

# Verbs of climbing: Semantic specificity in an under-explored corner of motion verb typology

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One of the central questions in lexical typology is how much meaning can be packaged in individual verb roots and—given lexicalization constraints in language—what types of verbs are possible. According to the proposal known as Manner-Result Complementarity (MRC), dynamic verbs can lexicalize either manner or result/path, but not both (Rappaport Hovav & Levin, 2010). One of the most widely debated verbs in this context is “climb” and its lexicalized meaning components (Fillmore, 1982; Beavers & Koontz-Garboden, 2017). While there is now convincing evidence against MRC for “climb” and other verbs (e.g., Goldberg, 2010), it is striking that despite decades of research into “climb” surprisingly few studies have looked beyond Indo-European. We seem to have limited knowledge about the cross-linguistic diversity of climbing verbs and appear to lack detailed reports from cultures where climbing is an ordinary everyday activity and a lexically elaborate domain.

In order to begin to fill this gap, I undertake a systematic investigation of climbing verbs in Maniq (Northern Aslian, Austroasiatic)—a language spoken by a group of hunter-gatherers in Southern Thailand. Maniq people routinely engage in tree climbing in order to obtain food and materials and refer to climbing events on an everyday basis. As might be expected, there is also a rich lexicon of verbs of climbing in Maniq expressing fine-grained distinctions of importance. For example, at least three different verbs are used to refer to common manners of climbing (or climbing styles): *kasāk*, *kacōs*, and *tnbōn*, each denoting a different way of resisting the pull of gravity and generating force, and at least two verbs for different ways of descending from trees: *hnagi* ‘to descend by “walking” down’ and *hamric* ‘to descend by sliding down’. A systematic examination of the domain of climbing in Maniq provides further evidence against MRC, bolstering earlier claims, and revealing a remarkable diversity of arboreal motion event categories. All in all, Maniq climbing verbs do not seem to be constrained by MRC, but are shaped by culturally relevant aspects of climbing events and the broader lexico-semantic profile of the language (Wnuk 2016; Wnuk 2022). The study contributes to the discussion of limits of lexicalization in lexical semantics and extends our knowledge of motion verb typology.

## References

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