

## Assessing metaphors effectiveness in medical interviews

Maria Grazia Rossi and Fabrizio Macagno, Nova University of Lisbon, Portugal.

Metaphors are commonly considered as cognitive and linguistic tools making the acquisition of new knowledge possible (Ortony 1975; Cameron 2002; Hesse 1966). Recently, metaphors have been investigated as tools to improve patient understanding and foster their self-management skills (Semino et al. 2018; Naik et al. 2011; Bleakley 2017). However, the conditions under which such communicative effects of metaphors are carried out are still controversial. The goal of this paper is to present the results of a study devoted to investigating the effectiveness of metaphors in medical interviews. More specifically, their communicative effectiveness has been determined by a) quantifying the number of misunderstanding due to metaphors, and 2) the correlation between metaphors and misunderstanding. From this analysis emerges that (1) metaphors – especially conventional metaphors – are positively correlated to misunderstanding; and (2) metaphors – especially creative metaphors – are used as argumentative instruments to foster patient understanding and patient self-management abilities but without a careful monitoring of their communicative effects in terms of patient understanding. Implications on the use of metaphors in medical setting will be discussed and criteria to design guidelines for health providers will be proposed.

### References

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