

`Metaphors we teach by': An exploration into how HE lecturers reflect on and conceptualise their experiences of teaching via the use of clean language interviewing model of exploring metaphors

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Abstract

In this session a presentation will be delivered on the topics of Metaphor and Clean Language. This paper aims to explore a developing doctoral study based on the research question 'What relationship is there between lecturers' use of metaphors, their beliefs about teaching and how this influences their teaching practice?' It is envisaged that discussion of Clean Language topics can enhance the awareness and skills of those that utilise NLP by developing knowledge of its application in NLP technologies.

The proposed qualitative study is to be conducted using interviews utilising the 'Clean Language' model. This is a model developed by the late David Grove and modelled by Lawley and Tomkins (2000) to better understand metaphors via a series of questions that are not hindered by the interviewers own assumptions, ideas and biases. It is suggested that this gives participants the opportunity to explore their thoughts and feelings in a way that is as close to their comprehension of the experience as possible. The application of this approach as qualitative research methodology will be explored and discussed.

The proposed study arose out of an interest in metaphor and Clean Language of the author. Bullough et al, (1992) suggest that teachers hold beliefs which influence not only how they teach, but also how they interpret their experiences of teaching, which Haney et al, (2002) describe as being an interactive process where one construct influences the other. To better understand these constructs, Mahlios, Massengill-Shaw and Barry (2010) suggest that it is necessary to research the metaphors which are representative of these constructs to identify how teachers organise their

thinking and plan their actions (Cook-Sather, 2003). Therefore it is appropriate for further exploration of these concepts.

The importance of exploring metaphors has been stressed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Grove (1996) and Geary (2011) who concur that individuals do not ordinarily talk about their experiences in concrete explicit terms but rather in metaphors. Grinder and Bandler (1981) suggested these could fall into two types of metaphor, isomorphic and universal. An isomorphic metaphor is a story or analogy that represents or is similar to another situation. A universal metaphor is when a more generalised example is given but is one where the respondent may have had some experience of the subject matter. Therefore there is some relevance to further exploring metaphor and its application to NLP as a method for understanding the building blocks of how individuals code their experiences of the world around them. By gaining these understandings it is possible to develop relationships in order to empower individuals based on the form and content of their experiences (Dilts et al, 1980). Geary (2011) argue that an exploration of the metaphors a teacher uses to reflect on their experiences will give a more thorough insight into how they contextualise their experiences of teaching, how this in turn informs their teaching practice and the impact on their relationships with their students (Mahlios, Massengill-Shaw & Barry, 2010). For example, a lecturer describing their work with a group 'as a calm oasis of creativity' is likely to rationale their experiences of teaching differently than a lecturer who describes their work with a group as 'a battle for hearts and minds'.

In this discussion the concepts outlined above will be fully explored and participants will be encouraged to engage in the debate and provide their own understandings of metaphor, clean language and its impact on them and their teaching. It is anticipated that discussion will take place related to the developing research study and analysis of experience and application of metaphor by teachers and educationalists.

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