

Does time hurt or does it heal? Does it approach or does it run away? Do I hold time in my hands or does time slip through my fingers? These diverse expressions relating to time are metaphorical representations people use to express their attitude towards time. The aim of the presented project is to study the relations between the way of thinking about time expressed in spatial metaphors and coping with negative mood in extraverts and introverts. Why would metaphorical representations of time be related to coping with negative mood and to extraversion? Let us start answering this question by explaining what metaphor is and what metaphorical representations we will be looking at.

Metaphor is a figure of speech in which a particular phenomenon or object is described as a different phenomenon or object: The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 45). Metaphors make it possible to express phenomena that we do not perceive directly, by means of the senses. One of such phenomena is time. We usually speak of time using spatial categories, e.g., time is dragging on. Numerous theorists and researchers draw attention to the link between time and space. In research, especially in research on embodied cognition, two basic cognitive representations of time are analyzed, understood in spatial terms, referred to as ego-moving representation and time-moving representation. In the case of thinking in ego-moving terms, time is treated as a motionless space a person moves through, e.g., We are approaching vacation. In thinking in time-moving terms, by contrast, it is time that moves, from the future towards the past, and the person is perceived as motionless, e.g., Vacation is approaching.

Research results have shown that, on the one hand, which way of thinking about time a person uses is determined by a variety of factors, such as spatial relations, recollecting and thinking about pleasant or unpleasant events that may happen, or anger. On the other hand, the activation of a particular way of thinking about time has also been found to influence emotions and behavior – for instance, the perception of the speed of the passage of time, the rating of distance towards the past, or the assessment of an ambivalent stimulus. Research also suggests that thinking about time in ego-moving and time-moving terms may perform the function of cognitive mood regulation strategies, which may help, e.g. people in posttraumatic stress to break free from the past that hurts them.

Also in the presented project we consider thinking about time in ego-moving and time-moving terms as cognitive mood improvement strategies, and we look at their consequences as dependent on the level of extraversion. Why? Referring to the theories of embodied cognition, it is possible to observe certain analogies between the ego-moving and time-moving representations of time and the concept of extraversion as a tendency to be guided by a reward-oriented approach motivation (Gray, 1990). Approach manifests itself in forward movement in space, just like the ego-moving representation. Therefore, in the presented project, we use a series of six experiments to check whether this will manifest itself in a preference for a particular type of thinking about time in a situation of coping with negative mood in extraverts or introverts. Every person copes the best with difficult challenges when he or she is in conditions that are the most favorable to him or her – in an environment that is the most adjusted to him or her. Therefore, when we obtained the results of questionnaire studies showing that for extraverts it is low fatalism (low belief in the lack of control over reality) that is the most significant when it comes to self-esteem and optimism, whereas for introverts it is strong positive retrospective perspective (a tendency to focus on positively evaluated past – we decided to check if this could be explained by referring to basic spatial representations of time and man.

It is worth adding that the results of the planned research may have considerable applicative value due to the role of metaphors in counseling and therapeutic work. As Lakoff and Johnson emphasize (1980, p. 261): A large part of self-understanding comes down to the conscious recognition of metaphors not previously realized and of how one lives by them (See also Barker, 1996).