

## How Politeness Is Embodied through Image Schemas

Key words: Embodiment; Politeness; Metaphor; Image schema

This paper attempts to explore how politeness is embodied through image schemas. The paper examines the politeness value of the linguistic expression in Chinese related to four image schemas: 上/下 (*shang/xia*, UP/DOWN), 前/后 (*qian/hou*, FRONT/BACK), 左/右 (*zuo/you*, LEFT/RIGHT), and 内/外 (*nei/wai*, INSIDE/OUTSIDE). These four pairs are also bodily-centered opposites.

The methodology consists of three steps. The first step concerns with the study of their semantic patterns, embodiment, polysemous extensions as well as the distributional features of each antonym in each pair. The data has been systematically collected from *Zuozhuan* ( “*Spring and Autumn Annals with Zuo's Commentaries*” , BC 772-481), a historical book collecting the records of important events in Chinese history. The preliminary analysis has indicated that these four pairs of image schemas or opposites are embodied in many ways including the character formation, their semantic extensions, and their politeness values.

The second step of the methodology concerns with a detailed analysis of the four pairs' semantic extensions into ethics, especially in honorifics and litotes expressions. The metaphorical polysemous meanings of these four pairs are heavily biased towards binaries of negative/positive, politeness/litotes etc. To be more specific, the first terms of the four pairs, *shang/qian/zuo/nei*/(up/front/left/inside/) tend to express positive meaning and show politeness to be used as honorifics in communication; while *xia/hou/you/wai* (down/ back/ right/ outside), tend to be just opposite. The analysis of the expressions attempt to support the conceptual metaphors including UP IS GOOD, FRONT IS GOOD, LEFT IS GOOD, and INSIDE IS GOOD. As another interesting finding, the meanings of the first group of lexical terms *up/front/left/ inside/* share their own meaning intentions, while *down/ back/ right/ outside* share theirs. Chinese expressions support the following conceptual metaphors UP IS FRONT, UP IS POLITENESS, LEFT IS UP, therefore LEFT IS POLITENESS. FRONT IS POLITENESS, etc.

The third step of this research is to argue that in fact the four pairs of opposites are exactly image schemas in Cognitive Linguistics as discussed by many cognitive linguists (Johnson 1987; Lakoff 1987; Hampe 2005; etc.). This case study tends to support the following claims: honorifics and litotes expressions are embodied through image schemas; Politeness Principle and Co-operative Principle are embodied through honorifics and litotes expressions through moral imagination based on image schemas; and eventually this research tends to support that principles of human ethics are embodied in many important ways.

### References

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