

A Conceptual Understanding of Bodily Orientation in Mandarin: A Quantitative
Corpus Perspective

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Abstract

The present study investigates the conceptualization of our bodily orientation in a quantitative corpus-based approach. Specifically, we identify correlated target domains with respect to each spatial dimension and clarify to what extent the physical symmetry of the spatial dimension plays a role in the metaphorical conceptualization. Based on the symbolic nature of constructions, we examine the correlation patterns of the NPs and the locatives in Mandarin Locative Construction “zai4 + NP + (zhi1) + LOCATIVE” through three major statistical analyses, i.e., covarying collexeme analysis, hierarchical clustering and principal component analysis. The results show that only FRONT/BACK dimension displays symmetrical metaphorical extension to similar metaphorical domains. The distributional patterns of the locatives have far-reaching implications for the embodiment of conceptual metaphors. It is concluded that the (a)symmetry of metaphorical patterns along each spatial dimension may be attributed to our recurring (a)symmetrical daily interaction and bodily experiences with the surrounding physical environment.

Key words : Covarying collexeme analysis; Spatial metaphors; Constructional
schema; Embodiment; Bodily orientation