Events and objects as the underlying conceptual layer for the temporal dimension in actual vs. fictive motion expressions

This paper discusses constructing the temporal dimension in linguistic expressions of actual vs. fictive motion events. Objectively verifiable frequencies of language patterns found in the British National Corpus indicate that in the semantic context of actual motion events English speakers often denote spatial distance in temporal terms, which was found to occur for the semantic attributes of motion Manner, Instrument, and Medium of motion. On the other hand, fictive motion expressions, which are used to depict spatial configurations of stationary objects in terms of motion over the object’s extent, tend to be expressed without reference to the temporal dimension.

Taken together, the results indicate that in the semantic context of motion-framed scenarios, space, time, and motion can be viewed as elements of a unified conceptual frame (Kövecses, 2010), which dictates the relationship between space and time in a largely complementary fashion. However, the potential interchangeability of space with time in the semantic context of motion is not universally manifested across all linguistic contexts (Waliński, 2014). While in the semantic context of actual motion the linguistic expressions of distance involve both space and time, in fictive motion the linguistic depictions of form, orientation, or location of spatially extended objects tend to avoid the temporal axis.

From the perspective of the obtained results, the cognitive entanglement of space and time (Núñez & Cooperrider, 2013) appears to hinge, at least to some extent, on the underlying semantic context in which a particular conceptualization takes place. Namely, it appears to relate a higher-order distinction between conceptions of objects and events (Langacker, 2012). If we approach space as a system of spatial relations between objects and time as a system of temporal relations between events (Huggett & Hoefer, 2009), it is plausible to presume that actual vs. fictive motion expressions are strongly tied to relations holding between objects and events, which act as the underlying conceptual layer for space and time at a higher ontological and epistemological level.

REFERENCES

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