

Academic Paper

Coaching and Mentoring with Metaphor

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Abstract

This conceptual study explores the effective use of metaphor in coaching and mentoring from literature evidence within the helping professions using a combination of three linked qualitative techniques: (i) a thematic network analysis to organise the coded data; (ii) a qualitative meta-synthesis to synthesise new understandings from the network data; and (iii) a critical realist analysis to enable development of a model for practical metaphor use. Qualitative Meta-synthesis inferred seven highly desired outcomes were important aspects of coaching and mentoring when using metaphor; these were formed from higher-order combinations (syntheses) of themes and codes. Critical realist analysis attempted to answer how these desired outcomes could possibly happen and proposed a model for metaphor-based coaching.

Keywords

metaphor, coaching, mentoring, thematic network analysis, qualitative meta-synthesis, critical realism,

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Introduction

This conceptual research sought to explore the effective use of metaphor within coaching and mentoring using a critical realist, themed qualitative meta-synthesis (Finfgeld-Connett, 2018) of primary literature research evidence collected from within the combined and related 'helping professions' (Heron, 2001; Hawkins and Shohet, 2012) of coaching, mentoring, counselling, psychotherapy and adult learning. The focus of this study was on metaphor use in coaching and mentoring but also considered metaphor use in psychotherapy, counselling and adult learning interventions to support the development of an understanding of what's happening in coaching and mentoring without being the focus of the study.

For me, metaphor has a magical quality seemingly able to resolve issues and situations concerning people and their problems, and as a result, I am vitally interested in exploring the phenomenon within coaching and mentoring. In my opinion, metaphor may play a significant role in persuasion and developmental change processes; in relationship building; accessing, symbolising and challenging assumptions; and introducing new frames of reference, all of which are particularly

appropriate to effective coaching and mentoring. My personal belief is that metaphor, used effectively and with volition, affects outcomes positively.

There is much evidence to suggest that metaphor is a highly successful intervention to assist coaching and therapy clients to resolve issues and problems (Way, 2013; Dunbar 2016; 2018; Cohen, 2018; Lloyd, 2018; Grant, 2019). However, it seems that there are no clearly defined or commonly accepted guiding rules on how to use metaphor most effectively in coaching and mentoring practice. This incomplete knowledge is an unsatisfactory situation that this study seeks to resolve. It was anticipated that knowledge generated from this research would provide new insights and inform and benefit coaching and mentoring practice and provide the basis for a new model of metaphor-based coaching.

Since the subject of metaphor and its associated research is so vast, a complete exposition is beyond the limits of this work. In the following focused critical review of some of the research relevant to the study, I first briefly review what a metaphor is, and then consider the consequences of its use in coaching and mentoring. Lastly, I consider the implications of this published content and describe an identified gap in the literature which forms the starting point for my own research study.

Literature Review

Metaphor has a comprehensive history of use in diverse fields including language/linguistics, education, communication, psychotherapy, counselling, neuroscience, politics, advertising/marketing (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980a; 1980b; Ortony, 1993; Putnam et. al., 1996; Cox and Theilgaard, 1997; Kövecses, 2003; 2005; 2010; 2015; Gibbs, 2008; 2017; Lakoff, 2014; Semino and Demjén, 2016; Musolff, 2016; Hidalgo-Downing and Kraljevic-Mujic, 2016; Atanasova and Koteyko, 2017; Landau et. al., 2018; Cohen, 2018; Lloyd, 2018; Grant, 2019) and more recently in coaching (Way, 2013; Dunbar 2016; 2018).

Lakoff and Johnson (1980a) maintain: 'The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another' (p 5). In conceptual metaphor theory, human thought processes are proposed to be largely metaphorical in structure (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980a), and metaphors as linguistic expressions are only possible because there are metaphors present in a person's conceptual system (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980b). In later work, Lakoff and Johnson (1999) suggest metaphors are based on embodied human experiences. In this conceptual metaphor theory view, metaphor is seen as part of a much bigger system of human thought and communication and not simply as an ornamental feature of language. Gibbs (2008) agrees with this position and further proposes that metaphor is the primary schema by which humans conceptualise their experience of the world.

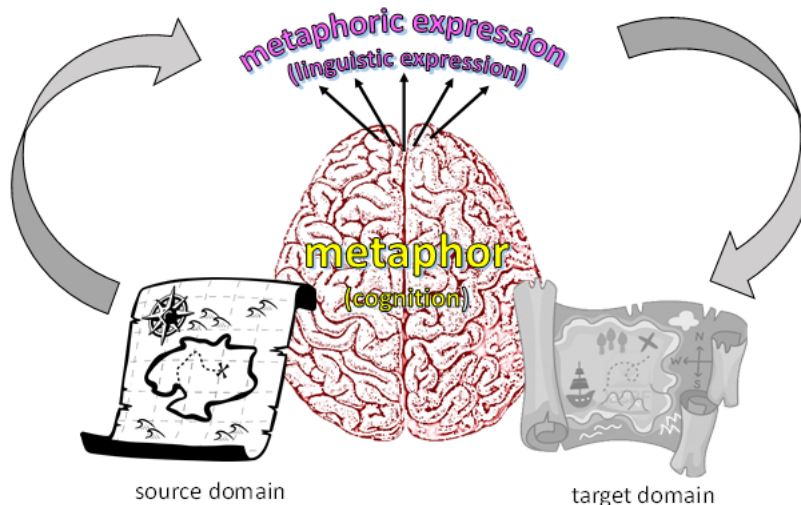
Conceptual metaphors are believed to bring two dissimilar objects (concepts or domains) into correspondence with each other (Figure 1), so that aspects that normally apply to one object are transferred over to the second object.

One of the domains (the source) is typically considered more physical or concrete than the other (the target which is thus more abstract) (Kövecses, 2010). The choice of a particular source to go with a particular target is driven by an experiential basis or on embodied experience. This embodied experience is purported to result in certain neural connections between areas of the brain corresponding to both source and target. The established position now is that particular pairings of source and target domains give rise to metaphorical linguistic expressions which are thus derived from the connection of two conceptual domains (Kövecses, 2015).

In more recent work that is a modern development of Lakoff and Johnson's ideas, Littlemore (2019) argues that when we encounter metaphor, unconscious sensorimotor responses for the source domain are triggered in the brain and body that are similar to those that would be triggered if we actively observed or experienced those actions and senses in the physical world, such that an abstract concept is understood in more concrete terms via metaphor.

Metaphor is also a literary device that can vividly abstract ideas (Carroll, 2008). The figurative meaning of a metaphor can diverge from its literal meaning and often make no sense at all - 'taken literally, metaphoric statements are mostly wrong' (Carroll, 2008, p 143). However, metaphor has the capability to structure, transform and create new knowledge, as well as evoke emotions, change perception and influence evaluations (Lakoff and Turner 1989). Metaphors may be used for conceptualising and making obvious relevant parts of our lives that are otherwise difficult to explain (Kövecses, 2015); sometimes to provide the basis for an empathic response (Semino, 2010). I would suggest that all of these attributes could be useful to coaching and mentoring practice.

Figure 1: My Representation of the Process of Conceptual Metaphor (according to Lakoff and Johnson, 1980a)



Use of Metaphor in Coaching and Mentoring

In this section, I am shifting the discussion to the practice level where I review the use of metaphor in the helping professions of interest - coaching and mentoring.

Clean Language is a client metaphor elicitation technique originally developed by counselling psychotherapist David Groves (Grove and Panzer, 1989; Wilson, 2017); the scope of which was developed and extended by Sullivan and Rees (2008). This technique has now spawned several variants of coaching and consequently a bit of a coaching 'industry' using the methodology. Symbolic Modelling (Lawley and Tomkins, 2000; Way, 2013), Systemic Modelling (Doyle, Tosey, and Walker, 2010), and the so-called Clean Coaching (Dunbar, 2016, 2018) all utilise this verbal method of eliciting clients' metaphoric content without 'contaminating' the relationship with the coach's own content. This technique is based on the premise that client-generated solutions described using their own metaphors are much more resonant to the client than any coach intervention or expert advice (Sullivan and Rees, 2008). It claims to provide in-depth understanding of a person's symbolic world (Tosey, Lawley and Meese 2014) which may lead to superior coaching interventions.

Grove and Panzer (1989) assert that well-intentioned coaches or therapists, through offering their own metaphors which interfere with the client's metaphor generation process, can steal from clients the very experience needed to resolve their personal issues. This might go somewhat against the principles of social constructionism which broadly claims that knowledge is co-constructed (Saunders et. al., 2019). An alternative view is that a carefully crafted metaphor sensitively co-created (Willox et. al., 2010) together by client and helper within an empathic relationship is of considerable value in promoting and assimilating new learning in the client.

Emson (2016) used semi-structured interviews with leaders who had been coached to explore their experience of so-called career "critical moments" using invited metaphoric descriptions. This was with a view to understanding individuals' unconscious sense-making via metaphoric utterances. The findings do suggest that coaches who work with metaphor are more likely to detect and potentially derive understanding about clients' comprehension from the metaphors they use during coaching practice. An earlier study also concerned with critical moments (de Haan et. al., 2010), analysed survey results and interview transcripts for metaphor used by clients to describe experience of critical moments occurring during or after executive coaching. Here, the rich metaphors used were fitted into a model of coaching constructed from content analysis of the same data. The bulk of the metaphors analysed concerned clients' personal 'revelations', with sensory (visual or hearing insights) descriptions prominent. This showed that the critical moments sense-making might be embodied; thereby agreeing with Kövecses, (2010) on metaphor being derived from embodied experience (vide supra). Indeed, Emson (2016) states 'the suggestion that metaphor is fundamentally embodied was also supported by all participants' metaphor use' (p 72) in that study.

Continuing to examine the connection between metaphor and embodied experience in recent coaching research, I note that Britten (2015) examined clients' metaphors used to describe their experiences of coaching. Results emphasised a clear relationship between embodied experience and metaphors that were related by clients' such as a sense of growing as a result of coaching and the felt sense of (suspended) time experienced during the coaching encounter. Metaphor is thus a means of making sense of embodied experience.

Hughes (2009), creatively used clay modelling with management students to create 'metaphors' in order to reflect on their leadership style. This was followed by one-to-one focused coaching to explore the meaning of the art object (metaphor). The use of kinaesthetic arts-based learning through a coaching dialogue is claimed to surface and deepen reflective understandings, improve meaning-making and prompt new action by revealing hidden, unrealised or unspoken issues in ways that are unavailable through written or spoken language (Hughes, 2009) -the sculptures stood as metaphors providing linkages to unconscious thoughts and feelings.

Seto and Geithner (2018) used an object-based coaching method along the lines of Hughes (2009). In their manifestation, clients formulate a problem statement/issue and arrange chosen objects (lucky charms representing symbolic metaphors) onto a felt mat and are invited by the coach to explain their metaphoric landscape using a set of directed questions (Seto and Geithner, 2018). There is a level of co-creation evident in this process that is not apparent in the approach used by Hughes (2009). However, making de novo art from an amorphous blob of clay and interpreting it (Hughes, 2009), rather than simply rearranging inanimate objects (Seto and Geithner, 2018) surely taps into an individual's creativity (Wang, 2016) in more effective ways to access deeper unconscious processes and metaphoric conceptualisation. Through coaching dialogue, the insights inherent can possibly be surfaced, discussed and may lead to new understanding and prompts for action. It is interesting to speculate whether this "doing stuff" with objects or arts-based coaching is a form of the physicality in coaching that Jackson (2016) defines or a version of enactive metaphor (Gallagher and Lindgren, 2015). Can model (metaphor) making be a form of rehearsal (Jackson, 2016) in the safety of a coaching space using somatic experience to facilitate insight and promote action?

There are just two recent research studies in mentoring examining metaphor use, both from a viewpoint of mentoring relationships. Simpson et. al., (2017) used visual metaphor (drawings) analysis to conceptualise the role of the mentor and the meaning of mentorship for engineering students. Here, metaphors were seen to provide insight into the particular interests of both individuals within the mentoring relationship and may help match mentor-mentee pairs for more productive mentoring relationships. Similarly, Izadinia (2017) examines changes in views of student-teacher mentees and their mentors as they go through a real mentoring relationship shown by their constructed metaphors. It was found that when mentees' views and metaphorical images of mentoring corresponded closely with those of their mentors at the start of the mentoring process; when going through the process - stronger personal relationships and higher levels of satisfaction were achieved. However, when mismatches occurred between mentors' and mentees' ideas and expectations or when mentees' mental images only remotely matched the reality of their mentoring experience, feelings of disappointment, lack of achievement and dissatisfaction ensued. Both studies implied metaphors could serve as a tool for making a better match between mentors and mentees.

The starting point of this section briefly reviews written literature suggesting there is an established system for metaphor use in coaching which is concerned entirely with extracting and using clients' metaphors (so-called Clean Coaching). Other recent coaching literature supports paying attention to clients' metaphors as vital and that metaphor use is strongly embodied, endorsing conceptual metaphor theory. What is not apparent in the literature is an established system of metaphor use in coaching and mentoring that takes account of co-creation/co-development of metaphor by both participants.

This brief literature review confirmed my belief; that apart from the so-called Clean Language coaching system (Dunbar, 2016; 2018), which concentrates practice on elicitation of client-derived metaphor, there appears to be no commonly-accepted framework for the coaching profession that uses metaphor more generally (client-generated, coach-generated and co-developed) in pursuit of its aims. This is a gap in the knowledge that I hope my research will fill.

Methodology

This study assumes an ontological, epistemological and axiological stance of critical realism that reality exists externally and independently of observation (Sayer, 1992, 2000; Archer, 1995; Danermark et. al., 2002). Since I needed a philosophical paradigm consistent with the coherent needs of my research inquiry – that of a broad-based search for data about people's experiences of metaphor within the helping professions; about the social structures and typical events that give rise to use of metaphor; and about explanations for what I find, I chose critical realism because of its layered ontological perspective (Vincent and O'Mahoney, 2018), its pluralist methodological approach (Mingers et. al., 2013) and the drive to uncover mechanisms to explain events (Bhaskar 1975).

Critical realism seeks a causal explanation for a given phenomenon by identifying explicitly how structural entities and contextual conditions interact to produce a certain set of events (Wynn and Williams, 2020). The critical realist logic of science is retroduction (abductive reasoning) (Mingers 2013; O'Mahoney and Vincent, 2014; Saunders et. al., 2019), where the aim is to uncover the interacting mechanisms and (social) structures causing a phenomenon (Fletcher, 2017). Retroduction is defined as a reasoning backwards from our experiences to the underlying reality that might have caused them (Saunders et. al., 2019). Bygstad et. al. (2016) provide a specific description of the formalised methodological process of retroduction used in critical realist data analysis to identify mechanisms, involving identification of the most plausible mechanism to explain the events.

This research was a critical realist/themed conceptual synthesis study exploring metaphor use using a linked combination of thematic network analysis to organise the coded data; qualitative meta-synthesis to synthesise new insights from the network data; and critical realist analysis to enable development of a model for practical metaphor use.

The source data for the study was a carefully selected broad selection of topically-related primary qualitative literature research findings identified via systematic search and selection (*vide infra*).

Since the metaphor field is so large, it was necessary to focus the searching a manageable sub-set of topically-related academic research appropriate to the field of coaching and mentoring. I chose to look for content relevant to occurrences of metaphor in the helping professions fields of interest, concentrating my focus on coaching and mentoring but also considering psychotherapy, counselling and adult learning interventions to support the development of understanding.

The study addressed a multi-level set of research questions relating to best practice/most effective use of metaphor in the helping professions; including perceptions of participants during metaphor use, breadth and depth of metaphor use, and evidence of the contribution of metaphor use to successful outcomes perceived.

The terms coaching and mentoring are considered interchangeable in this work as the emphasis in this conceptual research is broadly on metaphor use, not the specific context it is applied in.

Data Collection and Organization

An extensive literature search strategy utilising Boolean search algebra (Bryman and Bell, 2011) for metaphor use in the fields of interest was employed using relevant academic databases (EBSCO, Scopus, PsychINFO, PsychARTICLES, Proquest, SSCI via WoS).

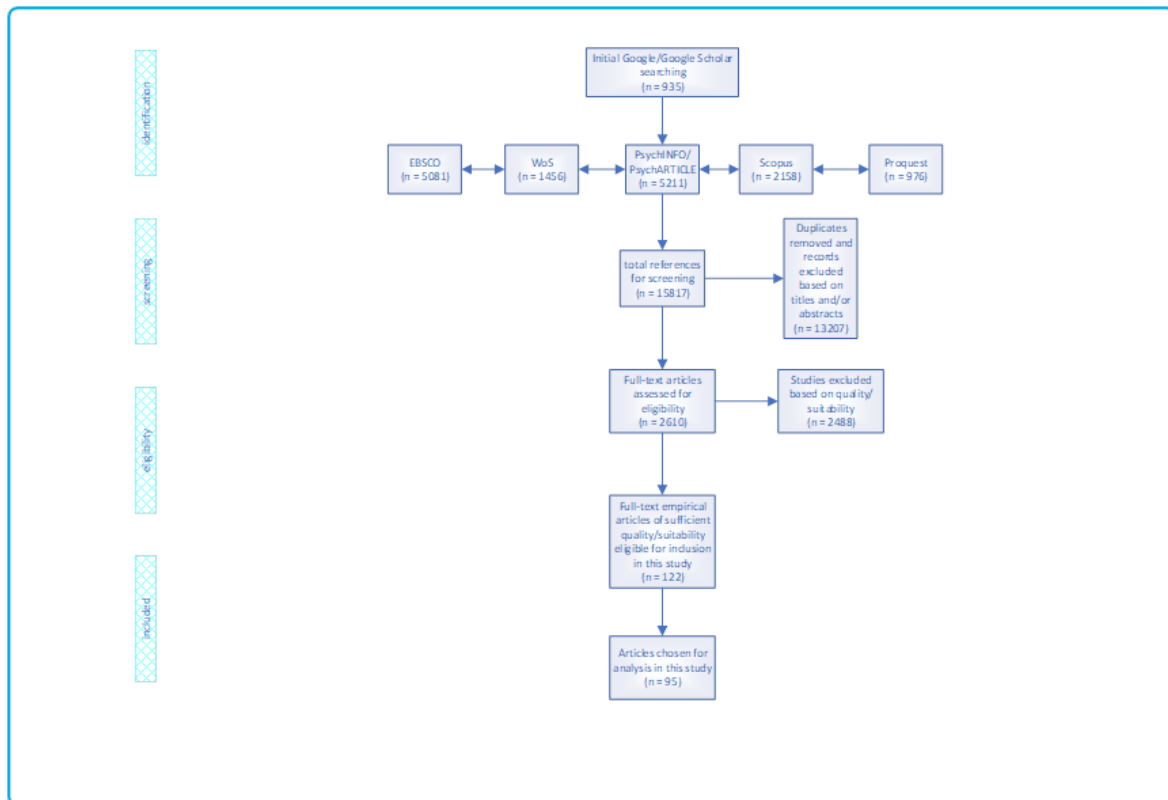
Using this approach, several thousand 'hits' (15,817) were found in total which were filed/manipulated with EndNote® X9, Clarivate Analytics. After removal of duplicates and records based on unsuitable content (keywords, title and/or abstract), I greatly reduced this number to a more workable collection of 2,610 potentially useful references, spread in multiple themes throughout the subject matter of metaphor use.

This dataset was further reduced according to quality and suitability considerations (Carroll et. al., 2011), with the inclusion/exclusion criteria consisting of whether the study was empirical, the research question posed and study design; type of participants; and the methods of data collection and analysis used, giving 122 full-text articles considered to be of sufficient quality/suitability and therefore eligible for inclusion in this study. Reference lists of all papers satisfying the inclusion criteria were also checked for additional relevant citations.

A final set of 95 studies were chosen as reference data for analysis in this work. I used NVIVO 12 Pro, QSR International for coding to assist with this critical realist-themed data analysis process which is described next.

The complete systematic search, appraisal and selection process deployed in this project is depicted in the PRISMA-type diagram (Moher et. al., 2009) in Figure 2.

Figure 2: PRISMA-type flow diagram showing the process by which studies were appraised and selected (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses)



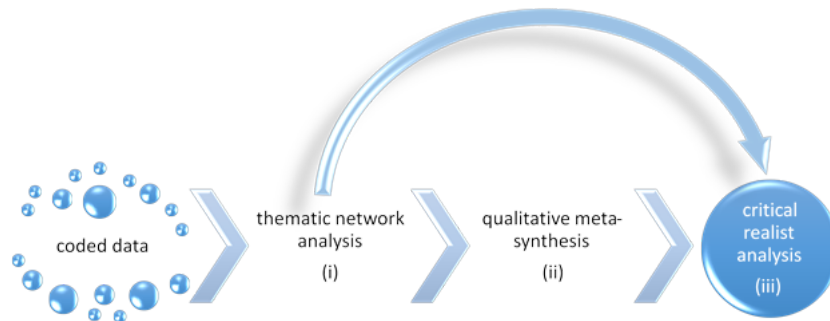
Data Analysis: Three-Step Analysis and Synthesis of Data

The needs of the project were thus to organise this enormous set of data; to explore the synthesis of new insights from the ordered data; and to convert the understandings into a personally relevant coaching model (Lennard, 2010). Overall, the project was guided by critical realism as paradigm according to my preferences stated above.

Critical realism has been variously described as permissive (Fleetwood, 2014) or 'eclectic' (Mingers et. al., 2013, 797) in terms of research methods that can be used with it. Given this flexibility, I chose to fuse the qualitative methods of thematic network analysis (Attride-Stirling 2001; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Clarke and Braun, 2018), qualitative meta-synthesis (Finfgeld-Connett, 2018; Noblit and Hare, 1988) and critical realist analysisA (Bygstad et. al., 2016; Wynn and Williams, 2020) in a linked combination designed to address my concurrent needs of organisation, synthesis and model-making, respectively.

An initial and extensive inductive coding of the reference data (Saldaña, 2013) provided the source data for thematic analysis. The 3 analysis processes were sequentially linked so that the output from the thematic network analysis was fed into the qualitative meta-synthesis and then results from both thematic network analysis and qualitative meta-synthesis were used for the critical realist analysisA model development (Figure 3). The specific meta-synthesis technique used in this study was meta-ethnography (Noblit and Hare, 1988).

Figure 3: Analysis and Interpretation Protocol Used



Data consisting of findings or fully analysed results from within the 95 references formed the qualitative data for initial coding and subsequent thematic analysis in this research. The coding unit was a theme of relevance to the research questions. The data was inductively coded and analysed thematically by the 6-step procedures of Attride-Stirling (2001) and Braun and Clarke (2006) using NVIVO and organised into a network diagram and thematic structure as output from stage 1 of this process.

Qualitative Meta-Synthesis is said to offer both a rigorous scientific approach to data analysis and the contribution of the researcher's subjective understanding and experience towards the results of the research outcomes (Lachal et. al., 2017). For the stage 2 meta-ethnography (Noblit and Hare, 1988; Britten et. al., 2002) qualitative meta-synthesis phase, I assembled selected network themes and the associated organised coded data from the thematic network analysis into synthesis tables, to synthesise the thematic network analysis data into 'supra-themes' running through the data from across the network using the lines of argument criteria of Noblit and Hare (1988). These supra-themes representing a higher-order theme landscape that was not apparent in the thematic network data. The supra-themes and associated codings were the key output from stage 2.

For stage 3, the combined results from the thematic network analysis and qualitative meta-synthesis were taken into a critical realist analysis process (Bygstad et. al., 2016; Wynn and Williams, 2020) with the goal to produce a working model of metaphor use in coaching and mentoring. It is the aim of critical realism to uncover the mechanisms (causal relationships) underpinning empirically observed events (Sayer, 1992). The codes and themes from the thematic network analysis represent an explication of the structure and context of metaphor use. The supra-themes or supra-outcomes developed from the qualitative meta-synthesis were used as the events or observations that occur as a result of the enactment and interaction of mechanisms (Bygstad et. al., 2016). The structure and events (codes, themes, supra-themes) are placed together in a retroduction process table where a process of inference is followed to develop a plausible explanation for the events (desired outcomes) and therefore a credible mode

Findings and Discussion

Data from the 95 source documents were coded using an inductive approach: i.e., a bottom-up process (Miles et. al., 2014) where codes were derived directly from the data, rather than using an a priori approach, and guided by multi-level research questions. Inductive coding was a conscious choice in order not to impose an a priori limiting structure on the initial analysis and to see what emerged de novo from the data. (Dixon-Woods et. al., 2005). This preliminary process, aided by NVIVO software resulted in 87 codings spread across the 95 references. The data corpus consisted of >2100 text sequences contained within these codes. This enormous coded data set was analysed thematically and organised into the thematic network structure (Attride-Stirling, 2001) in Figure 4.

Thematic network analysis suggested that use of metaphor in these related fields could be best understood in terms of six interacting themes. The network structure is organised around one central global/main theme (Relationship) with five organising themes (Coach or Therapist, Coachee or Client, Goals, Outcomes, Safe Space), together with 21 attendant basic themes buttressing the main metaphors.

What was surprising was just how strong the emphasis was on the themes of relationship and figurative safe space for metaphor use in the coded data. The five organising themes comprise of clusters of several associated basic themes anchored around their principal assumption. These organising themes group the ideas proposed by the basic themes and make sense of them. The organising themes together constitute the global theme, Relationship. These themes are all interrelated and 'flow through' the Relationship global theme in a hierarchy – it seems that everything to do with and as a result of metaphor use in this domain is as a result of a strong and enduring relationship – hence Relationship is the core of my thematic network.

From this network structure, a suitable initial defining narrative is: the coach/therapist and coachee/client respectively come together to work in the helping relationship which also creates the safe space for the helping to take place. During this process, goals are defined and worked upon within and through the relationship to generate outcomes. Metaphor is employed by the participants in every aspect of this network.

The thematic network map in Figure 4 therefore represents an ontologically sound picture of metaphor use in coaching and mentoring, based on the rich and complex information contained in the reference studies. The foregoing thematic network analysis tells a story (Attride-Stirling, 2001), and although it can be considered a handy 'working structure' or practical resource of use of metaphor in coaching and mentoring, it is not the overall analysis itself. The thematic network functions as the entry point for deeper investigation/interpretation of the coding texts in the qualitative meta-synthesis next. Intuition suggested that there was much more to be had in this enormous set of coded data and from the initial organisation of it represented by the thematic network analysis in Figure 4. The meta-synthesis also served to arrange the data ready for a much deeper examination in the critical realist analysis process in construction of the coaching model.

Synthesis of the Coded Data

Building on these results, the subsequent qualitative meta-synthesis reinterpreted the thematic data at the organising theme/basic theme level from across the network and inferred that seven additional supra-themes or highly desired outcomes were important aspects of coaching and mentoring when using metaphor (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Seven supra-themes

- | |
|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accountability (responsibility for results) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Movement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Perception |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Effectiveness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transformation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Authenticity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learning/Development |

These were not apparent in the initial thematic analysis – they came from higher-order combinations (synthesis) of themes and codes in an approach true to the original meta-ethnographic method (Noblit and Hare, 1988) using the 'line of argument synthesis' or inference process.

This second round of searching/analysis for patterns in the data generated new insights and uncovered patterns that were not immediately obvious or apparent in the initial round of analysis. The new supra-themes were formed via conjunctions of codes and themes from across the original thematic network analysis (Figure 5) to create new understandings of the phenomenon of effective metaphor use in coaching and mentoring.

This selection of the synthesised supra-themes appears to have some suggestion of structure itself (Figure 6) pertaining to an effective coaching and mentoring process using metaphor. These supra-themes represent highly desirable yet achievable outcomes for coaching and mentoring using metaphor. I see the narrative of the relationships between the supra-themes as: a) participants take responsibility for results at the onset of coaching with metaphor (accountability); b) they 'get going' on the process (movement); c) the belief (or perception) is that the coaching is going well and is on-track; d) there is a developing realisation that real achievements are being made (effectiveness) in the areas of learning/development, transformation and authenticity.

Figure 5: Thematic Network for Use of Metaphor in Coaching and Mentoring

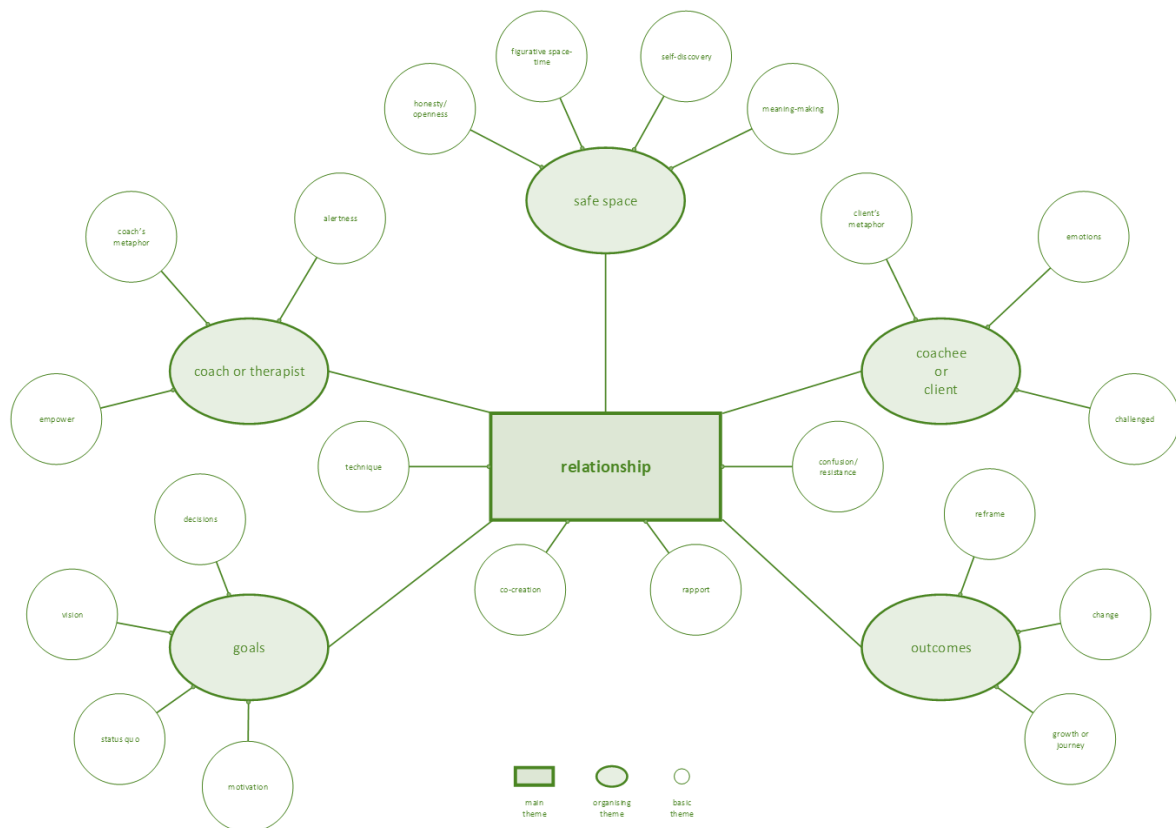
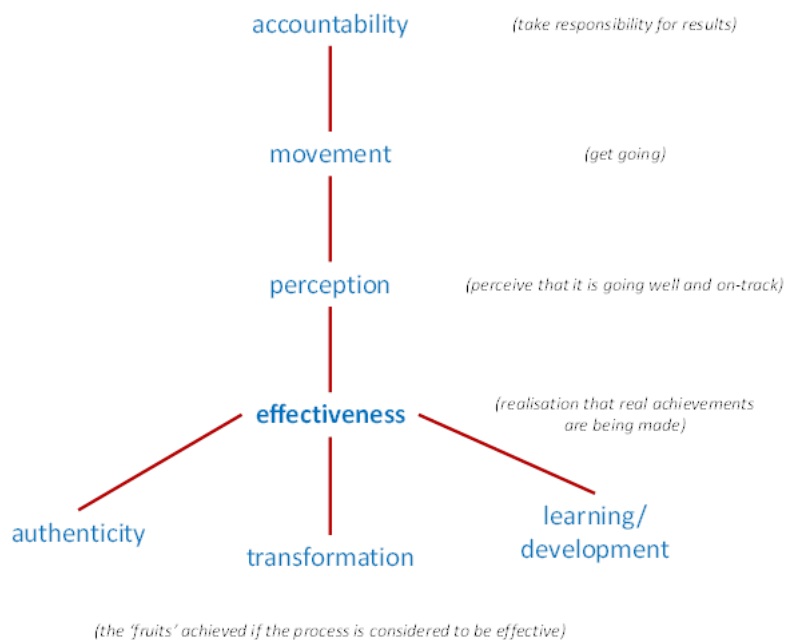


Figure 6: Structure and Flow of Synthesised Supra-Themes resulting from the qualitative meta-synthesis



Accountability is highly Goals-driven. It means taking responsibility for one's own results; coach and coachee separately assume their own responsibility. A key goal of the coach is to get the client to accept responsibility. This accountability transfer can take place in a figurative world when significant rapport exists. Different ways of being can be explored and 'tried on for size' before application back in the real world when the client is accountable and ready to do so. Accountability is a fundamental of coaching and mentoring (McDermott and Jago, 2005). The primary focus of accountability is with and for the client, although the coach is accountable for using their skills/experience to the best of their abilities too. What is perhaps new and important, found in this work is the apparent use of metaphor to construct the relationship so that the client can be held accountable. Metaphor seems to be intimately involved with the processes of goal-setting, challenging the client with the status quo, and in designing or visioning a desirable future outcome.

Movement signifies direction, action, progress, journey using metaphor to assist the process. This new theme corresponds with another supra-theme: effectiveness, to get the client to where he or she wants to be. The 'line of argument' synthesis infers the client makes a decision with coach assistance, has a vision about where to go and why; and has the motivation to stretch for the goal. This emotional process is iterative so as to maintain goal focus and transform fear to courage. The process could be a journey into the unknown for the client but they are not on their own and are supported. Metaphor serves to describe the vision/direction; explore the challenges on the way; and keep a check on how the journey is going. This new theme is action-based and motivational; about getting going – the journey not the destination. The destination can be defined/refined along the way. The key consideration is that change will only happen with movement. Movement or action is another theme not unknown in coaching, and features, for example, in ontological coaching conversations (Sieler, 2014). What was not previously apparent is the importance of metaphor in enhancing these ontological coaching conversations; as found in this study use of metaphor is wide-ranging in developing purpose and generating action, not superficial action. It is about designing a destination, prompting action and being metaphorically accompanied along the way.

Perception is defined here as how the participants experience the use of metaphor within the helping process. The line of argument synthesis submits that this supra-theme is about the coach being greatly attuned to the metaphoric musings and situation of the client and vice versa. There has to be a high level of rapport and co-creation necessary for this ambiguous process to proceed

in the constructed metaphoric world as the way ahead is not yet apparent, and clients 'feel' their way. Metaphor allows a coach to enter into this shared world and/or reflect back to communicate understanding of the client's developing situation. There is a perception on behalf of the coach of walking with the client to enable them to be themselves; to realise themselves. The perception of self-discovery can be tremendously satisfying to participants when they find the right path and the right way on the path. Perception of metaphor in coaching and mentoring is perhaps the most complex of the supra-themes uncovered in this work. We found that metaphor plays a vital role in coaching and mentoring perception with respect to attunement, overcoming ambiguity and self-discovery amongst other things as clients' experience the process.

Bachkirova (2011) speaks broadly on the topic of perception in developmental coaching but makes little mention of metaphor. In earlier work, Claxton and Ageha (1981) describe perception and conscious awareness in terms of attending, concentration and insight, but again there is no mention of metaphor. Perhaps the use of metaphor in the perception of coaching and mentoring is a worthwhile topic for future research?

Effectiveness aligns with new theme: movement and means achievement, being effective, achieving results, finding solutions, success. The line of argument synthesis implies metaphor provides a vital means for the coach to define their roles and those of their client in this co-created process. The supported process is emotional, must be conducted with openness and honesty, often with humour and challenge (often uncomfortable) to support meaning-making. Metaphor can be used to both neutralise difficulties and provide motivation to provide an effective way for the coach-client to connect on a deep level to support and safely challenge the client's meaning-making to achieve results. For effectiveness, the change process takes place in the specially co-created figurative space-time – this is all about the metaphoric creation of that world (a shared mental landscape) for the growth to take place safely and effectively. Effectiveness is a well-known perennial issue in coaching (Jones et. al., 2016) and mentoring (Hamlin and Sage, 2011), and perhaps the use of metaphor in promoting and ensuring effectiveness is not that well-known?

The line of argument synthesis for transformation indicates a co-created mutual realisation that the client holds the metaphoric keys to his/her own destiny. The coach's tuned-in but often spontaneous metaphor interventions/reframes are key to the harmoniously-created relationship necessary to keep the client's levels of awareness (perception), insight and motivation high. The symbols co-created in the figurative space promote honest self-searching and discovery in the client.

The line of argument synthesis suggests learning/development is more about the metaphoric journey rather than the final destination. The conceptual change process is emotional and close support from the coach is important. Artful use of metaphor serves to engage client attention on a deep (unconscious) level in co-constructed exploration. Meaning-making and the ambiguity can then be experimented with in the safety of the figurative space. The rewards are high; with this guided support the empowered client is able to directly engage the ambiguity to assume command of personal learning and development.

It is clear from this research that metaphor has a significant role in so-called helping conversations concerning transformation and transformative learning. Mezirow's theory of transformative learning has its foundations in the rational mind and is concerned with reason and logic playing a role in perspective transformation (Mezirow, 2000). However, Boyd and Myers (1988, p 277) earlier psychological work on transformative education proposes that alternative expressions of meaning such as symbols, images, metaphors can assist in creation of personal vision as long as the learner is receptive to new possibilities and recognises that the message is true and authentic. So, the use of metaphor in this regard is not new, and this research work would agree and support this notion.

Furthermore, Dirx (2008), Grabov (1997) and Taylor (2001), have also all criticised Mezirow's transformational learning theory and its emphasis on rationality and suggest that emotions (along with imagination, intuition and creativity) all play a major role in adult learning. In this work, we have a clear indication of the role of metaphor in helping to 'process' the emotional content of helping conversations to achieve cognition, and so, this research also supports that perspective.

Authenticity is about being comfortable with who you are or finding out during coaching how to be at one with the world and in some control of one's life. The line of argument synthesis: the coach closely attends to their client's metaphoric utterances, allowing the client to become relaxed and fully absorbed into their inner subjective experiences and to honestly share this until now covert world. The rewards are great. Self-discovery/meaning-making are the result of this supported metaphoric inner world exploration. There is a perceived need within coaching (Cox et. al., 2014) and in developmental coaching, specifically (Bachkirova, 2011) to help people express themselves with more authenticity and to have more authentic (coaching) dialogue. Perhaps the role of metaphor in this regard has been somewhat unrealised to-date.

Development of the Coaching Model for Metaphor Use

The critical realist analysis attempted to answer how the desired outcomes could possibly come about and proposed a working model for this type of metaphor-based coaching. My process of critical realist analysis began with a re-examination of the data derived from the thematic network analysis. Themes are codes that have been through a first level of organisation, so, the theme structure developed in the thematic network analysis represents a useful explication of the structure and context necessary in critical realist analysis (Wynn and Williams, 2020). For example, key empirical findings amongst others were the heightened sense of awareness of client's metaphor and willingness to engage and explore to co-develop. The metaphorical description of status quo and the vision (desired future outcome in a kind of metaphorical gap analysis) and the progress towards outcomes. The strong sense of relationship between coach and client and the creation of the safe space where the metaphorical helping process can happen. These findings were all revealed in the coded detail of the basic themes buttressing the organising themes in the thematic network analysis.

The seven supra-themes developed from the qualitative meta-synthesis were used in this critical realist analysis as the events or observations that occur as a result of the enactment and interaction of mechanisms (Wynn and Williams, 2020). The goal of a critical realist study is to search for causation by inferring the contextual conditions for a particular causal mechanism to take effect and result in the trends observed in a process termed retrodution (Bygstad et. al., 2016).

The process of retrodution was followed to examine what conditions in the network structure might be the cause of the highly desired outcomes in coaching and mentoring using metaphor. The results of this are depicted graphically in a model of best practice metaphor use in coaching and mentoring (Figure 6).

Conclusion

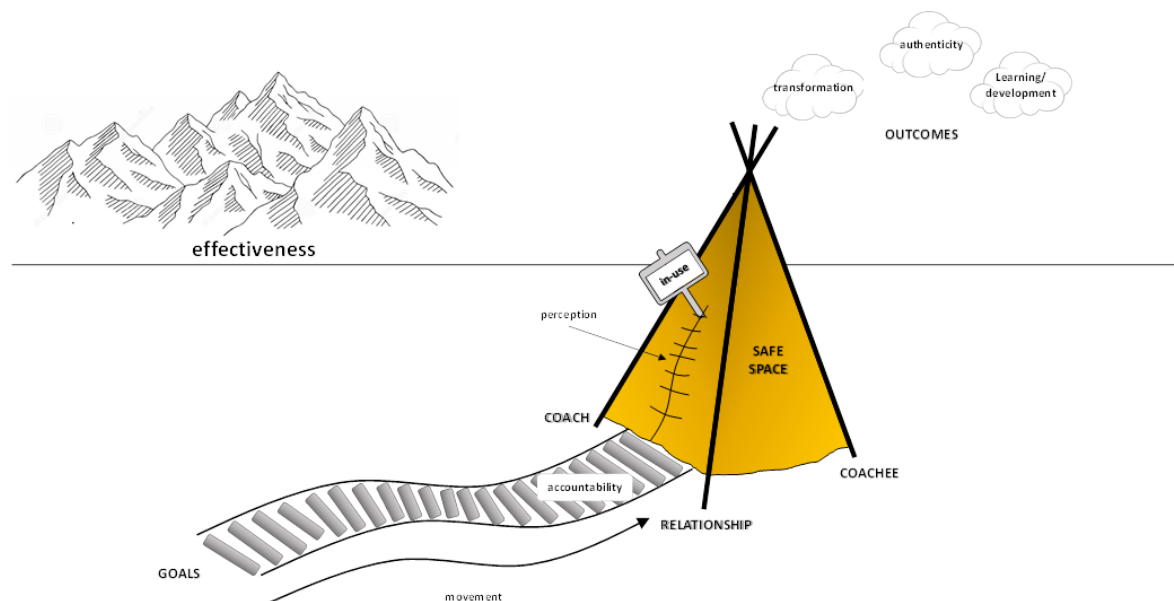
This study is the first to examine metaphor use from the literature in coaching and mentoring and related fields using sequential qualitative analyses consisting of a combination of thematic network analysis, qualitative meta-synthesis and critical realist analysis.

Some conclusions that may be drawn from this meta-synthesis research are the strong sense of relationship between coach and client and the creation of the figurative safe space where the metaphorical helping process can happen should be a goal of coaching or mentoring when using

metaphor. Generation of safe space allows the relationship factors to be maximised so that goals can be enacted and desired outcomes realised. Further, it seems that high level of metaphor use leads naturally to creation of safe space. Participants, particularly the coach, wishing for successful coaching and mentoring should be open to using metaphor at every relevant point in coaching and mentoring relationships to promote success. Metaphor does promote and enable a variety of participants' experiences in coaching; some very positive; others very challenging. Metaphor appears to be a useful tool to bring things to the fore to allow resolution of issues and situations concerning people and their problems.

A final conclusion to be taken from this is that there are many versatile ways to use metaphor effectively within coaching and mentoring and that there is a need for a model of effective metaphor use to provide new insights and inform and benefit practice. This has been a central undertaking of this research study and the result is depicted in Figure 7.

Figure 7: My 'Metaphor Tent' Model of the Effective Use of Metaphor in Coaching and Mentoring



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