

SPACE TO THINK

One of the more active topics in the study of metaphor is the metaphoric connection between the domains of space and time. We have all heard that temporal metaphors take structure from the domain of space and use it to structure our understanding of time. But what precisely does that mean?

Looking at the semantics of spatial terms, we quickly see that space comprises a complex domain, with spatial meanings drawing on multiple aspects of knowledge about objects and their interactions. For example, spatial locatives draw upon geometric and functional properties of the Figure and Ground and qualitative physical properties of their potential interaction, while motion language frequently encodes properties of the Figure and Ground along with the Path, Manner, and Cause of the motion event. Furthermore, the properties that are likely to be encoded in a spatial description and the particular ways in which these properties are defined varies across languages. If we are to understand the import of structure from space to time, then, we need to grapple with questions of which spatial properties undergird space-time metaphors, and under what circumstances different spatial properties undergo metaphorical extension.

In this talk, I will delve into the question of what it means to import structure from space to time. My point of departure will be the Moving Ego and Moving Time metaphors that have attracted so much attention in the metaphor literature, looking first at the spatial structure of these metaphors before moving on to consider the extra-linguistic factors that have been found to influence their interpretation. Following this, I will bring space back to the spotlight, asking what unites the spatial motivations for the range of effects that have been observed and, by extension, which aspects of spatial meaning underlie these two space-time metaphors.