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## **Metaphor Analysis in Vocational Counselling: Moving from Intuitive to Reliable Metaphor Identification**

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## **Metaphor Analysis in Vocational Counselling: Moving from Intuitive to Reliable Metaphor Identification**

This article introduces a metaphor identification method that can be readily applied to vocational psychology research and practice and contextualised to explore the phenomenon of career at a deeper level of experience. It offers a practically oriented demonstration of the Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit (Steen et al., 2010) on an illustrative sample of student testimonials from Higher Education promotional videos from Australia and Norway. Metaphors as understood through Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) conceptual metaphor theory have been shown to influence the attitudes and behaviours of the individual and organisation and orient the mindset of their audiences. The article extends the scholarly work about career metaphors championed by Inkson (2004), Inkson and Amundson (2002), and Mignot (2000) to offer a reliable method for investigating metaphor in language and communication.

*Keywords:* career; higher education; linguistics; metaphor; narratives; MIPVU

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## Introduction

Metaphor has been recognised as fundamental to understanding the notion of career (Inkson & Amundson, 2002; Inkson, Dries, & Arnold, 2015; Mignot, 2000; Super, 1957, 1980), meaningfulness in the workforce (Lengelle, Meijers, & Hughes, 2016; Savickas, 2011), and organisational behaviour more broadly (Cornelissen, Oswick, Christensen, & Phillips, 2008; El-Sawad, 2005; Morgan, 2006). Metaphors underlie basic analogical reasoning (Gentner & Stevens, 1983; Gibbs, 1994), are a personal and powerful influence on a range of social psychological phenomena (Landau, Meier, & Keefer, 2010; Thibodeau, Hendricks, & Boroditsky, 2017). They are also context sensitive, thereby enabling the exploration of individual, cognitive, and socio-cultural interactions (Kövecses, 2005; Yu, 1995). The analysis of metaphor is therefore a credible research method for investigating social, cultural, historical, and contextually situated language, thought, and behaviour. Although already established in disciplines such as linguistics, social psychology, and psycholinguistics, researchers and practitioners in the discipline of vocational psychology are without a comprehensive approach to metaphor analysis, i.e., a systematic means of metaphor identification that is not reliant on intuitive methods as its foundation. Intuition is difficult to apply in a consistent manner so replication of any such studies would be rendered impossible and comparison between different studies would be extremely problematic.

This article adds to the study of metaphor in the field of vocational psychology by presenting an analytical rather than intuitive approach to the identification of metaphorical language: The Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit (Steen et al., 2010). This procedure provides a valid, reliable, and replicable method for analysing metaphorical language that can be contextualised to guidance and career counselling, particularly narrative

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analysis. Metaphor identification clarifies the propositions in discourse and may build a bridge from linguistic analysis to conceptual analysis, i.e., from language to thought. Given that metaphor is a universal phenomenon (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), metaphor identification can be seen as a facilitatory resource for the career practitioner to promote new perceptions and greater awareness when discussing education and future career.

To this end, our aim is to bring together narrative approaches to career with the conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) advanced by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) on which the cognitive linguistic approach to metaphor analysis is based. A practically oriented, step-by-step demonstration of Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit (MIPVU) is given from a sample of student testimonials in Higher Education (henceforth, HE) promotional videos, presenting accounts of student experiences in specific institutions from Australia and Norway. Our discussion centres upon the proposed methodological approach, illustrated by selected examples from the HE discourse, as a valuable means to enrich narrative approaches to career and contribute to research and counselling practices. Finally, implications of our approach are discussed, and further thoughts offered on possible areas of application.

### *A cognitive linguistic framework*

The significance of metaphor to individual meaning making is recognized by Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) CMT. Gibbs (2017) expands this by adding that metaphor involves a coordinated enactment where a person's 'speech and actions do not merely reflect an outward manifestation of an inner, previously encoded conceptual metaphor' but instead a person conceptualises and expresses metaphor 'in the very moment of her movement and speech' (p. 252). Hence, research into metaphorical language in situated contexts of discourse offers

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scope to understand how individuals conceptualise and embody notions of career and sheds light on the learning process. At the conceptual level, metaphor involves a mapping from a more concrete source domain of knowledge (e.g., A JOURNEY) to a more abstract target domain (e.g., CAREER). Boers (2000) points out that ‘figurative expressions can often be traced back to a limited number of source domains’ (p. 553). For example, people can conceive of time as a spatially positioned object (e.g., *Leave the past behind you*), a movable object (e.g., *Time flies*), or as something of value (TIME IS MONEY e.g., *Don’t waste my time*). Such recurring domains or themes reveal structure and organisation in metaphor usage.

People often employ metaphors to highlight a perceived similarity or comparison between two things (e.g., EDUCATION and A JOURNEY). Such relations are evident in the italicized words in the two examples below, which are taken from our data. In (1), Damien, an Australian Doctor of Education student, talks about education and career using the word *journey* when referring to his graduation. By contrast, the Norwegian student Daniel, studying Bachelors of Engineering, Electronics, and ICT, talks about education and career as a movable object when discussing the advantages of an education that launches opportunities for a career in industry where one may choose between the oil, gas, and energy sectors; see (2):

- (1) Today is the final part of the *journey* [and] I think it signifies the next part of the *journey*.
- (2) Du trenger ikke nødvendigvis *sitte med en ting* resten av livet ditt.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> While only idiomatic translations of Norwegian examples are given in this article, readers may access full translations following the Leipzig glossing rules on our Open Science Framework project website (<https://osf.io/bk32q/>).

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‘You don't necessarily have to *keep doing one thing* [literal: *sit with one thing*] for the rest of your life.’

These two examples illustrate conventionally used and perhaps under-recognised metaphors. Metaphor identification is crucial to later analysis because metaphor use is often subtle and beyond people’s conscious awareness (Steen, 2017), and thus necessitates an explicit identification procedure to ensure validity. Moreover, CMT maintains that, beyond mere denotative meaning, such metaphorical words also indicate something about the conceptual structures in the mind – that is, how individuals actually conceive of and understand (in this case) education and career.

Metaphor identification can enrich the narrative approach to career development by offering a resource for understanding content, process, and rationale (i.e., the what, how, and why) of people’s lived experiences. The visual imagery or embodied sensations of a physical journey for instance, make the unfamiliar more familiar through brief, compact associations via metaphor. Metaphors play a role in facilitating, organising, and extending people's understanding of themselves and others (e.g., emotions and time). For example, the journey metaphor may highlight core or irrational beliefs related to career development in the first year after graduation that could hinder short-term goal setting. What is more, metaphors serve as devices that facilitate knowledge construction and transfer in communication, described by Kopp (1995) as word-pictures employed to convey meaning.

### ***Metaphor identification***

Within the paradigm of cognitive linguistics, metaphors may be identified in spoken and written discourse, as well as other modes such as gesture and images. For the purposes of

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linguistic metaphor identification at the word or phrase level, we propose MIPVU (Steen et al., 2010) as an objective tool that can be applied to the study of career (Creed & McIlveen, 2017). This is pertinent given the potential for MIPVU to be applied to contemporary theories and constructs that emphasise meaningfulness, such as life themes, career stories, and calling (Dik & Duffy, 2009; McMahon & Watson, 2012; Savickas, 2012). The MIPVU protocol provides a basis for proposing metaphorical frames comparable to Musolff's (2006) notion of 'mini-narratives' that provide 'focal points for conceptualizing the target topic' (p. 23). In addition, metaphorical frames may carry evaluative and attitudinal biases that are potentially related to particular beliefs and preferences of individuals or groups such as national discourse communities.

For example, consider the following sequence in our Australian transcripts where Kate, an indigenous Australian second year Bachelor of Psychology student, talks about the *support* she has found at her university:

- (a) My name is Kate and I'm a second year psychology student at USQ.
- (b) I would tell all other students who are considering study not to let anything hold them back.
- (c) **There's a lot of *support* at university.**
- (d) We have tutoring, we have mentoring.
- (e) I'm becoming really excited now that I've sort of reached that halfway mark with my degree.

- (f) As I'm studying, I start finding more opportunities and more doors opening and at this point in time I'm overwhelmed with where I can go with my degree and my studies.

First, we applied MIPVU to this passage and then the identified linguistic metaphors such as *support* were analysed. Actions feature in the sentence in line (b) where Kate encourages future students to not let events in their lives '*hold them back*' from enrolling in a HE program. Then, in line (c), the metaphorical word *support* frames the passage as a construction in terms of the more basic sense of an object bearing a weight. This metaphor is semantically associated with the positive action of helping, and one could think of the role of *support* in the act of development or formation (CONSTRUCTION) of Kate's education, enabled by tutoring and mentoring from university personnel (ACTIONS). In constructing her education and future career, Kate conceptualises an active process that is both temporal and spatial (line (e): '*halfway mark of my degree*') where she is '*finding more opportunities and more doors opening*' in line (f). Kate also indicates active motion in line (f) with 'terms of where I can *go* with my degree and my studies'. The metaphorical frame suggests that the notion of *support* can be understood with respect to the concept of EDUCATION in terms of source domains such as AN ACTION and A CONSTRUCTION.

When studied empirically, discourse in individual narratives can be identified, described, and explained as distinct, socially-situated events—discourse events—that can be examined as psychological and social processes with products, such as metaphor, seen as socio-cultural representations. MIPVU is used to identify primarily two types of metaphorical utterances in discourse. The most frequent type is indirect metaphor (Steen et al., 2010). Here there is a contrast between the contextual and the more basic sense of the word in question, Author approved manuscript. The citation of the published article: Creed, A. & S. Nacey (2020). Metaphor Analysis in Vocational Counselling: Moving from Intuitive to Reliable Metaphor Identification. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, DOI: [10.1080/03069885.2020.1763915](https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2020.1763915)

and that contrast may be attributed to comparison. The more basic sense is defined as a word's most concrete, specific, and human-oriented sense. For instance, the word *cold* in the sentence *My boss gave me a cold look* is an example of an indirect metaphor because the contextual sense is 'not seeming friendly or sympathetic' whilst the more basic sense is 'with a low temperature or a temperature that is lower than normal' (both senses found in the 'Macmillan Dictionary', explained further on, in our Phase 2: Metaphor identification section). An important feature of most indirect metaphors is that they usually represent a conventionally appropriate way of communicating our thoughts and feelings, acceptable as 'ordinary' language rather than as deliberately ornate language. This is consistent with the CMT view that metaphor is intrinsic to the human conceptual system; the words people use derive from the metaphors structuring their thought.

A second type of metaphor identified by MIPVU is direct metaphor. Here there is no contrast in meaning between the contextual and basic senses, even though the underlying reasoning involved in the utterance is metaphorical. In such cases, metaphorical comparison is expressed in the form of analogies, similes, etc. which 'directly' access the basic sense of the word in question. An example is the word *battle* in the simile *Her job felt like a daily battle*, where both the contextual and basic senses are identical: the 'fight' sense. In this case, the preposition *like* functions as a metaphorical flag, alerting the practitioner to the insertion of a referential domain (war) that differs from the main topic of the sentence (work) and thereby introducing the underlying conceptual metaphor WORK IS WAR.

### ***Integrating metaphor identification with narrative approaches to career***

Since Super's (1957) classical developmental theory conceptualising career as a vehicle or lifelong path, more recent approaches advance the psycho-biographical (Young & Collin, Author approved manuscript. The citation of the published article: Creed, A. & S. Nacey (2020). Metaphor Analysis in Vocational Counselling: Moving from Intuitive to Reliable Metaphor Identification. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, DOI: [10.1080/03069885.2020.1763915](https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2020.1763915))

1992), the dialogical (Hermans & Gieser, 2012), and the integration of the personal and biographical (Savickas, 2009). These narrative approaches often describe the conceptualisation of career as life themes and stories. As Savickas (2001) explains, ‘a career narrative comprehends the vocational self and shapes the further elaboration of this self-conception in the work world’ (p. 315). Metaphor identification and narrative analysis thus comfortably go hand in hand: metaphor offers a way of understanding one thing in terms of another, while narrative is an interpretive device concerning relationships and processes.

Nonetheless, metaphor identification and analysis in personal narratives remains under-developed in the career development literature. Availing vocational practitioners and researchers of a valid and reliable means of metaphor identification at this early stage of development can, firstly, create awareness of the frequently conventional nature of metaphor and, secondly, facilitate their ability to scrutinise the mapping of knowledge, implications, and shared attributes of a source domain onto the target domain. In the next section, the theoretical and methodological viewpoint is illustrated with an exploratory investigation of Australian and Norwegian students’ testimonials in university videos promoting education and career-related benefits of HE.

### **Case Study**

In this section, an illustrative case study is used to draw attention to three distinct phases of analysis to showcase MIPVU and scaffold understanding of its role in metaphor analysis:

- **Phase 1: Text preparation.** The Australian and Norwegian online videos were downloaded, and the narratives of all students were transcribed.

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- **Phase 2: Metaphor identification.** All metaphor-related words (MRWs) in the Australian video transcriptions were identified using the original MIPVU protocol, developed for English discourse (Steen et al., 2010). MRWs in the Norwegian video transcriptions were identified using the Scandinavian version of the MIPVU protocol (Nacey, Greve, & Falck, forthcoming).
- **Phase 3: Metaphor Analysis.** Metaphorical frames were proposed based on possible conceptual metaphors informed by results from the MIPVU analysis in phase 2.

### ***Materials***

Our primary data for metaphor analysis consists of short narratives from HE students and graduates: 30 transcripts from student testimonials in publicly accessible online videos used for promotional purposes on the university websites of an Australian university and a Norwegian university: University of Southern Queensland and Oslo and Akerhus University of Applied Sciences (since renamed to Oslo Metropolitan University). Although these are authentic and contemporary university communications, the authors have neither insight nor access to the details of video production related to e.g. participant selection, background information, payment for participation, or the extent of scripting associated with the individual narratives. The possibility of scripting means our findings may not reflect the true opinions of the individuals providing the testimonials. Nevertheless, our primary interest lies in the demonstration of MIPVU utilising the video testimonials because they situate ‘typical’ student experiences of education and career/working futures in the context of HE. Regardless of whether or not the videos were scripted, their ultimate goal was to attract new students, presumably in a manner that the target group would find familiar, engaging, useful, and

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recognisable.

Fifteen videos from one university in each country, published online between 2013 and 2016, were randomly selected for analysis. The Australian videos feature seven female students and eight male students whereas the Norwegian videos feature five female students and ten male students. The word count length in the Australian videos is higher ( $n = 3369$ ), ranging from a low of Kate with 145 words to a high of Eliza with 319 words. By contrast, the word count in the Norwegian videos ( $n = 2825$ ) ranges from Niosha with 71 words to Amund with 304 words. Overall, the word count length of the Australian videos is more uniform, and the average word count per video length is higher in the Norwegian videos. The videos are short, varying from half a minute to two minutes in duration.<sup>2</sup> The similar timing and word counts lend further support to our being able to draw valid comparisons between the videos from the two countries, because they not only deal with the same general themes for the same purpose, but they also share parallel formats. Note that reporting the total word count in the piece of discourse under investigation is essential when applying MIPVU to longer stretches of text because it gives readers an indication of the scale of the study and allows for later calculations of metaphor density.

### ***Phase 1: Text preparation***

All the online videos of the Australian (AuE) and Norwegian (No) student narratives were located, then downloaded and transcribed. Universities typically make different types of promotional videos; some are mainly visual while others bring in the perspectives of several

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<sup>2</sup> The videos, analysed transcriptions and R code are available at our Open Science Framework project website (<https://osf.io/bk32q/>). A template is provided for metaphor identification for scholars to adapt for their own research.

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students. The present study is restricted to only those videos that were ‘testimonials’ of a single student who was either currently enrolled or a very recent alumnus, discussing various aspects of HE in relation to his/her own experiences.

### ***Phase 2: Metaphor identification***

Annotation with MIPVU entails systematic, manual analysis. The procedure is broken down into six steps, summarised in Figure 1. To demonstrate MIPVU and the subsequent categorisation of metaphors into source domains, we provide a step-by-step illustration of the metaphor identification process, as applied to two linguistic metaphors found in the data—*give* and *take*. These verbs are particularly noteworthy due to their relatively frequent usage in both languages and contexts.

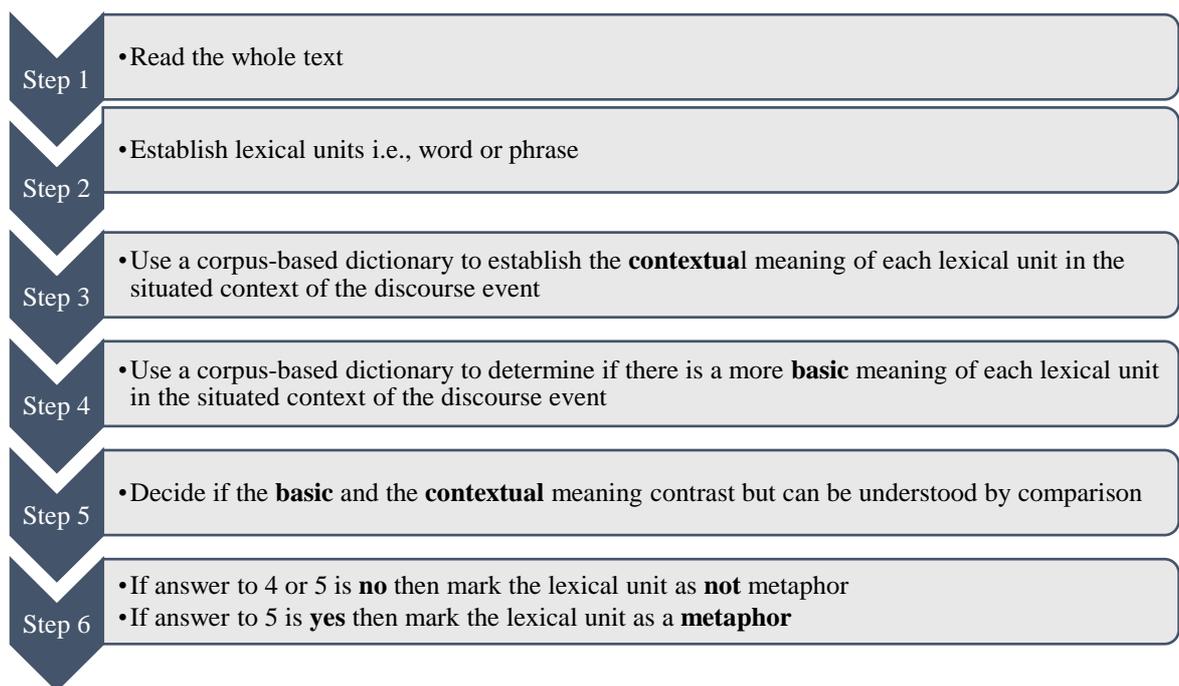


Figure 1. A visual representation of the MIPVU protocol steps adapted from Steen et al. (2010)

#### *Illustrative example 1. The English verb give and its Norwegian correspondent gi*

were selected for demonstration purposes because of a recurring similarity identified between Author approved manuscript. The citation of the published article: Creed, A. & S. Nacey (2020). Metaphor Analysis in Vocational Counselling: Moving from Intuitive to Reliable Metaphor Identification. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, DOI: [10.1080/03069885.2020.1763915](https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2020.1763915)

the Australian and Norwegian students when discussing their learning in the context of HE. Following MIPVU, both the English verb *give* and the Norwegian verb *gi* are shown to be metaphorical in use, both in conventionally appropriate, codified ways. More specifically, the English verb is identified as a metaphor as follows (with Norwegian MIPVU procedure yielding identical results, and hence not presented here):

**Step 1:** Read the whole text.

Text analysis begins with reading the entire text to ensure a thorough contextual understanding prior to coding. Consider sentences (4) and (5) where Australian Eliza, a third year Bachelor of Applied Media student, and Norwegian Daniel, a Bachelors of Engineering, Electronics, and ICT student talk about opportunities arising from education and university life in terms of a physical action scenario.

(4) It [the university] has *given* me that opportunity to make friends here. [Eliza]

(5) Disse tre årene som jeg har studert nå har *gitt* meg veldig mye.

‘The three years I have studied have *given* me a lot.’ [Daniel]

**Step 2:** Determine the lexical units.

The unit of analysis for MIPVU is the individual lexical unit. Consequently, each such lexical unit in the texts under investigation must be demarcated. Although there are exceptions, the majority of lexical units consist only of a single orthographic word, i.e. a string of letters preceded by a blank space and followed by either a blank space or punctuation. Because the goal in this article is to facilitate the application of MIPVU by novices to the procedure, however, we recommend treating all orthographic units as single words, with two exceptions:

1) when reference dictionaries indicate otherwise (as with e.g., phrasal verbs such as *look up*,

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*turn back*, etc.), and 2) with contractions (e.g., *I'm* should be separated into two units, *I* and *'m*). Such a simplification will not seriously affect later analyses, although we further recommend that researchers briefly explain in published works how lexical units were demarcated, to facilitate any future comparability studies.

**Step 3:** Determine the contextual meaning of each lexical unit.

Contextual meanings are determined through dictionary consultation, at least for languages when that is possible – as it is for English, with its wide array of high-quality corpus-based, online dictionaries. Following the precedent set by MIPVU, the ‘Macmillan Dictionary for Advanced English Learners’ (<https://www.macmillandictionary.com>) is proposed as the primary reference tool and ‘Bokmålsordboka’ (<http://ordbok.uib.no/>) for Norwegian definitions. Consider *give* in sentence (4):

- **Contextual meaning:** to cause a general result or effect (i.e., the fourth sense entry in the Macmillan Dictionary)

**Step 4:** Determine if there is a more basic meaning for each lexical unit.

MIPVU defines the more basic meaning as the most concrete, specific and human-oriented sense found in the dictionary. For *give* in sentence (4):

- **Basic meaning:** to put something in someone’s hand, or to pass something to someone (i.e., the first sense entry in the Macmillan Dictionary)

**Step 5:** Decide if the contextual and basic meanings of each lexical unit can be contrasted and understood by comparison.

The contextual and basic meanings of *give* clearly differ; dictionaries indicate such

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differences by separating them in two different sense entries (as seen in the example of *give*), as opposed to merging them in a single sense entry. A simple difference in meaning between the two senses, however, is not sufficient to judge the word as metaphorical. To be metaphorical, the two identified senses must be related through some sort of comparison.

- **Contextual vs. basic meaning:** The contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning and the relationship between the two may be viewed in terms of comparison. The transfer of something abstract (e.g., opportunities) can be understood in terms of the physical transfer of something concrete.

**Step 6:** Label each lexical unit as metaphorical if the answer to step is ‘yes’.

- **Metaphorically used?** Yes. The contextual meaning contrasts with its basic sense, and the relationship between the two can be viewed in terms of comparison. Therefore, the word support is labelled as metaphorical.

*Illustrative example 2.* Next, some differences can be observed with respect to how the Australian students in the videos employ the verb *take* compared to how the Norwegian students use its translation correspondent *ta* – both of which also draw upon the source domain of AN ACTION, similarly to *give/gi*. Consider the sentences (6) and (7) from the Australian data and the Norwegian data, respectively.

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

(7) Jeg har *tatt* bachelor i revisjonsfag.

‘I have *taken* a bachelor’s in accounting.’ [Niosha]

As previously described with respect to the analysis of *give*, **Step 1** of MIPVU requires practitioners to read *the entire text(s) to ensure a thorough contextual understanding*

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*prior to coding*. **Step 2** then requires them to determine the individual lexical units, which here adhere to the general ‘rule of thumb’ of equating lexical units with single orthographic words: *take* (from the infinitive *take*) in (6) and *tatt* (from the infinitive *ta*) in (7).

**Steps 3-6** for English *take* in sentence (6):

- **Contextual meaning:** to move something (abstract) from one place to another
- **Basic meaning:** to move something or someone (concrete) from one place to another
- **Contextual vs. basic meaning:** The contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning and the relationship between the two can be viewed in terms of comparison. The moving of knowledge (abstract) can be understood in terms of moving a concrete entity.
- **Metaphorically used?** Yes.

**Steps 3-6** for Norwegian *ta* in sentence (7):

- **Contextual meaning:** *gripe, holde (abstrakt)*; ‘to grasp, to hold (abstract)’
- **Basic meaning:** *gripe, holde (konkret)*; ‘to grasp, to hold (concrete)’
- **Contextual vs. basic meaning:** The contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning and the relationship between the two can be viewed in terms of comparison. The attainment of education can be understood in terms of physical holding.
- **Metaphorically used?** Yes.

To sum up, the verb *take/ta* is metaphorical in use in both cases, even though the analyses are slightly different due to the variation between the two languages.

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### *Phase 3: Metaphor analysis*

In the final phase, these same two illustrative examples are used to demonstrate the foundational purposes of MIPVU to conceptual analysis.

*Illustrative example 1.* The physical motion involving a human action of providing someone with something that becomes his/her possession—the English verb *give* and the Norwegian verb *gi*—realises a metaphorical frame: EDUCATION IS AN ACTION. In this instance, the entity of a university and/or the even more abstract entity of education is ‘performing’ the action of giving, via relationship building (networking) and study conducted during the HE experiences. Furthermore, the object being provided to the students for their ‘possession’ is an opportunity and experience from the situation that they will be able to apply to their future career development and working life, entailing EDUCATION/CAREER IS A POSSESSION.

*example 2.* Although both *take/ta* are identified as metaphorical and realise the frame EDUCATION IS AN ACTION, we find that the Australian Bachelor of Psychology student Kate in (6) ‘takes’ her education from one metaphorical location to another: in this instance, it is for the stated purpose of contributing to the community. By contrast, the Norwegian Bachelor of Accounting student Niosha in (7) ‘takes’ her degree more or less as a means in itself. While there is nothing in Norwegian that would preclude a use parallel to that of Kate’s, there are no such instances in the discourse data. Explicitly highlighting such a difference may prove beneficial in situations involving career guidance, as students could be prompted to consciously reflect upon the utility of their degree, both for themselves and for society as a whole.

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## Results and Discussion

The comparison of metaphorical content words (nouns, lexical verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) in the Australian English transcriptions and the Norwegian transcriptions shows that the median in both sets of text is almost identical: 16.5% and 16.3% respectively. An independent two-tailed  $t$ -test with Welch's correction indicates that the metaphorical frequencies of content words was not significantly different in the Australian and Norwegian sets of videos,  $t = 0.19$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ; AuE  $N = 15$ ,  $M = 16.5$ ,  $SD = 5.8$ ; No  $N = 15$ ,  $M = 16.3$ ,  $SD = 4.7$ . As can be seen in Figure 2, both groups appear to be using metaphor to an equal extent. The ubiquity of metaphor is thus evident in the student narratives from both countries, even though there is a greater amount of non-metaphorical language than metaphorical language. This finding adds to similar findings from previous empirical studies of metaphor frequency in spoken discourse (e.g., Steen et al., 2010), definitively demonstrating that metaphor is more than just an 'icing on the cake' language phenomenon.

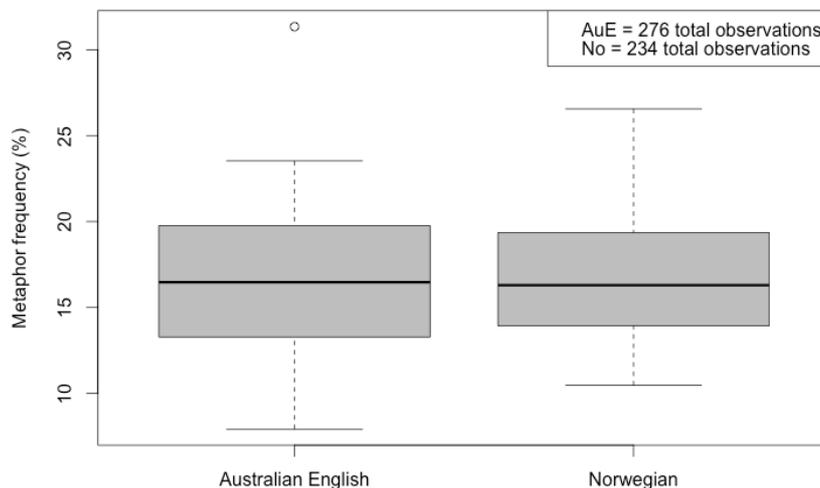


Figure 2. Frequency of metaphorical lexical words in the Australian (AuE) and Norwegian (No) samples

From our observations with MIPVU including and in addition to the examples discussed in this article, categorisation of metaphors into possible source domains reveal several possibilities for the conceptualisation of experiences in HE by students and graduates. The most frequent source domains are the following:

- Education as AN ACTION (e.g. *giving*) and A CONSTRUCTION (e.g. *support*), and,
- Career and future working life as A JOURNEY (e.g. *journey*) and A MENTAL OBJECT (e.g. *dreams*).

In the process of demonstrating the three phases of metaphor analysis, a number of similarities as well as some differences have become apparent between the student testimonials from the two countries in the metaphorical frames used to conceptualise education, career, and working life. Rather than rehash these variations, the discussion directs the reader's attention to the JOURNEY metaphor, which was not as frequent as expected despite Inkson's (2004) contention that 'journey' metaphors rank among nine key metaphors of career. It is noteworthy to point out that metaphor identification may highlight both occurrence *and* absence, thereby offering a compelling picture of individual perspectives or experiences: the construction of reality. A journey is defined in the dictionary as an occasion when you travel from one place to another, often across long distances. Katz and Taylor (2008) point out that in a journey 'one encounters places that one has passed or which one is trying to reach; in life the analogue would be transitional life episodes' (p. 150). Current rhetoric in HE has shifted towards lifelong and life-wide education and learning reflecting Author approved manuscript. The citation of the published article: Creed, A. & S. Nacey (2020). Metaphor Analysis in Vocational Counselling: Moving from Intuitive to Reliable Metaphor Identification. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, DOI: [10.1080/03069885.2020.1763915](https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2020.1763915)

life course transitions (Ecclestone et al., 2010). Guidance and career counselling practitioners could introduce the journey metaphor to a dialogue where it is relatively absent to represent just such a contemporary way of thinking.

Concepts of lifelong learning as well as career are continuously evolving, with education and working life no longer characterised by a set of tasks that are mastered once and for all. Competencies or skills acquired in HE for one job may not be sufficient for a long period, and a career is no longer characterised by a vertical process of advancement within one organisation. Instead, education and work are increasingly portrayed as a series of periods within and outside paid employment that are linked by experiences of learning and retraining. Although the journey metaphor appears to be representative given the definition of the word, an alternative might be that of a PATH, which implies a start and an end-point on some kind of surface. In short, the concepts of JOURNEY and PATH embody different metaphor entailments, despite their similarities.

While MIPVU protocol identifies metaphor on the level of language, the third phase in our proposed metaphor analysis consists of uncovering and making explicit the systematicity in metaphor use through linking the identified metaphors to underlying concepts (see Cameron, Low, & Maslen, 2010, for further explanation of how to make these links). Any claim made from metaphor analysis concerning concepts such as A JOURNEY, PATH, CONSTRUCTION, etc. must rest upon empirical linguistic evidence found in the text(s) at hand, (i.e., identified metaphor-related words associated with journeys, paths, construction, etc.), as opposed to the intuitive approaches in earlier works on metaphor and vocational counselling.

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For the purposes of guidance and career counselling or research, however, the main point is that metaphor identification facilitates access to situational and context-specific meanings and in this way serves to raise awareness of presumptions and ways of thinking that may otherwise go unnoticed. Linguistic metaphors identified through MIPVU analysis support a fundamental point of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), that people frequently use metaphor when expressing their thoughts and feelings. Moreover, linguistic metaphors are frequently highly conventional (such as in the examples of *give/gi* and *take/ta*) and need not be novel or consciously used as metaphor. Such observations can prove beneficial to guidance and counselling practitioners, as they may help heighten awareness of conventional ways of thinking and talking about education or career (see for example McIlveen & Creed, 2018).

Recognition of what is and what is not a metaphorical utterance is important because such awareness enables a conscious shift in perspective and recognition of similarities or differences between various worldviews, and foster reflection on outdated or unhelpful ways of being. Varying metaphors of career may be used interchangeably to help people think more flexibly, as well as evoke or subdue feelings toward change or transition. Hence, identification and application of metaphors can facilitate, adapt, or motivate attitudes and behaviours for current actions or future goals and aspirations.

### ***Concluding thoughts***

In this article, we have articulated and demonstrated a resource that draws upon the field of linguistics for the identification of metaphor as a foundation for subsequent analysis. In doing so, it has: 1) built on the literature of vocational psychology to develop understanding of the relationship between narrative approaches to guidance and career counselling and metaphor

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identification and analysis; 2) introduced and demonstrated MIPVU on an illustrative sample of student and graduate testimonials from publicly available HE promotional videos from Australia and Norway; and, 3) drawn attention to the prevalence and role of metaphor as a means to explore meaning and knowledge construction by way of similarity of universal constructs or as unique frames in personal and organisational perspectives.

Counselors adopting MIPVU have to reckon with investing some time, at least initially, to learn this procedure and get an evidence-based ‘feel’ for what metaphor is. This could be done based on e.g., transcriptions of relevant sessions, brief open-ended questions in a questionnaire, verbal or written responses to photo elicitation tasks, or selected sections of reflective texts. Later analysis need not be so detailed (i.e. every word). Instead, counselors could use findings from their initial detailed analysis as a springboard to search through later material for further examples of metaphor. Moreover, an intense period of metaphor analysis will heighten counselors’ awareness of metaphor ‘on-line’ – that is, as it happens – so that they are better positioned to react on the spot, highlighting, discussing and (when needed) challenging concepts and beliefs that might otherwise remain hidden below the radar. When needed – for instance, in academic papers, etc. – counselors can then employ and reference MIPVU to justify what they *call* metaphor actually *is* metaphor, or to provide evidence for a particular way of thinking (the concept). Mastery of MIPVU leads to a heightened awareness of metaphor in everyday discourse that will undoubtedly inform subsequent practice.

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