

A Web of Analogies: Depictive and Reaction Object Constructions in Modern English and French Fiction

Susanne Dyka¹(✉), Iva Novakova², and Dirk Siepmann¹

¹ Universität Osnabrück, University of Osnabrück,
Neuer Graben 40, 49069 Osnabrück, Germany
susanne.dyka@uni-osnabrueck.de, dirk.siepmann@uos.de

² Université Grenoble Alpes, Université Stendhal Grenoble3,
BP25, 38040 Grenoble Cedex 9, France
iva.novakova@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr

Abstract. This paper looks at the cross-linguistic complexity of two fiction-specific English-language constructions involving descriptive key words, viz. (a) depictive constructions and (b) reaction object constructions (ROCs). The English constructions in question were subjected to a detailed, corpus-based analysis in terms of their lexical realizations and complementation patterns. A comparison was then made (a) with French constructional equivalents in literary texts written by French authors and (b) with translations of literary texts from English into French and vice versa. The results show that, compared to English, French literary style has limited options for expressing descriptivity. However, whilst there is an almost total absence of full equivalents of depictives in French novels, the situation is more varied in the case of ROCs, with some types being fairly productive in French (e.g. *hurler*, *murmurer*) but others non-existent.

Keywords: Depictive constructions · Reaction object constructions · Fictional key words · Descriptive verbs

1 Introduction

1.1 Descriptive Fictional Key Words in Contrast

One key feature of modern fiction is the frequent use of descriptive lexis, especially descriptive verbs, i.e. verbs such as *jerk*, *stiffen*, *huddle*, or *gasp* which, besides having a core lexical meaning, contain a complex of semantic features that may “express modality of action (direct descriptivity), (...) characterize one or more of the participants or (...) specify circumstances surrounding the action (indirect descriptivity), or (...) combine all three perspectives” (Snell-Hornby 1983: 43). Although most such words are also found in everyday language, their frequency of occurrence and the patterns in which they occur in fiction are usually specific to that genre.

Previous contrastive research on constructions entered into by literary key words (Siepmann 2016) has shown that a distinction can be made between fully equivalent

(‘his thoughts were interrupted as’ – ‘il en était là de ses réflexions quand’) and language-specific constructions. The latter are doubly interesting in that they provide insights into interlingual differences, which in turn reveal something about the intralingual constraints under which literary authors operate. Examples are verbs such as *pour*, *slant* and *break*, which are commonly used to describe the passage of sunlight through a particular medium. The English constructions based around these items can be labelled ‘discreetly conventional’ because their structural and lexical properties are firmly rooted in the general language. This is far from the case in French, where expressing *exactly* the same content requires far more cognitive processing. In other words, it is the language system itself that motivates particular choices in literary expression, coaxing the literary author into well-trodden semantic paths and often defying even the most inspired translation.

Talmy (2000: 49) has tried to capture such facts in terms of typological differences between languages, claiming that Romance languages conflate motion and path, whereas Germanic languages conflate motion and co-event. The cross-linguistic situation is a little more complex than that, especially in literary text (cf. Siepmann 2016). While Talmy’s assumptions would be true of the French equivalents of *trickle* and *slant*, and to a lesser extent of *pour/spill/stream*, they would not apply to the equivalents of *shimmer* and only partly to those of *break*.

This short paper will adduce more such evidence on the cross-linguistic complexity of constructions involving descriptive key words. It looks at two types of constructions, viz. (a) depictive constructions and (b) reaction object constructions (henceforth ROCs). The English constructions in question will be subjected to detailed analysis in terms of their lexical realizations and complementation patterns. Particular attention will be given to metaphorical uses. On the basis of the typical target domains used in metaphorization, a comparison will be made (a) with French constructional equivalents in literary texts written by French authors and (b) with translations of literary texts from English into French and vice versa.

2 Corpora and Methodology

The present study is essentially based on data from two comparable corpora of English-language and French-language novels, comprising crime, science, fantasy, sentimental, historical and general fiction, as well as a parallel corpus containing novels that have been translated from English into French or vice versa; the corpora in question were compiled as part of the PHRASEOROM project (<http://turing3.u-grenoble3.fr/phraseorom/index.php/en/author/phraseorom/>) and partly analysed using the Sketchengine (www.sketchengine.co.uk). The corpora can be partitioned into a section containing highbrow novels and one containing lowbrow novels. The novels, most of which were published in the late twentieth century or in the early years of the present century, were classified with the aid of publishers’ catalogues. The informative section of the British National Corpus (BNC) was used as a reference corpus in investigating English ROCs. Table 1 provides detailed information about the corpora in question.

Table 1. Corpora used in this study.

	Texts	Tokens
English comparable corpus	766	93 Millions
French comparable corpus	1164	110 Millions
Parallel corpus EN-FR	395	19 532 554
Informative section of the BNC	2665	68 419 979

As can be seen, the English and French corpora differ in size. However, since we do not intend to make direct comparisons between absolute frequencies, the fact that one corpus is somewhat larger than the other will not have any significant impact on our findings.

The corpora were automatically parsed to carry out lemmatization and part-of-speech tagging as well as to mark syntactic dependencies between words. Two different tools were used: Connexor (Tapanainen and Järvinen 1997) for the French texts, and XIP (Ait-Mokhtar et al. 2002) for the English texts. Three main procedures were applied:

- (a) search for constructions in monolingual corpora
- (b) matching of constructions found in monolingual corpora
- (c) search for translated constructions in parallel corpora.

3 Depictive Constructions

One typical fiction-specific construction is the use of the descriptive key word *jerk* with a prepositional object designating a change of state, such as *jerk into wakefulness* (cf. Siepmann 2016). On one side, this construction is analogically related to other patterns of the type motion/auditory/visual verb+ADJ (denoting a state); on the other, it is related to a whole class of constructions centred around the lexico-grammatical pattern V+into+N (denoting a state: *wakefulness, consciousness, life*), which in turn give rise to variants on the result phrase such as *to life, to action, into existence, to lifelessness, out of existence*, etc. It is important to note that the patterns in question are not specific to *jerk*. Underlying them is a complex web of analogical creations (cf. Hanks 2013: 429 on the interplay between logic and analogy in language), all of which take the same or similar patterns and most of which are highly fiction-specific. This web, which is far more complex than any set of synonymic constructions found in speech or newspaper language, is instrumental in creating the illusion of creativity in literary text.

Although there is a vast linguistic literature on constructions of this type (cf. Beaver 2012), there is a lack of consensus on how to classify them. Whereas a prototypical resultative such as (1) indicates a causal link between the two events denoted by the verb and the resultative complement, resultatives with intransitive verbs as in (2) defy a causative reading:

- (1) *He hammered the metal flat.*
- (2) *The pond froze solid.* (The pond did not solidify by freezing.)

Examples of the type *jerk/snap/bolt/etc. awake* are similar to example (2) in that the motion events involved are concomitant with the state denoted by *awake*. Variants of the *V into life* pattern such as (3) exemplify resultatives where the prototypical order is reversed: the change of state denoted by *into life* causes the auditory impression denoted by the verb:

(3) *The radio crackled into life.*

Such instances, which are commonly found in literary text, contradict Beaver's claim (2012) that "if the sound denoted by the V cannot be caused by motion, a resultative is unacceptable" (such unacceptability is claimed for '*the car honked down the road' vs. 'the truck rumbled into the driveway'). Acknowledging the bewildering variety of resultatives in English, Goldberg and Jackendoff (2004) view them as a family of constructions, each of which encodes a different bi-eventive relationship.

Other authors (Himmelmann and Schulze-Berndt 2005) describe the constructions in question as 'depictive'. In depictive constructions the result complement is participant-oriented, denoting a property of the participant that is true for at least part of the duration of the event denoted by the main predicate, rather than event-orientated, i.e. denoting a property of the event itself by means of (e.g.) a manner adverb (*he shouted at them angrily*).

It is evident that the constructions under discussion, by virtue of being based on complex 'descriptive' verbs, do not need to lexicalize a manner co-event by means of an adverb. We are thus dealing with a kind of double process of composition and densification, with the descriptive verb lexicalizing both action and manner/characterization and the resultative construction combining the verb and the result complement into a single event. On top of this, the depictive constructions coined by novelists are frequently metaphorizations, where target and source domains merge to form a single conceptual entity. A further point to note is that, while descriptive verbs such as *stir* would normally be taken to be atelic, resultatives such as *stir into life* are telic and inchoative. As will be seen, it is difficult to accommodate this diversity of factors in translation.

Table 2 shows the most common variants in abstracted form of the intransitive *V into/to life* construction¹ found in the PHRASEOROM corpora; Table 3 lists the actual verbs that occur at least ten times in one construction in frequency order.

The variability of construct(ion)s would merit further investigation, which is beyond the scope of this paper. The data show quite clearly that some V+result complement constructions admit of a greater variety of subjects and meanings than others; *spring to life*, for example, can be found with people, places, machines, sounds, symbols, but also with flames, faces, topics, blood, etc. It is fair to assume that the construction in question probably originated from the lexicalized expression *come to life* and its causative variant *bring to life*.

A few full-length examples may suffice to illuminate the typical contextual environment in which the construction occurs:

¹ Space in the present article precludes a discussion of the transitive variant (e.g. *unpleasant glimpses jerked him into life*).

Table 2. Intransitive V *into/to life* construction.

	participants		into/to life
non-metaphorical	[person or other fictitious entity]	V	
	proper noun/pronoun	<i>jerks</i>	<i>into life</i>
	<i>the gargoyle</i>	<i>springs</i>	<i>to life</i>
metaphorical	[place: city, jungle, etc.]	motion verb	
	<i>the city</i>	<i>stirred</i>	<i>into life</i>
	[device: radio, machine, heater, etc.]	visual verb, auditory verb, motion verb	
	<i>the radio</i>	<i>crackled</i>	<i>into life</i>
	<i>a frosted wall panel</i>	<i>glowed</i>	<i>into life</i>
	<i>the machine</i>	<i>burst</i>	<i>into life</i>
	[sound or symbol]		
	<i>the voice</i>	<i>sprang</i>	<i>to life</i>
	<i>the words of the Bible</i>	<i>sprang</i>	<i>to life</i>
	[person]		
<i>the servants</i>	<i>surged</i>	<i>into life</i>	
	core meaning: wild movement as caused by the elements	core meaning: start to perform one's habitual function	

- (4) *Herbie scrambled up to the bow to flash a light ahead of them. As soon as he flicked it on, the grand sweeping semicircle of the beach sprang **to life** as if they were seeing it on a movie screen* (T.C. Boyle, *San Miguel*)
- (5) *Then she picked up Annette's blouse and skirt from the place where they had been carelessly left on the floor and thrust them at her with a gesture of violence. Annette sprang **to life**, and in a moment she had slipped them on.* (Iris Murdoch, *The Flight from the Enchanter*)

The abstract forms of the construction listed in Table 2 provided a useful point of embarkation into the search for its natural French equivalents. A trawl was made through the French monolingual corpus to look for the constructions which follow prototypical subjects such as *ville* ('city'), *engin* or *machine* ('engine'), *radio* or *talkie-walkie* and *lumière* (light). Table 4 juxtaposes the results of this search against the correspondences found in the PHRASEOROM parallel corpus of translated texts.

It is evident from the large number of gaps in the second column as well as from the close correspondence between 'natural' equivalents and translation equivalents that French writers are loath to use expressions that would achieve the same degree of

Table 3. Verbs used in intransitive V *into/to life* construction with absolute frequencies.

	+to life	+into life
come (lexicalized)	+(1180)	
spring	+(320)	+(33)
roar	+(129)	+(34)
cling	+(91)	
bring	+(93)	
return	+(78)	
flare	+(56)	+(23)
crackle	+(54)	+(31)
flicker	+(53)	+(42)
hum	+(37)	+(12)
glow	+(34)	+(16)
stir	+(33)	+(14)
rumble	+(29)	+(12)
sentence	+(24)	
blink	+(24)	+(6)
whir	+(22)	+(7)
restore	+(22)	
cough	+(20)	+(9)
leap	+(19)	+(6)
spark	+(17)	+(6)
jangle	+(17)	
blaze	+(17)	+(16)
flash	+(16)	+(20)
sputter	+(15)	+(9)
wink	+(12)	+(9)
purr	+(11)	+(7)
burst		+(22)
explode		+(18)
kick		+(10)

descriptivity as English depictives. Such findings are consistent with Siepmann's (2016) aforementioned results on light effects.

Turning now to a more detailed consideration of the correspondences found in published translations, it is found that English metaphorical depictive constructions are most commonly rendered into French by intransitive verbs whose metaphorical origins are no longer apparent (*s'allumer*, *se rallumer*, *s'animer*, *se ranimer*, *s'illuminer*, *s'éveiller*, *s'embraser*, *se réactiver*); these verbs tend to express a change of state and are used with telic, punctual and inchoative meanings. If we compare these translation solutions with their commonest natural equivalents found in French novels on the one hand, and with fully equivalent but very infrequent renditions on the other, it becomes clear that, in the majority of cases, translators adopt a target-oriented approach to translating English depictive constructions. Far less frequently do they opt for more

Table 4. Natural French equivalents and translations found.

General pattern	English example	Most common, natural equivalent	Attested fully equivalent item	Correspondence found in translated text
place Vmotion into life	<i>The city stirred into life</i>	<i>la ville s'éveilla (s'éveille)</i>	<i>La ville commença à s'animer./La ville commença paresseusement à vivre. (Simenon, Les dossiers de l'agence)</i>	–
	<i>The chamber sprang to life</i>	<i>La salle s'anima.</i>	–	<i>La salle s'anima subitement.</i>
object Vvisual/motion into life	<i>The gargoyles sprang to life</i>	<i>La gargouille s'anima.</i>	–	<i>La gargouille s'anima.</i>
	<i>The candle flared to life</i>	<i>La bougie s'alluma/se ralluma.</i>	–	<i>La bougie s'embrasa toute seule.</i>
device Vauditory/visual into life	<i>The engine roared into life</i>	<i>le moteur rugit</i>	–	<i>Le moteur démarra avec un rugissement/dans un vrombissement; le moteur se mit à rugir; s'éveilla/s'anima en rugissant</i>
	<i>The walkie-talkie crackled into life</i>	<i>Le talkie-walkie grésilla/se mit à grésiller.</i>	–	<i>Son talkie-walkie grésilla.</i>
	<i>The screen (monitor) glowed to life</i>	<i>L'écran s'alluma.</i>	–	<i>L'écran s'alluma/se mit en marche.</i>
device Vmotion into life	<i>The machine burst into life</i>	<i>la machine se mit en marche/l'engin s'éveilla/se mit à tourner.</i>	<i>Le moteur se mit soudain à tourner à plein régime. (Stefan Mani, Noir Karma, Gallimard)</i>	<i>La machine s'éveilla alors avec force gargouillis (Amanda Coe, translator Sarah Gurcel)</i>

metaphorical, source-oriented renditions such as *Les murs et les plafonds revinrent soudain à la vie*. The latter equivalent and a number of variants (*revenir à la réalité, renaître, revivre*) are also found in cases where the subject slot is filled by a noun denoting a person that has previously been alive. Such equivalents are of course ruled out if the subject is an inanimate entity that becomes animate in particular types of fiction. In these cases *s'animer* is the most obvious equivalent:

- (6a) *The gargoyle sprang to life and jumped aside.* (J.-K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, 2000)
 (6b) *La gargouille s'anima soudain et s'écarta en faisant glisser le mur derrière elle.* (Translator Jean-François Menard)

Such fiction-specific constructions, notably common in science or fantasy fiction, are instrumental in creating a fictional universe that presupposes a vocabulary of its own which is “accessible to readers but slightly different from the vocabulary they are accustomed to” (Bozzeto 2007: 60–61; our translation).

A greater variety of equivalents is found in cases where the subject slot is filled by a noun designating a device such as a motor or engine. Here target-oriented translators make ample use of auditory verbs (*rugir, cliqueter, gronder*) without any further support to specify the meaning. An example:

- (7a) *The Jeep rumbled to life, and he spun us around, the tires squealing.* (Stephenie Meyer, *Twilight 0*, 2005)
 (7b) *La Jeep gronda et fit demi-tour dans un hurlement de pneus.* (Translator Luc Rigoureux)

By contrast, source-oriented translators opt for deverbal nouns (*vrombissement, rugissement du moteur*) or combinations of verbs denoting motion or change of state with gerund constructions functioning as manner adjuncts (Riegel et al. 1993: 339). The following examples illustrate both options:

- (8a) *The engines roared to life beneath him, sending a deep shudder through the hull.* (Dan Brown, *Angels and demons*, 2000)
 (8b) *Le vrombissement des moteurs qui faisait vibrer toute la coque le ramena à la réalité.* (Translator Daniel Roche)
 (9a) *I glanced back to find Nathaniel in the Jeep, with Caleb and Gil in the back. The engine roared to life.* (Laurell Kaye Hamilton, *Anita Blake 10 - Narcissus in chains*, 2001)
 (9b) *Jetant un coup d'œil par-dessus mon épaule, je vis que Nathaniel était monté dans la Jeep, et que Caleb et Gil se faufilaient sur la banquette arrière. Le moteur s'éveilla en rugissant.* (Translator Isabelle Troin)

Source orientation of the kind observed by Siepmann (2016) can be seen in the following example, which provides further evidence suggesting that, in French literary style, the expression of manner may sometimes be effected by a modification of the subject noun (in this case *lueur*) rather than being limited to independent, usually adverbial or gerundial type constituents, as claimed by Talmy (2000: 49).

- (10) *Titus' small eyes flared to life.*
 (11) *... une lueur de colère passa dans ses petits yeux.*

4 Reaction Object Constructions

Reaction Object Constructions (henceforth ROCs) bear some resemblance to resultative constructions in that they form a family of different but related constructions (cf. Bouso 2017: 7, Goldberg and Jackendoff 2004) centred around descriptive verbs – usually manner of speaking or gesture verbs (Martínez Vázquez 2014b) – that are transitivized to acquire the meaning “express (a reaction) by V-ing” (Levin 1993: 98), as illustrated in (12) and (13):

- (12) *The vicar nodded agreement.* (Julian Barnes, *England, England*, 1998)
 (13) *Her jaw ached with smiling her appreciation.* (Beryl Bainbridge, *An awfully big adventure*, 1989)

Examples of manner of speaking verbs used in this construction are *bark*, *groan*, *hum*, *moan*, *murmur*, *snort*, *yowl*, *shout*, *howl*, *cough* and *spit*; gesture verbs include *smile*, *nod*, *blink*, *grin*, *shrug*, *frown*, *clap* (cf. Martínez Vázquez 2014b and Levin 1993: 89). The object can be preceded by a co-referential pronoun (*The woman snorted her contempt.*), the indefinite article (*..., grinning a welcome.*), the zero article (*She was murmuring reassurance...*) or an adjective (*He blinked rueful acknowledgement*) (Bouso 2017: 6). ROCs are closely related to alternative constructions in which the object noun of the corresponding ROC occurs in a prepositional phrase introduced by *in* which functions as an adjunct:

- (14) *Sheila nodded in vigorous agreement.* (John McGahern, *Amongst Women*, 1990)

Like the depictive constructions discussed above, ROCs are highly specific to fictional prose. Of the verbs examined here, only *shout* and *nod* were found to occur in the informative section of the BNC; ROCs based on verbs such as *frown*, *grin*, *howl*, *snort*, *shout*, and *spit* thus appear to be highly fiction-specific.

Table 5 shows the most common object nouns found in ROCs in the PHRA-SEOROM highbrow and lowbrow corpora. The nouns in question are conventionalized speech acts (*hello*, *thanks*), deverbal speech nouns (*appreciation*, *encouragement*) or emotion nouns (*frustration*, *triumph*) (cf. Martínez Vázquez 2014a: 186–188).

It is evident that there are significant differences between verbs with respect to the range of nouns they accept, with *nod*, *smile* and *murmur* being among the most flexible. Another interesting finding is that, generally speaking, popular fiction exhibits a higher proportion of ROCs than highbrow fiction, with some verbs, such as *shrug* and *blink*, being exclusive to popular fiction.

Although not entirely absent from French, ROCs appear to be less frequent than in English, confirming findings on Spanish (Martínez Vázquez 2014b) and Romance languages generally (Real Puigdollers 2008). A query was made of the PHRA-SEOROM French literary corpus for potential English equivalents of the English ROC verbs (see Table 5). The findings show that the verbs *hurler*, *crier*, *grommeler*,

Table 5. Most common reaction object nouns found in the English literary corpus.

	PHRASEOROM	
	Lowbrow	Highbrow
<i>bark</i>	acknowledgement, approval, encouragement	–
<i>groan</i>	apologies	resignation, delight, relief
<i>hum</i>	approval	–
<i>moan</i>	encouragement, pleasure	–
<i>murmur</i>	apology/apologies, greeting(s), assent (s), delight, good morning, agreement, approval, thanks/thank you, assurance, denial, love, gratitude, reassurance(s), acceptance, welcome, envy, good bye, sympathy, consent, objection, regret, release, excuse	admiration, assent, sympathy, consolation, acknowledgement, concern, regret, disapproval, greeting, excuse, agreement, thanks, good night
<i>snort</i>	contempt, amusement, terror, frustration, impatience, scorn, derision, upset, exasperation, disapproval, skepticism	derision, contempt, astringency
<i>yowl</i>	protest	–
<i>shout</i>	defiance, contempt, encouragement, abuse, triumph, surprise, rage, confusion, exhilaration, bewilderment, apologies, gratitude, congratulations, agreement, disagreement, frustration, approval, disappointment	abuse, accusations, relief, agreement
<i>howl</i>	glee, distraught, frustration, rage, disapproval, welcome, victory, abuse, displeasure, anger, triumph, defiance	abuse, ignorance, eagerness
<i>spit</i>	disgust, insult, scorn	–
<i>smile</i>	welcome(s), thanks/thank you, gratitude, comprehension, consent, acknowledgement, encouragement, greeting, agreement, apology approval, gratitude, farewell, relief, challenge, amusement, sympathy, pleasure, goodbye(s), congratulations	agreement, goodbye, welcome, thanks, appreciation, reassurance, acknowledgement, greeting, approval, readiness, No
<i>nod</i>	agreement, farewell(s), greeting, thanks, approval, assent, gratitude, affirmation, hello, understanding, acknowledgement, encouragement, satisfaction, consent, acquiescence, permission, goodbye, confirmation, good morning, welcome, respect, comprehension, apology/apologies, appreciation, affirmative, approval,	thanks, satisfaction, acknowledgement, welcome, approval, agreement, assent, greeting, good morning, goodbye, encouragement, understanding, acquiescence, affirmative, gratitude, consent, apology, dismissal, permission

(continued)

Table 5. (continued)

	PHRASEOROM	
	Lowbrow	Highbrow
	dismissal, appreciation, attention, acceptance, admission, submission	
<i>blink</i>	agreement	–
<i>grin</i>	acknowledgement, defiance, approval, delight, exasperation, thanks	delight, acknowledgement, approval, relief, complicity
<i>shrug</i>	apology, ignorance, indifference, agreement, impotence, approval, bewilderment	–
<i>frown</i>	warning, protest, irritation, disdain, disappointment, impatience, puzzlement, reproach	interest
<i>clap</i>	appreciation, pleasure, approval	–

murmurer, *grogner* have common transitive uses with speech nouns, such as *murmurer des mots/phrases/paroles/prières*; *hurler des mots, son nom*; *grommeler des mots inaudibles, cracher les mots*. Just like their English counterparts, the verbs in question also combine with nouns denoting conventionalized speech acts (‘merci’), some of which constitute deverbal nouns (cf. Martínez Vázquez 2014b) such as *hurler des félicitations* (‘congratulations’), *grommeler un remerciement* (‘thank you’), *grogner une série d’injures* (‘insults’). Another commonality is the use of emotion nouns, as in *hurler son angoisse, son indignation, son mécontentement, crier son désespoir, sa colère, sa joie, son amour*.

- (15) *Des larmes coulent sur son visage, elle murmure «Merci».* (Frédérique Deghelt, *Les brumes de l'apparence*, 2014)
- (16) *Je grognai ma satisfaction* (Philippe Djian, *Echine*, 1998).

Just as in English, these ROCs can be described and paraphrased as double predicate constructions: ‘dire merci en murmurant’, ‘remercier en grommelant’, ‘exprimer sa satisfaction en grognant’, ‘féliciter en hurlant’, ‘dire son amour en criant’. Note, however, that such constructions are uncommon in real literary text; there seems to be a preference for using gerund constructions with motion verbs (e.g. ‘il se lève/tombe par terre en grognant’), something which awaits further investigation. There are also examples in evidence that denote “the cathartic liberation of a negative emotion” (Martínez Vázquez 2014b: 208):

- (17) *Dans le silence je l’ai regardé, le monde, ébranlé, violé, déchiré, tanguant et vacillant et, dans ma tête où les noms propres déferlaient en tourbillon, le monde a crié sa misère...* (Yves Berger, *Les matins du Nouveau Monde*, 1987).

By contrast, gesture verbs such as *sourire* (‘smile’ or ‘grin’) or *applaudir* (‘applaud’ or ‘clap’) are not used transitively in the French comparable (i.e. monolingual) corpus. English constructions of the type *Richard smiled his encouragement* correspond to V+adjunct (PP or adverb) in French: *sourire tendrement, avec tendresse* rather

than **sourire sa tendresse*. Given the large number of ROCs involving *smile* found in the English comparable (i.e. monolingual) corpus (*smile satisfaction, pleasure, encouragement, delight, agreement, gratitude, approval* etc.; see Table 5 above), the inference is that in this regard English and French differ considerably (just like English and Spanish; see Martínez Vázquez 2014b: 205).

Another divergence between the two languages concerns the verbs *nod* (‘hocher la tête’), *shrug* (‘hausser les épaules’), *blink* (‘cligner des/les yeux’), *frown* (‘froncer les sourcils’). These verbs are invariably transitive in French and take objects denoting body parts (*la tête, les épaules, les yeux, les sourcils*). The object of the English ROC is generally found to correspond to an adjunct in French: *il hocha la tête en signe d’approbation, avec approbation*.

- (18) *Il vit clairement les reptiles, autour de lui, hocher la tête avec approbation.* (Romain Gary, *Les racines du ciel*, 1956).
- (19) *Capitini cligna les yeux avec étonnement.* (Dominique Fernandez, *Pise 1951*, 2011)

The discussion so far has been limited to potential equivalents of English ROCs, with no consideration given to their frequency of occurrence in French text. It is worth bearing in mind, however, that, even though ROCs can be attested in very large corpora of French fiction, English ROCs are both far more frequent and far more flexible in terms of the range of objects they accept, as illustrated by a comparison of *murmurer* and *murmur* (see Table 6).

Table 6. Occurrences per ten million words of *murmurer/murmur*+reaction objects in French and English corpora (sample).

<i>murmurer</i>		<i>murmur (lowbrow)</i>		<i>murmur (highbrow)</i>	
merci	1.16	thanks/thank you, agreement	1.17	assent	2.28
amour	0.58	apology/apologies	1.04	greeting	1.14
		greeting(s), assent(s)	0.52		
		assurance(s), good bye, approval	0.39		

The comparative paucity of French ROCs based on verbs such as *murmurer* raises the question of how French fiction writers typically express the same kind of content. If our above discussion was along the right lines, the theoretical possibilities would seem to be limited to four options:

1. a double predicate construction of the type *V+en murmurant*
2. the combination of *murmurer* with an adjunct:
 - (a) *murmurer avec+N/en signe de+N*
 - (b) *murmurer *ment*
3. a class shift which combines the noun *murmure* with an appropriate verb and adjectival or nominal postmodification: *avoir/émettre un murmure de N/ADJ*

4. a class shift which combines the prepositional phrase *dans un murmure* with a verb:
V+*dans un murmure*

Oddly enough, none of these constructions occur with any frequency in contexts where they might be viewed as equivalent to English ROCs; only type 3 is found very occasionally:

- (20) *Ainsi, il pourrait me faire relire et signer ma déposition avant de partir; j'eus un murmure d'approbation.* (Michel Houellebecq, *Plateforme*, 2001)

If the same situation were found to obtain in the case of other verbs (this would require a more detailed study), this would mean that while writers in both languages may choose to express the same content, French writers do not do so as regularly as English writers. It would be tempting to conclude from such evidence that literary writers use constructions for the sake of constructions; in other words, English writers make ample use of ROCs not because they express significant content, but because they are readily available and almost infinitely malleable.

The results obtained from the parallel corpora provide some confirmation of the tendencies observed in the comparable corpus. Thus, English ROCs involving *murmur* ('murmurer') are usually translated into French as ROCs, confirming the patterns found in the French comparable corpus (see above). This means that, with *murmur*, the translators have adopted a source-oriented strategy.

- (21a) *Others murmured their agreement.* (Laurell Kaye Hamilton, *Anita Blake 06, The killing dance*, 1997)
(21b) *Les autres murmurèrent leur approbation.* (Translator Isabelle Troin)

In some cases, however, the ROCs involving *murmur* are broken down into constructions of the type verb+prepositional phrase built around the deverbial *un murmure*. This translation solution, which may be described as target-oriented, is less frequent, however.

- (22a) *Althea murmured an assent, but said no more.* (Robbin Hobb, *Ship of Destiny*, 2000)
(22b) *Althéa acquiesça dans un murmure, mais n'ajouta rien.* (Translator Véronique David-Marescot)

Similarly with *howl his pain and rage*: le verbe *howl* has been rendered into French as the deverbial noun *hurlement* followed by a prepositional phrase denoting emotion (*de douleur, de rage*):

- (23a) *The guard howled his pain and rage.* (Isaac Asimov, *Foundation 4 - Foundation and Empire*, 1952)
(23b) *Le garde poussa un hurlement de douleur et de rage.* (Translator Jean Rosenthal)

With regard to ROCs centred around gesture verbs such as *shrug, blink, frown, nod* – for which no attested equivalents were found in the comparable corpus (see above) – a search of the parallel corpus reveals a predilection for translation equivalents involving a

double predicate structure: *incliner la tête en signe d'approbation* ('bend one's head in agreement')/avec *satisfaction* ('with satisfaction'):

- (24a) *No one, said Harry, and Dumbledore **nodded his satisfaction**.* (JK Rowling, *HP 07*, 2007)
- (24b) «*Personne*» *indiqua Harry, et Dumbledore **inclina la tête avec satisfaction**.* (Translator Jean-François Ménard)

Another equivalent of *nod*+reaction object can be seen in the deverbal noun construction *hochement de tête*:

- (25a) *She watched her older son, and when **he nodded approval**, she breathed a secret sigh of relief.* (Robin Hobb, *Mad Ship*, 1999).
- (25b) *Elle regarda son aîné et, quand **il eut approuvé d'un hochement de tête**, elle poussa un imperceptible soupir de soulagement.* (Translator Véronique David-Marescot)

Table 7 provides a summary, and additional examples, of French equivalents of the ROC construction other than ROCs. The gerund construction has been omitted because it rarely constitutes a real textual equivalent of an English ROC.

Table 7. French equivalents of ROC constructions.

	Pattern	Equivalents
murmur +agreement, smile +satisfaction	verb-noun shift, verb +noun collocation; V +(+de+N/+ADJ)	<i>émettre un murmure d'approbation, arborer un sourire satisfait/avoir un sourire de satisfaction</i>
<i>He frowned his puzzlement</i>	extraposed ADJ+VP	<i>Perplexe, il fronça les sourcils.</i>
<i>The display blinked fresh acknowledgement</i>	V+adjunct (often <i>en signe de</i>)	<i>L'écran clignota derechef en signe d'assentiment., Elle sourit de/avec satisfaction/d'un sourire satisfait.</i>

5 Conclusion

The picture emerging from this study is one of considerable complexity. It has been shown that, compared to English, French literary style has limited options for expressing descriptivity. However, whilst there is an almost total absence of full equivalents of depictives in French novels, the situation is more varied in the case of ROCs, with some types being fairly productive in French (e.g. *hurler*, *murmurer*) but others being non-existent. Even potentially productive patterns, such as *murmurer*+reaction object, occur with considerably lower frequencies than their English counterparts. One reason for this may be that in French intransitive verbs lend themselves less readily to transitivity than is the case in English; the same applies to the causative transitivity of inaccusative verbs (Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995), which is frequent in English but less so in French.

With regard to translation, there is evidence that most translators adopt a target-oriented approach that is in keeping with functionalist theories of translation according to which the target text should read like an original. Only a few translators attempt to recreate the formal or semantic characteristics of English ROCs by opting for a source-oriented approach.

References

- Ait-Mokhtar, S., Chanod, J., Roux, C.: Robustness beyond shallowness: incremental deep parsing. *J. Nat. Lang. Eng.* **8**(2/3), 121–144 (2002)
- Beaver, J.: Resultative constructions. In: Binnick, R. (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Tense and Aspect*. Oxford University Press, Oxford (2012)
- Bouso, T.: Muttering contempt and smiling appreciation: disentangling the history of the reaction object construction in English. *Engl. Stud.* **98**(2), 194–215 (2017)
- Bozzeto, R.: *La Science-fiction*. Armand Colin, Paris (2007)
- Goldberg, A., Jackendoff, R.: The English resultative as a family of constructions. *Language* **80**(3), 532–568 (2004). <https://ase.tufts.edu/cogstud/jackendoff/papers/EnglishResultative.pdf>. Accessed 28 May 2017
- Hanks, P.: *Lexical Analysis: Norms and Exploitations*. MIT Press, Cambridge (2013)
- Himmelmann, N., Schulze-Berndt, E. (eds.): *Secondary Predication and Adverbial Modification: The Typology of Depictives*. Oxford University Press, Oxford (2005)
- Levin, B.: *English Verb Classes and Alternations: A Preliminary Investigation*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, London (1993)
- Levin, B., Rappaport Hovav, M.: *Unaccusativity: At the Syntax-Lexical Semantics Interface*. MIT Press, Cambridge (1995)
- Martínez Vázquez, M.: Expressive object constructions in English: a corpus based analysis. *Revista Canara De Estudios Ingleses* **69**, 175–190 (2014a). https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Montserrat_Martinez_Vazquez/publication/303523978_EXPRESSIVE_OBJECT_CONSTRUCTIONS_IN_ENGLISH_A_CORPUS_BASED_ANALYSIS/links/5746cadd08aea45ee856d00a.pdf. Accessed 28 May 2017
- Martínez Vázquez, M.: Reaction object constructions in English and Spanish. *E.S. Revista de Filología Inglesa* **35**, 193–217 (2014b). <https://revistas.uva.es/index.php/esreview/article/view/732/714>. Accessed 29 Aug 2017
- Real Puigdollers, C.: The nature of cognate objects: a syntactic approach. In: *Proceedings ConSOLE XVI*, pp. 157–178 (2008). <http://media.leidenuniv.nl/legacy/console16-real-puigdollers.pdf>. Accessed 28 May 2017
- Riegel, M., Pellat, J.-C., Rioul, R.: *Grammaire méthodique du français*. Presse Universitaires de France, Paris (1993)
- Siepmann, D.: *Lexicologie et phraséologie du roman contemporain: Quelques pistes pour le français et l'anglais*. Cahiers de lexicologie, No. 108 (2016)
- Snell-Hornby, M.: *Verb-Descriptivity in German and English: A Contrastive Study in Semantic Fields*. Carl Winter, Heidelberg (1983)
- Talmy, L.: *Towards a Cognitive Semantics*, vol. 2. MIT Press, Cambridge (2000)
- Tapanainen, P., Järvinen, T.: A non-projective dependency parser. In: *Proceedings of the Fifth Conference on Applied Natural Language Processing*, pp. 64–71. Association for Computational Linguistics, Washington D.C. (1997). <http://delivery.acm.org/10.1145/980000/974568/p64-tapanainen.pdf>. Accessed 28 May 2017