Abstract

In this study, we are going to probe Boroditsky’s study that if Mandarin Chinese really use more vertical phrases than horizontal phrases to express time. In the first step, we try to find out the using frequency of vertical and horizontal way when Chinese talk about the time. In this research, we found an interesting phenomenon that when Chinese people talk about time, they do not use more vertical way to express time as Boroditsky said, instead they use horizontal way to express time most. For the second step, by using of the collected news from the web, yahoo, google and Academic Sinica Balanced Corpus, we try to probe why Chinese use spatial metaphors to express time and see if there is something related to the properties of space and time. From the research, we can get four conclusions. First, when Chinese talk about the order of the event, they are used to using the spatial phrases in the vertical way like shang 'up', xia ‘down’ to express time like shang (xia) ge yue 上(下)個月 last (next) month. Second, when people talk about the days (months) of the week (year), they use the horizontal way to express time like qian (ho) i ge xing qi 前(後)一個星期 a week ago. Third, when they talk about the weeks and months on the calendar, they will use calendar schemas (vertical way) to express time like shang (xia) xing qi 上(下)星期 last(next) week. The last one is that when people talk about the amount of the time, they are used to using zuo you’ 左右’ left (right) to express time.