

Time Is Not on Our Side: Temporal Agency Language in the Enron Email Corpus

Matthew S. McGlone Dawna I. Ballard Nicholas Merola Joseph McGlynn
Department of Communication Studies, The University of Texas at Austin

Analyses of organizational e-mail corpora have demonstrated that language patterns in email reflect employees' identities in an organization (Oberlander & Gill, 2006), their relationships with peers, superiors, and subordinates (McArthur & Bruza, 2003), and their sensitivity to organizational change (Carley & Reminga, 2004). These analyses have focused chiefly on explicit, intentional communication between employees. However, implicit and ostensibly nonconscious word use patterns in email may also reflect organizational dynamics (e.g., Keila & Skillicorn, 2005; Kessler, 2010). In this report, we describe the results of a preliminary study exploring a documented nonconscious word use pattern – grammatical agency assignment in temporal language (McGlone & Pfister, 2009) – in the Enron email corpus released by the U.S. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in 2002 (and refined by Klimt & Yang, 2004).

In a span of roughly 15 years, the Enron Corporation ("Enron" hereafter) grew from a merger of two local gas-supply companies into the seventh largest business organization by revenue in the United States. By 2001, the company employed 21,000 people in over 40 countries (Fox, 2003; Fusaro and Miller, 2002). From Enron's inception, CEO Kenneth Lay and other senior management aggressively sought growth and profit by selling off key petrochemical assets, taking on silent partners, and rebranding the company to take advantage of the burgeoning deregulated energy market. After constructing the first nationwide natural-gas pipeline in the United States, Enron promptly transformed the company's core business into global commodity and options trading. They deftly created a successful global financial powerhouse from very simple beginnings. By taking this course, Enron quickly became beloved to its devoted employees, its unswerving stakeholders, and the broader stock-market community.

Enron's soaring success came crashing down late in 2001, when the mammoth organization suddenly found itself insolvent, causing senior management to file for Chapter 13 bankruptcy. Financial tragedy, public outcry, and scandal quickly followed. Under heavy stakeholder uproar and political pressure, the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) conducted simultaneous, albeit independent, inquiries into the sudden collapse. In May of 2002, FERC publicly released a corpus of actual emails from 158 employees—including those produced by top executives such as the company's very-public CEOs, Kenneth Lay and Jeffrey Skilling. The FERC took this unusual step in order to improve the public's understanding of the various reasons for their investigation of Enron. The full corpus represents a large collection (~500,000 emails) and temporal record of e-mail conversations over a period of 3.5 years.

For researchers focusing on social networks and organizational behavior, the Enron corpus is alluring because it enables the examination of communication and social processes in a real-world organization over a long period of time. It provides researchers a rare, authentic glimpse into the social network of an actual business organization. The Enron corpus also contains a large amount of raw data on communication, knowledge, relationships, perceptions, resources and events in a company in *crisis*. We believe that scientific analysis of this data will provide information and insight leading to an understanding of the communicative relationship within and among the social and formal networks in this particular organization.

Our focus here is on the communicative patterns Enron executives used in their correspondence to describe the passage of time. Although the language people use to describe temporal passage is typically idiomatic and composed with little deliberation, recent research suggests that time language can reflect one's emotional and attitudinal orientation toward events that are not always apparent from more deliberate and considered word choices (McGlone & Pfister, 2009; McGlone & Giles, 2011). In the next section, we describe this research on the "affective embodiment" of time language. In the following section, we apply an analytic scheme based on this research to samples of correspondence in the Enron e-mail database. In the final section, we draw conclusions regarding the utility of this analysis and delineate its implications for future research on time language patterns in organizational correspondence.

Time, Affect, and Embodiment

Scholars have long observed that humans' sense of time is mediated by their communication patterns. Leibniz (1717) famously rejected Newton's notion of "absolute time" in favor of a relative temporality people employ to represent order relations (before, after, during) between events. Bergson (1889) characterized temporal change as a perceptual illusion produced by imposing the analytic medium of language on a physical dimension we grasp intuitively. Idealist philosophers such as McTaggart (1908) took this reasoning even further, asserting that time is entirely an illusion resulting from humans' inclination to anchor sensory experience in a "specious present." Few contemporary scholars question time's very existence, but most continue to treat it as a highly mediated, context-sensitive concept.

Communication research on time has been heavily influenced by the idea of "social time" (Sorokin & Merton, 1937), which emphasizes the link between interpersonal interactions and the temporal intervals they occupy. In the 1970s, Bruneau (1977) introduced an area of communication

inquiry he dubbed “chronemics” with the express purpose of studying this link. Since then, communication scholars have examined people’s intersubjective experience of time primarily in organizational settings (e.g., Ballard & Seibold, 2004; Shockley-Zalabak, 2002). This work has demonstrated that our interactions in various social, cultural, and occupational groups engender a plurality of temporal frames of reference that we experience in parallel. Researchers have also investigated people’s use of monotemporal artifacts (timelines and calendars, in particular) to concretize and simplify their complex temporal experiences in the service of communicating and coordinating with others (e.g., McGrath & Kelly, 1986). One commonly overlooked set of such artifacts – linguistic conventions for describing temporal change – plays a subtle but nonetheless significant role in temporal communication.

Like many other abstract, non-sensorial concepts, time is linguistically structured by analogical extension from more concrete concepts grounded in physical experience (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Miller & Johnson-Laird, 1976). The primary source analog for time is space. The correspondences between time and space are reflected in the common phrasal lexicon used to denote relations in the two domains. These parallels occur because temporal relations are predicated on a subset of those used for the analysis of spatial location and motion. Clark (1973) argued that the applicable subset of spatial relations is determined by conceiving time as a unidimensional, directional, and dynamic entity. Because time is typically thought of as unidimensional, only those spatial terms that presuppose one dimension (e.g., *long-short*) also appear in the temporal lexicon, but those that presuppose two or more dimensions (e.g., *deep-shallow*) do not. Because time is directional, ordered spatial terms (e.g., *before-after*) have temporal senses, but symmetric terms (*left-right*) do not. We will focus here on terms used to convey time’s dynamic quality. Numerous terms that denote physical movement are also used to describe the passage of time, as in *the weekend flew by*, *we’re getting close to Thanksgiving*, and so forth.

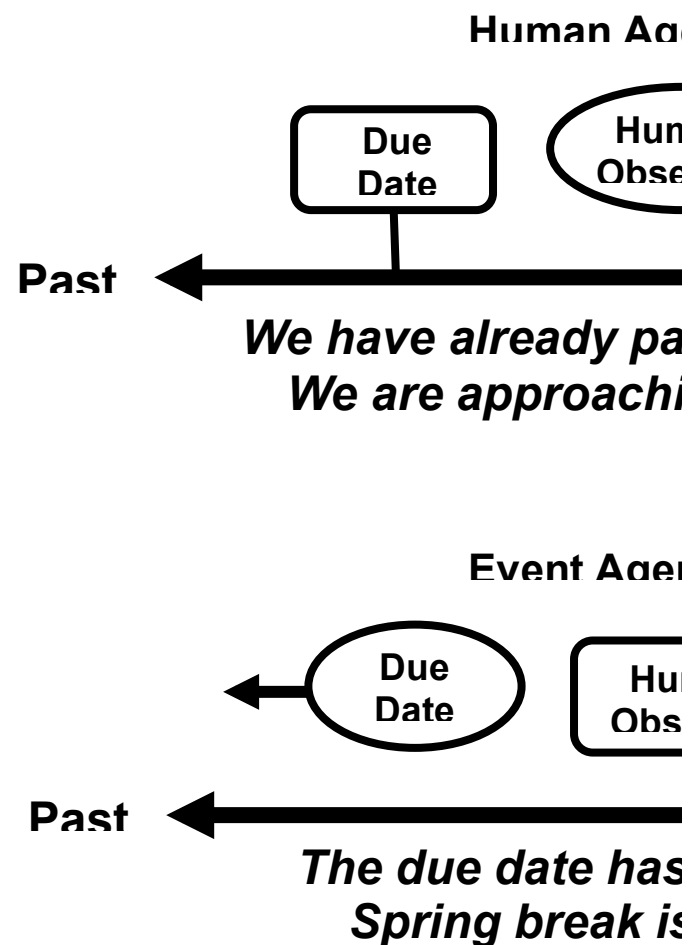
Table 1. *Parallel Spatial and Temporal English Constructions*

Space	Time
<i>from L.A. to San Francisco</i>	<i>from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.</i>
<i>in San Antonio</i>	<i>in 1976</i>
<i>The border lies ahead of us.</i>	<i>The future lies ahead of us.</i>
<i>He’s two miles behind us.</i>	<i>He’s two hours behind us.</i>
<i>Dallas is coming up soon.</i>	<i>Easter is coming up soon.</i>
<i>The train is fast approaching.</i>	<i>Summer is fast approaching.</i>

English and most other languages use two distinct spatial metaphors to encode temporal change. These metaphors are grounded in our experience of bodily movement, and consequently provide linguistic evidence of time’s status as an “embodied” concept (Clark, 1973; Johnson, 1990). To illustrate, compare the assertions we

have passed the due date and *the due date has passed*. These statements differ in two important respects. First, they imply opposite directions of symbolic movement. The former implies a future-bound (past → future) direction of temporal passage, but the latter implies a past-bound (past ← future) direction. Second, the sentences attribute agency – i.e., the instrumentality of temporal change – to different entities. The former implies that humans (the referents of *we*) are the agents of temporal change, moving away from inert events in the past and present toward others in the future. In contrast, the latter attributes agency to the event (*due date*) itself, which has moved from the future beyond present-dwelling human observers into the past. The spatiotemporal relations implied by the human-agent and event-agent metaphors are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. *Two Metaphors of Temporal Change*



As vehicles for conveying temporal sequencing and change, human- and event-agent expressions are functionally equivalent. Thus *we are approaching spring break* and *spring break is approaching* both convey the same temporal relation (future) between the observer and the event, albeit from different spatiotemporal perspectives. Given their ostensible equivalence, under what circumstances are people inclined to

use one type of expression or the other? To date, studies of temporal language have focused exclusively on the comprehension of idiomatic time expressions (Boroditsky & Ramscar, 2002; McGlone & Harding, 1998), not their production. This research has demonstrated that the context in which temporal expressions are encountered can have a significant impact on the ease and manner with which they are comprehended. McGlone and Harding (1998) observed that people's comprehension of temporal sentences was facilitated when they were presented in perspectively consistent blocks (i.e., all human- or event-agent sentences) relative to inconsistent (the two types juxtaposed) blocks. People also used the perspectival information available in these blocks to interpret ambiguous temporal sentences in a contextually consistent manner. For example, when people encountered the ambiguous sentence *The meeting scheduled for next Wednesday has been moved forward two days* in the context of human-agent sentences, most inferred that the meeting had been postponed to Friday, consistent with the human-agent entailment directing temporal movement toward the future (see Figure 1). In contrast, when this sentence appeared in the context of event-agent sentences, the majority inferred that the meeting had been moved earlier in the week to Monday, consistent with the event-agent entailment directing temporal movement toward the past. The influence of linguistic context on temporal thinking is paralleled by spatial context effects documented by Boroditsky and Ramscar (2002), who posed the aforementioned proposition about rescheduling a meeting to people in a variety of situations involving physical movement. When interpreters engaged in forward physical movement themselves (e.g., moving through a lunch line), they preferred the human-agent reading of the proposition; however, when they observed an object moving toward them (e.g., a wheeled chair moving across the room), they preferred the event-agent reading. Taken together, the effects of linguistic and spatial context on temporal language comprehension suggest that the human- and event-agent perspectives are not "dead metaphors" of mere etymological interest, but active cognitive constructs that mediate people's thinking about time.

Another contextual factor that may influence temporal communication is the speaker's affective orientation toward the event being described. In everyday discourse, people express their feelings about conversational topics in many ways, not just direct declarations like *I'm really into Facebook* or *I hate my job*. Sociolinguists have identified a variety of subtle linguistic markers that reflect one's affect, attitude, or stance toward a topic (Berman, 2005; Wiener & Mehrabian, 1968). One such marker is the grammatical passive voice. Communicators opt for passive constructions (e.g., *Louise was helped by John*) over parallel active constructions (e.g., *John helped Louise*) to direct causal attribution away from the thematic agent to the patient (Brown & Fish, 1983). This choice may reflect their attitudes and beliefs about the agent (e.g., John is nurturing) or the patient (e.g., Louise is weak),

and in turn may implicitly encourage addressees to form consonant impressions of these parties (LaFrance, Brownell, & Hahn, 1997).

Like passive voice, the manner in which people encode their temporal experiences constitutes another potential linguistic marker of their affective orientation toward life events. In particular, the metaphor one uses to frame temporal passage constitutes a vehicle for manipulating agency akin to grammatical voice. When communicators assign temporal agency to humans (*we're approaching the weekend*) or events (*the weekend is approaching*), the assignment reflects different spatial entailments of time's embodied conceptual structure (Clark, 1973). However, affect is also grounded in bodily experience and poses spatial entailments of its own. These entailments are reflected in the etymology of the term *emotion*, which derives from the Latin verb *emovere* denoting "moving out, or migration from one place to another" (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989). Embodiment theorists argue that humans' understanding of emotion is predicated on a symbolic relationship between affect and movement, in which we equate positive affect with approach and negative affect with avoidance or passivity (Johnson, 1990; Kovecses, 2000). This relationship is presumed to underlie a variety of behavioral phenomena associated with emotional processing. For example, Cacioppo, Priester, and Berntson (1993) observed that novel pictorial stimuli presented while participants were engaged in arm flexion (a motor action associated with approach) were subsequently evaluated more favorably than stimuli presented during arm extension (associated with avoidance). In recent years, numerous studies employing variants of Cacioppo et al.'s (1993) methodology have demonstrated that approach/avoidance motor actions differentially modulate the affective appraisal of many classes of stimuli, including words, names, faces, and songs (e.g., Niedenthal, Barsalou, Winkielman, Krauth-Gruber, & Ric, 2005).

The motion-emotion link is also evident among the various figurative expressions we use to talk about emotional experience (Gibbs, 1994; Kovecses, 2000). Likes and loves are commonly framed in terms of approach (*I'm leaning towards Obama, we've become so close since we first met*, etc.), while disaffections and detestations are equated with physical withdrawal (*we're far apart on that issue, she pushed me away*, etc.). McGlone and Pfiester (2009) explored the possibility that the conceptual correspondences between motion and emotion influence the way communicators encode the temporal passage of emotionally valenced events. For example, consider the different ways one might talk about a prospective event expected to be pleasant, such as a birthday. The human- and event-agent metaphors provide functionally equivalent ways to articulate the birthday's temporal status. However, our desire to encounter pleasant events – i.e., the ones we "look forward to" – may predispose us to conceive them in terms of approach, and accordingly attribute temporal agency to ourselves (e.g., *we're getting close to my birthday*). In contrast, our trepidation about

experiencing an unpleasant event may incline us to deemphasize our symbolic role in temporal change by instead assigning agency to the event itself (e.g., *the April 15 tax filing deadline is fast approaching*). In this manner, the language we use to encode temporal change may reflect an embodied “approach/avoidance” affective schema in which communicators symbolically move toward pleasant events but passively observe the arrival of unpleasant ones via agency manipulation.

McGlone and Pfister (2009) report linguistic evidence for this affective schema using two different methodologies. In their first study, they searched a large corpus (~14 million words) of written and spoken English for the occurrence of key spatial terms used in a temporal sense (e.g., *come*). Independent coders then examined the immediate discourse context of each identified linguistic token and judged whether the affective valence of the encoded event was positive, negative, or neutral. This analysis indicated that communicators describing temporal passage associated with ostensibly positive events (a wedding anniversary, a noteworthy scientific discovery, etc.) modally characterized themselves as the symbolic locus of temporal change (*we are coming up on our tenth anniversary; we might be coming to the culminating stage of our search*). In contrast, communicators preferred to encode the passage of negative events (age-related health problems, a projected increase in traffic volume on urban roads, etc.) by assigning the agency of change not to themselves, but to the event (*when the time comes [that] she can't do things; average speeds for major arterial roads are expected to decline significantly in coming years*). A similar pattern of agency assignment was observed for temporal expressions employing the other key terms.

A second study employed an experimental methodology to explore the motion-emotion link. Participants were asked to describe positive or negative experiences in the recent past. These accounts were then analyzed for the presence of key spatiotemporal terms used in human- and event-agent expressions. These analyses corroborated the correlational findings of the aforementioned corpus study. When recounting positive past experiences, people modally encoded temporal passage using human-agent metaphors.

The narratives participants generated for negative events, in contrast, were dominated by event-agent metaphors. These findings suggest that the conceptual correspondences between motion and emotion identified by embodiment theorists (Gibbs, 2006; Niedenthal et al., 2005) are operative when people describe the symbolic motion of temporal passage. Anecdotally, the operation of the correspondences appears to have occurred largely outside of awareness. After the researchers informed participants at the beginning of the debriefing that our study examined “differences in the way people talk about time when recalling positive and negative experiences,” participants were then asked to speculate about what these differences might be. Although many hypotheses were offered (e.g., people talk about time as elapsing more quickly for positive than negative events), no

one spontaneously generated ideas that bore any resemblance to the notion of temporal agency that was the actual focus. Moreover, when the researchers did eventually describe the difference between human- and event-agent metaphors and provided examples, many participants expressed puzzlement and confusion about the distinction.

Space-Time Language in Enron E-mails

The research we report here extended McGlone and Pfister’s (2009) analysis of temporal agency assignments to an investigation of longitudinal trends in temporal language used by employees in professional correspondence contained in the Enron email corpus. This corpus offers not only the largest extant collection of internal electronic correspondence within a large and prominent corporation, but also constitutes a rich temporal record of dramatic organizational change. Over the 3.5 years of correspondence included in the corpus (1999-2002), Enron descended from its peak as a global financial powerhouse named “America’s Most Innovative Company” by *Fortune* magazine 6 years in a row to a scandal-ridden, bankrupt company that became a popular symbol for corporate fraud and corruption.

Table 2. Critical Incidents Used as Anchoring in Corpus Analysis

Date	Valence	Incident Description
1/19/2000	Positive	Enron rolls out Broadband plan; stocks rise 26% in a single day to record high of \$67.25
5/5/2000	Positive	Enron energy analyst describes "Deathstar Strategy" to executive board for gaming the California energy market in an e-mail; according to the memo, Enron would be paid "for moving energy to relieve congestion, without actually moving any energy or relieving any congestion."
8/23/2000	Positive	Stock rises 10% in a single day to hit all-time high of \$90.56 with a market valuation of \$70 billion
2/19/2001	Negative	Fortune article by Bethany McLean released, "Is Enron Overpriced?"; stocks drop 8% in single day; Skilling calls employee meeting to discuss "blackbox" strategy
8/22/2001	Negative	Sherron Watkins, executive VP, writes letter to Lay expressing concern about accounting practices; provides a letter in which describes suspicion that these practices are an "elaborate hoax"
10/17/2001	Negative	Wall Street journal article describing CFO Fastow's shell company accounting strategy coincides with "surprise" announcement of SEC inquiry; Lay allegedly caught off guard

Term	Human Agent Expressions	Event Agent Expressions
ahead	<i>We went ahead with the renovation plan.</i>	<i>The renovation plan is ahead of schedule.</i>
approach	<i>We are approaching the summer.</i>	<i>The summer is approaching.</i>
begin	<i>We began the meeting at 3 p.m.</i>	<i>The meeting began at 6 p.m.</i>
behind	<i>Let's put the matter behind us.</i>	<i>All our troubles are behind us.</i>
close	<i>We're getting close to kickoff time.</i>	<i>Kickoff time is getting closer.</i>
come	<i>We have come to the end of the regular season.</i>	<i>The playoffs are coming up soon.</i>
done	<i>When I'm done with dinner, I'll drive home.</i>	<i>When dinner is done, I'll drive home.</i>
end	<i>We ended the meeting at 6.</i>	<i>The meeting ended at 6.</i>
enter	<i>We are entering the last month of the fiscal year.</i>	<i>The fiscal year is entering its last month.</i>
finish	<i>When I've finished dinner, I'll drive home.</i>	<i>When dinner is finished, I'll drive home.</i>
forward	<i>We are moving forward with the project.</i>	<i>The project is moving forward.</i>
from.. to/until	<i>I was in a meeting from 2 to/until 4 p.m.</i>	<i>My meeting was from 2 to/until 4 p.m.</i>
go	<i>I went through the day feeling tired.</i>	<i>As the day went on, I grew tired.</i>
move	<i>We are moving quickly through our meeting agenda.</i>	<i>The meeting is moving quickly.</i>
near	<i>We are nearing the filing date.</i>	<i>The filing date is drawing near.</i>
pass	<i>We passed the due date on Thursday.</i>	<i>The due date passed on Thursday.</i>
reach	<i>We have reached the last week of the election season.</i>	<i>The election season has reached its last week.</i>
run	<i>We are running a few minutes late.</i>	<i>The meeting is running a few minutes late.</i>
start	<i>We started the fiscal year with a bang.</i>	<i>The fiscal year started with a bang.</i>

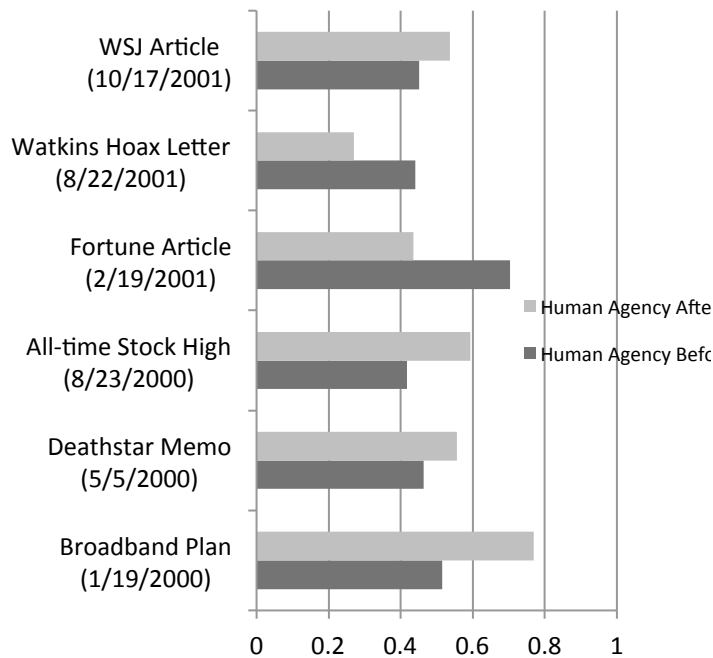
Table 3. Key Terms Used in Corpus Analysis.

negative critical incidents during the 1999-2002 corpus coverage period. Three positive and negative incidents – valenced as such from the perspective of a present-oriented Enron executive with a profit motive, albeit not from that of consumers nor a government agency, nor from that of the executives in hindsight – were selected. These events were selected not only for their affective valence but also because they were relatively discrete events that occurred within a single day, thus allowing us to distinguish between correspondence occurring before or after the event with some degree of precision. The critical incidents we selected for our analysis are described in Table 2. The key terms used in our analysis of the e-mail corpus are presented in Table 3.

We examined the pre- and post-incident correspondence generated by members of Enron's Corporate Policy Committee in 2000, consisting of 13 influential executives. These executives included the CEO (Skillings), Chairman (Lay), Vice-Chairman (Baxter), CFO (Fastow), CAO (Causey), a number of heads from different Enron divisions, and an in-house lawyer. One member from this committee has since committed suicide (Baxter), one died of a heart attack (Lay), and eight have been charged and found guilty of various accounting and securities frauds. All correspondence generated by committee members within seven days prior to and seven days following each critical incident were inspected for the presence of key spatiotemporal terms. Because the temporal agency assignment process appears to be unconscious rather than strategic (McGlone & Pfister, 2009), we analyzed all correspondence regardless of intended recipient, reasoning that the emotional valence of the incident would "color" post-incident correspondence attributes regardless of recipient. The percentages of human- and event-agency expressions in pre- and post-incident e-mail messages are presented in Figures 2 and 3.

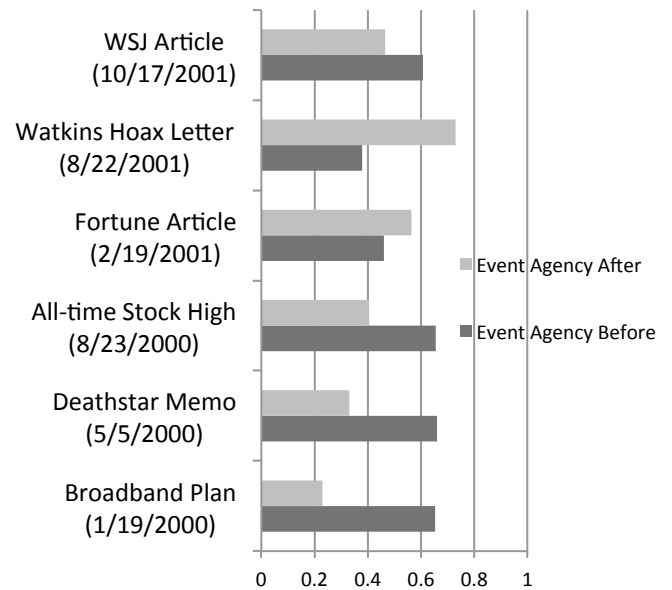
Figure 2. Proportions of Human Agency Expressions in Pre- and Post-Critical Incident Correspondence

Several studies have mined the Enron email corpus to investigate social networks among employees (e.g., Keila & Skillicorn, 2005), dissemination of proprietary neologisms (Kessler, 2010), and message clustering during critical incidents in the company's downfall (e.g., Berry & Browne, 2004). However, the metaphoric content of the corpus has not been explored heretofore. Our analysis focused specifically on metaphoric language used to describe the passage of time by members of Enron's senior management. Using an incident timeline metric suggested by Berry and Browne (2004), we explored the relative frequency of human and event temporal agency assignments in executive correspondence before and after ostensibly positive and



This analysis revealed significant, contrasting shifts in temporal agency assignment based on incident valence. When the incidents were positive, executives' use of human agency assignments (e.g., *Look how far we have come in just a few months!*) increased and event assignments declined; however, when the incidents were negative, event assignments (e.g., *the time for doing that has already come and gone*) increased and human assignments declined. Interestingly, the shifts in temporal agency assignment we observed align better with Berry and Browne's (2004) timeline than with former CEO Jeffrey Skilling's testimony at his 2006 trial about the time course with which he and other senior executives became aware of accounting irregularities and other problems that ultimately led to Enron's downfall. Skilling's testimony was disputed by attorneys for the prosecution, who claimed he and his senior colleagues were aware of these problems far earlier than they claimed. Given that temporal agency assignments are typically made outside of conscious awareness, our findings suggest that affect-driven temporal agency assignments may constitute a cue to emotional leakage and identity conflict in managerial discourse (Keila & Skillicorn, 2005).

Figure 3. Proportions of Event Agency Expressions in Pre- and Post-Critical Incident Correspondence



Conclusions

We contend that the pattern of metaphorical agency assignment we have documented in the Enron e-mail database derives from the interaction of tacit embodied simulations underlying people's understanding of time and emotion. Time's grounding in the perceptual experience of movement in space creates two perspectives of temporal passage, one in which people are the agents of passage (*we're approaching the end of the fiscal year*) and another in which events are the agents (*the end of the fiscal year is approaching*). The symbolic human activity implied by the former and passivity by the latter map onto the motion entailments underlying emotion, whereby we move toward affectively positive stimuli, but either withdraw from negative stimuli we can avoid or resignedly observe the arrival of those we can't. The interaction of the entailments inclines us to symbolically assume the agent role for the passage of a pleasant event but to abdicate it when faced with an unpleasant one. The resulting pattern of agency assignments constitutes a temporal analog of the self-serving attributional bias studied by social psychologists, whereby people prefer to make internal attributions for successes and external attributions for failures (Miller & Ross, 1975).

Our conclusions are qualified by two important limitations of the reported research. First, we have no direct evidence of embodiment's role in temporal agency assignment beyond the documented assignment patterns. Although the conceptual correspondences between time, motion, and emotion constitute a plausible substrate for these patterns, future research employing direct measures of these hypothesized mediators (e.g., a measure of cortical activity) is necessary to substantiate this substrate. Second, the generalizability of our findings is obviously limited by the characteristics of the language sample we examined. Most known human languages employ some form of human- and event-agent expressions to describe temporal passage

(Boroditsky, 2001; Clark, 1973; Nunez & Sweetser, 2006), but we have only explored their correspondence with event valence in a sample of well-educated, high SES American English speakers. Whether this correspondence generalizes to other English-speaking groups or other languages remains an open question.

Finally, our study highlights the analytic value of examining symbolic agency in communication, a topic that has received considerable attention in recent years but is rarely portrayed in precise linguistic terms. In particular, Cooren, Fairhurst, Putnam, and their colleagues have explored the ascription of agency to non-human entities such as machines (e.g., *my computer doesn't like the file you just sent me*), texts (e.g., *Leaked Memo Unmasks Duplicity of Enron Executives*), and even directional signs (e.g., *the yellow arrows will direct you to the waiting room*) in organizational discourse (Cooren, 2004; Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004). The interplay of human and non-human agency, Castor and Cooren (2006) argue, discursively constitutes organizations as “hybrid” forms, whose hybridity is most salient when they confront institutional problems. The present results hint at a similarly hybrid construction of human temporal experience: Enron executives generally ascribed temporal agency to themselves when times were good, but abdicated it to events when times were bad.

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