: 48.2%

favour them (e.g. 'lose', 'spoil', 'mess', 'accuse'). As a matter of fact, in most instances (51.2%) the activity indicated by the infinitive itself has a negative tone, as with *pilata* 'spoil' in example (9).

- (9) *Kultaus on periaattee-ssa ikuinen, jos si-tä ei*  
 gilding.NOM be.3SG in principle-INE everlasting.NOM if it-PTV NEG.3SG  
*men-nä pilaa-ma-an esimerkiksi märä-llä räti-llä.* (hs1995hu 654710)  
 go-PASS spoil-INF-ILL for example wet-ADE rag-ADE  
 'In principle, gilding is everlasting, if one does not go and spoil it with a wet rag.'

Another lexical difference between the concrete and abstract senses of the *mennä* V-*mAAn* concerns the semantic tone of the structure's subject and, if the infinitive is a transitive verb, object phrase. In a sample of 1,000 concrete examples subjects associated with negative tone (e.g. *hujjari* 'conman') were practically non-existent (0.1%) whereas in a same-size sample of the affective construction 6.2% of

**Table 1b.** Verb lexemes most often used in the infinitive slot of the *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction in the abstract, affective sense (N = 1000)

Rank	Verb	Occurrences	%
1.	<i>sanoa</i> 'say'	88	8.8
2.	<i>tehdä</i> 'do'	60	6.0
3.	<i>luvata</i> 'promise'	30	3.0
4.	<i>muuttaa</i> 'change'	22	2.2
5.	<i>hävitä</i> 'lose'	18	1.8
6.	<i>ottaa</i> 'take'	18	1.8
7.	<i>pilata</i> 'spoil'	16	1.6
8.	<i>antaa</i> 'give'	14	1.4
9.	<i>ostaa</i> 'buy'	14	1.4
10.	<i>puhua</i> 'speak'	14	1.4
11.	<i>vannoa</i> 'swear'	13	1.3
12.	<i>kertoa</i> 'tell'	12	1.2
13.	<i>neuvoa</i> 'advise'	12	1.2
14.	<i>sotkea</i> 'mess'	10	1.0
15.	<i>moittia</i> 'accuse'	10	1.0
16.	<i>esittää</i> 'present'	9	0.9
17.	<i>repiä</i> 'tear'	9	0.9
18.	<i>väittää</i> 'claim'	8	0.8
19.	<i>purkaa</i> 'dismantle'	7	0.7
20.	<i>tunnustaa</i> 'confess'	7	0.7
			Total: 39.1%

subjects clearly had a negative bias, such as *pöljä* 'dumb', *tunari* 'duffer' or *hölmö* 'fool' as in example (10). In addition, the object phrase is more often (6.4%) connected with a negative meaning in the affective construction – in (11) *mi-tä perkelet-tä* [what-PTV devil-PTV] 'what the devil' – whereas none of the commensurate concrete examples exhibited such a tone. Even though the frequencies of negative subject and object phrases are in general quite low, the difference between their occurrences in the two senses of the *mennä* V-*mAA*n phrase seems to stand out as significant.

- (10) *Vain hölmö mene-e teke-mä-än*  
 only fool,NOM go-3SG do-INF-ILL  
*sellais-i-a sitoumuks-i-a.* (aamu1999 482520)  
 such-PL-PTV commitment-PL-PTV  
 'Only a fool goes and makes such commitments.'

- (11) *Mi-tä perkelet-tä sinä ole-t*  
 what-PTV devil-PTV you.NOM be-2SG  
*men-nyt teke-mä-än?* (aamu1999 455608)  
 go-PTCP.NOM do-INF-ILL  
 ‘What the devil have you gone and done?’

## 5. The role of context in the interpretation of the *mennä V-mAAn* construction

In addition to the lexical elements (i.e. the choice of the infinitive verb, subject and object phrase) used in the *mennä V-mAAn*, the role of the context is significant in the disambiguation of the affective construction from the commensurate concrete structure. First of all, the syntactic context where the *mennä V-mAAn* is used is significantly different in concrete and abstract usage. In a sample of 1,000 sentences it was found that quite often (27%) the affective construction functions as a part of a negated modal verb structure (‘one must not go and do something’) which explicitly designates the activity as unwished (12), whereas a similar objective structure is rare (2.4%). Also the *mennä V-mAAn* construction may function (15.8%) as a syntactic subject to a predicative phrase expressing negative evaluation. In these cases, the predicative clearly states that the activity described in the construction is unwished – in (13) it is defined as *typerä* ‘stupid’ – but such a sentence conveying concrete meaning is practically non-existing (0.2%). These modal and copulative constructions are often evaluative generalisations, which reflect not only the negative feelings of the speaker but also a more generally shared aloof stance.<sup>4</sup>

- (12) *Häne-n miele-stä-än sii-tä ei pitä-isi men-nä*  
 s/he-GEN opinion-ELA-3PX it-ELA NEG.3SG should-COND go-INF  
*päättä-mä-än mitään niin kauan kuin uudistukse-n sisältö*  
 decide-INF-ILL nothing as long as reform-GEN content.NOM  
*on auki ei-kä tiede-tä, mi-tä työllistäv-i-ä*  
 be.3SG open NEG.3SG-CLIT know-PASS what-PTV employing-PL-PTV  
*ratkaisu-j-a uudistukse-en liite-tään.* (demari1995 425968)  
 solution-PL-PTV reform-ILL attach-PASS  
 ‘In her/his opinion, one should not go and make any decision about it as long as the content of the reform is open and it is not known what kind of employment solutions are attached to the reform.’

4. In example (12) the adverbial *häne-n miele-stä-än* [she/he-GEN opinion-ELA-3PX] ‘in her/his opinion’ indicates that the stance is personal.


- (13) *Osaaminen on juuri Jyväskylä-ssä ja työntekijö-i-ssä*  
 know-how.NOM be.3SG precisely Jyväskylä-INE and worker-PL-INE  
*siellä, joten ol-isi typerä-ä men-nä muutta-ma-an*  
 there so be-COND.3SG stupid-PTV go-INF change-INF-ILL  
*mitään sii-nä.* (kesu1999 301135)  
 nothing it-INE  
 ‘Know-how is precisely in Jyväskylä and in workers, so it would be stupid to go and change anything in it.’


The *mennä V-mAAn* construction is often accompanied by an adverbial modifier which expresses negative evaluation of the described situation, such as *valitettavasti* ‘regrettably’ in example (14). In a sample of 1,000 *mennä V-mAAn* construction instances, 49 different adverbials occurred and 12 of them had clearly negative tone (e.g. *idioottimaisesti* ‘idiotically’, *hölmöyttään* ‘due to her/his foolishness’, *tyhmyyttään* ‘due to her/his stupidity’). Though the frequencies of these adverbials are very low, this seems significant when considering that a similar amount of the commensurate neutral *mennä V-mAAn* phrase contained only two adverbials associated with such a negative meaning.

- (14) *Palloliitto on valitettavasti men-nyt*  
 football association.NOM be.3SG regrettably go-PTCP.NOM  
*anta-ma-an näi-lle puhe-i-lle lisäkatet-ta.* (tusa1998 322911)  
 give-INF-ILL these-ALL talk-PL-ALL extra reliability-PTV  
 ‘The football association has regrettably gone and given these talks extra significance.’

The different negatively biased elements used in abstract construction strengthen the affective meaning of the whole sentence, in other words they constitute a negative “semantic prosody” in terms of Louw (1993, p. 157) and in that way guide the interpretation of the sentence. It is not at all odd that conceptually similar elements such as the *mennä V-mAAn* construction and expressions associated with negative sense co-occur in sentences. As Langacker (1987, p. 278) argues, when different structures have common substructures they can be integrated to form a coherent expression. In Finnish, for instance, it has been noted that expressions containing similar modal meanings go together (ISK, 2004, p. 1486). Similarly, the lexemes accompanying the negatively evaluating *mennä V-mAAn* construction are often associated with negative bias.

If the *mennä V-mAAn* construction occurs without any negative element described above, the affective construction can be disambiguated from the concrete reading on the grounds of a locative adverbial. If the construction is accompanied by a locative adverbial, it is prototypically in the inessive (‘in’) or adessive (‘at’)

case, not in an illative ('into') or allative ('to') case, because the  would suggest the existence of a goal of actual motion. Thus, in example (14) the locative adverbial *televisio-ssa* [television-INE] 'on the television' supports a non-motional affective reading, whereas the same adverbial in the illative case (*televisio-on* [television-ILL] 'to the television') would suggest concrete motion – see also example (3).

- (15) *Ja nyt hän on men-nyt sano-ma-an si-llä*  
 and now s/he.NOM be.3SG go-PTCP.NOM say-INF-ILL it-ADE  
*tava-lla 60-vuotispäivä- kunnia-ksi televisio-ssa*  
 manner-ADE 60th birthday-GEN honour-TRA television-INE  
*kaike-lle kansa-lle.* (karj1992 188575)  
 all-ALL people-ALL  
 'And now s/he has spoken like that on the television to all the people, in honour of her/his 60th birthday [though s/he should not have].'

In addition to case, the position of the locative adverbial has influence on the interpretation of the sentence. Such an adverbial between the finite and infinite verbs is virtually non-existent in the *mennä V-mAAn* construction, because when situated immediately after the motion verb (e.g. *mennä koti-in luke-ma-an kirja-a* [go home-ILL read-INF-ILL book-PTV] 'to go home to read a/the book') the adverbial disturbs the coherence of the *mennä V-mAAn* structure and indicates concrete motion. As a matter of fact, it is typical (61.7%) that there is not any word between the affective construction's two verbs. For instance, in example (16) an affective reading is quite strong, but if the locative adverbial was placed between the verbs 'go' and 'argue' (i.e. *mennä kauppiaspäiv-i-lle pauhaa-ma-an* [go trade fair.PL-ALL argue-INF-ILL] 'go to the trade fair to argue') an interpretation of concrete motion would be plausible.

- (16) *Ei ol-isi mitään syy-tä men-nä pauhaa-ma-an*  
 NEG.3SG be-COND.3SG nothing reason-PTV go-INF argue-INF-ILL  
*kuluttaja-n asia-a kauppiaspäiv-i-lle.* (hs1995vk 734508)  
 consumer-GEN business-PTV trade fair-PL-ALL  
 'There would be no reason to go and argue about consumer matters at the trade fair.'

The *mennä V-mAAn* construction has an affective meaning even if there is no other element in the same sentence to corroborate it. In these relatively frequent cases (25.5%) a larger context triggers the meaning of disapproval. In example (17) the *on men-nyt lupaa-ma-an kansanäänestykse-n* [be-3SG go-PTCP.NOM

promise-INF-ILL referendum-ACC] ‘has gone and promised a referendum’ structure conveys the speaker’s negative evaluation (which shows clearly when compared with the neutral *on luvan-nut kansanäänestykse-n* [be.3SG promise-PTCP.NOM referendum-ACC] ‘has promised a referendum’) but it is only the next sentence (after the *ja* ‘and’ conjunction) which reveals why the act of promising a referendum is considered as unwished.

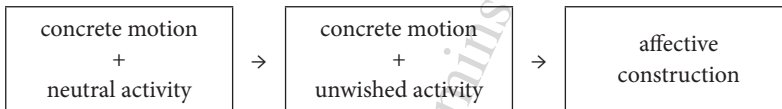
- (17) *Wahid on men-nyt lupaa-ma-an kansanäänestykse-n*  
 Wahid.NOM be.3SG go-PTCP.NOM promise-INF-ILL referendum-ACC  
*toise-lle-kin kapinamaakunna-lla Acehi-lla ja voi*  
 another-ALL-CLIT revolting province-ALL Aceh-ALL and may.3SG  
*joutu-a pahasti napi-t vastakkain paitsi*  
 end up-INF badly button-PL.NOM vis-à-vis not only  
*varapresidentti-nsä myös armeija-n kanssa.* (aamu1999 442537)  
 vice president-3PX.GEN also army-GEN with  
 ‘Wahid has gone and promised a referendum to another province in revolt, Aceh, and may end up at loggerheads not only with his vice-president but also with the army.’

The above analysis illustrates how the context disambiguates the affective *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction from the commensurate literal structure. Moreover, the context can also be used to endorse the structure’s status as a construction. According to Goldberg (1995, p. 4), a criterion for a construction is that its semantic properties are not strictly predictable. However, in her revised view (Goldberg, 2006, p. 5) she adds that merely a sufficient frequency is enough for construction status, regardless of predictability. The Finnish *mennä* V-*mAA*n corresponds to these prerequisites well. As mentioned earlier, the affective meaning of the *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction cannot be derived from the lexical meanings of its components. Moreover, if the verb *mennä* was replaced by whichever near-synonymous motion verb, such as *kulkea* ‘proceed’, *siirtyä* ‘move’ or *käydä* ‘step’, the structure would only indicate neutral concrete movement without any affective tone. As Wulff (2006) demonstrates, calculating the lexemes appearing in and with certain grammatical structure can be used when deciding whether structures can be considered as different constructions. Following this idea, the construction status of the *mennä* V-*mAA*n can be supported not only by the semantic criteria but also by quantitative analysis of the lexemes used in it and in its near context, as there is an observable difference in the choice of the infinitive, subject and object lexemes and adverbial modifiers in accordance with the concrete and abstract meaning.



## 6. The grammaticalization of the *mennä V-mAAn* construction: From concrete motion to expression of disapproval

Although this paper focuses on the abstract *mennä V-mAAn* construction in Modern Finnish, it is worthwhile illuminating its semantic development. As mentioned earlier, the *mennä V-mAAn* phrase is most often used for referring to concrete motion followed by activity expressed in the structure's infinitive element. In addition, the direction of semantic change is typically from concrete to abstract, not vice versa. Keeping this in mind, the grammaticalization path of the *mennä V-mAAn* construction may follow a development from expressions of concrete motion across motion which is combined to unwished activity to a stage where examples of affective construction co-exist with the others, as is typical for an ongoing grammaticalization process (see, for example, Busse, 2002, p. 289):



In order to discover whether this hypothesis is correct, a sample of older Finnish was analysed. This data has a total of 529 *mennä V-mAAn* phrases and consists of material from the mid-16th century (the oldest possible Finnish data available) to the year 1820, examples from Early Modern Finnish (1820–1870) and finally examples from a sample of literary texts written by well-known Finnish authors of the time period 1880–1930. The occurrences of the *mennä V-mAAn* phrases were analysed in this material, and the findings are summarized in Table 2.

The three main columns illustrate time periods. The columns are divided into three sub columns based on semantic type of the examples. The sub columns “Concrete and neutral” on each left side show the number of *mennä V-mAAn* phrases which can only be given a concrete reading without any reference to negative activity. The middle columns “Concrete and unwished” stand for those cases

Table 2. Semantic division of the *mennä V-mAAn* phrase occurrences from the mid-16th century to the 1930s

Old Finnish (ca 1540–1820)			Early Modern Finnish (1820–1870)			Sample of Literary Texts (1880–1930)		
Concrete and neutral	Concrete and un- wished	Abstract construc- tion	Concrete and neutral	Concrete and un- wished	Abstract construc- tion	Concrete and neutral	Concrete and un- wished	Abstract construc- tion
77	2	–	77	1	7	337	6	22
97.5%	2.5%	0%	90.6%	1.2%	8.2%	92.3%	1.7%	6.0%

where the *mennä* verb refers to concrete motion but the activity expressed in the infinitive element is unwished, as in example (18) from the late 17th century and the act of stealing. The sub columns on the right show the number of examples which have only a non-motional affective reading and are therefore best considered as instances of the *mennä V-mAAn* construction.

- (18) *Jos taas mene-t warasta-ma-an Kyllä-s sijt*  
 if on the other hand go-2SG steal-INF-ILL yes-CLIT then  
*saa-t palca-n paha-n.* (Menn 1699-A2b)  
 get-2SG reward-ACC nasty-ACC  
 ‘If, on the other hand, you go and steal, you will then get a nasty reward.’

In example (18) the concrete motion sense (expressed by the finite verb) and the unwished activity (expressed by the infinitive) are interwoven. It is plausible to argue that cases like this may have initiated the grammaticalization process of the *mennä V-mAAn* construction, as they enable a reinterpretation of the event in such a way that the concrete motion gets undermined and the disapproving stance towards the activity expressed in the infinitive is highlighted. The next step of the grammaticalization process can be traced to the late 19th century where the first indisputable occurrence of the non-motional *mennä V-mAAn* construction can be found (19).

- (19) *Vaan kielio pillinen järki ei saa mennä*  
 but grammatical.NOM mind.NOM NEG.3SG must go  
*korjaa-ma-an kiel-tä.* (Kioletär 1871-37)  
 correct-INF-ILL language-PTV  
 ‘But the grammatical mind must not go and correct language.’

Indeed, the analysis of older data supports the aforementioned grammaticalization hypothesis. Table 2 shows that no occurrences of the affective construction were found in the Old Finnish data and only few in the Early Modern Finnish. However, this is not to say that the abstract construction definitely did not exist as early as in the 16th century – it merely indicates that there is no written evidence of its usage. What Table 2 does demonstrate is that the more modern the data is, the more frequently the *mennä V-mAAn* construction is used. Even though the percentage value of the affective instances (when compared to non-motional concrete examples) is actually even higher in Early Modern Finnish data (8.2%) than in the Sample of Literary Texts (6.0%), the absolute number of occurrences (22 examples) suggests that the *mennä V-mAAn* construction definitely started its expansion in the early 20th century at the latest. To sum up, it seems evident that during the past 150 years the grammaticalization process of the *mennä V-mAAn* construction has been vivid, since in the modern language (late 20th century)

data the construction has reached remarkable frequency: now approximately every fifth (20.1%) *mennä* V-*mAA*n phrase does not express physical motion but is an instance of the affective construction.

## 7. The motivation of the *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction

The corpus data of Modern Finnish shows how the *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction is used and how it can be differentiated from similar structures expressing concrete motion. For its part, the data from old Finnish reveals how the construction might have developed. However, none of the data gives much help when the motivation of the construction is concerned. Motivation in language has been one of the key topics in cognitive research. However, as Radden and Panther (2004, p. 2) observe, what is meant by it varies a great deal. In this paper, motivation is seen as a non-arbitrary relationship between linguistic form and meaning in a way that through motivation linguistic structures begin to “make sense”, i.e. there is a reason for the presence of certain lexical and grammatical elements that an expression contains. From the point of view of motivation, the *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction includes two intertwined features: (i) the motion verb *mennä* ‘go’ used with no reference to physical motion and (ii) the negatively evaluating affective meaning. Constructions containing verbs of motion are particularly useful for an analysis of motivation in language. It is a well-known fact that many frequently used motion verbs are subject to various semantic developments in world languages (Givón, 1973), e.g. they may lose the meaning of motion and start to express other kinds of meanings. For example, in English the verb *go* has been grammaticalized into a future time and intention marker (*be going to*)<sup>5</sup> (Heine, Claudi, & Hünnemeyer, 1991; Langacker, 2008, p. 538). Furthermore, one may both *go home* and *go mad* and only the former phrase expresses motion, whereas the latter refers to a change in a state of mind (for figurative usages of ‘go’ and ‘come’ in Finnish, see Huumo & Sivonen, 2010).

It is emphasized in cognitive semantics that semantic developments are not random but often motivated. Panther and Radden (2011, pp. 12–13) argue that motivation is a matter of degree and the more transparent the meaning of a linguistic unit is, the more motivated it can be considered. In the *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction the most transparent element is the motion verb. It is suggested by Croft (2003, p. 65) that the parts of linguistic constructions have recurring

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5. Interestingly, in Finnish, presumably due to borrowing from the Swedish language, the opposite deictic verb *tulla* ‘come’ is used for referring to the future, whereas its deictic counterpart *mennä* ‘go’ has other extensions, one of which is the theme of this paper.

meanings in most of their various contexts, and the recurrent aspects of meaning sanction the usage of these elements. As mentioned earlier, in its literal sense the *mennä V-mAAn* phrase expresses motion into some location, followed by the activity described in the infinitival complement. In addition, the verb *mennä* itself expresses motion along a path and “most often towards some destination” (KS s.v. *mennä*). Bearing this in mind, the affective *mennä V-mAAn* construction is likely to have some connection to actual motion.<sup>6</sup> Thus what is most relevant in understanding how the *mennä V-mAAn* construction gains its meanings is how literal movement “towards a destination” presupposed by the verb *mennä* can be interpreted in an abstract way apart from physical motion.

Stefanowitsch (1999, p. 123) notes that though verb structures which contain two verb lexemes but express only one verbal concept have been broadly studied, the analyses tend to focus on the structures’ formal properties, not their semantics. To some extent, this is also the case with the Finnish *mennä V-mAAn* construction. In earlier Finnish studies it has been noted that when the verb *mennä* is followed by another verb in the MA infinitive illative case, the expression conveys meanings other than motion (Kiuru, 1977, p. 263), such as undesirable activity or thoughtlessness of the action (Larjavaara, 1990, p. 261). The recent reference grammar of Finnish (ISK, 2004, pp. 463, 1205) states that Finnish verbs of motion have specialized meanings when followed by another verb in the MA infinitive and, for example, the verb *mennä* expresses an undesirable and imprudent act in such structures. Furthermore, it is mentioned in dictionaries as a specialized usage that the verb *mennä* can convey a criticizing attitude or an aloof stance (KS s.v. *mennä*). However, what seems to be lacking so far is an explanation as to why there is a verb of motion but no reference to physical motion in this construction, and how its affective meaning emerges. It is argued here that previous observations can be elaborated by sketching an explanation based on the metaphorical conceptualization of concrete sense of this polysemous verb.

Polysemy has been one of the main themes in the cognitive paradigm. Cognitive semantics has adopted the view that different senses of polysemous expressions, both separate lexemes and different types of complex constructions, are related to each other through general cognitive principles, such as metaphor, metonymy, generalization, specification and image-schematic transformations (Cuyckens & Zawada, 2001, p. xiv; Stefanowitsch, 1999, pp. 125, 128). These means of construal also apply to the *mennä V-mAAn* construction, as its affective

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6. Moreover, *mennä* is also a basic deictic verb of motion and expresses movement away from the speaker or from the deictic centre. If this is re-interpreted as abstract motion away from the speaker’s approving stance, it gives further support to the argument that the affective meaning of the *mennä V-mAAn* construction has its roots in the concrete usage of *mennä*.

meaning is not random but related to other senses of the verb *mennä* via metaphorical conceptualization and image-schema patterns. The argument supported in this paper is that the lexical (the motion verb) and the grammatical (the illative case of the infinitival complement) forms, as well as the affective meaning of the construction, begin to make sense when the construction is seen as an elaboration of image schematic pattern where the trajector, in its abstract motion, deviates from its projected “path” and winds up in an erroneous destination.

According to Talmy (1975, p. 181), the path can be defined as “the respect in which one object is considered as moving or located to another object” in a motion situation. A path may be latent but still an obligatory component of all motion-events: no motion can be produced without a moving entity following a path (Slobin, 2004, p. 238), though not every verb of motion lexicalizes it (for the lexicalization patterns of the path in Finnish, see Sivonen, 2010). In addition to the track itself, the schema of PATH includes a starting point as well as an ending point of the motion, even though these elements do not need to be profiled by a motion verb nor expressed in a sentence referring to a motion event, as pointed out by Svorou (1994, p. 29). In Talmy’s (2000, pp. 265–268) terms, the windowing of attention can be set into different portions of the PATH (e.g. starting point, intermediate section, ending point) by lexical and syntactic means.

In the *mennä V-mAAn* construction the trajector is conceived of as abstractly moving along a path and “into” the activity expressed by the construction’s infinitive verb. It is a common phenomenon that activities are metaphorically conceived of as substances (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp. 30–32; Kövecses, 2002, p. 35; 2006, p. 193). Therefore they can “take in” other entities such as the agent of the activity (consider, for example, the usage of the preposition *into* in *How did you get into teaching computer science?*). Moreover, the infinitival complement’s illative case gives support to the trajector’s abstract motion,<sup>7</sup> since the basic meaning of the Finnish illative is “into” (Huumo & Ojutkangas, 2006, pp. 13–14). This explains why the MA infinitive is used in this construction: it is the only infinitive in Finnish that contains the illative case. However, even though the abstract motion “into” the activity accounts for the presence of the motion verb and the illative case of the construction’s infinitival complement, it does not yet motivate the meaning of negative evaluation.

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7. In cognitive semantics the usage of motion verbs is often divided into two main types. The “objective motion” refers to what is normally understood as motion: physical movement of some entity through three-dimensional space (e.g. *A man is running to the valley*). “Abstract motion”, on the other hand, refers to situations where a motion verb is used for describing various types of dynamic change (e.g. *The milk is about to go sour*). (Langacker, 1987, pp. 170–173; 1990, pp. 155–160; see also Talmy, 2000, pp. 101–102.)

The negatively evaluating affective meaning of the *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction can be explained in terms of underlying image schemas. As characterized by Langacker (2008, p. 32), image schemas are schematized patterns of activity abstracted from everyday bodily experience. These schemas seem to have a convincing explanatory value concerning linguistic motivation, as they provide the source domain in metaphorical mappings. For example, Stefanowitch (1999) analyses the *go-and-verb* construction (e.g. *Look what you have gone and done!*) from a cross-linguistic perspective and concludes that this construction is motivated by combinations of image schematic properties of the verb *go* and the second verb occurring in the expression. He argues that the meaning of ‘disapproval’ and ‘evaluation of an action as stupid’ expressed in this construction can be explained in terms of a blended schema based on more basic schemas of divergence and action (Stefanowitch, 1999, pp. 123, 129–130).

However, the *go-and-verb* construction integrates two finite verbs, whereas the Finnish *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction contains a goal-like infinitive as its latter component. It is a characteristic property of image schemas that they can undergo transformations from one schema into another (Evans, 2007, pp. 108–109) and therefore novel schemas can arise from embodied human experiences. Indeed, a novel path schema needs to be postulated to uncover the conceptual bases of the *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction’s negatively evaluating meaning. The affective meaning is based on a blend of two basic motion schemas, the source-path-goal schema (Johnson, 1987, p. 126) and the divergence schema (Stefanowitch, 1999, p. 129), which are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2. These schemas constitute a novel blended schema of deviant path and simultaneous goal (Figure 3). The affective meaning of the construction is based on a metaphorical conceptualization where the trajector, while abstractly moving towards the destination projected by the speaker, abandons its correct route and consequently arrives at a false destination (i.e. the activity expressed in the construction’s infinitival element). In other words, the contrast with the desired course of events is conceptualized as the trajector’s abstract motion into a deviant ending point, which explains why the activity expressed in the construction’s infinitival element is understood as unwished. This pattern is illustrated in Figure 3 by the trajector’s ascending turn from the expected path (dashed line) and goal and ending up in the erroneous destination (unwished activity).

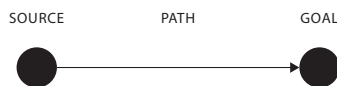


Figure 1. The source-path-goal schema (Johnson, 1987, p. 126)

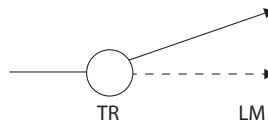


Figure 2. The divergence schema (Stefanowitch, 1999, p. 129)

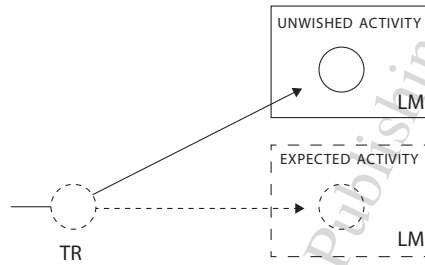



Figure 3. The deviant path – erroneous goal schema motivating the affective meaning ‘do something unwished’ of the Finnish *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction

To sum up, by utilizing the blended schema deviant path – erroneous goal, the *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction fuses the lexical semantics of the verb *mennä* and the meaning of the infinitival element into a single event frame and hence enables the speaker to construe the event as unwished. This pattern can be supported by further evidence involving parallel figurative expression. Indeed, many Finnish figurative expressions containing the verb *mennä* have a strong tendency to relate to negative states or actions (Onikki-Rantajääskö, 2001, p. 207). However, it is sensible to compare the *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction only with those figurative expressions which involve the sense of unwished situation or are connected to the same path schema. These include idioms given in (20)–(23).

- (20) *mennä* *piele-en*  
 go jamb-ILL  
 lit. ‘go into a jamb’  
 ‘go wrong’
- (21) *mennä* *metsä-än*  
 go forest-ILL  
 lit. ‘go into a forest’  
 ‘go wrong’
- (22) *mennä* *pu-i-hin*  
 go tree-PL-ILL  
 lit. ‘go into trees’  
 ‘go wrong’



- (23) *mennä päin sein-i-ä*  
 go towards wall-PL-PTV  
 lit. 'go towards walls'  
 'go wrong'

All the examples (20)–(23) convey roughly the meaning 'go wrong' or 'fail', but how this is metaphorically constructed varies. The literal content of the expression in (20) is 'go into a jamb'. The meaning 'go wrong' begins to make sense when the literal content of the expression is compared with objective motion where the trajector does not follow the anticipated path through the entranceway (e.g. doorway, window opening) but instead deviates from it and hits the jamb. Naturally, this is quite an unwished ending point. In example (21) the forest represents an erroneous goal when compared with canonical moving along a conventional forest path (road, way, trail, etc.). Also in example (22) it is understandable how the trees can be conceived of as an unwished ending point of (human) movement. Example (23), for its part, illustrates that in order to create the meaning of unwished outcome the trajector does not need to enter the erroneous destination: it is enough just to deviate from the anticipated path and proceed towards it .

The metaphorical thinking behind examples (20)–(23) utilizes the same pattern as the *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction: the trajector's deviation from the expected path and ending up in an erroneous destination provide a motivation for expressions of unwished event. To be precise, the activity is unwished in relation to the advisable event in a way analogous to that in which a deviation from a correct path and entering a false goal differentiates from motion along a suitable path in the right destination. This semantic pattern is by no means peculiar to Finnish. Indeed, in English for example, expressions such as *Mary got distracted from her goal* and *I would have made it if I had not strayed off the path* seem to be instances of the very same schema. These kinds of findings provide further evidence for the proposed conceptualization model, because when similar figurative expressions appear across languages they are likely to be motivated by a broader pattern of metaphorical structuring (see Sweetser, 1990, pp. 9, 91).

However, not all non-motional usages of the verb *mennä* have a negative connotation and some of these positive idioms are connected to the path schema as well. Consider examples (24) and (25).

- (24) *mennä oikea-an osoittee-seen*  
 go correct-ILL address-ILL  
 lit. 'go into correct address'  
 'turn out as hoped'

- (25) *Tentti men-i läpi.*  
 exam.NOM go-PST.3SG through  
 lit. ‘The exam went through.’  
 ‘The exam was passed.’

The difference from the previous cases with a negative meaning (20)–(23) is that here the anticipated destination is or can be reached. In example (24) the fact that the expected destination is reached is clearly evident from the idiom’s literal meaning ‘go into correct address’. In example (25) the adverb *läpi* ‘through’ implies a conceptualization pattern where a (fictive) path is blocked by an obstacle (the exam). Passing the exam is metaphorically expressed as abstract motion through the implicit blockade. Here the destination is not mentioned but it nevertheless exists, since after the passing of the blockade it is possible to continue the abstract motion (studying) towards it (for example, an academic degree).

To sum up, when there is no deviation from the projected path and the anticipated destination is reached, the meaning of the figurative *mennä* path expression is positive. In more general terms, path idioms seem to be motivated by metaphors where A DEVIATION FROM THE PATH IS UNWISHED and MOTION ALONG AN EXPECTED PATH IS ADVISABLE. It can be argued that these patterns have their roots in our everyday experiences. As Sweetser (1990, pp. 29–30) points out, prototypical physical events motivate metaphorical language. For example, when liquid is poured into a container (e.g. a glass or cup) the surface will rise, or a pile of objects gets higher as more objects are added to it, and experiences of such phenomena motivate the metaphor MORE IS UP (e.g. *high price*). Correspondingly, our fundamental experiences of moving along different passages and through doorways, etc. enable us to use the figurative expressions described above. Empirical psycholinguistic tests have even suggested that understanding figurative expressions may include simulation processes of corresponding literal sense (Gibbs, 2007, p. 16). However, this is not to say that our experiences of hitting a jamb or departing from a trail should have something objectively in common with experiences of an unwished activity or event (one being concrete whereas the other is more abstract). Instead, as Sweetser (1990, pp. 59–60) suggests, these experiences share a limited amount of common structure, an image-schematic pattern which enables the metaphorical mappings.

It can be concluded that the Finnish language utilizes a metaphor where a change into an inferior situation can be conceived of as abstract motion where the trajector deviates from the projected path and, in most cases, ends up in the erroneous destination. This image-schematic pattern explains why the verb *mennä*, which expresses motion ‘into something’, is often associated with a negatively

evaluated state of affairs. In this light, the *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction is not an unexplainable exception but an example of a more general conceptualization pattern.

## 8. Conclusions

This paper has addressed the usage, development and motivation of the Finnish *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction which, regardless of its motion verb *mennä* ‘go’, does not express movement but highlights the speaker’s negative feelings. It has been shown that several lexical and syntactic factors can be used for disambiguating the affective abstract sense from the literal meaning of concrete motion, but in some cases only a larger context triggers the non-motional sense. The analysis illustrates that the meaning of a grammatical structure which may look arbitrary at first glance can be motivated, in this case through an elaboration of a particular path schema, deviant path – erroneous goal. The *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction designates abstract motion where the trajector is conceived of as deviating from its projected path and ending up in an erroneous destination, and this constitutes a contrast with the desired course of events. This novel conceptualization pattern, which has escaped earlier studies, motivates the presence of the construction’s lexical (the motion verb) and grammatical (the illative case of the infinitival complement) constituents, as well as its negatively evaluating meaning ‘do something unwished’.

The use of figurative expressions containing motion elements (e.g. verbs of motion, dynamic case affixes, adpositions) in language reflects our general tendency to conceptualize abstract and complicated states of affairs metaphorically as motion and, in Talmy’s (2000, p. 101) terms, our cognitive bias towards dynamism. In addition, these kinds of findings support the idea that linguistic structures are often motivated by general cognitive processes, such as metaphor (e.g. CHANGE IS MOTION). This brings about a rather obvious but still noteworthy observation, which concerns the importance of the analysis of the linguistic coding of motion. As Langacker (1987, p. 166) puts it: “The motion of the physical object through space is fundamental to our experience, so an explicit analysis of its conceptualization is important for linguistic semantics.” Indeed, the Finnish *mennä* V-*mAA*n construction, though conveying a rather sophisticated form of motion, gives support to this statement.

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## Appendix

The morpheme-by-morpheme glosses are based on the Leipzig Glossing Rules

1 = first person	2 = second person	3 = third person	ABL = ablative
ACC = accusative	ADE = adessive	ALL = allative	COND = conditional
CLIT = clitic	ELA = elative	ESS = essive	GEN = genitive
ILL = illative	INE = inessive	INF = infinitive	NEG = negation verb
NOM = nominative	PASS = passive	PL = plural	PST = past tense
PTCP = participle	PTV = partitive	PX = possessive	SG = singular
TRA = translative			

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