Fictive path, as Talmy (2000) describes it in his section “Path Windowing”, draws listeners’ attention to move along a path for which the linguistic forms do not describe any motion. This constructs an interesting contrastive pairing of static linguistic scenes and dynamic mental scenes, one that warrants empirical investigation. However, there does not seem to be any empirical research specifically testing for the existence fictive path as Talmy presents it: the usage and occurrence of fictive path in spoken language, its mental representation, and the sequencing of path components in mental representation. This pilot study sought to create empirical evidence of the movement of mental attention among path components and the precise sequencing of those components. Participants were read aloud sentences of static scenes and prompted to locate the given object within a visual scene. To mirror the attention windowing that occurs in the mind when creating fictive path, the participants’ visual fields were restricted to only a certain fractional window of the scene at a given time; thus, the visual field was restricted to isolate and display the participants’ mental window of attention. They had the ability to shift this visual window to perform the task of locating the given object. My hypothesis was that when participants were familiar with the scene (having examined the scene prior to testing), their visual/cognitive window would go directly to the location of the object. When participants were unfamiliar with the scene, they would have to follow a path to the “end” location, using landmarks specified in the linguistic form. Thus, even when linguistic forms are the same, the level of familiarity with a visual scene can determine whether a person develops and uses a fictive path. The mental representation of a static scene as a path serves as an aid for individuals to interpret and use language. Having found evidence of fictive path and the sequencing it embodies, further investigation into its usage and functional purpose is necessary to further explore and more soundly support the theory of fictive path as it relates to attention windowing.

References