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Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society

Title

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Permalink

Journal

Author

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Publication Date

1997

Peer reviewed

Conceptualizing the World through Spatial Metaphors
-- An Analysis of UP/DOWN vs. *SHANG/XIA* Metaphors

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This paper takes a cognitive rather than a rhetorical approach to metaphor. The author considers metaphor not as a fancy poetic skill, but as one of the basic means through which human beings conceptualize the world.

Spatial metaphors play an especially important role in the conceptualization of various abstract domains. This is true not only in English, but in Chinese as well. Yet man's physical and cultural experience provides many possible bases for spatial metaphors. Which ones are chosen, and which ones become salient, may not be the same from culture to culture.

In collecting her data, the author has sorted out 200,000 words from British National Corpus and 200,000 words from Chinese National Corpus, from which she has picked up 230 lexical items containing *shang*, 190 lexical items containing *xia*, 313 lexical items containing *up* and 270 lexical items containing *down*. By analyzing them along 7 parameters, namely *sense, location, motion, direction, destination, primary metaphorical extension*, and *secondary metaphorical extension*, she has found out that:

1. Both in English and Chinese, over 80% of all the lexical items carry metaphorical extensions.

2. Both in English and Chinese, the dominant metaphor is to conceptualize quantity through space, namely MORE IS UP/LESS IS DOWN. Under this prevailing metaphor, many minor metaphors develop, e.g. higher prices are up; slower speed is down.

3. What is unique of Chinese is to conceptualize time through up/down orientation -- PAST IS UP/FUTURE IS DOWN, whereas English seems to have developed a whole set of metaphors under the general one -- A HIGHER DEGREE OF SOMETHING IS UP/A LOWER DEGREE OF SOMETHING IS DOWN. For example, more attractive is up; less soft is down.

The author concludes that in conceptualizing other domains via spatial metaphors, English and Chinese show more similarities than differences. Those differences that do occur are due to different cultural values treasured by Chinese and English.

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