

Abstract

The present study tested the validity of the linguistic relativity hypothesis (which suggests that speakers of different languages will essentially develop different cultural representations of the reality) by focusing on one of the linguistic structures in Chinese, verb aspect, which is the temporal perspective taken toward the action. There are two elements involved when distinguishing between perfective and imperfective aspects, namely the viewing of an action as completed versus not completed (the temporal element), and the viewing of an action from an outside versus inside perspective (the perspective taking element). The present study thus tried to find out which of the elements was related to ability to use aspect markers. Results showed that mastery of aspect markers was significantly correlated with sensitivity to passage of time, but not perspective taking ability. The linguistic relativity hypothesis was supported, and the possible explanations for the results were discussed.