Abstract & Introduction
Cultures talk metaphorically about concepts in the same ways they think about them [1,2].
Especially true for time [3,4]. For English speakers: future=ahead, past=behind.
Metaphorical language shapes metaphorical thought: Learning new linguistic metaphors for time creates new mental representations [5].

But how does metaphorical thought become metaphorical language?

Native speakers of English and other languages think about time on the left-right axis, but never talk about time using that axis.

We document a novel, conventional system of linguistic metaphors that uses this left-right axis to talk about time.

Military personnel accepted Dynamic-Lateral phrases more than civilians did.

“Move the meeting right” (Dynamic) = “Move the meeting later”

General Discussion

• Members of the US military, especially Officers, accept sentences containing dynamic-lateral metaphors, compared to civilians.

• Bidirectional link between conventional linguistic metaphors & cultural conceptual systems:
  • language shapes thought...
  • ... but metaphorical mental representations can also make their way into conventionalized language.

Study 1: Acceptability Ratings

Active Duty members of the US military (n=23)
Civilian undergraduates at UC San Diego (n=31)

Sentence Types

Standard The meeting was moved two days earlier, from Friday to Wednesday

Dynamic-Lateral The meeting was moved two days to the left from Friday to Wednesday

Static-Lateral The meeting on Wednesday is two days to the left of the meeting on Friday

Ungrammatical From the meeting was two earlier days, Friday to Wednesday pushed

Study 2: Acceptability ratings in different contexts (Military vs. Civilian)

Question: Do military personnel recognize that these metaphors are only used in military contexts?

Active Duty members of the US military (n=14)
Civilian undergraduates at UC San Diego (n=27)

• Again, military personnel selectively accept lateral metaphors, compared to civilians

• True regardless of context: talking to civilians (left panel) or military personnel (right panel).

References


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