

Handbook of Research Methods in Careers

Chapter: Qualitative and quantitative examination of metaphorical language use in career-life preparedness.

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Qualitative and quantitative examination of metaphorical language use in career-life preparedness.

Vocational theories, research, and intervention practices are embodied in, mediated by, and emergent from metaphorical language that is socio-culturally, historically, and intellectually situated in social-political-economic evolution. Although metaphors have been recognised as ubiquitous in communication and fundamental to meaning making in notions of career, workforce, and organisations, metaphor remains underexplored in naturalistic discourse within the field. This chapter introduces a reliable and replicable procedure for metaphor identification: The Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit (MIPVU) for application to such discourse. We demonstrate MIPVU using transcribed student testimonials from higher education promotional online videos of an Australian and Norwegian university. MIPVU affords an integrated qualitative and quantitative approach to examine career-life preparedness. We showcase MIPVU as a methodological resource that can enhance understanding of how individuals prepare for, make meaning about, and manage their learning, work, and career development over their lifespan.

Keywords: career; higher education; lifespan; metaphor; MIPVU; vocational psychology word

<a> Introduction

This chapter introduces a procedure for metaphor identification allowing for an integrated qualitative and quantitative approach to investigating career guidance discourse. We offer a step-by-step demonstration of the Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit (henceforth MIPVU; Steen et al., 2010), applied to metaphorical language used in student testimonials in promotional online videos of an Australian and Norwegian university. Metaphor is a specific form of communicative behaviour that may function as an initiator of framing for topics in public discourse (Krippendorff, 2017) as well as a reasoning device that adds conceptual content (Burgers, Kronijn, & Steen, 2016). In these publicly available videos, students talk about their experiences in higher education as well as express their thoughts and feelings about career and future working life. The videos were transcribed, and metaphor identified using the English and Norwegian versions of MIPVU.

Metaphor identification can open a window to deeper understanding of how individuals and organizations make meaning about education and career development over the lifespan. For instance, the interpersonal and social existence of individuals can be surveyed in terms *career-life preparedness* (Lent, 2013) to stimulate and nourish career adaptability, resilience, and coping. Although metaphors are recognised as fundamental to making meaning in notions of career, workforce, and organisations (Inkson & Amundson, 2002; Inkson, Dries, & Arnold, 2015; Morgan, 2006), metaphor analysis has been reliant on more intuitive methods and has thus far had no robust systematic foundation for metaphor identification. Significantly, metaphor remains underexplored in naturalistic discourse within the field of vocational psychology. MIPVU addresses this gap with a protocol for metaphor identification and affords both linguistic and conceptual analysis.

<a> **Background**

The vocational choices people make about career and working life and their adjustment to occupational situations involves two processes according to Super (1950). The first is the development of a concept of who a person really is and the second is turning that concept into a reality (p. 351). Metaphor analysis offers a means to explore self and identity (e.g., self-concepts) as well as a framework for theorising career and working life; such analysis is currently emerging within the field of vocational psychology for the study of career, work, and organisational dynamics. Metaphor is recognised as fundamental figurative language that frames individual and institutional ways of being in the contexts of career development (Inkson, 2004, 2006; Mignot, 2000; Super, 1957, 1980), narratives of self in working life (Inkson, Dries, & Arnold, 2015; Lengelle, Meijjers, & Hughes, 2016; Savickas, 2011), and organisational management (Cornelissen, Oswick, Christensen, & Phillips, 2008; El Sawad, 2005; Morgan, 2006).

For instance, Super (1957) conceptualised career as a vehicle or lifelong path, Inkson (2004) proposed nine metaphors for framing career including actions, encounters and relationships, a journey, a story, and more recently, boundaryless and protean careers (Inkson, 2006), and El-Sawad (2005) provided insight concerning metaphors that graduate level employees drew upon to conceptualise career in blue chip organisations. Their findings reveal dominant ways of thinking in career development literature. More specifically, Whiston, Lindeman, Rahardja, and Reed (2005) performed a retrospective analysis of case materials and found themes within experts' opinion.

McIlveen and Creed (2018) extended this line of research and used the structured narratives of case formulation—summarised data from counselor interviews with a client—to highlight metaphors used in clinical vocabulary and conventions. Given metaphors both enhance and constrain meaningfulness in case conceptualization, they suggest metaphor analysis has a pedagogical utility. For example, enabling the exploration of transcripts of audio-visual recordings of counselling sessions or post session reflections to minimize cognitive bias and improve specificity of interventions. With the exception of such publications, the analysis of metaphor in career development literature has been notably absent, something that may be due to the lack of a usable and replicable method for scholars of career and working life.

<a> Theoretical Framework

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) pioneered the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and argued that metaphor is fundamentally significant to individual making of meaning. Conceptual thought and systematic linguistic correspondences are central to CMT, as is a decontextual and universalist focus on conceptual metaphor indicative of socially shared realities. In contrast, discourse analysts and discursive psychologists argue for locally contextualised conventions, choice, and application that reflect the in situ lived experience of people. Nevertheless, it is generally agreed that metaphor facilitates, organises, and extends understanding, thereby structuring how people understand more abstract concepts such as emotions, ideas and time. In addition to this relational role, metaphor plays a process role in communication: metaphors may create insight and indicate appropriate actions but also “create ways of *not* seeing” (Morgan, 2006, p. 348). Similarly, Mignot (2000) suggested that metaphor analysis offers a means to explore an individual’s career construction, along with ways in which they are constrained by it. Therefore, alternate world views reflected by metaphors can veil or reveal features of career concepts and may influence an individual’s proactivity in career and work. For instance, the concepts of ‘school-like surveillance’ or ‘the Wild West’ discussed by El-Sawad (2005) suggest contrastive, situationally contextualised, meanings of career offered by graduate level employees.

Cognitive linguists maintain that human cognition functions through the asymmetrical mapping of concepts from two different domains of knowledge. An abstract or less tangible concept (i.e., the *target domain*) is mapped onto a more physical or concrete *source domain* through some real or perceived similarity and comparison

(Gentner & Markham 1997; Kövecses, 2010). For instance, primary metaphors include GOOD IS UP and BAD IS DOWN, whereas more socially situated conceptual metaphors include LOVE IS A JOURNEY, ARGUMENT IS WAR, and SOCIAL ORGANISATIONS ARE PLANTS.¹ Metaphorical expressions in the language we produce (e.g. *I'm feeling down today*) reflect underlying conceptual metaphors. Although many conceptual metaphors are universal, the actual words used in linguistic metaphors to reflect the underlying concepts vary by language and culture.

CMT has made an essential and enduring contribution to metaphor research. However, current literature calls attention to the socially situated notion of understanding (Bowdle & Gentner, 2005; Gibbs Jr., 2008; Kövecses, 2010) and cultural cognitive models (Blount, 2014; Frank, Dirven, Ziemke, & Bernárdez 2008; Kövecses, 2005). As a “unique cognitive mechanism underlying social thought and attitudes” (p. 1046), metaphorical expressions form fuzzy categorical clusters of expectations and associations accessed in culturally and socially situated contexts of discourse (Landau, Meier, & Keefer, 2010). With the focus on the individual and meaning making, particularly in the schools of narrative and critical psychology, metaphor analysis offers a further means to individualise qualitative assessment in career counselling. Text, visual imagery, gesture, and artefact involved in narratives and stories are rich sources detailing human experience and are ripe for an examination of the validity of established career metaphors.

More specifically, conceptual metaphor is relevant to practices of career development that emphasise cognitively embodied construction of the social and psychological worlds through social processes and interaction. This is because metaphor is foregrounded in all aspects of people's lives. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue:

[W]e define our reality in terms of metaphors and then proceed to act on the basis of the metaphors. We draw inferences, set goals, make commitments, and execute plans, all on the basis of how we in part structure our experience, consciously and unconsciously, by means of metaphor. (p. 158)

Our intention in this chapter is to demonstrate a method of metaphor identification that complements more intuitive and introspective analyses with an explicit, valid, and reliable procedure applicable to contemporary constructivist theories and constructs that emphasise meaning making embodied in personal narratives.

¹ The capital letters follow convention dictating the mnemonic naming of systematic sets of correspondences in our conceptual system as TARGET-DOMAIN IS SOURCE-DOMAIN (Lakoff, 1993, p. 207 & 209).

<a> Primary data and method

In this chapter, we maintain that the analysis of metaphor in thought and communication depends upon systematic, transparent, reliable, and replicable means for identification of metaphor in language, i.e., linguistic metaphor; MIPVU has been put forward as a suitable method for such purposes (Steen et al., 2010). Although MIPVU does not identify conceptual metaphor, it does identify words that have the *potential* of reflecting the metaphors in people's minds. In doing so, MIPVU provides a methodological bridge to operationalise metaphor analysis and thereby provides foundational knowledge and understanding to inform and facilitate the analyst's capability to enhance theorisations about career and technical developments.

Our demonstration analyses publicly accessible online videos where Australian and Norwegian university students and college graduates talk about education and career. The videos were created between 2014 and 2015 to promote career-related benefits of higher education and to attract prospective students. Although the videos therefore clearly represent the institutional voice rather than the spontaneous voices of students, the sentiments expressed in these short messages are certainly intended to be recognisable to potential incoming students. In this way, they illustrate authentic education and career-related discourse and showcase current thinking of and in higher education in the context of the two institutions responsible for the video productions.

We apply MIPVU to the English transcriptions and an adapted Scandinavian version of MIPVU to the Norwegian transcriptions of the videos to illustrate the method for qualitative and quantitative approaches to data analysis of metaphorical expressions. Our demonstration thus provides a means of cross-cultural comparison of metaphors with those previously postulated by scholars of vocational psychology. This work represents an innovative methodological advance to enrich existing methods of research into career and working life.

 Metaphor identification

The analysis of metaphorical language requires a robust foundation, that is, a valid, reliable, and replicable procedure for metaphor identification. MIPVU is a systematic and explicit language-in-use approach to metaphor analysis, developed by Steen et al. (2010). The procedure involves the manual annotation of lexical units for metaphor identification using corpus-based dictionaries. The aim of MIPVU is the identification

of possible linguistic metaphors in discourse, the surface realisations of underlying conceptual metaphors. The procedure consists of six steps, as follows:

- (1) read the text as a whole,
- (2) determine the lexical units,
- (3) determine their contextual meaning,
- (4) determine if there is a more basic meaning (i.e., a more concrete, precise and/or human-related sense),
- (5) decide if the basic and the contextual meanings can be contrasted and understood by comparison
- (6) label the lexical unit as metaphorical if yes.

As part of the development of MIPVU, patterns of metaphor in English discourse were explored in four registers: academic discourse from a science discipline, conversation, fiction, and news. Results of these studies, reported in Steen et al. (2010), indicate the lowest frequency of occurrence of metaphorical language was identified in conversation, and the most in academic discourse. Importantly, interrater reliability tests, where analysts independently applied MIPVU to the same texts and then compared their results, found a high rate of agreement (>90%) for all four registers the group examined. This means that it is possible for the procedure to be applied by different researchers in a reliable way. Since its development, MIPVU has been successfully applied to other types of English texts, including the written production of second language learners (Nacey, 2013) and vocational discourse (Creed & McIlveen, 2017). Moreover, the procedure, originally developed on the basis of and for English, has been adapted for a variety of languages other than English, most recently with a volume about MIPVU in multiple languages containing extensions of the procedure to eleven different language varieties (Nacey, Dorst, Krennmayr, & Reijnierse, accepted). This volume includes the Scandinavian version of MIPVU applied in the present study (Nacey, Greve, & Johansson Falck, accepted).

MIPVU identifies primarily two different types of linguistic metaphor: indirect metaphor and direct metaphor.² With indirect metaphors, there is a contrast and comparison between the contextual sense and a more basic sense. The word *down* in *I'm*

² A third type of metaphor may also be identified with MIPVU: implicit metaphors consisting of cohesive grammatical or semantic links that refer back to recoverable metaphors. Examples of implicit metaphors are demonstrative pronouns (e.g. *that*, *this*) that refer to an indirect metaphor. Although they contribute to the overall metaphor density of a given text, they are less interesting for the type of discourse analysis for the present study.

feeling down today is an example of such an indirect metaphor. The contextual sense is ‘sad’, while a more basic sense is ‘to/towards a lower place’. These two senses differ considerably, and the link between them may be understood through comparison: we understand negative feelings in terms of a being in a physically lower location or position. The spatial positioning of sadness is coherent with the conceptual metaphor GOOD IS UP / BAD IN DOWN (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). By contrast, direct metaphors consist of similes, analogies, etc. where there is no contrast between a contextual and more basic sense, despite a metaphorical comparison being evident; the metaphor is thus expressed through direct language. Steen et al. exemplify this with the word *ferret* in the sentence *he’s like a ferret* where the contextual ‘animal’ sense matches also the basic meaning.³ Given that ‘he’ is a person, there is nevertheless an underlying conceptual metaphor, signalled here by the preposition *like*, a word functioning here as a metaphorical flag.

Empirical studies have found that the bulk of metaphorical language is indirect, prompting Steen et al. (2010b) to call this metaphor type “the classic case of metaphorically used words” (p. 77). Note, however, that indirect metaphors are not necessarily deliberately intended nor perceived as metaphors; rather, they often represent conventional ways of expressing thoughts. This aligns with one of the fundamental claims of the CMT, namely that metaphor pervades our everyday language and our thought, with the former reflecting the latter.

** Primary data**

For the purposes of demonstrating MIPVU, thirty publicly available online videos containing individual student testimonials about their university experiences were downloaded and transcribed. In both sets of videos, current or recently graduated students introduce themselves and then briefly discuss their choice of study and why they selected the particular institution featured in the video. They sometimes also talk about the careers they either plan for or have recently embarked upon. Half of the videos were developed to promote an Australian university (the University of Southern Queensland; USQ), while the other half advertise for a Norwegian university (Oslo and

³ See here: http://www.vismet.org/metcor/documentation/relation_to_metaphor.html

Akershus University of Applied Sciences; HiOA, which has since been renamed Oslo Metropolitan University).

Our main criterion for video selection was that they all have a similar format, by being ‘testimonials’ featuring a single student each, as opposed to videos focussing on images or groups of students, or voiceover videos with an anonymous narrator. The only information we have about the featured individuals derives from what we can see and hear in the videos. Thus, we can say, for example, that the Australian videos feature seven female students and eight male students, whereas the Norwegian videos feature five female students and ten male students. The videos are all quite short, ranging from around half a minute to two minutes at the longest. While word count length in the Australian videos ranges from a low of Kate with 145 words to a high of Eliza with 319 words, the Norwegian videos range from Niosha with 71 words to Amund with 304 words. More specifically we analysed roughly 400 more words of Australian English text, 3369 Australian English words versus 2825 Norwegian words.⁴ No information about production conditions is available; as a result, we know nothing about e.g. the degree of spontaneity of the student’s testimonials, whether the videos were scripted, or indeed, whether the people portrayed in the videos were actual students rather than actors. Nevertheless, as marketing tools promoting the two universities, the videos are intended to convey similar messages about the value of education, with the ultimate goal of attracting future students.

** Procedure**

MIPVU was applied to the testimonials collected from online videos that had been transcribed into each country’s national language. The video transcriptions were transferred to a custom-made Excel spreadsheet for analysis.

<c> Step 1: Read the whole text

The analyst begins by reading the text in its entirety to gain a thorough understanding. For the purposes of this demonstration, the following sentence taken from the AuE transcript of Stephen, an Indigenous Australian student studying a Bachelor of Arts /

⁴ The videos, analysed data and R code are available at our Open Science Framework project page. We also provide a template for metaphor identification for scholars to adapt for their own research. Please see <https://osf.io/bk32q/>

Bachelor of Laws, in which he compares his personal experiences of high school and university, is the focus for our analysis:

- (1) Stephen (AuE): I wasn't a particularly good high school student but I found university was such a different environment.

<c> *Step 2: Determine the lexical units*

The basic unit of analysis in MIPVU is the individual lexical unit. In most cases, the lexical unit corresponds to the orthographic unit, what is in layman's terms is referred to as a *word* (as a consequence, we henceforth use the terms *lexical unit* and *word* interchangeably). Steen et al.'s (2010) MIPVU protocol outlines a number of exceptions to this one-to-one correspondence between lexical unit and single-unit word, along with detailed guidelines for lexical demarcation. This protocol, however, was created by linguists and (mainly) for linguists, who frequently require an extremely precise definition of what a lexical unit is. Researchers from other disciplines may not require such finely graded analysis, and we therefore recommend a less detailed means of lexical demarcation, through reliance on dictionary codification.

In this way, for example, we count 17 words in sentence (1): *I, was, n't [not], a, particularly, good, high school, student, but, I, found, university, was, such, a, different, environment*. Here we see that *high school* is considered as one lexical unit, even though it consists of two orthographic words; the reason for this is that it is codified as such in our primary reference dictionary, the *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* (MM).⁵ Such a simplification through reliance on a quality dictionary should not seriously affect any findings, although we do recommend that researchers be forthright in explaining how they demarcated lexical units, to facilitate any future comparability studies.⁶

<c> *Step 3: Determine the contextual meaning of each lexical unit*

To demonstrate steps 3 to 6, we focus on the word *environment* as it appears in the context of sentence (1). Consulting the Macmillan dictionary, we find that the

⁵ This is a contemporary, corpus-based learners' dictionary and was also the primary reference dictionary for the developers of MIPVU. It may be freely accessed here: <http://www.macmillandictionary.com>.

⁶ Note that we employed the complete original version of MIPVU in our analysis, rather than the simplified version we recommend here. In doing so, we came to realise that the MIPVU demarcation instructions would present an unnecessarily prohibitive barrier for use by non-linguists.

contextual meaning of *environment* in Stephen's statement corresponds to the first sense entry for the noun in the dictionary:

MM1:⁷ 'the place in which people live and work, including all the physical conditions that affect them'.

<c>Step 4: Determine if there is a more basic meaning for each lexical unit

The more basic meaning for *environment* is its most concrete sense, and corresponds to the dictionary's second sense entry for the noun:

MM2: 'the natural world, including the land, water, air, plants, and animals, especially considered as something that is affected by human activity'.

<c>Step 5: Decide if the basic and the contextual meaning of each lexical unit can be contrasted but understood by comparison

The contextual meaning of *environment* relates to social and cultural conditions of a place, in this instance the university where the student Stephen follows his educational pursuits. The more basic meaning of *environment* concerns external, physical factors of a geographically situated place comprising ecological elements such as air, water, soil, organisms, etc. that surround and interact with the survival of all living organisms. These two meanings contrast (i.e., there is a noticeable difference between the contextual and the basic meaning) and they can be understood by comparison (i.e., consideration of similarities and differences): we can understand the social and cultural conditions of a place in terms of a geographically situated place with interactive, living organisms.

<c>Step 6: Label each lexical unit as metaphorical when the answer to step 5 is yes

The basic and contextual meanings of *environment*, in this situated context of understanding, can be contrasted and understood in terms of a comparison of similarities. Therefore, the lexical unit *environment* is labelled as metaphorical. More

⁷ The number following the dictionary abbreviation - here and elsewhere in our chapter - identifies the particular sense in the entry being referred to.

specifically, it is an indirect metaphor, evoking a referent that differs from its basic ‘direct’ meaning.

<a> Discussion

How much metaphorical language did we identify? The boxplots in Figure 1 show a comparison of the frequency of metaphorical content words (nouns, lexical verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) in the Australian English transcriptions and the Norwegian transcriptions (i.e., the number of metaphorical content words / the total number of content words, per text). Here we see that the median in both sets of text is almost identical: 16.5% and 16.3% respectively. Even though there is more non-metaphorical language than metaphorical language, metaphor is clearly ubiquitous in the recorded videos from both countries. This finding aligns with that of other empirical investigations into metaphor frequency, such as Steen et al. (2010) and Nacey (2013).

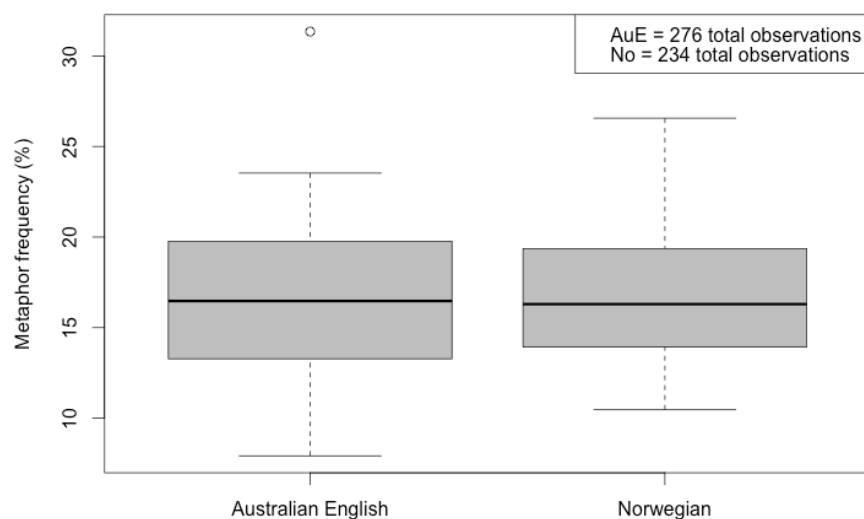


Figure 1. Frequency of metaphorical lexical words in the Australian (AuE) and Norwegian (Norw) samples

According to results from the Shapiro-Wilk test, the frequencies of metaphorical lexical words in both the Australian English and Norwegian texts are normally distributed (For AuE, $W=0.95$, $p\approx 0.54$; for Norw, $W=0.97$, $p\approx 0.43$). The assumptions for normality thus being met, an independent two-tailed Welch’s t -test was performed to compare the metaphorical frequencies of content words in the Australian and Norwegian sets of videos. The results indicate that we cannot reject the null hypothesis

that there is no significant difference ($N=30$, $t=0.19$, $p\approx 0.85$). As can be seen in the boxplots, the quantitative differences in terms of numbers of identified metaphors in the two sets of videos are minimal. When it comes to quantitative measures, both groups therefore appear to be using metaphor to an equal extent.

As far as content is concerned, we find a number of similarities in the metaphors students and graduates employ. The examples we provide here for discussion concern the broad metaphorical theme of AN OBJECT. First, we identify a recurring similarity between the Australian and Norwegian students when discussing their career aspirations. Both English *dream/dreams* and their Norwegian correspondents *drøm/drømmer* demonstrate conventional usage of metaphor when the entity under discussion is less tangible and more abstract. Consider sentences (2) and (3), where Matthew, an Australian student studying a Bachelor of Commerce, and Amund, a Norwegian student studying a Bachelor of Product Design, talk about their future aspirations in terms of a mental object:

(2) Matthew (AuE): I suppose my *dream* job is to become an accountant.

(3) Amund (Norw):⁸

Min	<i>drøm</i>	er	å	bli	bil.designer
my	<i>dream</i>	be.PRS	to	become.INF	car.designer

‘My *dream* is to become a car designer.’

Looking at Matthew’s statement in example 2, MIPVU identifies the lexical unit *dream* to be a metaphor as follows:

- **Contextual meaning:** In this context, the meaning of the noun *dream* corresponds to MM2 ‘something good that you hope you will have or achieve in the future’.
- **Basic meaning:** The basic meaning of the noun *dream* is MM1 ‘something that you experience in your mind while you are sleeping’.
- **Contextual vs. basic meaning:** The contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning and the relationship between the two can be viewed in terms of

⁸ All renditions of Norwegian examples into English follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules (see <https://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/pdf/Glossing-Rules.pdf>).

comparison. We can understand a person's hopes for the future in terms of a mental experience during sleep.

- **Metaphorically used?** Yes.

Identification of the metaphorical word *dream* may form the foundation of analysis of how the conceptualisation of a future career as a mental object (i.e., CAREER IS A MENTAL OBJECT) influences productive or innovative thinking by a student grappling with career options or ambitions. Acceptance of the metaphor may enable students to visualise themselves in a variety of careers, enabling exploration and reflection without direct physical engagement. However, the *dream* metaphor may sometimes be a handicap because it is an idealized version entailing students with unlimited options that does not necessarily align with real-life capabilities or constraints. Instead, the *dream* metaphor could be reappropriated as a story metaphor enabling students to talk about future opportunities and thereby develop or change their narrative based on personal identity construction.

A second similarity in our two data sets is the conceptualisation of higher education and/or the studies pursued by the Australian and Norwegian students as AN OBJECT with an inside and an outside. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) identify the container image schema as a recurring metaphor with a schematic meaning related to activities and states including the physical experience of being 'in' and 'out'. The situated use by the students indicates an agency or preparedness to go forth. This pattern is evident in statements (4) and (5) where the student Kate, an indigenous Australian studying a Bachelor of Psychology, and Lise Helen, a Norwegian student studying orthopaedics, talk of the transition from being 'in' education to going 'out' to working life:

(4) Kate (AuE): It is sort of exciting to think that I can go *out* there and change things.

(5) Lise Helen (Norw):

Vi	er	derfor	veldig	etter.trakt-a	<i>ut</i>	i	arbeids.liv-et
we	be.PRS	therefore	very	after.wish- PTCP	<i>out</i>	in	work.life- ART.DEF.N

'We are therefore very attractive *out* in working life.'

This conceptualisation of movement in or out of a container-like object may be grounded in the metaphor 'environment' used by both groups of students to describe education and the learning context or situation as seen in the following two examples:

(6) Stephen (AuE): I found university was such a different *environment* [Stephen, AuE]

(7) Magnus (Norw):

Noe	av	de	best-e	med
some	of	the.PL	best-PL	with
studie-t	er	det	god-e	lærings.miljø-et
study-	be.PRS	the.	good-N	learning.environment-
ART.DEF.N		ART.DEF.N		ART.DE.N

‘One of the best thing with the studies is the good learning *environment*.’

Although the Australian and Norwegian students often used metaphor in similar ways to discuss their education or future after university, we also observe some differences between them. For instance, our small pool of videos indicates a possible difference in metaphorical ‘taking’ expressed in the discourse of Australian and Norwegian students. Both English *take* and its Norwegian correspondent *ta* are conventionally used as metaphors when the entity being taken is abstract rather than concrete, as we see sentence 8, where Stephen talks about hopes for his future career. Here, Stephen uses a construction whereby he proposes ‘taking’ an abstract entity—knowledge as a psychological resource—and doing something further with it. We see this same pattern in Kate’s statement in sentence (9) discussing the positive benefits of her education for her working life; she too ‘takes’ knowledge—resources-in-hand—and does something with it, reflecting Lent’s (2013) description of preparedness:

(8) Stephen (AuE): In my future, I’d like to *take* what I’ve learnt from anthropology and combine it with my law career.

(9) Kate (AuE): Already I’m able to *take* a lot of what I know and put it back into the community.

By contrast, we find no such pattern in the Norwegian testimonials. Consider sentence (10) where the student Daniel, studying for a bachelor’s in engineering, electronics, and ICT, says he can ‘take’ jobs, and sentence (11) where Niosha explains that he has ‘taken’ a degree:

(10) Daniel (Norw):

Du	kan	med	denne	utdanning-en
you	can	with	this.M	education-M
her	<i>ta</i>	mange	forskjellig-e	jobb-er
here	<i>take.INF</i>	many	different-PL	jobb-PL

‘You can *get* many different jobs with this education.’

(11) Niosha (Norw):

Jeg	ha-r	ta-tt	bachelor	i	revisjons.fag
I	have-PRS	take-PTCP	bachelor	in	auditing.subject

‘I have *taken* a bachelor's in auditing.’

Both Daniel and Niosha have employed the Norwegian verb *ta* in a conventionally appropriate manner. Neither these metaphors, nor those of Stephen and Kate, bear any of the hallmarks of deliberate use of figurative speech, whereby one intentionally employs metaphor to change the perspective of the interlocutor. Instead, they illustrate an important point in Lakoff and Johnson’s CMT, that we frequently use metaphor in conventional ways when expressing ourselves; indeed, it would be difficult to avoid metaphor, in any language. However, a cross-cultural comparison such as ours has the potential to reveal nuances that may otherwise prove elusive. For example, we see here that whereas Stephen and Kate ‘take’ X for a particular purpose, both Daniel and Niosha ‘take’ X more or less as a means in itself. Hence, metaphor analysis facilitates access to situational and context-specific meanings.

It should be noted, however, that there is nothing inherent in the Norwegian language that would preclude Norwegians from using the verb *ta* in a pattern mirroring that of the Australian statements. Absence of any such Norwegian examples might simply be the result of the relatively small data set we have compiled for the present exploratory study. Further research is required to uncover whether this difference is due simply to sample size, or whether it reflects a real difference in the ways in which Australian and Norwegian institutions of higher education and/or their students talk (and perhaps think) about education, career, and future working life. Nevertheless, our identification and analysis of metaphorical language in the students’ testimonials in these promotional videos helps to illuminate personal or organisational conceptions. In addition, it offers the potential to cross-culturally compare and contrast the discourse in light of current research comparing national cultures in shaping the outcomes of career proactivity (e.g., Smale et al., 2019) and notions of career success (e.g., She et al., 2015). The analysis could also be used to compare with postulated metaphors of career to generate conceptual insight about a participant group—students and graduates—that remains largely unexplored in current literature of metaphor and vocational psychology.

<a> Concluding thoughts

In this chapter, a social constructivist perspective was followed that calls attention to language, narrative, and storying to understand and inform the reality of career and working life. This perspective emphasises the interpersonal and social existence of individuals through personal and social narratives. In applying MIPVU to this small study of student testimonials used for promotional purposes by an Australian and Norwegian university, we found the conventional use of indirect metaphors to be far more frequent than use of direct metaphor such as similes, analogies, etc. These results draw attention to the ubiquity of metaphor in the language students use to talk about educational choices and career plans but also suggest that they are not consciously attending to the target concept (e.g., CAREER) in terms of the source domain (e.g., AN OBJECT).

The MIPVU versions used in this study make possible the reliable identification of metaphor in real language situations free of propositions of conceptual structures, cognitive processes, and products. In doing so, identified metaphors can provide a “tool through which career counselors may conceptualize and define their work” (McMahon, 2007, p. 274). From such a basis, an analysis of metaphorical language may indicate a conceptual bridge that helps scaffold communication to enhance awareness and build understanding of career-life preparedness. When metaphorical expressions are identified and explicitly discussed, or developed collaboratively, they can advance the client/counsellor, student/professor, or applicant/employer relationship. For example, practitioners can identify metaphors in their own or client’s communication and then evaluate the capacity of those metaphors to enhance (or not) the clarification of career goals, motivate education and career planning activities, or support individuals’ adjustment to new education or work contexts that advance adaptability, resilience, and coping.

Vocational psychology that considers career behaviour, decision-making, and development continues to benefit from insights drawn from culturally diverse narratives and collective experiences of career success. However, metaphor analysis as a method for the investigation of “notions of collective experience of careers, or collective criteria for career success” remains infrequent in the literature as Inkson (2007, p. 6) points out and an empirical procedure for identification appears altogether absent. Future research that draws from diverse international environments and collects data from different demographic groups (e.g., students and graduate level employees) to examine metaphor

use in narratives of career and working life can potentially reveal unacknowledged variation in the concept of career. The beauty of MIPVU is its potential for adaptability across languages for the identification of metaphor, providing a springboard for linguistic and conceptual analysis that offers a robust foundation for empirical studies of metaphorical language use in vocational psychology.

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