Metaphor response categories and distribution between therapists and clients: A case study in the Chinese context

Abstract

There are strong theoretical foundations supporting the use of metaphors in counseling.

However, our understanding might become overly idealized without

close contextual analysis of different aspects of their use. This paper focuses on one such

aspect in the underexplored Chinese-speaking context – how therapists and clients respond

to each other's metaphors, based on 30 hours of transcribed talk from a Chinese university

counseling centre. A hierarchical set of response categories (repeat, reject, explore, extend)

split into 'non-developmental' and 'developmental' pathways is proposed, reflecting the

progressive nature of metaphor response. Differences with categories in previous studies

are highlighted, and examples discussed from metaphor theoretical perspectives. A χ^2 test

of independence revealed a significant association between response categories and

initiators (therapist or client) (χ^2 (3, N = 178) = 31.05, p < 0.001, Cramer's V = 0.418, Log

(BF_{10}) =11.18), offering further insight into how responses to metaphor relate to counseling

objectives. Therapists are more likely to explore and reject metaphors than clients, clients

are more likely to repeat metaphors than therapists, and clients and therapists are equally

likely to extend metaphors. Implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research

are put forward.

Keywords: metaphor, response to metaphor, Chinese context, discourse analysis

Introduction

Metaphors have long been recognized as useful to counseling and therapeutic practice. A broad and widely accepted definition of metaphor is the act of describing, and potentially thinking about, something in terms of something else (Semino, 2008). The influential Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff, 1993) hypothesizes that systematic patterns of metaphorical language reflect systematic patterns of metaphorical thought – for example, prosaic expressions like "our relationship is at a crossroads" and "we are spinning our wheels" reflect how we conceptualize relationships as a physical journey by 'mapping' inferences from the latter to the former. This outlines a clear interface between counseling talk and its central objective of working with client conceptualizations of their problems (Wickman, Daniels, White, & Fesmire, 1999), and has inspired approaches to metaphor use in various paradigms like constructivism and CBT (Goncalves & Craine, 1990; Kopp & Craw, 1998; Stott, Mansell, Salkovskis, Lavender, & Cartwright-Hatton, 2010). Metaphors have also been shown to serve other functions beyond their cognitive grounding such as exhibiting cultural sensitivity, reducing client resistance, and fostering the therapeutic relationship (Dwairy, 2009; Lyddon, Clay, & Sparks, 2001).

Despite the strong theoretical foundations, there has been a relative lack of context-sensitive analyses of spontaneous metaphors unfolding in counseling interaction (McMullen, 2008; Tay, 2013). This might lead to an overly ideal or abstract understanding of their nature in counseling. For example, there is a popular distinction between therapist-generated (Blenkiron, 2010; Lankton & Lankton, 1983; Stott et al., 2010) and client-generated (Kopp, 1995) metaphors – the former are 'stock metaphors' prepared by therapists beforehand, the latter are metaphors produced by clients that ought to be affirmed and developed by therapists. Lost in this neat conceptual distinction are instances of co-constructed metaphors where meanings are negotiated in more complicated ways, and over longer stretches of interaction (Ferrara, 1994; Tay, 2016a). The fact that metaphors are seldom neatly circumscribed, but often tied to the dynamics of interaction, has long been observed in the linguistics and metaphor

theoretical literature. The 'discourse dynamics' approach (Cameron & Maslen, 2010) asserts that

metaphors are constantly reshaped as speakers pursue their discourse aims, while Drew and Holt (1998)

highlights the unique tendency for figurative expressions to be used as topic transition devices in

telephone conversations. The co-occurrence of metaphors with other linguistic markers that signal their

presence or indicate attitudes like certainty and tentativeness (Cameron & Deignan, 2003; Tay, 2011,

2014a) has also been documented. These studies furthermore tend to discuss metaphorical language in a

more nuanced way with reference to theoretical constructs like targets (i.e. the subject matter of the

metaphor), sources (the thing used to describe the subject matter), and mappings (the links between target

and source) (Tay, 2014b, 2017). As a verbal activity, counseling is a context where such constructs are

likely to be relevant. We can generally state that counseling research could focus more on the spontaneity

of metaphoric talk, drawing from linguistic and metaphor theoretical perspectives where appropriate.

In this paper, I extend this line of argument by examining the phenomenon of metaphor response,

or uptake, in spontaneous counseling . This is defined as the various ways with which therapists and

clients respond to noteworthy metaphors initiated by each other, and their unfolding functions beyond

those suggested in the literature (Lyddon et al., 2001). Mathieson et al. (2015) refer to this as the

'metaphoric dance' as therapists and clients develop a shared language. In general, therapist and client

responses to each other are important research areas (Claiborn & Goodyear, 2005; Stiles, 1988). There are

several existing accounts of the nature of responses to metaphor and their implications. Strong (1989)

offers a theoretical model with three categories of counselor response (explicating what is implicit,

extending or modifying the metaphor, and creating and delivering therapeutic metaphors), partially

confirmed by data in Bayne and Thompson (2000). Ferrara (1994) provides a close-up look at how a

single therapist-client dyad co-construct a novel metaphor of life as 'going down the river'. More

recently, Mathieson et al. (2015) discern a set of categories from a sample of CBT transcripts that include

repetition, rephrasing, exploration, elaboration/extension, and agreement. These accounts have helped us

move beyond the aforementioned categorical understanding of metaphor in counseling, but could still be

taken further. The earlier studies are rich in clinical insight (Ferrara, 1994; Strong, 1989) but do not adequately examine spontaneous metaphors *in situ*. Mathieson et al.'s (2015) discussion is backed up by both clinical insight and careful study of spontaneous metaphors, but omits closely related figurative language like metonymy. Furthermore, virtually all previous studies have been conducted in English-speaking contexts, which motivates the question of how responses to metaphor might vary across languages and cultures (cf. Tay, 2015).

This paper addresses the above gaps with a case study of metaphor response categories, driven by metaphor theoretical perspectives, between therapists and clients in a Chinese-speaking context. The research questions are i) whether we can construct a systematic typology of response categories by inductive, bottom-up analysis, ii) how we can understand these categories with reference to the unfolding therapeutic work, and iii) whether response tendencies vary systematically between therapists and clients. The methodology is both qualitative and quantitative, combining manual with statistical analysis of association. The discussion will highlight differences between the present typology and previous accounts, as well as limitations and directions for future research.

Data and methodology

The data contains 30 hours of anonymized transcribed talk by three therapist-client dyads (15/8/7 hours respectively) at a Chinese university counseling centre. The therapists in the centre use an eclectic mix of approaches including object relations and expressive arts therapy. Both these approaches would be theoretically receptive towards metaphor use because of their respective emphasis on images of the self, and creativity as a tool to initiate change. Informed consent was obtained for the recordings. Details of the current study were not known to participants at the time of the sessions.

The methodology comprises the following steps: i) identify clear instances of metaphor use; ii) for each instance, identify and categorize the nature of (non)-response within three conversational turns;

iii) analyze illustrative examples of each category (qualitative) and the distribution of categories across therapists and clients (quantitative). Quantitative reliability measures were not used for the identification procedures in steps i) and ii) because of their inductive and recursive nature. Reliability was assessed instead with calibration of understanding between two trained raters, independent identification, and subsequent discussion to arrive at a consensus (Cameron & Maslen, 2010).

Metaphor identification

The discourse dynamics approach (Cameron & Maslen, 2010) was applied to identify metaphorical words and phrases, or 'metaphor vehicle terms', based on the criterion of contrast and meaning transfer between dictionary and contextual senses. This procedure was preferred over others like the MIP (metaphor identification procedure) (Pragglejaz Group, 2007) and MIPVU (metaphor identification procedure VU University Amsterdam) (Steen et al., 2010), which focus on lexical metaphors and are therefore less suitable for spontaneous discourse like psychotherapy. Consider the following (translated) examples

1. 现在都能感受到自己心里有好几个洞 就是他们射的 I can now feel the many holes that are in my heart were shot by them
2. 我好像给自己宣布了死刑 I seem to have sentenced myself to death
3. 有一些怕的东西，怕的感觉 There are some frightening things, frightening feelings.

In Example 1, the underlined expressions 口口 (in my heart), 口口口口 (many holes), and 口 (shot) all involve meaning contrast and transfer between a basic sense and a more abstract contextual sense related to the speaker's emotions. Example 2 is a metaphorical simile expressed over a stretch of language where 口口 (seem to) signals the metaphorical comparison between the basic sense of a death sentence and the contextual sense of an undesirable emotional state. Example 3 illustrates a caveat for

metaphor identification in Mandarin Chinese where individual character meanings in lexical compounds contribute to the overall meaning in ways opaque even to native speakers (Ceccagno & Basciano, 2007). The compound □ □ , which means a general thing, comprises two characters with respective basic meanings of east and west. While this may seem starkly metaphorical, native speakers are unlikely to consider these compounds as involving metaphorical meaning transfer. Such examples are therefore not considered metaphorical.

Since the present study focuses on clear and purposive instances of metaphor, the next step followed Cameron and Maslen's (2010) general advice to filter out instances that are "not of much relevance in answering the research questions" (p. 111) at hand. Examples are common metaphorical nouns, verbs, and prepositions which do not seem to serve therapeutic functions. This decision is further supported by evidence that therapeutic processes such as restructuring of cognitive schemas and problem-solving are more likely associated with unconventional rather than conventional metaphors (Gelo & Mergenthaler, 2003; Pollio & Barlow, 1975).While highly conventional metaphors may have therapeutic value if explicitly engaged (Witztum, van der Hart, & Friedman, 1988), clear examples were absent from the data. The Metaphor Analysis in Psychotherapy (MAP) model (Gelo, 2008) provides further working criteria to help determine which instances are more relevant; i.e. those whose metaphorical meanings are not fixed, are perceived as unfamiliar, and require a certain effort to understand. Returning to the above examples, □ □ (in my heart) is thus considered conventional while the rest unconventional. This study therefore makes the practical assumption that unconventionality is a key indicator of clear and purposive metaphor use – an assumption we will critically interrogate in the limitations section.

Determination of response categories

The next step was to determine if, and how, each instance of metaphor was responded to by the other

speaker within a span of three conversational turns (Hill & Regan, 1991; Mathieson et al., 2015). This was as an inductive process starting from the intuitive categories of 'no response' and 'response', and gradually discerning more specific types of response. Consider Examples 4 and 5.

4. T: □ □ □ □ , □ □ □ □ □ □ □ [Client's name] □ □ □ □ □ 。 □ □ □ , □ □ <u>□ □ □ □</u>

    □ □ □ Because this is, this is back then, [Client's name] in primary school was very angry.

    He has been <u>suppressing</u> it very hard

    C: □ □ □ , <u>□ □</u> □ □ □ □ □ 。 I have been <u>repressing</u> it very hard.

5. T: □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ , □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ ？ If you were to

    use a metaphor to describe that past relationship, what would it be?

    C: <u>□ □ □ □ □</u>。 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ <u>□ □</u> □ □ □ □ , □ □ □ … A <u>thorny rose</u>.

    Because if I <u>touch</u> that memory again, I might…

    T: <u>□ □ □ □ □</u> A <u>thorny rose</u>

    C: □ <u>□ □ □ □</u>。 □ □ □ □ □ , □ □ □ , □ □ □ □ □ □ <u>□ □</u>。 □ □ □ □ <u>□ □</u> , □ □ … It

    will <u>prick my hand</u>. But if I, I look at it, it won't <u>prick</u> me. As long as I don't <u>touch</u> it, it's…

Both examples illustrate different types of response. In Example 4, the client responds to the therapist's metaphor of "suppressing" his anger by rephrasing it as "repressing", which has a similar meaning and inferential potential. However, the metaphor was not subsequently developed beyond this

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rephrasing. In Example 5 the therapist elicits a metaphor from the client, responds by repeating it, after which the client further develops its inferences. Existing literature (Mathieson et al., 2015) provides a useful reference for identifying and labeling these different response categories, but the data was considered on its own terms for the present purpose. This process resulted in the categories presented in Figure 1 below.

Qualitative and quantitative analysis

Examples from each category were analyzed to illustrate the qualitative nature of different response categories in context. To address the research question on the distribution of response types between therapists and clients, a χ^2 test of independence was conducted on their cross-classified frequencies with elaboration on specific categories where they differ with statistical significance.

Metaphor response categories

Figure 1 depicts the response categories identified from the present dataset. They are generally similar to Mathieson et al.'s (2015) categories, but the importance of distinguishing a 'developmental' vs. 'non-developmental' response pathway is highlighted. Once a metaphor is introduced, it is either unrecognized by the other party or recognized (within three turns). Unrecognized metaphors are by default non-developmental and not a response category *per se.* Among the many possible reasons why metaphors are unrecognized, a general lack of awareness of metaphor is the most interesting from a therapist training perspective (Kopp, 1995), but detailed discussion of this issue is beyond the present scope.

A metaphor is recognized if there is some explicit form of acknowledgement from the other party. However, it may still end up as non-developmental if it is merely repeated/rephrased without subsequent follow-up, or explicitly rejected by the other party for some reason. If the recognized metaphor is instead

explored and furthermore extended in therapeutically relevant ways, they are considered as developmental responses. We should also note the hierarchical nature of these categories. On the non-developmental side, a repeated/rejected metaphor must have been previously recognized. On the developmental side, an extended metaphor presupposes exploration and recognition, and so on. This approach of conceptualizing metaphor response better reflects its progressive, incremental nature. Each of these categories will be elaborated with (translated) examples below, and with reference to specific theoretical constructs like sources, targets, and metonymy. C refers to client and T to therapist.

[Figure 1 near here]

Rejection

Rejection is defined as an explicit indication that an introduced metaphor should not be further discussed. It is distinguished from 'unrecognized' cases where introduced metaphors are simply overlooked without further comment. Rejection does not occur frequently (See Table 1 below) but deserves more attention in the counseling literature on metaphor. Even though the focus of the literature is often on strategic metaphor use and development, the reasons why therapists and/or clients reject (the use of) purposively introduced metaphors may have implications for practice. Consider Example 6 which illustrates the therapist rejecting the client's use of metaphor and stating his preference for more literal description.

6. C: □ □ 。 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ …□ □ , □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ <u>□ □ □ □</u> Shame. I feel that the

   "me" inside my heart…his, his heart <u>has been frozen</u>

   T: <u>□ □ □ □ □ □</u> 。 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ <u>Let's not use metaphors</u>. Describe this feeling in detail.

C: ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ I feel shameful

The client is recounting his childhood experience of prolonged sexual abuse by a relative, and metaphorically describes his sense of shame as having a heart that "has been frozen". In the next turn, the therapist explicitly encourages the client to "not use metaphors" and "describe this feeling in detail", implying that the previous metaphorical description is not helpful to the therapeutic process. This explicit preference for non-metaphorical language continues in subsequent turns (Example 7) as the therapist views literal description as a more direct way to accomplish the important but difficult objective of acknowledging and verbalizing shame (Kaufman, 1989).

7. C: ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ … ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ <u>⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚</u> I feel very shameful. I want to <u>release</u> it

   T: ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ You are doing so indeed

   C: ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ <u>⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚</u> I want to <u>release</u> it.

   T: <u>⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚</u> ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ <u>Just say this sentence directly.</u>

   C: ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ <u>⬚ ⬚ ⬚</u> , ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ , ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ <u>⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚</u> I want to <u>release</u> it, I feel very guilty, I want to <u>release</u> it.

   T: <u>⬚ ⬚ ⬚</u> , ⬚ , ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ , ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ <u>Say it directly</u>, I, the most direct way is, I feel very shameful.

In Example 7, the client persistently uses another metaphor of wanting to "release" the distinct but often-correlated senses of shame and guilt (Baldwin, Baldwin, & Ewald, 2006) from his childhood

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experiences. The therapist does not acknowledge this repeated metaphor. Instead, he responds to each

attempt by requesting the client to express himself directly, even suggesting exactly what should be said.

While Example 5 above ("if you were to use a metaphor…") illustrates the oft-discussed use of metaphors

as an indirect way to express painful content (Dwairy, 2009; Kopp & Craw, 1998), Example 7 illustrates

the opposite and less discussed perspective - that with some clients/therapists, in some situations,

metaphors could be seen as vague, evasive, and impede therapeutic work. Converse instances of clients

rejecting therapist metaphors were not found in the present data but are conceivably possible. For

example, there is an extensive literature on "stock" metaphors (e.g. describing anorexia as driving a car

without petrol) that can be prepared in advance and used by therapists to explain different concepts and

situations to clients (Blenkiron, 2010; Stott et al., 2010). Clients might nonetheless reject further

elaboration because the source and/or target of these metaphors are not sufficiently relatable, or are

viewed as somewhat playful. Another possibility lies with attitudes towards the general use of metaphor

as a communication technique. This issue is currently far better understood in other contexts like science

education (Duit, 1991) where listeners may expect precise and factual information rather than idealized

source-target mappings. It should also be noted that there were no instances where a rejection is followed

by using an alternative metaphor.

Recognition – non-developmental and developmental

Recognition is the first step towards potential collaborative uptake. The counseling literature describes

recognition in different ways like "noticing" (Kopp & Craw, 1998) and "hearing and validating" (Sims,

2003), which may include therapists praising clients for their metaphor use (Mathieson et al., 2015).

Recognition is defined here as any form of acknowledgement of a metaphor within the next three turns.

This definition also implies that recognition alone does not entail further collaborative development. In

many cases, a recognized metaphor ends up as non-developmental by merely being repeated and/or
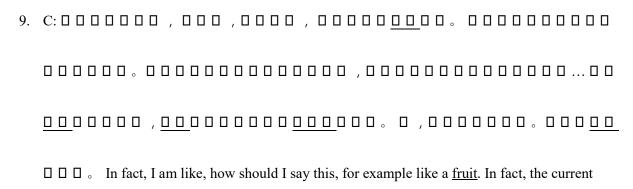
rephrased over several turns without building upon any of its components like source, target, and mappings. Consider Example 8.

8. T: □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ 。□ □ □ □ □ □ You have turned into a self-blaming person. You will slide towards this self-blaming

   C: □ □ □ □ □ 。□ □ □ □ □ □ 。□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ I will not blame myself. I will not slide toward self-blaming. Because I think I never expected his father to change

The therapist describes the client's tendency for self-blame as a metaphorical location she is "sliding" towards. The client repeats the same metaphorical expression in her response, similar to the minor rephrasing of the therapist's metaphor in Example 4. However, neither she nor the therapist continued to exploit its inferential potential (e.g. self-blaming as an uncontrollable tendency). Ferrara (1994) observes that repeating a metaphor can be an indirect request for clarifying its meaning, and is often done by therapists to prompt further elaboration from the client. In such cases the repeating utterance is often short and limited to restating the metaphor without other remarks, like Example 5 above where the therapist simply repeats "a thorny rose". If the request for clarification is accepted like in Example 5, the metaphor then moves further along a developmental path as illustrated in the upcoming sections. However, if the request does not appear to be accepted, the metaphor likely ends up as non-developmental. Note that this does not preclude the same metaphor from eventually being taken up again beyond the defined window of three consecutive turns, but such cases of 'delayed uptake' are beyond the present scope.

Developmental recognition will be discussed under the two incremental categories of 'exploration' and 'extension'. These categories are by definition collaborative in nature because they mark accepting responses to previous turns from the other speaker. The notion of 'collaborative co-construction' is therefore operationalized in this paper to mean cases where both therapist and client contribute at least one metaphor-relevant turn.

Exploration

This category describes the most basic type of collaborative development where therapists and/or clients begin to engage with the inferential potential of metaphors used. A common way of doing this is to topicalize the source of the metaphor; i.e. what the prevailing topic is being depicted as, and discuss how its associated meanings are relevant for the topic. The act of topicalizing the source and inviting exploration is more often performed by therapists than clients, which reflects their guiding role. Distributional differences in categories between therapists and clients will be elaborated in a later section. For now, Examples 9 to 11 illustrate three different scenarios – i) the therapist initiating exploration of the client's metaphor, ii) the client initiating exploration of the therapist's metaphor, and iii) a common strategy called 'literalization' (Cameron, 2008) where a metaphor is explored and extended with reference to its literal meaning.

9. C: □□□□□□□，□□□，□□□□，□□□□□□<u>□□</u>。□□□□□□□□□□□□
   □□□□□□。□□□□□□□□□□□□□□，□□□□□□□□□□□□□□…□□
   <u>□□</u>□□□□□，<u>□□</u>□□□□□□□<u>□□□□</u>。□，□□□□□□□。□□□<u>□□</u>
   □□□。In fact, I am like, how should I say this, for example like a <u>fruit</u>. In fact, the current

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situation is that I look good on the <u>outside</u>. Everyone that sees me will not think I have mental, they would say how could you have mental problems … often if one looks good on the <u>outside,</u> there will be something <u>hidden inside</u>. These will be <u>fragile</u> times.

T: □ □ □ □ □ □ , □ □ □ , □ □ □ <u>□ □</u> , <u>□ □ □ □ □</u> , □ □ , □ □ □ <u>□ □ □</u> □ □ □ □

□ ? You think that if you say, if you use, you are a <u>fruit</u>, and look good on the <u>outside</u>, then how do you feel about what is <u>inside</u>?

C: □ □ <u>□ □ □ □ □</u> ……□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ <u>□ □ □ □ □ □ □</u> □ <u>□ □ □ □</u> □ □

□ □ □ 。 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ <u>□ □</u> , □ □ □ 。 □ □ □ □ □ , □ □ □ □ □ <u>□ □ □</u> , □ □ □ □ □ <u>□ □</u>

□ 。 □ □ , □ □ □ □ □ <u>□ □ □ □ □ □</u> , □ □ □ □ 。 My feeling <u>inside</u> is … at first perhaps I

didn't think of <u>cutting open my heart</u> to <u>see what exactly is inside</u>. Neither did I want to <u>look at or</u>

<u>face it</u>. But now I want to <u>fix my inside</u>, to <u>face</u> it, to slowly <u>enrich</u> my heart and work hard to be

better.

T: □ □ <u>□ □ □ □ □</u> □ □ □ □ □ ? So what does <u>the inside of this fruit look like</u>?

C: <u>□ □ □ □</u> , □ □ □ □ □ □ <u>□ □ □</u> , □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ <u>□ □</u> 。 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

□ <u>□ □ □ □ □</u> □ □ , □ □ ……□ , □ , □ □ □ …<u>Inside the fruit</u>, if I say I am an <u>apple</u>, I feel it

would be <u>rotten</u> at the beginning. Feel like although the <u>outside</u> feels good, but…well…

T: □ <u>□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □</u> ? □ □ □ □ <u>□ □</u> , □ <u>□ □ □</u> , □ □ □ □ <u>□ □</u> □ □ □ <u>□ □</u>

□ □ , □ <u>□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □</u> , □ □ □ ? How does the <u>inside of the apple look</u>? If this

<u>apple</u> can <u>be opened</u>, if there's a <u>hole</u> you can <u>see through</u>, what's <u>inside</u>?

C: □□□□□□□□<u>□</u>□□□。□□□□□□<u>□□</u>□□□,□□□…□□<u>□□□□□□□</u>

<u>□</u>。 I worry that it might have <u>gone bad</u> or something. It's already <u>turning black</u> and me...it feels

<u>pretty on the outside</u>.

In the first turn the client metaphorically describes herself as a fruit that looks good on the outside but has things "hidden inside". This exemplifies the common use of physical interiority, exteriority and boundaries as sources to depict accessibility to emotional states (Tay, 2013). The therapist's intention to elaborate this setup is clear as he initiates an inferential scenario of asking her to imagine how the inside of the fruit looks. The client has little difficulty with complying and appears to understand the implied metaphorical mapping from how the fruit looks to how she evaluates her self-image. In this way, metaphor use goes beyond a mere description of the issue(s) at hand and constitutes the ongoing therapeutic activity with active participation by the client. While this example appears to show a high degree of developmental recognition of metaphor, we will see that it still stops short of the next category of 'extension' because the elaboration is still confined within a single metaphorical source (fruit) and target (client's self-image), without venturing onto other sources/targets.

The next Example 10 illustrates the client initiating exploration of the therapist's metaphor. This is less frequent than the above scenario but may occur with clients who demonstrate greater initiative or creativity when dealing with metaphors and other figurative activities.

10. T: □□□□□□<u>□□□□□</u>？ Will we put grandma <u>inside your heart</u>?

C: □□…<u>□□□□</u>。Yes. it would be… <u>at the bottom</u> of my heart.

T: <u>□□</u>□□,□□<u>□□□□□</u>？<u>Bottom</u> of your heart, <u>on the left or right</u>?

C: □ □ □ 。 <u>In the middle</u>

Here, the therapist asks a rather conventional metaphorical question of whether the client will put her deceased grandma "inside her heart"; i.e. whether and how she will commemorate her. The client's response specifies the location to be "at the bottom" of her heart, and when the therapist subsequently offers two options for elaboration, "on the left or right", the client suggests a third possibility of "in the middle". We can see this as an instance where the client initiates alternative inferential possibilities than those put forward by the therapist, but this is again confined to a consistent source (physical location) and target (memories of the grandmother).

The final Example 11 illustrates a slightly different type of metaphor exploration. While the examples above show how a metaphorical source is developed *as a source*; i.e. with reference to its metaphorical meaning in context, Example 11 shows that speakers sometimes elaborate on its literal meaning instead.

11. C: □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ <u>□ □ □</u> 。 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ 。 There is this feeling of being

<u>electrocuted</u>. Suddenly turning from big to small.

T: □ <u>□ □ □</u> □ □ , □ □ □ □ □ 。 It was <u>electrocuted</u> and it turned small.

C: □ □ □ □ , □ □ □ □ □ 。 With a whizzing sound, it's like it's numbed.

T: □ □ 。 Numbed.

C: □ <u>□ □ □ □ □ □</u> , □ , <u>□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ , □ □ □ □</u> , □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ , □ □

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ , □ □ , □ □ □ □ □ □ □ 。 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ 。 □ □ □ , □ □ □ □ □ , □ □

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ 。 Being <u>electrocuted</u> feels like, whiz, because <u>I was electrocuted when I was a</u> <u>kid</u>, when I accidentally touched the switch, there is that feeling or something similar. Speaking of which, there was also an experience that left me feeling somewhat very scared afterwards.

The client had been discussing his subjective perception that his sexual organs have shrunk "from big to small", which he metaphorically describes as a feeling of electrocution. To recapitulate, notice that this exchange would have been an instance of mere repetition (i.e. non-developmental recognition) had it ended with the therapist's next turn of repeating the metaphor. However, the exchange went further with the client relating this metaphor to a prior literal life experience of being electrocuted. This is an instance of literalization, the act of relating metaphorical sources to life experiences in which their meanings are literal. Cameron's (2008) examples are taken from the science classroom where metaphors are literalized to make them more relatable for students – for example, talking about blankets protecting us from the cold when trying to understand the atmosphere's 'blanket' of gases. Our counseling example is broadly similar, but further demonstrates the unique role of past idiosyncratic experiences in shaping perceptions of the present, creating a semblance of 'reliving' the past (Tay, 2016b).

Extension

The second category of developmental recognition is extension, which goes beyond elaborating given sources/targets to introducing new ones. The metaphor theoretical literature labels this as 'diversification' – where a single target topic is discussed via multiple sources, and 'multivalency' – where a single source is used to discuss multiple target topics (Goatly, 1997). The original and new sources/targets are often observed to be related in some way to preserve a sense of conceptual coherence. In the counseling context, extension can serve specific purposes like allowing an issue to be examined from alternative perspectives or facilitating subtle topic shifts under a semblance of continuity. We again illustrate three

different instances of extension from Examples 12 to 14. They depict therapist-initiated extension, client-initiated extension, and show how subtle topic shifts can be accomplished via a device closely related to metaphor known as metonymy (Kövecses & Radden, 1998).

12. C: □□□□□□□□ <u>□□</u> , □□□□□□□ <u>□□□</u> , □□ <u>□□</u> … They are like a <u>fountain</u>, constantly <u>delivering</u> me, that <u>freshness</u>…

T: □ , <u>□□□□ , □□</u> , □□□□ ! □□□□□□□□□□ , <u>□□□□□□□□</u> ? Ah, <u>fountain, fountain, fountain</u>, good description! Is it, those bad feelings, are they <u>far away from us</u> now?

(several turns omitted)

C: □□□□ …□□ <u>□□</u> 。 They are like…a <u>fountain</u>.

T: □ , <u>□□□□□□</u> 。 <u>Come closer to the fountain</u>.

C: □□□ …<u>□□□</u> …<u>□□□□</u> 。 That kind of <u>fountain is…very clear</u>.

T: □□ , □□□ , □□ …□□□□□ , □□□□□ …<u>□□□□□□</u> …<u>□□□□□□□</u> …<u>□□□</u> …<u>□□□□□ , □□□□□□□□</u> 。 Feel it, let's not talk about it yet, feel it, let's not rush to talk about it, we can talk about it later…<u>come to the fountain…the clear fountain…soft… …I am the fountain, my heart is the fountain</u>.

C: □□□□□□□□□ <u>□□</u> 。 □□□□□□□□□ <u>□□</u> 。 My heart is a <u>fountain</u>. My heart is a <u>fountain</u>.

'They' in the first turn in Example 12 refers to the client's idealized masculinity and sexual attractiveness, which in prior turns are described as being destroyed as a result of his childhood experiences of sexual abuse. He metaphorically describes them as a fountain that constantly delivers a subjective sense of "freshness" to him. The therapist keenly recognizes and praises the use of this metaphor in his response, followed by several (omitted) long turns in which they continue to elaborate on the imagistic details of this fountain. The therapist then asks the client to imagine coming "closer to the fountain". Up to this point the example is an instance of productive elaboration confined to one overarching source and target. The critical but subtle moment that turns it into an instance of extension comes when the therapist suggests that "I (the client) am the fountain, my heart is the fountain". This changes the original target topics, which are the client's subjective perception of his masculinity and attractiveness, into the client himself and his "heart". From his response it appears that the client has either not noticed or accepted this subtle shift. A similar pattern can be observed in Example 13 from the same dyad.

13 T: 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 。 You <u>strangled</u> my vitality.

C: 􀀀 。 Yes.

T: 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 … You <u>strangled</u> my…

C: 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 。 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 。 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 。 You <u>strangled</u> my vitality. You <u>strangled</u> the happiness and joy that I was supposed to have. The joy from my heart.

T: 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 , 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 􀀀 。 Tell him, you <u>strangled</u> me.

Here, the therapist is taking the client through a fictive dialogue where he verbalizes his anger towards his sexual abuser. He introduces the metaphor of "strangling" the client's vitality and prompts him to echo it. The client goes beyond this, and initiates a subtle shift from the original single target topic of 'vitality', to related ones like 'happiness' and 'joy'. The therapist follows this up with another shift of the target to the totality of the client's self ("you strangled me"), which we might interpret as an abstract summation of the previously mentioned aspects. In both Examples 12 and 13, we observe that the original and extended targets share a conceptually contiguous rather than distinct relationship. This is known as metonymy in the metaphor theoretical literature; i.e. mapping within a conceptual domain rather than across distinct conceptual domains (Kövecses & Radden, 1998). We may speculate upon these examples that metonymy is a useful but under-researched counseling resource. This is because it allows different but related aspects of typical targets like client's self and self-perception to be discussed using the same source, thus conveying a semblance of coherence and naturalness.

The above examples illustrate the extension of metaphorical targets as a subtle topic shifting device. In Example 14 we see that extension can also involve chaining together different but related metaphorical sources, and can be initiated by clients too.

14 C: □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ ，□ □ □ □ □ □ 。 I think you are cruel, you are a <u>tyrant</u>.

T: □ □ □ □ ，□ □ …□ □ □ □ □ □ 。 Such a <u>tyrant</u>, I'm very…you are a <u>tyrant</u>.

C: □ 。 □ □ □ □ □ □ 。 Yes. You are my <u>enemy</u>.

T: □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ ，□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ 。 You treat me like an <u>enemy</u>. Why are you treating me like an <u>enemy</u>?

The dyad here is likewise undergoing a verbalization exercise where the client engages in fictive dialogue with his father. She describes him in the first turn as a "tyrant", which the therapist recognizes and echoes in response. The client then proceeds to switch the metaphorical source from "tyrant" to "enemy" in the following turn – again, the original and new sources are conceptually related in that both are negative descriptions, and this example shows that strategic instances of metaphor management are not exclusive to therapists. Therapists may instead play a supporting and affirmative role in going along with the client's preferred conceptualizations. More generally, the above examples of extension – defined here as spontaneous and conceptually naturalistic switches of metaphorical sources and/or targets – are demonstrably common in counseling talk and warrant greater attention beyond isolating single sources and/or targets.

Distributional differences

This section addresses the distributional differences in metaphor response categories between therapists and clients. The four response categories are repeat, reject (non-developmental), explore, and extend (developmental). Unrecognized metaphors are excluded as they do not constitute a response category. The tabulated frequencies are non-overlapping despite the categories being hierarchical. That means each instance is only classified once according to the highest level reached; e.g. an extended metaphor is classified only under 'extend' even though it was also 'explored', as explained earlier. Table 1 shows the overall frequency distribution in the dataset. Table 2 is a contingency table showing the distribution according to who initiated the exploration, repetition, extension, or rejection – therapist or client. As part of a χ^2 test of independence between the INITIATOR and CATEGORY variables, it also shows the expected frequencies and adjusted Pearson's residuals.

We see from Table 1 that the majority of metaphors are explored. Recall that this level of response does not involve the introduction of new sources and/or targets, but is confined to the

elaboration of a single overall source and target. There is also a good number of metaphors that are merely repeated or acknowledged in a non-developmental way. Table 2 provides a more specific distributional analysis by initiator. A χ^2 test of independence with Bayes factor (Kass & Raftery, 1995) suggests a significant association between the two variables with strong effect size (χ^2 (3, N = 178) = 31.05, p < 0.001, Cramer's V = 0.418, Log (BF$_{10}$) =11.18). Adjusted Pearson's residuals highlight the specific categories where observed frequencies are significantly higher or lower than expected by chance (p<0.05), as marked by an asterisk.

The analysis shows that i) therapists are significantly more likely to explore and reject metaphors than clients; ii) clients are significantly more likely to repeat metaphors than therapists; iii) clients and therapists are equally likely to extend metaphors. These findings confirm theoretical intuitions but also throw up some intriguing points. Therapists as guides were expectedly more likely to initiate exploration of a metaphor produced by clients, which also implies that clients were more likely to just repeat a therapist metaphor without the initiative to pursue it further. However, the fact that only therapists reject client metaphors, and not the other way around, is inconsistent with the wider philosophical maxim of client input or 'centeredness' (Kopp & Craw, 1998; Mead & Bower, 2000). Although therapists' rejection of client metaphors may be motivated by genuine beliefs that they are unhelpful, such decisions were never explained to the client in the present dataset. Another interesting finding is that therapists and clients were equally likely to extend introduced metaphors by venturing onto new sources and/or targets. Although instances of extension are low in absolute terms, the equal distribution between initiators reflects the general willingness and ability of clients, as supposed 'laypersons', to make good use of metaphors for constructive purposes. On the whole, the present approach offers insights about metaphor use that are driven by probability rather than possibility; i.e. they reflect actual metaphor response tendencies rather than idealized guidelines and principles, which could help therapists anticipate clients' responses in spontaneous interaction.

Conclusion

This paper underlined the importance of studying spontaneous metaphors by focusing on metaphor response types between therapists and clients. A typology of response categories was proposed. Its hierarchical nature and dual pathways differ from existing categories and highlights the progressive character of metaphor response. Examples of each category were discussed with reference to the ongoing counseling work, drawing upon metaphor theoretical constructs where relevant. These examples suggest that any particular response type could be based on different motivations that can only be understood by close attention to context. The follow-up analysis of association also revealed some interesting divergences between theoretical intuitions and actual response patterns. Overall, two important implications can be discerned from the present study: i) therapeutic roles and functions of metaphor are better discerned by a bottom-up approach to actual talk, rather than a top-down statement of broad categories typical of the counseling literature; ii) a probabilistic approach focusing on actual response patterns is likely to be more helpful for therapists to anticipate and prepare for client responses, compared to an overly ideal approach built upon theoretical principles alone.

One limitation of this study is the extent which the qualitative response types and their statistical associations could be generalized to different counseling contexts. While the 30 hours of talk is arguably substantial compared to other related qualitative studies, it would still be ideal to replicate the present approach with more representative datasets to investigate similarities and differences in response types and their distributions. Another limitation to be addressed in future research is to go beyond transcripts and examine other response indicators like gestures, intonation, and the recently studied skin conductance levels (Tay, in press; Tay, Huang, & Zeng, 2019). Relatedly, the emphasis on linguistic metaphors also means that metaphorical processes at higher levels of analysis – including psychological transference as metaphorical projections from past to present (Grant & Crawley, 2002; Tay, 2016b) – have not been considered for the responses they might generate. Future work could also investigate more fine-grained

levels of verbal response – including different gradations of recognition, elaboration, and so on – by considering linguistic features that co-occur with metaphors. A final limitation of the study is that it does not look into the nature of potentially delayed responses that may manifest at later parts of a session, or in a different session. Similar to studies that track the contents of a particular metaphor across time as a marker of change (Levitt, Korman, & Angus, 2000), future case studies can track the nature of responses across time; e.g. how a memorable metaphor introduced in the distant past could be reevoked for various purposes.

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Category	Frequency	Percent
Explore	76	42.7
Repeat	68	38.2
Extend	25	14.0
Reject	9	5.1
Total	178	100.0

Table 1 Overall frequency distribution of response categories

			Category			
			Explore	Extend	Repeat	Reject
		Observed	22	8	46	0
	C	Expected	32.4	10.7	29.0	3.8
Initiator		Adjusted Residual	-3.2*	-1.2	5.3*	-2.7*
		Observed	54	17	22	9
	T	Expected	43.6	14.3	39.0	5.2

	Adjusted Residual	3.2*	1.2	-5.3*	2.7*

*=significant at p<0.05
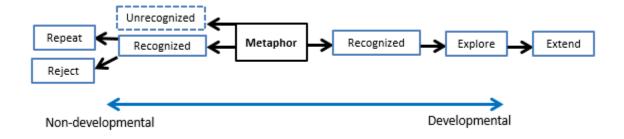
Table 2 Contingency table of response categories by initiator

Figure 1 Metaphor response categories as two pathways