

Systematic Metaphor Analysis as a Method of Qualitative Research¹

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George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's theory of metaphor (1980, 1999) provides a basis for describing everyday cognitive structures using linguistic models and thus, making it possible to uncover both individual and collective patterns of thought and action. Lakoff and Johnson have not, however, developed a workable system for carrying out qualitative research. This paper outlines the fundamentals of this approach and proposes a procedure for the reconstruction of metaphorical concepts. As is normally the case in qualitative research, such guidelines can only ever represent the interplay between the ability of the researcher to understand the sense of things and the rules of the methodology. An overview of the typical interpretations that a metaphor analysis allows is also given. Key Words: Metaphor Analysis, Subjectivity, Hermeneutics, and Qualitative Research

"But one must know how to invent metaphors, which is not something for a rustic like me..." (Umberto Eco, 1996, p. 90)

Metaphor, Qualitative Research and Lakoff and Johnson's "Cognitive Linguistics"

For Anglo-American readers, this paper documents a return. In Germany, the linguistic theory of metaphorical concepts by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson has led to the creation of an evaluation method for qualitative research, now presented in the original language. From a German perspective, it is puzzling that these theories are hardly mentioned in the literature on qualitative research.

Introduction: Cognitive Linguistics and Qualitative Research

For almost all qualitative methods of research, language is at one and the same time subject and medium. It is used above all as material referring to content outside language: patterns of relationships, latent structures of meaning, communicative strategies, etc. The fact that, in this process, structures immanent to language and their relevance are rarely made an issue and that debates from the discipline of linguistics - with the exception of conversation analysis - are hardly taken heed of, may perhaps result

¹ This paper further develops a number of papers published in German in "Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung", "FQS", (Schmitt 2000a, 2003).

from the division of labor within our specialized academic world. In particular there is a lack of theories capable of bridging the gap between disciplines. Lakoff and Johnson (Johnson, 1987; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson 1980) did just this, however, in terms of formulating the overall framework of a "cognitive linguistics." Their theory of metaphor has inspired a variety of approaches to the analysis of metaphor as a qualitative research procedure.

Lakoff and Johnson propose a comprehensive concept of metaphor, which enables the reconstruction of cognitive strategies of action. We know, for example, the image whereby problems are portrayed as a weight, which "oppresses" a person. Thus in one interview, unemployment is stated to have "really *weighed down on*" ("ganz schön *belastet*") an interviewee. Otherwise we find, as part of a philosophy of life, the formulation "everybody has to *shoulder his burden*" ("jeder hat sein. *Päckel zu tragen*"). The corresponding moods are encoded as a metaphorical low: "to collapse, fall away" ("versacken"), "to be at rock-bottom" ("*am Boden sein*"), "to fall into a pit" ("in ein Loch fallen"). On the other hand, moods felt to be positive are described in terms of geographic height: to be "high" ("hoch"), "exulting to the heavens" ("himmelhoch jauchzend"), to be "on top of the world"/"on top of things" ("obenauf sein"). This metaphoric pattern is matched by one model of psycho-social help: Helpers are said to retrieve the persons concerned from the depths, to save them from "a fall" ("Absturz"), to "support" "back them up" ("unterstützen"), "get them on their feet again" ("aufrichten"), or "build them up again" ("aufbauen"). Such metaphors, however, can also, somewhat confusingly, be found in interviews concerning day-to-day use of alcohol: after drinking alcohol, "diverse problems are ... no longer so weighty" ("gewichtig"), "things are simply less *burdensome*" ("es war einfach *unbeschwerter*"), and "it *lifts* the mood" ("das *hebt* die Stimmung"). We can formulate this metaphorical idea in the following way: "Being drunk makes the heavy things of life less weighty". Professional help and the consolation of the psyche by means of alcohol are united by the same, culturally typical metaphorical scheme of things - "good is up" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Before I delve more deeply into Lakoff and Johnson's theory it will be helpful to take a closer look at the current use of metaphors in social-scientific research and, more exactly, in qualitative research. We can differentiate between the following patterns of use, each of which brings with it various difficulties:

The metaphor as a rhetorical instrument and its criticism

Characteristic of this approach, to work with metaphors, is that individual metaphors are taken out of context without a systematic reconstruction; they are often used, critically commented, as evidence for/proof of an opposing position. Piterman (2004), for example, in writing on "health care practice" states that "the business market metaphor becomes the dominant metaphor as far as social policy is concerned" and complains that "The market is blind to equity, need and compassion, and emotion is eschewed." (§ 8) it is doubtful, however, that the market metaphor has become the dominant one. In phrases commonly used to describe the health system reform, we also find many metaphors of clever housekeeping when talking about just distribution of scant resources. How can we decide which dominates, the market or the housekeeping metaphor? Upon closer look, we find both metaphors – mixed – in the texts on health

system reforms, with differing focuses depending on political context. It seems very legitimate to assign an ideological function to both metaphorical descriptions. In Piterman's text it is not reconstructed whether further metaphors also determine the reform discussion, thus potentially limiting or weakening the impact of the above-listed metaphors. Methodic-empirical reflections are generally completely lacking in this approach: They could indeed bring out important points, or not, as the case may be. Here metaphors are simply alluded to in passing, with no pretense of a differentiated reflection on the possibilities and limits of metaphorical thinking.

The metaphor as therapeutic tool

The therapeutic use of metaphors has quite a long tradition of its own, particularly, although not only, in family therapy (see Gordon, 1978, Kopp, 1995). This use of metaphors must be mentioned here because the differing definitions of and traditional ways of handling metaphors often lead to misunderstandings. In the context of therapy, the goal is for therapists to develop metaphors and allegories, which presents the client's problem in a solution-friendly framework (Gordon). Newer approaches assume that the development of solution metaphors should come as close as possible to the client's own language (Kopp). Here metaphors are seen as – to use a metaphor – "tools" which are employed intentionally and deliberately. The discussion of the metaphor in the social sciences, especially following Lakoff and Johnson, aims at another concept of metaphor, one that instead leads to the converse notion that metaphors can be conscious; usually they are not. We as individuals, groups, and in our culture have unconscious metaphorical thinking patterns, which are simply taken as "givens". The analysis of metaphors aims to shed light on these metaphorical thinking patterns. Lakoff and Johnson describe the metaphorical concept "time is money" as we find it in the following sayings and common phrases: "The flat tire *cost* me an hour"; "You don't *use* your time *profitably*"; and "You need to *budget* your time". Those using this metaphorical pattern are, at best, superficially aware of it: Its depth in the culture, however, has hardly begun to be recognized. "In our culture TIME IS MONEY in many ways: telephone message units, hourly wages, hotel room rates, yearly budgets, interest on loans, and paying our debt to society by "serving time." (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, p. 8).

Seen in this light, metaphors are not tools, but rather form a structure in which we live. The metaphor analysis described in this article does not intend to use metaphors therapeutically or rhetorically, seeking rather to bring the use of metaphors and the practices associated with this to the conscious level; a mission more of enlightenment which can sometimes be critical of prevalent ideologies.

Metaphors used to describe the results of qualitative research

Qualitative research yields a multitude of heterogeneous pieces of information, which contain complex meaningful structures. Metaphors can well be used to reduce this complexity to clearly structured patterns. In their study on (medical) "primary care research", Aita, McIlvain, Susman, and Crabtree (2003) describe three metaphorical patterns of thought and action, namely practice as a franchise, practice as a mission, and practice as nurturing a family. It is amazing to see to what extent these metaphorical

conceptions determine how doctors in respective institutions think and act. The metaphors surfaced during discussions and evaluation processes, which are for the most part, undocumented, leave us with no clear system for identifying the metaphors. The metaphors did not necessarily come from the interviewees themselves, even though they did feel well described by the respective metaphor. Additionally, it appears as though each of the three exemplary institutions seem to function along the lines of a single metaphor: However, such a "pure" metaphorical conception seems unlikely in the real world.² The same is true for Callahan, Maldonado, and Efinger (2003) who describe a training course on "End-of-Life Decisions" with the metaphor of a "bridge over troubled waters." Lakoff and Turner (1989) on the other hand, indicate the cultural multiplicity of metaphors used to talk about death, and it does not make sense to limit all participants of the training to one single metaphor.

Aubusson (2002) also attempts to represent the "massive, untidy mess of information" (§ 5) typical of qualitative research with the help of a metaphor. In doing so, he employs very discerning considerations on how to match the metaphor to the research data. I remain skeptical however: My study on psychological and social assistance in casework (Schmitt, 1995) shows that one particular phenomenon can be represented in many, sometimes contradictory metaphors (which indicates, by the way, problems in this field). We should note here that metaphors can be used well to represent the results of qualitative research.

Metaphors to describe the qualitative research process

Not only is it complicated to present the results of qualitative research, but the research process itself generally proves to be a complex undertaking: Metaphors serve well to give some orientation for the researchers in their endeavor and in its presentation. Schalkwyk (2002) describes the metaphor of a classical concert as framework of her dissertation ("... was that of the concerto from the Western classical music genre"). Combe (1995), in contrast, uses the scenario of purchasing a car and then going on a trip as a kind of metaphorical heuristics to discuss the options open for decision and the pressure of selecting in qualitative research. Sommers (1997) uses the various forms of quilting used by Amish women to depict qualitative as well as quantitative research. One completely different figure comes from Dye, Schatz, Rosenberg, and Coleman (2000). In their description of the "Constant Comparison Method", which is adopted from Glaser and Strauss, the kaleidoscope and its parts (mirror, small pieces of colored glass, metal plates) are the metaphors that represent the data and the categories, and the changes in how the data is seen are described as changes in the kaleidoscope's patterns.

The multitude of metaphors used for the qualitative research process shows that the reduction of the research processes to one metaphor actually remains a forced simplification.³ On the other hand, the fact that every metaphor seems to have had a

² Schachtner (2002) documents – even in the English-language summary of her study (1999) – a number of metaphors for the actions of doctors.

³ In the research on organizations, the view that a phenomenon can be contained in one single metaphor has been left behind; cf. Tenni, Smyth, and Boucher (2003): "For instance, Morgan (1997) describes a range of ways in which experiences of organizations can be theorized and describes how various metaphors can be employed to describe organizational experience in very different ways. These different metaphors also have

"gripping" affect on its creator, produced the result that competing metaphors and their cognitive implications were not documented. How can we reduce the complexity of the world metaphorically without betraying its content? What metaphorical models are used to discuss qualitative research itself? Rathmayr (1991) lists five metaphors to describe researchers in the qualitative social research: hunters, generals, ornithologists, detectives and hikers; Murray (2003) compares a participant observer to a spy, a shill or a go-between. This collection is an indication of different research styles, which a metaphor analysis should document.

The search for specified metaphors in the material

Other researchers attempt to orient themselves along metaphors considered central by a specific philosophy. The following studies work out of a concept by Pepper (1942). In a study with both quantitative and qualitative elements, Super and Harkness (2003) analyzed central metaphors according to Pepper's "root metaphors" (formalism, mechanism, contextualism, organicism).⁴ In interviews with parents and psychiatric professionals they looked for expressions concerning human development. They found stable preferences for certain metaphor fields and discussed numerous implications for understanding children's behavior. Seifert (2000) argues similarly on the basis of a study on the social construction of childhood, which is also based on Pepper's work and the four above-mentioned metaphor fields. If we assume, as do Lakoff and Johnson, that there are the most varied number of metaphors intricately intertwined in the day-to-day world, the reduction of the interviews to four pre-specified "root metaphors" also seem a problematic limitation, both content-wise and methodically. For comparison, Lakoff and Johnson (1999, pp. 50ff) count 24 representative primary metaphors for understanding the world: I have found over twenty different metaphorical concepts in the German language for the specific topic of mental illness alone (Schmitt, 2000a).

Metaphors for the self-reflection process of researchers – or – Metaphors we research by

The uses of metaphors in research so far have assumed that we search directly for certain metaphors in the material and consciously form metaphors in order to present results or describe processes. However, Lakoff and Johnson point out something, which is true not only for our research participants but also for us researchers as well: The use of metaphors is often unconscious. Danziger (2000) voiced the consideration in the context of the history of psychology, in that the scientific theories we are "born into" dictate metaphorical thought patterns, which we seldom reflect upon:

.. the analysis of metaphor becomes historically interesting, for we can use it to improve our understanding of patterns of psychological thought that were characteristic of a period, or a culture, or a particular intellectual community. ... Such metaphors are used pervasively over relatively long

the effect of problematizing different aspects of organizational life, offering different ways of changing organizations and professional practice.”

⁴ Other research based on Pepper works with six basic metaphors (those above, plus: animism, participation). Cf. Fernandez (1991).

periods, and typically their users do not seem to regard them as 'mere' metaphors but as expressing some kind of literal truth. (Danziger, pp. 331f)

Danziger is not getting at creative, thought-up metaphors but rather at latent, subtle linguistic pictures which are not recognized as metaphors. Such analyses have been conducted for certain areas of psychology (Leary, 2000), as metaphors of the spirit in the context of intelligence research (Sternberg, 2000) and as a comprehensive study for the psychology of memory (Draaisma, 1999). Jurczak (1997) compares the French original with English translations of Piaget and shows that many of Piaget's biological metaphors were either changed to mechanical ones or eliminated altogether. The understanding of Piaget among English speakers is, as a result of Jurczak's findings, different from the understanding of Piaget among French speakers. For qualitative research, Aita et al. (2003) states that:

Our heightened awareness of our own metaphorical language of our inquiry led us to eventually look critically at the metaphorical language of our field-workers' and their descriptions of each practice and the metaphorical language of the research participants themselves. (p. 1423)

Chenail (1990/1991a) suggested that research therapists make themselves aware of the metaphors they use in therapy and see whether these metaphors could perhaps open a door for further research. These rather widely scattered references indicate that our research is determined by metaphors, the cognitive limits of which we cannot always overcome.

Eliciting explicit metaphors from research participants

Yet another possible way to work with metaphors in qualitative research is to elicit them directly from the research participants themselves. Deacon (2000), in his market research, suggests that the participants describe either themselves or product-relevant happenings in terms of color, as a fairy tale, television show, object, piece of music, etc. By using this metaphoric transformation he is able to get valuable and surprising narratives. Christensen and Olson (2002) as well as Zaltman (2003) proceed by asking the research participants to bring several pictures showing their attitude and feeling towards the product at hand with them to the interview. They are then asked to explain each picture and its personal meaning, thus treating the picture as a metaphor. In talking about the pictures, new verbal metaphors come up which are also mirrored and explained in depth.

It is easy to imagine that each of the above approaches can elicit very personal and deep accounts. Here too, however, a selection takes place – for one thing through Deacon's pre-determined metaphorical assignment and for another by asking that visual (and no other) material be brought.⁵ Both approaches limit themselves of necessity,

⁵ Zaltman chooses several destructive metaphors to describe his procedure: He hopes "to dig deeper into the customers' and consumers' minds" (2003, p. 75) with this method or he wishes to "penetrat[e] the mind by metaphor" (p. 76) (also compare Zaltman, 1996). Conversely, Deacon (2000) hopes to lessen the gap

through the data-gathering methods, to the metaphors that the research participants themselves provide. In both methods metaphors are dealt with strictly during the data-gathering process: The evaluation is conducted using other methods. The possibilities of reconstructing metaphorical concepts inherent in cognitive linguistics are not used.

The use of metaphors as part of a broader research strategy

Last but not least, I will mention some research approaches which recognize metaphors as a part of the material to be analyzed and as helpful in the analysis of phenomena, but which draw on other theories and procedures in the data analysis. One of these is Keeney and Chenail's "Recursive Frame Analysis" (Chenail, 1990/1991a, 1995). Cybernetic and musical metaphors as well as some metaphors from the visual arts were formative in the development of this research method, and a basic metaphoricity of conversation is assumed and is used in the research steps. The term "frames" Chenail uses is very close to what Lakoff and Johnson understand as "metaphorical concepts". However, Chenail 1990/1991b uses other theories different from those of Goffmann to Bateson and subsequent researchers, to examine the "therapy" phenomenon. Jaeggi, Faas, and Mruck (1998) present a research procedure which instructs researchers to first build categories and then to search explicitly for any metaphors which might stand out in the material, and which generate an element of tension in relation to the previously-developed categories.

As far as I can tell neither of these two assessment procedures aim to reconstruct the spectrum of all metaphors, in a given text, in order to generate a "cognitive map" of the perception of the phenomenon. The internal structure of the metaphorical worldview of the clients is not the goal of these techniques of interpretation.

Reconstruction of research participants' metaphorical points of view and of cultural phenomena

One study, which must receive mention here is Beneke's (1982) – inspired by Lakoff and Johnson – on sexual violence. In conversations both with men convicted of sexual abuse and with "the guy from the street" Beneke finds a world of images in their language, which makes sexual violence understandable, even necessary, in their eyes. Sexuality is success, performance, and triumph: The metaphors of hunting and of war ("lady-killer", "conquest/entering", "didn't put up any more resistance", "surrendered") dominate. Men refer to women, using metaphors, as things they have control over such as objects, food ("What a piece of meat!"), animals ("chick", "bunny") or children ("baby"). Sexuality is uncontrollable craziness or physical violence ("lightening", "spark"). The male sexual organ is spoken of metaphorically as a weapon, sperm as "the load" and "ammunition". The impressive and sobering reconstruction of the world these men think and act in terms of has unfortunately not inspired many follow-up research projects in this area.

In constructive debate with Lakoff and Johnson, Quinn (1987, 1991) found eight different metaphors for "marriage" among native-born residents of the USA, in a middle-

between researcher and "researched" through his open method, and to make the research a meaningful experience for participants.

sized southern city. She found metaphors of "sharedness", "lastingness", "mutual benefit", "compatibility", "difficulty", "effort", "success and failure", and "risk".⁶ She sees a layer of cultural models for understanding the world, which is deeper than the metaphorical concepts: "metaphor, far from being productive of understanding, is actually highly constrained by understanding" (ibid) She also criticizes that cognitive linguistics leaves the impression that all understanding is completely dominated by metaphorical projections. I may share this criticism, but do not follow her thesis that there are cultural models, independent of their metaphorical expression in language.

Yet other works have come out recently: Horton (2002) analyzes metaphors for mid-life changes and presents five case studies in which each person's statement is reduced to one central metaphor. As in the two previously mentioned studies, information on what methods were used to reconstruct the metaphors in the texts is lacking here as well. While the previous analyses primarily deal with individual cases or group analyses, Nerlich, Hamilton, and Rowe (2002) present an impressive analysis of metaphors used by media and politics in handling the Foot and Mouth Disease in Great Britain.

In an earlier study of my own (Schmitt, 1995), I analysed social workers and psychologists who were assigned by the Department of social work to work with people with various psychosocial "handicaps".

I tried to identify the metaphors of social work and psychological assistance in community care. There were nine conceptual metaphors:

1. Helping is to accompany people on nearly impassable paths and to put them on the right track.
2. Helping is to support people with heavy burdens.
3. Helping is to make dark situations clear and bright.
4. Helping is helping people learn (life is like school).
5. Helping is to facilitate bonding between lonely people severed from social networks and to free persons entangled in restrictive circumstances.
6. Helping is to talk about, to bring up, to speak about, to speak for, to argue against (in a non-limited verbal space of prepositional directions).
7. Helping is to work through psychological problems and to produce (common) things (i.e., stability) in the therapeutic relationship.
8. Helping is to cause reserved people open their minds and to set limits for people who cannot yet do so themselves.
9. Helping is to give substances (i.e., love, attention, care) to uncared-for people.

I have attempted to develop metaphor analysis as a systematic method to discover sub-cultural thinking patterns and to refine them to credible, teachable research steps.

⁶ In her earlier publication, she formulated some even more poignant visual metaphorical concepts: marriage is a manufactured product, marriage is an ongoing journey, marriage is a durable bond between two people, a spouse is a fitting part, marriage is an investment (Quinn, 1987). Some things found in her published material invited other reconstructions: "he jumped from one marriage into another" and other formulations describe marriage also as a "container". "Struggle" and "fighting" were mentioned, but not reconstructed as metaphorical concepts in and of themselves. The uncertainty could stem from the earlier version of the Lakoff-Johnson theory, in which the differentiation between preverbal image schemes and metaphorical concepts was made less clearly.

Along with its credibility, I am concerned with the thoroughness of the analysis, especially in light of the fact that any complex phenomenon can, as a rule, be described using more than one metaphor. Third, in the approach presented here we focus on the unconscious metaphors of daily language or those found in the documents gathered and try not to take any of our own metaphors with us into the process. Fourth, the systematic metaphor analysis is an attempt to exploit the potential of Lakoff and Johnson's cognitive linguistic theories, using them more extensively than has been done in the studies up to now. Having presented this background I would now like to introduce the central assumptions in Lakoff and Johnson's approach.

Central Assumptions made by Lakoff and Johnson

These examples allow clarification of the following assumptions made by Lakoff and Johnson:

Metaphorical concepts

Metaphors do not appear in isolation but form metaphorical concepts, which can be reconstructed. The number of fundamental metaphorical concepts is limited - thus from the numerous metaphors of psycho-social help just nine concepts can be reconstructed (Schmitt, 1995). Our experience of interpretation hitherto suggests that the more exact the focus of research is and the more closely demarcated the area of investigation is, the better metaphorical concepts can be specifically formulated.

Body models

As a rule metaphors transfer their image structure from straightforward and *gestalt*-like experiences (e.g., height and depth) to complex, taboo, or new subject matters (e.g., "psycho-social help"). The sources of these images are often physically experienced dimensions or simple courses of events whose elementary parts can be used as models. Thus the model of the "Weg" ("path") with its beginning, duration, and destination refers to a pattern of action experienced from early on in life and which generates a multiplicity of metaphors such as "Lebenslauf" ("course of life") or "Lebensweg" ("path of life").

The use of models expressing physical experience to categorize complex and new phenomena has proved to be a resource-saving technique for interpreting the world. Metaphors provide schemes, which bundle together the fullness of details, making them clearer and more manageable. In doing this, they make perception more automatic and ease the energy required to understand.

Homology of thought and speech

The employment and linking of these metaphors is not a matter of chance but an indication that patterns of thought, perception, communication, and action that are consistent in themselves are here coming into play. Lakoff and Johnson assume a substantial homology of thought and speech: This premise is the starting point for the possibility and relevance of an analysis of metaphors in social science. Bock's (1981)

older investigations into problem-solving behavior as experimental psychology sees it, points to a close connection between metaphorical cognition and the planning of action (see also Mio, Thompson, & Givens, 1993; Moser, 2000).

Relevance to Social Science and Psychology

The relevance of metaphor analyses can be discussed on a variety of levels:

Transcultural metaphor

Lakoff and Johnson suggest that a schema such as "good is up" may be present in all cultures and yet may not be weighted the same in all of them, with other spatial structures (centre/periphery; in the front/at the rear; inside/outside) perhaps being more dominant. In addition, the concepts linked to these image sources overlap only partially from culture to culture. Thus in her studies on AIDS, Wolf (1996) has compared the war metaphors of the first world (e.g., "combating the disease" and "killer cells") with the fund of metaphors employed in Malawi, where the AIDS virus is conceptualised above all in metaphors of eating; the virus, conceived of as a worm, eats up human beings, just as witches and social deviants take food from other humans and even assail living bodies (vampire motive). In the predominantly agrarian region, sexuality is also conceived mainly in terms of an eating metaphor (approximately equivalent to "gobbling someone up"). So Wolf is not surprised to find that condom packages with their pictures of shields and spears, portraying African warriors but at the same time employing European concepts of combat, meet with no success in the population at large. Questioning a number of men on their non-acceptance of condoms she received the reply, "You don't eat a sweet in its wrapper".

Culturally specific occurrences of metaphor

This subject has been investigated on a number of occasions, notably from a linguistic point of view (e.g., Baldauf, 1997). Nieraad (1977) has described the metaphors of fascism and the actions they motivated ("*Volk ohne Raum*" - "Nation without (Living) Space"); war of conquest; the "*Führer*" ("leader") as a figure transcending democratic legitimation and change; the designation of political opponents as "rats" and "vermin"; and implementation of biological programs for their "eradication" and "extirpation". The present author (Schmitt, 2000c) has ventured a survey of metaphorical concepts for psychological crises or illnesses of all kinds - from "Ausrasten" ("going crazy") to "*Zerrissenheit*" ("inner divisions", "being torn (apart)").

Occurrences of metaphors in sub-groups

In the field of professional psycho-social help there are several papers analysing milieu-specific metaphors and their implications for human action. Schachtner (1999, 2002) has investigated diagnostic and therapeutic strategies among general practitioners with regard to linguistic images which guide their action: The metaphorical perception and staging of inter-human contact in ward-based psychotherapy has been described by

Buchholz and von Kleist (1997). A survey of metaphorical concepts employed in the overall framework of seeking psycho-social help (Schmitt, 1995) has already been mentioned.

Metaphors as steering mechanisms for interaction

Buchholz and von Kleist (1995) describe the steering of human interaction through metaphor in therapeutic settings. They analyze, with reference to one specific example, what client and therapist envisage as metaphors of their joint undertaking, the enactment of these metaphors in their interaction, the break-downs in understanding brought about by divergent metaphors, and the possibility of meta-linguistically transcending obstacles to communication using metaphors. Quantitative studies on the use of metaphors in therapy are to be found in Pollio, Barlow, Fine, & Pollio (1977).

Individual occurrences of metaphor

In the studies mentioned above, individual *occurrences* of metaphor are made an issue to varying degrees. With these case studies, metaphor analysis can give stimuli to biographical research and to the evaluation of therapeutic processes (Kronberger, 1999).

Subjectivity and Method I: Procedure

Qualitative research demonstrates the wide range of tension that exists in the relationship between subjectivity, self-reflection, and adherence to methodical procedures. Examples range from Mayring's (1983) rule-based content analysis, which hardly reflects on the subjective part of category development at all, to the position taken by Huber (2001) that strict adherence to methodology is less important to the researcher than is aesthetic subjectivity. This paper will attempt to illustrate the reciprocal factors in the relationship between subjectivity and methodical procedures using a newly developed research method – systematic metaphor analysis.

Systematic metaphor analysis attempts to reconstruct models of thought, language, and action. It follows indicators found in historical writings on philosophy that the metaphorical model determines thought, even during the most abstract of discourse (Blumenberg, 1960, 1971, 1988), as well as those from therapeutic practice where metaphors used in communication are a vital part of being able to understand the sense of things, especially under difficult circumstances (von Kleist, 1987).

Under completely different research conditions, a study into experimental psychology has shown that metaphors induce both attention-directing and cognitive processes (Moser, 2001). The contribution of the field of linguistics to the role and function of the metaphor, in written and spoken language, has increased considerably over the last decade.⁷ The contributions of the various disciplines share the common conclusion that metaphors provide preconceptional orientation with respect to thought and experience that is hardly accessible, or accessible only with analytical aids, in

⁷ In addition to the authors mentioned later, the portal <http://www.metaphorik.de> has a well-categorized link list representative of the current linguistic discourse (not only in and not only concerning the German language). The journal "Metaphor and Symbol" is also dedicated to cognitive linguistics.

rational discussion. Qualitative research needs an approach that allows a systematic reflection of the metaphors in which, and through which, we perceive, speak, think, and act.

The systematic analysis of metaphors draws on the results of "Cognitive Linguistics" by Lakoff and Johnson (Johnson 1987; Lakoff 1987; Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 1999), adding a step-by-step systematic reconstruction of metaphorical models. Both authors have made a lasting contribution to the discussion on metaphors in various disciplines in German speaking countries (collection of discussions with a linguistic background following the reception of Lakoff and Johnson in Baldauf (1997), psychoanalytical contributions see Buchholz, 1993), psychological discourse in Moser (2000) and Schmitt (2001).

The research procedure of systematically analyzing the meaning of metaphors emerged thanks to a movement of rejection. Hitherto, the literature often contained casual etymological interpretation and extreme over-emphasis of individual metaphors, which should be described as "merely subjective" (e.g., Graf, 1988). In contrast to this, the last publication of Lakoff and Johnson leads to the assumption that metaphorical models, forming the framework of collective thought, have already essentially been identified in their basic form (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). Both positions bypass the (often difficult) task of identifying metaphors and reconstructing their contextual meaning. Also, in both cases there is no description of a systematic methodology for extracting an interpretation. Nevertheless, even in facing this deficit the systematic analysis of metaphor, as a hermeneutic process, remains an applied art. The reconstruction of metaphorical models cannot be automated; the process can only be learned. The investigative understanding of someone else's linguistic images is conveyed via the horizons of a historical subject; a person's social character, life experience, and level of education both allow and limit this understanding. Practical rules for the collection of material and processing procedures do not place limits on the researcher, rather inviting the discovery of as many different metaphorical concepts of thought, feeling, and action, which are then woven into multi-layered interpretations and presented in a comprehensible and convincing manner. Despite this optimism, systematic metaphor analysis, as a method of evaluation, can only be a part of a research procedure appropriate to its subject. I address the limitations and necessity of further development in section titled *Steps to Ensure Trustworthiness*. The proposed procedure for text interpretation based on metaphor analysis within the framework of qualitative research can be divided into five stages, as follows.

Identifying the Target Area for Metaphor Analysis

This stage can be found, more or less explicitly, in all introductions on qualitative research methods: determine the topic, decide on the right questions, and draft a plan for the survey and evaluation. Metaphor analysis requires that a topic be selected in advance so that a search can be made for mostly colloquial, metaphoric filling. An example of this, taken from an unfinished project, is the target area of "abstinence". How is the term, which plays a central role in anti-addiction work and the condition it describes, experienced and conceptualized by those affected? Even an initial analysis of common metaphors such as "*trocken sein*" ("being dry"), "*nüchtern bleiben*" ("staying sober"), or "*enthaltssam leben*" ("abstaining") highlight the fact that the condition of abstinence is not

seen in an attractive light (Schmitt, 2002b). In deciding on such a subject, even at dissertation level, a wide range of subjective influences can be identified. For what biographical reasons does someone choose such a topic? Does the selection of this subject matter represent an overture to specialists working in the field and possible employers? A number of subjective and situational influences are possible here, but there are still none that are typical in respect to metaphor analysis. It would be more interesting to find an answer to the question of whether giving preference to metaphor analysis or another method of text evaluation can be linked to a particular subjective (non-)ability, but I am not aware of any research into this area. Schachtner (1999) has shown that medical doctors use metaphors stemming from their individual experience. This leads to a wide diversity of metaphorical models which, however, prove to share general consistent aspects and are used similarly by the doctors. A comparable qualitative study into the metaphorical models qualitative researchers use to describe their "comprehending", "investigating", or "discovering" activities has not yet been conducted.⁸

Unsystematic, Broad-Based Collection of Background Metaphors

The second step in the process, the unsystematic broad-based collection of background metaphors, serves both as preparation for the research and the documentation of the cultural scope that exists for describing a phenomenon. During this preparatory phase researchers ought to search for metaphors in a wide range of materials containing references to the topic being investigated (encyclopedias, journals, specialist books written for the general public, etc.). Academic literature should also be scanned for metaphorical conceptualization. The list created will allow an initial overview of the culturally appropriate metaphorical concepts used to reflect upon the topic. This proposed methodology encourages researchers to make note of competing metaphoric models for the target area from neighboring disciplines and also from the everyday world, thus providing the opportunity to further sensibilities in respect to phenomena-specific linguistic images beyond the research routine.

This practical section was added following my first publication (Schmitt, 1995). This was after I became aware that particular metaphorical concepts describing help and change in difficult life situations did not appear within the context of special social educational support for individuals and families. It was indeed possible to reconstruct nine models, which for example conceptualize psycho-social help in images of education ("he still has to learn that ..."; "first he has to do his homework, then ..."; and "I have tried to teach him that ...").

However, the organic metaphor of psychological "*Wachstum*" ("growth") (see Leihener, 1997, amongst others), which is common in humanistic psychotherapy, was not represented. This deficit might have contributed in describing help in casework in which there was obviously little room for such processes of "growth". The unsystematic search beyond a narrow research context provides a draft for a cultural foil which, above all, highlights the absence of certain metaphorical models (see Section on *The Absence of Metaphorical Models*). These collections in everyday language and theoretical essays

⁸ But compare the preliminary studies mentioned in 1.1.d.

assist in finding sensitizing concepts which might be utilized in the subsequent evaluation of interviews and other texts.

Systematic Analysis of a Sub-Group

The existing rules assume that texts are available as material for further analysis⁹. This step includes analyzing the verbal expressions of a sub-group¹⁰ in order to establish which metaphors it uses to describe the area of research. This takes place in two stages, beginning with the identification of metaphors through segmentation of the texts and followed by the reconstruction of metaphorical concepts.

Identification of metaphors and deconstructive segmentation of the texts

The analysis starts by identifying the metaphors contained in the text. This task is not easily achieved in working groups (as the general understanding of what counts as a metaphor is only partly covered by Lakoff and Johnson's comprehensive concept of metaphor) according to which a word or phrase is identified as a metaphor if:

- a. a word or phrase, strictly speaking, can be understood beyond the literal meaning in the context; and
- b. the literal meaning stems from an area of sensoric or cultural experience (source area),
- c. which, however, is transferred to a second, often abstract, area (target area).

To illustrate these conditions, for identifying a metaphor, let me provide an example taken from an interview on the role of alcohol in everyday life. After drinking alcohol the interviewee was *"den Leuten gegenüber ein bißchen offener"* ("a bit more open with people"). In this context the word "open" does not make a lot of sense in its literal meaning. It points to a source area that can be described as a *"Behälter"* ("container" or similar closed object) and transfers a particular state that the container is described as being in (i.e., "open") to the social self-estimation of the person concerned (target area). What is meant is a reduced *"Abgrenzung"* ("fencing off", here "barriers") to social contact. This practical definition of a metaphor appears to me as important in view of the heterogeneous usage of the term in the literature.¹¹

The practical procedure is first to copy the metaphors used (in which the target area being researched appears, including the immediate text-context) and then to paste these into a separate list. The remaining body of text is then scanned to find and extract

⁹ This brings with it its own limitations. The observation that expressive gestures are often used to emphasize what is being said, or to replace speech altogether (e.g., a disparaging hand movement or tapping one's forehead at someone) has not yet led to a corresponding method of analyzing the metaphorical content of gestures. The same can be said in regard to the metaphorical content of symbols and images.

¹⁰ I will not go into sampling strategies here. The principle of a "maximum variation of perspectives" in the tradition of grounded theory appears to me to be the most sensible approach for most research (Strauss & Corbin, 1996).

¹¹ See appendix A for anchoring examples and a more detailed instances of this process. With similarly clear operationalization, Pollio et al. (1977) were able to produce really quite high levels of agreement between different raters, and also mention the importance of training.

all further metaphoric descriptions of the topic being researched, until only connecting words, text that is not relevant to the target area and abstracts with no connection to metaphors remain.

Although this rule at first appears to be quite clear, and therefore capable of "controlling" any evidently subjective influences, a blind spot is revealed, both in communicating the method and in looking back at one's own previous interpretations: Researchers seldom recognize their own use of metaphors as such, taking them to be "literally correct" descriptions. Thus, the author only realizes much later that the apparent everyday figures of speech used in the context of psycho-social help ("then I talked to him again and really hammered the message home", "I'm still working on him", "building a relationship") also has a metaphoric content (psycho-social help is a manual trade).

In her study, Schulze (2005) has therefore recommended and participated in a self-interview. Before all the other interviews take place the researcher is interviewed on the topic and then identifies and extracts his or her own metaphors. Conspicuous, disturbing idioms that do not correspond to one's own set opinions appear to be much more easily recognized as metaphors.

Synthesis of collective metaphorical models

I have not previously used the words metaphoric "cluster", "model", or "concept" in a specific sense. This conceals a further fundamental innovation from Lakoff and Johnson in the linguistic discussion: Individual metaphorical idioms do not occur by chance, but as a rule can be traced back to a small number of common concepts. At the same time, they share the same source and target areas. Thus it is possible to summarize the metaphor mentioned above, to be "*offen*" ("open"), together with other metaphors such as "*verschlossen zu sein*" (to "shut oneself off"), "*zu zu sein*" (to "be closed"), and "*dicht gemacht zu haben*" (to have "shut tightly") to form a concept: both the source area of a "container" and the target area of "social interaction"¹² are common to all of these examples. Lakoff and Johnson summarize such metaphorical transfers in a "metaphorical concept": "the person is a container". This seemingly banal concept of a hitherto hardly reconstructed everyday psychology first becomes significant if one can indicate that it is connected to the evaluation process: in this model of the container, for example, extreme forms of reserve ("*zu sein*" - being "closed", "tight-lipped") are given a negative value as are the opposite forms of uncontrolled openness ("*nicht ganz dicht sein*" - "to be a crackpot", to be "out of one's mind").

The metaphorical logic of everyday language recommends, in this case as a rule of conduct, a middle ground between the extremes (Schmitt, 1997). Such general metaphorical concepts are sometimes rather randomly differentiated, both by social groups and individuals. Here qualitative research can apply the reconstruction of specific metaphorical models in biographical and group-specific materials.

How is this reconstruction carried out? This second stage can be summarized as follows: All metaphors belonging to the same image source and describing the same

¹² This is, of course, a very broad definition of the possible target area – in actual research the target areas are much more precisely formulated.

target area are grouped into metaphorical concepts under the main heading "target is source." I have already mentioned as examples the metaphorical models: "psycho-social help is education" and "psycho-social help is a manual trade". These and similar concepts are created in a constant and circular refinement of the material during the sorting process. Often, a large number of metaphorical idioms are clustered under a surprisingly small number of concepts.¹³

This process of allocating metaphorical idioms to metaphorical concepts is then continued until all metaphors are listed under a concept.

In the discipline of grouping all metaphors according to collective references,¹⁴ the scope for the interpretation of plausible metaphorical concepts is restricted by the presence of competing concepts. Thus, there is a clear difference between systematic and "free" metaphor analysis. In the latter, the process remains incomplete and the (mostly conspicuous) metaphors found initially are then over-interpreted. The language of a person, a group, or an epoch consists of a number of different complementary and contrasting metaphorical concepts, which change according to the subject or situation. So all metaphorical concepts should be investigated without exception. In a lot of publications we recognize the desire to discover a single "central", "profound" "root", "key", or "organizing" metaphor from which all the thoughts and actions of the person, group or even epoch being investigated can be derived. This proves to be a metaphor-induced illusion leading to the over-interpretation of the more conspicuous linguistic images.¹⁵

The formulation of metaphorical concepts requires a creative, synthesizing approach. The practical rules call for the subjective ability to find or revise appropriate linguistic constructs and to identify clearly defined sub-concepts. The right training and anchoring examples can help. Nevertheless, this method of investigative interpretation is dependent on personal factors such as practice, the level of knowledge in comparable concepts, biographical and cultural metaphorical characteristics, and the ability to make decisions and revise those decisions as well as the usual endurance and patience in working through the materials. It is an effort in discovering and differentiating as well as revising available models, which according to Piaget requires and allows the assimilation and adaptation of the material using the available systems. The reconstruction of metaphorical concepts, for which Lakoff and Johnson do not formulate any rules, is more open to subjective influences than the identification of metaphors. Despite this, largely concurring concept development is found in the literature.

¹³ For more detailed examples see Appendix B for anchoring examples.

¹⁴ This rule aims at avoiding distraction caused by concepts that are already familiar. Naturally, some individual idioms are left over as they cannot be allocated to a cluster with the same target and source area. These often represent formulations that are idiosyncratic, sub-cultural, historic or no longer in general use. These might be looked at individually to examine whether they might indeed point the way to a metaphorical concept waiting to be discovered (as the "tip of an undiscovered iceberg") and whether an extension of the text basis should follow.

¹⁵ In his concentrated and recommendable description of the role and history of the metaphor in (American) anthropology, Fernandez places these attempts to discover central metaphors in the 1970s. Later approaches, also in anthropology, led to the recognition of a "polytropy" or a "play of tropes" (Fernandez 1991, pp. 5f.) – his volume lets us surmise that Lakoff and Johnson's theory was received much more readily in anthropological circles than it was in qualitative social-scientific research; compare Holland.

The interplay between utilizing a subjective presence of knowledge and following practical rules can also be discussed in the light of other methods of text evaluation, employing a necessary distance from the familiar. The strict division between the two phases of collecting and reconstructing counters the readiness to make over-hasty judgments and avoids the danger of coming to a halt after the first conclusive linguistic images have been found. A number of experimental findings (for an overview see Moser, 2000, 2001) prove that metaphor distraction is a frequent occurrence. Metaphor analysis, therefore, cannot really succeed unless a technique is used to subvert routine reading habits. The destruction of the text's structure, by cutting out the metaphoric phrases, removes the familiar metaphors from the text and permits a reappraisal of the remaining textual elements. Hitzler's description of other uses of hermeneutics can therefore be adopted for metaphor analysis:

With "feigned stupidity and slowness" social scientific hermeneutics therefore purposefully alienates the application of an understanding of daily life, which is for the most part culturally extremely routine, aimed at the practical matters of life, and which constantly applies numerous advance certainties - with the aim of self-informing social practices. (Hitzler, 2002, paragraph 27)

The use of metaphorical models belongs to these social practices and ethno-methods of communicating with oneself and others.

Reconstruction of Individual Occurrences of metaphorical concepts

It is possible to carry out biographical analyses against the background of collective occurrences of metaphor. Independent linguistic images, and the lack of conventional ones, become evident if one compares the findings against the corresponding group. The process is the same as is the interplay between practical rules and subjective ability.

Subjectivity and Method II: Interpretations

What do we have if we reconstruct metaphorical concepts such as "a person is a container"? The metaphoric phrase, to have not much more than points on a map, seems appropriate. Knowledge in respect of metaphoric concepts only becomes of use if it makes interpretation possible (i.e., if a connection can be made between the concepts found and the events, thoughts, and actions that take place in the real world). In the following, I will undertake an initial systematization of typical models of interpretation of previous metaphor analyses, using a very different subject matter.

This means that:

- researchers who have a corresponding knowledge of the world,
- researchers who have studied the linguistic materials intensively,
- researchers who have experience in the corresponding (sub)cultural or specialist contexts will be in a position to draw conclusions more easily.

Hermeneutic understanding is the projection of a subject onto the world (Gadamer, 1986, p. 264) and (linguistic, intellectual and practical) "worldliness" is a prerequisite for uncovering other connections in the symbolically structured world. The steps in the procedure and knowledge of the conclusions that are possible assist in attaining multi-faceted interpretations beyond initial shaping experiences and one's own cognitive limits. This understanding is in principle incomplete; the concept of "theoretical saturation", in the "grounded theory" sense, presents itself as a pragmatic criterion for bringing an investigation to a close.

Which interpretative conclusions does systematic metaphor analysis permit and how is the interpreting subject involved in reaching these conclusions?

The Comparison of Metaphorical Concepts

The comparison of metaphorical concepts accounts for a number of different actions and experiences. Barkfelt (2003) for example in her study on metaphors of depression, found in autobiographical writings, works out that some authors experienced their illness as a light-dark contrast ("*die Welt wird zunehmend grau*" - "the world is becoming increasingly grey"); others described their depression as an "*Überfall*" ("attack"), which hits them unexpectedly and "*niederwirft*" ("knocked them down"). The comparison of the two metaphorical concepts points to different experiences of the illness, which manifests itself at different speeds. The use of metaphor in terms of light-dark gives the perception of a transition, thus allowing room for maneuvers which is not possible when depression is perceived as an "attack." In the latter, on the other hand, the illness is more clearly defined as a personal and dangerous enemy than in the first metaphorical concept. From this, Barkfelt derives a number of different options for linguistic or therapeutic intervention. Put more generally: The comparison of metaphorical concepts with the models of actions they contain allows certain conclusions to be drawn. However, these conclusions are only possible if the context is understood fully. Barkfelt is only able to draw such conclusions because she is able to recognize the various implications, due to her competence in the field as a therapist, of the metaphorical concept of depression – beyond any specialist manual, which might simplify the process of coming to these conclusions but which cannot produce them.

Implicit Sub-Division and Values

In retranslating metaphorical models to make sense of life in our world a number of implicit sub-divisions and values become apparent: The metaphoric of movement ("*Das Leben ist ein Weg*" - "life is a journey") contains, in respect of the phenomenon of physical illness or crisis, the following sub-divisions:

- one can be too slow on the path of life: "*langsam im Kopf*" ("slow on the uptake"), *geistig "behindert" oder "beschränkt"* (mentally "incapacitated" or "restricted"), a person is "*ein bisschen zurückgeblieben*" ("a bit backward");

- one can be too fast on the path of life: "*hin und weg*" sein (to be "off and away"), "*durch den Wind*" sein (to be "gone with the wind"), *einen "Schub" haben* (to be in "overdrive");
- one can exist alongside this path of life: "*nicht in der Spur sein*" ("to be off track"), "*neben sich stehen*" ("to drift off", "to be out of sorts"), "*neben der Mütze sein*" ("to wander"), "*verstiegen*" sein ("not go along with the mainstream"), "*abweichendes Verhalten zeigen*" (to "go astray", "walk to the beat of a different drummer");
- perhaps a speed somewhere in the middle on the path of life is an indicator of physical health or normality: "*Wie geht es? Es geht*" ("How's it going? It's going OK"), *auf die Welt "kommen"* (to "come" into the world), "Fortschritte" machen (to make "headway", to make "progress"), *einer Person "näher kommen"* (to "come closer" to a person), "*mit ihr gehen*" ("to go with her"), *bis es wieder auseinander geht*" (until we "go" our separate ways again), and at the end we say that *jemand sei "von uns gegangen"* (someone has "gone from us").

Thus, with a single image and using everyday language it is possible to accommodate three different diagnoses of extreme physical conditions, a description of psycho-social health or relationship capability, and finally the various stages of life from beginning to end. This reveals a still undiscovered richness in everyday language with all its natural classifications and complex layers, which often remain hidden by inconspicuous usage.

Metaphorical Resources

In examining the question: "What is the differentiating, expression-extending, - for the text producer or speaker – functional content of the metaphors used?" it is possible to work out the strengths and resources of a metaphorical concept. The above-mentioned container image conceives, for example, a stable "I" with its contents being relatively well protected. It constructs both too much openness ("*nicht ganz dicht sein*", "to be a crackpot") and permanent "*Verschlossenheit*" ("reservedness") as a psycho-social problem. Within the use of this metaphor the ideal is rather "*aus sich heraus zu kommen*" ("to come out of oneself") without damaging the container. The container imagery allows for individual withdrawal *from and* exchange with the social environment in a precise concept and thus offers a comprehensive repertoire of common and field-specific idioms.

A particular use of metaphor as a resource can be recognized with the benefit of extensive field experience (again a subjective influence). Thus, during interviews on the role of commonplace alcoholism among trainees (Schmitt, 2002b), it was found that traditional clichés of manliness, strength, power, sporting prowess, and combat were the images used to describe drinking. The talk is about "*Männlichkeitsbeweisen*" ("proving one's manhood"), feeling "*stark*" ("strong"), and (with a twinkle in the eye) confessing to not being a "*Kampftrinker*" ("heavyweight drinker"), but nevertheless being "*trainiert*" ("fit"), i.e., everything but a "*Weichei*" ("softy"). Following this logic, whoever does not drink is "*untrainiert*" ("not fit") and therefore "*kein Mann*" ("not a real man") – an unattractive perspective. After an obvious addiction, therefore, a man will have to

maintain the image of masculinity even during abstinence: as with one interviewee who no longer wants to drink:

I don't want to show myself up ("*bloß stellen*") in front of them. They know that I had therapy, and in a certain sense I do want to show a little bit of strength ("*doch ein bißchen Stärke beweisen*"). Because it's been 16 months now, and that drains your power ("*Kraft*"), above all in the first year. An incredible amount of energy ("*Energie*") too, just to keep on target because there are so many opportunities where you could, where you would. (Schmitt, 2002b, p. 105)

Here a change has taken place: Earlier on the interviewee would have disgraced himself if he had not joined in the drinking, now it is drinking that would cause the embarrassment. Abstinence now means proving one's "*Stärke*" ("strength") as a man, "*Kraft*", ("power"), and "*Energie*" ("energy"). Metaphors from the sporting world are trying to save the self-image of masculinity. Through its re-evaluation this masculinity becomes a resource, giving the opportunity to show abstinence in a positive light.

Limits to the Use of Metaphor

In examining the question: "What is the expression-shortening, knowledge-preventing content of the metaphors used?" it is possible to work out the "hiding" elements, the ideological and cognitive deficits of a metaphorical concept. Which aspects does this use of metaphor conceal? Again, making use of the container image, it is not able to represent temporal aspects; one is either "*dicht*" ("shut") or "*nicht dicht*" ("not shut"). The "*Verlauf*" ("passing") of time is better described in the use of the path metaphor ("*im Leben weiter kommen*" - "to make headway in life", "to get ahead", to make "progress"): The image of the container is not able to do this. Another example that we are familiar with is the image of the "*Großwetterlage*" ("general weather conditions"); used by the media to describe the economic situation. The metamorphosis of market movements into nature disguises the fact that one is dealing with a man-made phenomenon. In nearly all cases, this use of metaphor can form the basis of a discussion of advantages and disadvantages.

The deficits and resources of a metaphorical concept can be reconstructed for the three stages in the usual individual, sub-cultural and cultural use of metaphor. Naturally, the process of assessment, in being able to see one aspect of a metaphor as "highlighting" and another as "hiding," requires a subjectivity that is able to draw on a culture that has been lived in and is understood. It is therefore dependent on the discriminatory ability of the person undertaking the interpretation.

Actions Motivated by Metaphors

From sub-cultural and individual metaphor analyses, further motivations or options for human actions can be reconstructed (as a weak form of prognosis). How does someone act who thinks in these images? Nieraad (1977) gives the example of the use of metaphor, borrowed from the sphere of biology, in fascism (blood, land, race etc.) in

order to show the link between the use of metaphor and action: Human models who did not fit into the ideological straightjacket, i.e., who were not "*rassisch gesund*" ("racially healthy") had to undergo "*biologische Therapie*" ("biological therapy"); i.e., they were "*ausgemerzt, ausgerottet, vertilgt*" ("eliminated, eradicated, exterminated"). Such prognoses of future action based on the metaphors used are more likely to be correct, the more a single metaphorical concept dominates the social or personal discourse. Here the same can be said for the conclusions mentioned above: Without the knowledge of the world that an experienced researcher brings, this level of interpretation will remain elusive. The "richer" in knowledge the researcher is, the "richer" will be the links that can be produced.

Conflicts Between Metaphorical Models

Conflicts between metaphorical models in individuals or sub-cultures reveal problems in their actions. Indeed, with Pollio et al. (1977) we can assume that the varied use of metaphors is an indicator of psycho-social integration and conversely, the example of fascism shows that the dominance of a single fund of metaphor makes it possible to forecast the disposition to act in a certain way. The "*gesunde*" ("healthy") multitude of necessary images leads, however, to conflicts between their various implications. As mentioned, the terms "*nüchtern*" ("sober"), "*trocken*" ("dry"), and "*enthaltssam*" ("abstinent"), which are normally selected to describe the target of successful anti-alcoholism consultation, bring to mind less attractive bodily experiences. The opposite metaphors "*sich satt zu trinken*" ("drink one's fill"), "*feucht-fröhliche Feiern*" ("drink and be merry"), and "*trainierte*" ("fit"- i.e., masculinity that has passed the drinking test) suggests pleasant bodily experiences. This conflict between the unattractive images of abstinence and the positive ones of alcoholism means that those affected hardly use the common metaphors of abstinence or, as the example of the masculinity metaphors shows, have to re-evaluate them. Successful abstainers are more likely to select their own images to describe their current life situation (Schmitt, 2002b).

This conclusion follows the steps introduced above for metaphor analysis, without which it would probably not have been reached. The conflicts between metaphorical concepts, only become evident after a prolonged period of contact with the material and an environment of alcohol use; evaluation technique and field competence complement one another.

The Absence of Metaphorical Models

The absence of individual metaphorical models is conspicuous in comparison with the sub-cultural and cultural reservoirs and can present a challenge to interpretation. Von Kleist (1987) describes a client in psychotherapy who lacks a fund of metaphors to describe the movement of "*Annäherns*" *an* ("coming closer" to) and "*Zugehens*" *auf* ("going" up to, "approaching") other people; social deficits and test-situations in particular in which she feels herself to be trapped are a general problem for her. The author makes this absence clear. This is done for example by using points from the discussion during therapy, when the client misunderstands the path metaphors used by

the therapist. On the other hand, she is able to show the metaphorical fit of both interacting parties at other points.

While this example describes the revealing absence of a metaphoric fund in an individual, I am reminded of the significant absence of metaphors of "*Wachstum*" ("growth") described under the first evaluation rule in a certain sub-culture of psycho-social help (see above).

Metaphors in Meta-Communication

The reconstruction of metaphorical models of interaction in conversation provides useful information for consultation, therapy, or prevention. The fit and non-fit of metaphors used by speakers, and possibly subsequent attempts at repair and translation, offer opportunities for intervention (Schmitt, 2000b). Metaphorical descriptions of relationships in which two people speak about their joint activities offer a further level of analysis. An example of this is if in a discussion such a term is used as: "*Damit kommen wir jetzt aber in eine Sackgasse*" ("But with that we've now come to a dead end"). Buchholz and von Kleist (1995, 1997) have described such meta-communicative use of metaphor in a number of studies. In Buchholz and von Kleist (1995) they reconstruct a "*Jagdspiel*" ("hunting game") in which the client, like a hare, lures the therapist by leaving behind ever changing but promising topics as "*Fährten*" ("tracks"). The therapist is only able to give a limited account of the game being played jointly with the client.

In addition to the knowledge of the world that the researcher possesses, this example allows the study of clinical experience as a subjective resource of reconstruction.

Metaphors as a Projection Screen

The "*Ausbuchstabieren*" ("spelling out") word by word of metaphors in actions and rituals provides access to everyday practices. This possibility of reaching a conclusion in interpretation is not related to the reconstruction of metaphorical concepts but to how people furnish the metaphors offered to them with meaning. Thus Breuer (1998), in her interviews on the use and misuse of alcohol, provides the question: "*Wo würdest Du eine Grenze setzen, ab der das Trinken zum Problem wird?*" ("Where would you draw the line, past which drinking would become a problem?") with the spatial metaphor of a "*Grenze*" ("limit, border"). The answers distinguish between four different groups of strategies for coping with life (Schmitt, 2002a): Some of the interviewees name temporal, spatial, or situational limits to drinking others present more general consumption-limiting dogmas and self-images. In addition, the interviews allow further rules of behavior to be reconstructed (e.g., not to encourage others to drink and not to let oneself be led into drinking). A fourth group, of very individual criteria of experience, explains the effects of alcohol from their own intimate knowledge (e.g., at which stage of sight-loss drinking is stopped). To summarize not only the analysis of metaphors but also the reaction that metaphors cause need to be analyzed. This example shows that, at this stage, metaphor analysis can be well complemented by procedures for the analysis of content.

Steps to Ensure Trustworthiness

Metaphor analyses must also provide the possibility to test their credibility. The first draft of the systematic metaphor analysis (Schmitt, 1995) relied upon quality criteria such as those formulated by Mayring (1983) for "qualitative content analysis" and conformed to traditional quality criteria – objectivity, reliability, validity – and their adaptation to qualitative research. The discussion on quality criteria in qualitative research has gone through subsequent developments (Steinke, 1999; see also the continuing debate on "Quality Standards in Qualitative Research" in the online journal *Forum Qualitative Social Research* at <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs/fqs-d/debate-1-d.htm>). In the development of the method of metaphor analysis it became clear that the field competence of the researcher, his/her theoretical sensibility and the scope of his/her fund of subjective knowledge and ability to interpret must be given more attention and weight (Schmitt, 2003). The quality criteria, which are deemed useful and reasonable for a systematic metaphor analysis will thus be formulated here anew.

I will orient myself along the lines of Steinke (1999) and limit myself to central assumptions.

Theoretically, the quality criteria are not for the evaluation/assessment method itself, but must rather be formulated for the entire investigation. Some of the criteria Steinke (1999) lists pertain much more strongly to the investigation as a whole than for the evaluation procedure alone. She lists the following criteria as relevant from the gathering of material through to the formulation of results:

- reflection on or testing of the limits and range of the results of a study ("limitation")
- the coherence of the theory developed
- its relevance for research and practice
- documentation of a reflective subjectivity

Here I will refer specifically only to the criteria which can apply to the evaluation process.

1. One of Steinke's core criteria for the evaluating qualitative research is "intersubjective credibility" attainable by means of:

- broad documentation of the research process; the various stages and decisions along the way,
- interpretation in groups
- using a standardized procedure

These three suggestions are easily followed in metaphor analyses. One element of the research process documentation according to Steinke (1999) is the explication of one's own initial understanding. For metaphor analysis we should specify more closely, pointing out that the researcher should shed light on his/her own metaphorical patterns through self-experience, self-interview with follow-up analysis, etc.; in order to keep interference from unresolved metaphorical patterns to a minimum. In many of social

science's older metaphor analyses, critics note certain metaphors such as those from a technical background (e.g., criticism of the "mind-as-machine" paradigm of cognitive psychology) without reflecting on their own - most often organic - metaphors. This is a distortion, which is no longer acceptable.

2. Steinke (1999) lists the "indication of the research process" as the second core criteria. This includes the appropriateness of the methods for the particular object of research; Here metaphor analysis is only appropriate when the goal of the research is to discover patterns of interpretation and how they are altered and/or processed discursively.

3. The next criteria is the "empirical anchoring of the theory building" in the material. The reconstruction of metaphorical concepts work directly with the original material, without paraphrasing intermediate steps. The interpretation growing out of this foundation can draw upon the heuristic developed in paragraph 3 of *"Subjectivity and Method II: Interpretations"* (see above) - All interpretations always refer back to the material for comparison. The systematic metaphor analysis must always present its results using the language of the material collected (in the terminus of the "grounded theory" as "in-vivo codes"). The reconstruction, interpretation, and presentation of metaphor analyses are therefore always empirically anchored.

As a result, quality loss occurs when interpretation, relevant linguistic material is not evaluated, not interpreted, or not presented. For this reason, I have formulated specific quality criteria for metaphor analysis that go beyond those discussed by Steinke (1999). These are:

4. The amount of metaphorical concepts found and to what extent they are satiated with material: The greater the number of instances in which the metaphorical concepts are documented, the sooner it can be assumed that actual metaphorical projections have been recorded. When material gathered in a study is published, it is possible to check whether perhaps additional metaphorical concepts can be found or whether an insufficient satiation with the concepts might call for revision.

5. The thoroughness of the reflection on interpretive options within the metaphorical concepts: The more thorough the comparison of the metaphorical concepts within the material, the sooner can it be assumed that the most significant implications of metaphorical thinking have been discovered. An all-encompassing usage of the heuristic guidelines or perhaps even their expansion is also an indication that the consequences of these cognitive patterns have been recorded quite thoroughly.

6. Thoroughness of the comparison with non-metaphorical finds: The more exhaustively the metaphorical concepts and their implications are compared with non-verbal practices and non-metaphorical text content, the better one can judge the scope, the limits, and the validity of the findings of a metaphor analysis. As with every assessment method it cannot be expected that the systematic metaphor analysis alone can always fully and completely describe the phenomena of interest to the researcher.

In selecting the most appropriate method of evaluation it should be noted that metaphor analysis is not always suitable for answering particular questions or analyzing all kinds of material. Metaphor analysis requires that:

- a) Different people are able to conceptualize the subject being analyzed differently.
- b) The question being researched is targeted at least in part at the various subjective, group-specific or cultural conceptualization of the phenomenon being investigated.

These requirements make it clear that metaphor analysis is targeted at collective and subjective constructions. Conversely, metaphor analysis provides only incomplete and indirect answers to questions asked about for example socio-economic circumstances, which play an important role in social science research.

Hitherto, metaphor analysis has not made any particular demands on the type of texts used. Previous analyses have used a wide variety of texts ranging from interviews, newspapers (Baldauf, 1997), and theoretical materials (Leihener, 1997) to the analysis of legal texts (Schulze & Schmitt, 2005) and novels (Barkfelt, 2003). As mentioned above, this approach has so far stopped short of venturing into territory such as gestures, musical or acoustic material, images (although Schachtner, 1999, 2002, has included the analysis of drawings), architecture, and other areas of "presentational symbolism" (Lorenzer, 1986). There may well be some disadvantage in dialogue-orientated materials, if for example, the question being researched is aimed at how the dynamics of conversational (mis-)understanding(s) develop. The reconstruction of the given metaphorical models in conversation is nevertheless the first step, which has to be followed by a sequential analytical or ethno-methodological approach, drawing on the subsequently documented metaphorical models. If all that matters is the documentation of all available metaphorical models used then the loss of sequentiality will not represent a problem for the results. Therefore, depending on the question being researched, the triangulation (Flick, 2000) of metaphor analysis with other methods of evaluation is to be recommended.

I have described areas of overlap and also of difference and deficit, e.g., in comparison of metaphor analysis with Mayring's content analysis (Schmitt, 1995). Metaphor analysis can only partially reconstruct propositional statements and content. The analysis of metaphors in the context of an ethno-methodological or psychoanalytical approach has been introduced by Buchholz and von Kleist (1997); they include the sequentiality of metaphorical statements. In a procedure within the framework of "grounded theory" Schachtner (1999) has integrated the analysis of metaphors in order to be able to integrate other previously undefined interview details in the interpretation. Moser (2000) has used quantitative methods of self-concept research in the analysis of metaphoric speech. Therefore, it would be sensible, depending on the research question, to combine methods, which focus on aspects that are not recorded by systematic metaphor analysis.

As we see, there are other possible or potential triangulations with other evaluation methods. Flick (2000) even notes the possibilities and limits of triangulation. Particularly worth noting is his remark about not (just) using triangulation to validate, but also to understand differences in the conclusions reached by the various evaluation methods as grounds or opportunity for additional theoretical explanation.

In the light of these three criteria, an empirical "falsification" of a metaphor analysis is possible. By making the material accessible, other researchers can also discover metaphorical relationships and further limit or extend the assumed range of previously developed interpretations. (Strictly speaking, such a criticism of the quality of a study is not a "falsification" of its results but rather an elaboration and a deepening of it).

Some Final Comments on Subjectivity, Hermeneutics, and Metaphor Analysis

Metaphor analysis cannot work without previous socialization in the language and environment in general and, in particular, without field experience gained prior to or during the course of research. The "*Vermögen*" ("fund of knowledge") the researcher has is a vital part of the process. Habermas takes recourse to this competence in his understanding of hermeneutics aimed at Gadamer:

Hermeneutik bezieht sich auf ein "Vermögen", das wir in dem Maße erwerben, als wir eine natürliche Sprache "beherrschen" lernen: auf die Kunst, sprachlich kommunizierbaren Sinn zu verstehen und, im Falle gestörter Kommunikation, verständlich zu machen. ("Hermeneutics refers to a "wealth of knowledge" that we acquire to the level required when we learn to 'have command of' a natural language: it relates to the art of understanding the sense of what is verbally communicated and, in the case of disturbed communication, making it intelligible" Habermas, 1970, p. 73)

He understands hermeneutics as practical knowledge and preconception of the world, which is only made possible at all by the development of standards of reflection and their description. According to Habermas (1970) hermeneutic understanding is not to be classified as either theory or experience since it anticipates both and is ahead in developing patterns for a possible world-view. Systematic metaphor analysis relies heavily on the understanding gained prior to theory. This has been shown by the remarks made in the second section above on the role of researchers. On the other hand, metaphor analysis targets what Habermas refers to as "*Schemata möglicher Weltauffassung*" ("patterns for a possible world-view"). There is not enough room here to reconstruct the debate between Gadamer and Habermas on the relationship between understanding and methods of research in respect of metaphor analysis (Schmitt, 1995). For the sake of order, however, I will briefly mention the result of the debate: Later participants in the discussion were in agreement that social scientific understanding draws from an understanding of understanding. Beyond everyday understanding, under practical constraints, the aim was to allow a second order of understanding, which could reconstruct understanding in everyday life (Bergold & Breuer, 1987). Metaphor analysis can follow this directly by bringing to word the very linguistic models through which understanding is translated.

The understanding of understanding requires a slowing down of pace and a certain distance to the subject. This justifies research methods that serve this purpose.¹⁶ Following practical rules prior to interpretation can prevent reaching hasty and, with the benefit of additional knowledge of other metaphorical concepts, obsolete conclusions. Methodical rules therefore impede an incomplete understanding of the links in the symbolically structured world and facilitate unintended learning processes. They reduce the risk of incorrect interpretations, but do not eliminate that risk. Heuristic rules for the process of metaphor analysis and aids to interpretation do not, therefore, restrict the researcher but offer possibilities for an extension of knowledge.¹⁷

Peripheral knowledge with respect to the subject does assist in reducing hasty conclusions. The proposed analysis can identify metaphoric structures of thought and resulting patterns of action. This means that phenomena, which cannot be recorded in metaphorical language, falls outside of the focus of the analysis, even though Lakoff and Johnson describe metaphor in very broad terms. As discussed in the section titled *Steps to Ensure Trustworthiness* these restrictions recommend the use, depending on the question being researched, of triangulation with other forms of evaluation. With such an approach the question of the criteria for the quality of an analysis needs to be answered for every single study. Many studies inspired by Lakoff and Johnson do not ask themselves this question – the rules presented in this paper contribute towards being able to provide an answer.

Appendix A

Rules for the Identification of Metaphors

A metaphor can be determined when:

- a. A word or phrase, strictly-speaking, can be understood beyond the literal meaning in context of what is being said; and
- b. The literal meaning stems from an area of physical or cultural experience (source area)
- c. Which, however, is - in this context - transferred to a second, often abstract, area (target area).

Example from an Interview

... today things are already going much better for me, she told me straight away, just bubbling over with life. Take a look, I've also painted my nails. Yes, and then I really praised her and said what I thought, found it simply terrific ...

¹⁶ Devereux (1967) has quite rightly pointed out that research methods can also serve to defend against and provide distance from contents that are unpleasant. However, this general suspicion against research methods does not do justice to the defence-preventing because slowing and fear-removing function of research methods.

¹⁷ Subjective "*Vermögen*" ("fund of knowledge"), "*Erweiterung*" ("extension of knowledge") and "*Lernen*" ("learning"): here I am metaphorizing subjectivity within the framework of a "*ressourcenorientierten*" ("resource-oriented") view, not as a restriction or defect.

... und mir geht es heute schon viel besser, hat sie mir gleich erzählt und hat so gesprüht vor Leben. Gucken Sie, ich habe mir auch die Fingernägel lackiert. Ja, und dann habe ich sie so gelobt und meinte, daß ich das toll fände ...

Carrying Out the Identification Procedure

“Today things are already *going* much better for me”: she is not going but things are going better for her: path/journey metaphor.

“*Today* things are *already* going much better for me”: “today” and “already” are adverbs of time or condition without an image content – they are not metaphors.

“Today things are already going *much* better for me”: the abstract “better” (target area) is extended in meaning by the word “much” which stems from substance quantification (source area): here to be “better” means having “more”, cf. the metaphors of giving and providing.

“Today things are already going much *better* for me”: “better” is abstract without an image content, a literal meaning could possibly be reconstructed etymologically and would no longer be accessible, considering the understanding of today’s speakers: It is, therefore, more likely to be the target area for metaphor use rather than the source area.

“She *told* me *straight away*”: here “told” (“erzählen”) means a real account of a story. With “straight away” (“gleich”) the literal meaning refers to a path, the target is communication or the kind of telling, so “straight away” is a metaphor in this context.

“(She was) just *bubbling* over with life”: here the bubbling of water (source area) is applied to the expression of emotion (target area). It does not make sense to analyze the individual parts of the phrase, as it is the phrase as a whole which first constitutes the metaphor.

“Take a *look*, I’ve also painted my nails”: “look” is used literally here and is therefore not a visual metaphor for cognitive orientation; compare on the other hand Franz Beckenbauer: “Schau'n wir mal” (“Let’s just see”).

“Then I really *praised* her and said what I *thought*”: for “to praise” and “to think” one could also undertake an etymological deep-sea dive and come across a deep, deep meaning: For today’s speakers, however, the literal meaning is the same as that, which is to be expected in the context, so it cannot be reconstructed as a metaphor.

“that I *found* it simply terrific”: “to find” refers to a concrete process which often follows a concrete search; “to find” is transferred to processes of social interaction/evaluation and is thus a metaphor which, in my experience, often appears along with the path metaphor.

Appendix B

Rules for the Reconstruction of Metaphorical Models

First group all the metaphorical terms, which describe the same (concrete-sensory) source area and the same (abstract) target area together. Then give them a title summarizing the metaphorical model in the equation:

(target area) = (source area)

Example 1:

“You just don’t experience problems like that as being so *weighty* (‘*gewichtig*’) when you are drunk.”

“It is *easier* (‘*leichter*’) to get into a conversation with people when you’re no longer sober.”

“It was simply *less burdensome* (‘*unbeschwerter*’) after the second beer.”

All three quotations are related to various states of drunkenness, which is also the target area in a current investigation entitled *Which Experiences and Expectations are Related to Alcohol Consumption?*

The common source area can be formulated in terms of a “burden”, “effort”, “weight” – the most suitable term will become evident upon the discovery of further metaphors. Thus, I would offer the following as an initial formulation of the metaphorical concept: “Drunkenness makes difficulties easier to bear”.

Example 2:

“They *met* (‘*getroffen*’) there and got into an argument.”

“He tried to *find* (‘*finden*’) a way to reach him” (“*Zugang zu ihm*”).

It could be argued that to meet (“*treffen*”) and find (“*finden*”) require space to take place... But in this case it is a very strained construction of a source area, which uses “space” in its most abstract quality (i.e., it’s somehow simply being present). Speaking metaphorically, it is an attempt to give a skinhead a perm. Therefore, we have no common source area, no metaphorical model here, even if the target area (interaction) is the same.

Example 3:

“He *got out of his way*” (“*aus dem Weg gegangen*”).

“He is making *progress* (‘Fortschritte’) with his therapy.”

The same source area (path metaphor) but no common target area. First interaction then individual development, therefore not suitable for grouping in a common model.

Example 4:

“She *bubbled over with life* (‘gesprudelt vor Leben’).

“She *effervesced* (‘gesprüht’) as she told her story.”

“And then the *dams burst* (‘Dämme gebrochen’) as she told her story and wept.”

We are able to ascribe the metaphors to the same source area (moving liquid) and the same target area (emotional exchange). The corresponding titles might be:

- Emotional vitality is running water.
- Emotional vitality is overflowing water.
- Emotional vitality is pressurised liquid.

A decision for one of these titles cannot yet be made; they are *provisional constructions*. Experience shows that it is also too early to formulate a title based on just three metaphors. We may well find further metaphors to add to the image of the bursting dams.

Example 5:

“She *burst out* (‘herausgebrochen’) with it.”

“I found that she was too *open* (‘offen’) there.”

“In the village they said that at the time she was a *crackpot* (‘nicht mehr ganz dicht’).”

Here there is no more talk of a liquid. The concrete source area might be formulated as a container, the abstract target area as the psyche, and a possible title: “Y’s psyche is a container with a tendency to break”.

We now have two metaphorical models describing emotional facts; and the image of the breaking dams fits into both models. What should we do?

- a. Allocate further metaphors. With two times three metaphors, decisions regarding the fundamental model cannot be adequately justified.
- b. In the event that many metaphors are found: as long as it is only single metaphors that appear in two models, one can allow them to stay in both models; there are more complex metaphors which build upon multi-images (compare to go astray (“auf die schiefe Bahn geraten”), the path-metaphors and the metaphorical pattern of above (“oben”) and below (“unten”) are used here.

c. One can attempt to formulate a joint model; in this case: “Y is seen as an unsound container which breaks under the pressure of emotions as liquids.” This is already an extremely complex interpretation, which is used to describe perception and social interaction; it is almost part of the final results of a case study already.

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Schmitt, R. (2005). Systematic metaphor analysis as a method of qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 10(2), 358-394. Retrieved [Insert date], from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR10-2/schmitt.pdf>
