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## **The 'transformative' power of 'integrated metaphor' in counselling: Applying and measuring its implemented potential**

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Given the centrality of metaphor in the (re)structuring of experience (Burns, 2005; Loue, 2008; Roffman, 2008) and of bodily experience to the notion of conceptual metaphor in cognitive theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003[1980]; Lakoff 1993, Gibbs, 2006), this paper investigates the 'transformative power' of metaphor in 'talking cure' practices - Counselling and Psychotherapy - to implement its application potential. An experimental integrated "metaphor-based and -driven" model is presented by adapting textual identification procedures (Steen, 1999; Ferrari, 2007; Praggeljaz, 2007) to an integrated psychological approach (Rogers, 2003[1951]; Perls, 1951) in order to further develop metaphor transformation guidelines. The 'M' psycho-test had been created to evaluate the power of metaphor in counselling sessions in a diachronic perspective, providing both qualitative and quantitative data. Some preliminary cases (e.g. 'the frog', 'eating', 'the hare', 'the desolated land') are presented, with relative Transformational score, as examples of test application and metaphor potential. Test evidence has allowed for quantitative and qualitative observations. The evidence gathered shows: 1) Applying a metaphor-based experimental integrated approach can offer alternative for action in the practice; 2) Measuring the transformational power of metaphor through 'M' psycho-test can offer further degree of awareness for both counsellor and client.

**Keywords:** metaphor transformation, 'M' psycho-test, transformational score, metaphor-based, metaphor-driven

## **1. Introduction: Integrating Metaphor**

Metaphor has long been investigated as a linguistic and conceptual device, and consistently used for fostering exploration in counselling and psychotherapy alike (Tay, 2012, 2013; Barker 1985) as well as to describe mind disorders (Schoeneman, Putnam, Rasmussen, Sparr & Beechem, 2012). The centrality of metaphor in the (-re)structuring of experience has also been extensively acknowledged (Burns 2005, Loue 2008, Roffman 2008) and “the use of metaphorical communication has been widely cited as an effective intervention (e.g., Bandler & Grinder, 1975; Fine, Pollio, & Simpkinson, 1973; Gore, 1977; Haley, 1987; Martin, Cummings, & Hallberg, 1992; Strong, 1989)”. (Young & Borders 1998: 238).

And yet, some of its potential is still available for further exploitation. The implications on (the) practice might be promising. This chapter relates to a theoretical and methodological investigation on the transformational power of metaphor which bridges the gap between talking cure and cognitive linguistics literatures (Ferrari, 2020) so as to face the (un)explored territory and implement metaphor as a transformative tool, thus strengthening its effectiveness in the practice itself.

Starting from a brief overview of existing methodological proposals, the chapter casts light on an experimental perspective on “integrated” metaphor (Ferrari, 2018), implemented as a ‘transformative’ tool in the practice, also focusing on its measurement. A new “metaphor-based and -driven” protocol is introduced, with indication on its application within an integrated framework. As for the measurement, to

The 'transformative' power of 'integrated metaphor' in counselling evaluate the transformational power of such an 'implemented' use of metaphor in the practice from the point of view of the client, a psychometric test is proposed here and named 'M'. Evidence of relevant cases is offered and discussed to suggest further investigation and new lines of intervention.

The path of metaphor as a tool in the psycho-practice<sup>1</sup> might be traced back to Erickson who conceives of metaphor as a "bridge" between contextual domains of experience, to help the "utilization principle": "whatever the behaviour offered by the subjects, it should be accepted and utilized to develop further responsive behaviour" (1952/1980, p.55). From this Ericksonian departure then it goes through the application opportunities offered by cognitive-behavioural and constructivist perspectives to the existing counselling application, not dismissing passing by the crucial suggestions coming from the psychoanalytic approaches. See the following grid for synthetic evidence<sup>2</sup>:

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Grid. 1: Some existing methodological proposals – using metaphors in the practice<sup>1</sup>

Ericksonian	Cognitive/Constructivist/CBT	Gestalt-integrated perspective & Counselling	Psychoanalytic perspective
<p><b>Erickson –</b> <u>utilization principle</u> (1952/1980) and metaphor as a bridge (Roffman 2008)</p> <p><b>Lankton &amp; Lankton –</b> <u>“matching metaphor”</u>, <u>“multiple-embedded metaphor”</u> (1983)</p>	<p><b>Gonçalves &amp; Craine</b> (1990) Two phases methodological approach (1) <u>“Identifying client’s metaphors”</u> and 2) <u>“Imploding new metaphors”</u> to use therapeutic metaphor to redirect and restructure the client’s metaphor. The <u>2) phase</u> <u>further consists in a five-stage intervention strategy</u></p> <p><b>Kopp &amp; Craw’s “step-by-step interview protocol”</b> (1998) Cf. <b>Kopp</b> (1995) attempt at systematizing a cognitive protocol of <u>metaphor-based therapy</u></p> <p>CBT descriptive and explanatory overview of metaphor types (Stott et al., 2010 and Fothergill, 2012)</p>	<p>Hayes (2011) and Reynolds (1996): embodiment and moving of metaphor;</p> <p><b>Strong</b> <u>“model of counsellor response to client’s metaphors”</u> (1989) Cf. Gordon’s (1978) connecting strategy Cf. <b>Rogers</b>: “client-centered therapy” (2003 [1951]) and <b>Perls</b>: "Gestalt Therapy" (Perls, Hefferline &amp; Goodman, 1951)</p>	<p><b>Spence</b> (1993): metaphor as the core of the psychoanalytic process</p> <p><b>Voth</b> (1970) metaphor’s identification attributed to the “fine ear” of the analyst</p> <p><b>Reider</b>: metaphor as “condensation of understanding of many levels of experience” (Reider, 1972: 469) [Descriptive perspective: Mathieson &amp; Hosjins (2005): metaphors of change; Rasmussen &amp; Angus (1996): qualitative analysis of Borderline and non-Borderline clients and therapist experience of metaphoric expressions; Thompson (2012); Long &amp; Lepper (2008)]</p>

<sup>1</sup> For further discussion on existing methodological proposals and an extended discussion see

also Torneke (2017: 2)

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Whether with a more operational (Erickson 1952/1980) or interpretative (Reider, 1972) focus, client-generated (Kopp, 1995, Voth, 1970), therapist suggested (Gonçalves & Craine, 1990), client customized (Strong 1989) or interactively negotiated (Kopp 1995), with a mainly linguistic (Voth 1970, Long & Lepper, 2008) or integrated (Strong 1989) conception, central (Spence 1993) or marginal in the therapeutic direction, metaphor is certainly a crucial tool along a variety of therapeutic perspectives.<sup>3</sup>

In general, a dynamic and instrumental feature seems to emerge as a crucial prerogative of metaphor in/for the 'talking cure' practice (counselling/psychotherapy), which is also in line with its transformativity: metaphor can change, promote change, and can be used for strategic purposes in the practice. All these features maintained, in line with the Ericksonian utilization principle (1952/1980), my proposal further implements the transformative potential of metaphor as a tool in the practice starting from a reevaluation of the theoretical underpinnings of the Lakoffian definition of metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson 2003[1980], Lakoff 1993). Reference to this had already been made by Gonçalves & Craine (1990), despite the directive feature of their protocol. More specifically, metaphor integration is fostered here, thus bordering out of a strictly linguistic definition. The automatic features of the metaphor, already anticipated in Kopp & Craw (1998: 309), will be highlighted into what I also call 'self-propulsion' (Ferrari, 2018), together with the interactive direction of the therapy, also present in Strong's proposal (1989). Finally, the creative feature also present in the psychoanalytic perspective (Ullman, 1969) together with the dialogue between the conscious and (sub-in)conscious operating of the metaphor as a mode of thought will be developed.

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In the background are: the centrality of bodily experience and empathy to the notion of conceptual metaphor in cognitive linguistics theory (Lakoff 1987, 1993, 1997, 2008, 2009R; Lakoff & Johnson 2003[1980], Gallese & Lakoff 2005, Gibbs 2006), the relationship between metaphor and emotion (Kövecses 2000), and an “integrated” conception of metaphor (Ferrari, 2018, 2020).

Metaphor integration has been debated from various perspectives in cognitive linguistics (e.g. Fauconnier & Turner 1998, 2002; Semino et al 2018, Forceville 2008). Here it is the conceptual feature of the Lakoffian metaphor which is explicitly articulated in such as “integrated”. By “integrated” I mean that the metaphor in so far as it is conceptual is “three-dimensional”: it interests, accounts for, and acts at such levels as MIND/EMOTIONS/BODY. It therefore presides over thought, experience and action. In other words, metaphor is the way through which we think, feel, and act.

Operatively, integration proactively interacts with the bi-univocal relationship between language and thought (Ferrari, 2018), which allows it to be expressed as well as detected in language, also meant here as ‘integrated’: accounting for any kind of expressive manifestation – not only verbal – be it at the level of thought/emotion/body. Integration is therefore important because it substantiates the metaphor-based and – driven framework, which is organized accordingly as far as both the activation and the operating of the metaphors are concerned. This will also reflect on how to work with them, in order to produce change for strategic purposes, i.e. more well-being for the client/patient. Correspondingly, integration also interests the structure of the form used to measure their transformational power (see Method section for evidence).

The transformational power of integrated metaphor is strengthened by creativity and self-propulsion.<sup>4</sup> The creative feature of the relationship between language - meant as integrated - and thought becomes even more fascinating and complex in an



The ‘transformative’ power of ‘integrated metaphor’ in counselling interactive dimension. Moreover, given that metaphorical processes are automatic and inevitable, they can operate autonomously at a deep level, offering an enormous potential for change (self-propulsion), if conveniently conducted.

From the multidimensional nature of metaphor in as much as integrated and the creative dynamism implied by its language/thought interaction, it follows that any expressive manifestation of the client, be it at thought/emotional/bodily level can be possibly seized as a creative and exquisitely individual expression of her/his own state also with respect to discomfort, and becomes a potential field of metaphorical development, to be explored as a viable path of awareness and change.

In my methodological proposal for a metaphor-based and -driven talking cure, I merge techniques of metaphor identification with an integrated approach to the counselling session to activate an integrated version of conceptual metaphor as a pivotal transformative trigger in the practice. In other words, I am trying to implement the potential of metaphor to DO something, possibly useful, possibly pleasant, possibly something you could not achieve without it

From here the ‘transformative power’ of metaphor follows, which raises two crucial research questions. 1) How and to what extent can an ‘implemented’ version of metaphor be exploited for the sake of patient/client self-exploration and well-being and to foster change? 2) How to ‘measure’ the transformative power of metaphor?

## **2. Method**

### **2.1 Design: Metaphor-based and –driven Method**

A “metaphor-based and -driven” talking cure constitutes a specific approach to counselling and psychotherapy to promote change. It can favour aid relationship on individual clients as well as constitute an alternative for effective action in a network

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perspective. This method accounts for an implemented version of integrated metaphor also varied according to the metaphor’s primary activation – thought, emotion, body. Notwithstanding the level of primary activation, the transformative power of the metaphor is measurable at all levels in a holistic perspective. Schematic evidence of the framework can be found in the following table (Table 1).

Tab. 1 Framework for detecting and working with metaphor in talking cure practices:

<p><b><u>Fore contact</u></b> (condition for/beginning of the session)                  The client’s need: <b>Sensation, awareness,</b> emerging of need                  With the counsellor: beginning of the session</p>	<p>Opening the session:                  Welcoming the client and her/his need (Rogers principles of active listening, empathy, unconditional acceptance)</p>				
<p><b><u>Contact</u></b>  <b>Mobilisation</b> and excitement phase of contact                   Choice of and implementation of appropriate <b>action</b> phase of contact</p>	<p>1 Metaphor identification</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="738 952 1409 1093"> <tr> <td rowspan="3" style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">integration</td> <td>a Metaphor (focus) identification in language &amp; body</td> </tr> <tr> <td>b Conceptual implications</td> </tr> <tr> <td>c Appeals to emotions</td> </tr> </table> <p>1bis Perspectives for psychological exploration in/for personal development at a macrotextual level (talking cure practice)</p> <p>2 Working with metaphor – metaphor processing</p>	integration	a Metaphor (focus) identification in language & body	b Conceptual implications	c Appeals to emotions
integration	a Metaphor (focus) identification in language & body				
	b Conceptual implications				
	c Appeals to emotions				
<p><b><u>Full or final contact</u></b></p>	<p>3 Metaphor transformation</p>				
<p><b><u>Post contact</u></b>                  Satisfaction or post-contact gestalt completion</p>	<p>4 Metaphor elaboration: awareness stage</p>				
<p><b><u>Withdrawal</u></b>                  Or organism at rest (end of the session)</p>	<p>5 Closing the session: perspectives for personal development</p>				

My methodological framework of reference integrates Rogers’ person-centered therapy into a Gestalt management of the session - fore contact, contact, full contact, post contact, withdrawal (Perls, Hefferline & Goodman, 1973) - which is evident in the left column of the table. Particular reference is made to Rogers’ core conditions of congruence, unconditional positive regard and empathy, as far as the attitude of the counsellor/therapist is concerned (Rogers, 2003[1951]), the basic counselling skills (e.g.

The ‘transformative’ power of ‘integrated metaphor’ in counselling active listening, paraphrasing, echoing, open questions...), the goal-oriented nature of the sessions and the Gestalt cycle for opening and closing the sessions (Perls 1969[1947]: 44).

With reference to the right column, more specifically from 1) “metaphor identification” to 1bis Perspectives [...] at a macrotextual level”, the framework adapts textual metaphor identification procedures (Steen 1999; Pragglejaz 2007; Ferrari 2007, 2013, 2018) to the counselling and psychotherapy interview meant as a multimodal text, to further develop metaphor transformation guidelines for the client’s personal development. The ‘text under analysis’ comes here to be a complex and mixed manifestation of verbal embodied and relational messages and processes alike.

If any manifestation of the client can, in principle, be a potential field of metaphorical development, my approach to metaphor as a transformative tool will help ascertain what is possible to process and is therefore useful in a strategic perspective – whether it can change and promote change. Reference to the procedure is therefore made with respect to its functioning (from identification to processing, elaboration and transformation of the metaphor), without limiting it to metaphors verbally expressed.

Although the verbal component certainly turns out to be the easiest to record and therefore most observable in our records, a clarification has to be made with respect to the focus. As for metaphor identification in the psycho-practice, the “focus” is not just “the linguistic expression used non-literally”, within a “linguistic metaphor [...] as a whole” (Steen, 1999: 60-1), but any kind of language instance signalling a potential metaphorical shifting, or clash: something at though/emotional/body level, verbally or non-verbally expressed and potentially standing, signifying, manifesting something else, in accordance with my integrated view of language. For example in the case of the ‘desolate land’ to be discussed in the results, a client suddenly clenches her fists, a

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Back to metaphor identification, it is also crucial to underline that it can be promoted by the counsellor at all language levels i.e. on verbal expressions, body and emotional language in addition to behavioural expressions, notwithstanding the different kinds of metaphors, identifiable according to their primary activation. There you can loom for metaphorical 'foci', which we can here more informally refer to as 'clues' of the metaphor. Moreover, the dialogical mutual negotiation of metaphorical construction is to be taken into account, given the interactional nature of the psycho-practice. The choice of which metaphors to explore can be made based on their availability and transformative potential: whether they can change and promote change.

Within my integrated approach, particular importance is given to the notion of the contract – set goal of the counselling exploration, defined according to client's needs, and mutually negotiated between client and counsellor. Therefore, the change happening in the client is not imposed, but built together with the counsellor thanks to the auto-determination of the client and this change is supposed to ameliorate her/his well-being.

Though adaptable to counselling and psychotherapy alike, the metaphor-based and –driven method has been developed initially in counselling contexts, which justifies its primary reference to counselling in the application exposure and evidence offered here.

### **3. Practice and application of the framework: Working with**

#### **Metaphor**

Going into further practical details, what does working with metaphor within an integrated framework in a counselling session mean? I am providing further exposure of the framework of Table 1.

While conducting the client in her/his exploration thanks to the choice procedures, techniques and expertise (opening and closing, Rogerian principles, basic counselling skills), as long as the contact stage of the session begins (as indicated in Table 1 as "opening the session") the counsellor/therapist will try and specifically focus on metaphor, where that is a feasible and desired option for the client, operating as follows.

The client starts expressing her/his unease/problem/state in a given way.

The counsellor/therapist, in turn, working as she/he is used with active listening, paraphrasing, echoing, open questions, will be open to pick up and welcome any metaphorical clues, or foci (verbal, body language, other...) in order to help the client identify a possible primary source of how she/he expresses her/his own unease – which has normally been previously anticipated in the contract. Instead of addressing directly such uneasiness as an 'obstacle', the counsellor can guide the client to work together on this source and see whether and how there are ways to transform it proactively. If the client does not offer any metaphorical content in the opening session, s/he can be stimulated through questions such as "How does this make you feel, emotionally and bodily? What does this make you think of?". If s/he does not even respond to metaphorical stimulation, the session can proceed according to the standard constraints of the chosen approach, in the hope that some metaphorical 'light' can come out soon. However, the counsellor can work metaphorically on the problem, even though the

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client is not pro-actively contributing to the metaphor creative action. It is clear that the job of the metaphor is more effective when it is shared and mutually contributed to by both counsellor and client. For example in the case of 'eating', which will be referred to in the results section, the client was particularly resistant to the metaphorical work, and 'eating' was proposed by the counsellor and co-constructed with the client along the cycle of the sessions using his food behaviour as a potential source for exploration to deal with his existential problem.

From my perspective, working on her/his own metaphorical source might be an easier way for the client to address her/his problems, also promoting further awareness, and more effective from a pragmatic point of view, as the source is the mode through which the client conceptualises, embodies, experiences and ultimately builds her/his emotive experience around such uneasiness. The counsellor/therapist, in turn, will take score of the metaphor(s) used and the way they have been developed and mutually negotiated. Possibly, s/he might have to record the change that occurred in the client's attitude, who will then be tested before and after the session.<sup>5</sup>

This corresponds for the counsellor/therapist to what is indicated in Table 1 as 1) "metaphor (focus) identification in language and body" and 1bis) "perspectives for psychological exploration in/for personal development at a macrotextual level (talking cure practice)", defined within the established borders of the help relationship for the specific case.

As for "metaphor identification" (1), it is important to underline that here the metaphor the counsellor glimpses or catches in the client's language – be it verbal, emotional, bodily or behavioural, and be the client more or less aware of it – has to be negotiated in the interaction with the client. Even when metaphor arousal is 'helped' by the counsellor, the metaphor will be 'belonging' to the client's own process. Metaphor

The 'transformative' power of 'integrated metaphor' in counselling identification has then to be considered as a hypothetical, possible way the counsellor/therapist might suggest in the dialogic practice and not 'imposed' as an interpretation.

"Setting perspectives for psychological exploration in/for personal development at a macrotextual level" (1bis) allows the counsellor/therapist to assess whether/how to further work on the metaphor (on the basis of criteria of opportunity, choice and well-being of the client). More specifically, it is then possible to evaluate whether the identified metaphor might lead to further steps within the personal exploration process and towards the agreed goal(s) of the session/cycle, in which case it can be promoted through focussed work – 2) metaphor processing.

"Metaphor processing" (2) through focussed work consists in the production and development of further explorative work on the part of the client and/or articulation of the same metaphor in further subsequent forms, within the same session or between one session and the other. Metaphor processing can be considered as a positive answer, and acceptance of the 'proposed' metaphorical work, preparing the ground for 3) "metaphor transformation", and change.

There, a metaphor can become an incredibly powerful transformative device. Once it has been generated, and the client has got in touch with it, more or less consciously and in the interaction with the counsellor/therapist, in the course of the personal exploration the metaphor can get transformed into new domains of experience. These in turn can translate into new projections of the client's self in her/his own present and future perception. It is at this stage that metaphor can even transcend its own three-dimensional nature by eventually encompassing a 'transdimensional', or synthetic, further level of activation, on the part of the client or the counsellor or as

The ‘transformative’ power of ‘integrated metaphor’ in counselling mutually negotiated, functioning as a therapy development trigger or as a personality stabilizer.

In this sense, whatever stage of metaphor work the session has arrived at, it is important that the counsellor/therapist attempts at closing the explorative process (2 “metaphor processing” – 3 “metaphor transformation”) with a question aimed at focalizing the metaphor (4 “metaphor elaboration: awareness stage”, so as to “clos[e] the session” with “perspectives for personal development (5). This is valid notwithstanding the kind of metaphor which is primarily activated – a) metaphor activated at thought level; b) metaphor activated at body level c) metaphor activated at emotional level – see next paragraph dedicated to variants. For instance, in the case of a metaphor type b), where bodily symptoms are explored as metaphors, the counsellor/therapist may ask: “What is your headache for you?”, or “What does this headache mean to you?”

#### **4. Application: variation within the framework**

This framework can be applied in slightly different ways according to the kind of metaphor which has been produced. The kind of metaphor is determined by its primary activation, which does not deny its working in an integrated way afterwards. Metaphors can be identified and used as modes of expressing different facets of personal experience. In such as integrated, metaphors operate in personal experience at all the levels indistinctively. And yet, three different kinds of metaphors are identifiable in the practice, depending on which dimension the metaphorical transposition is operating at during their primary activation phase: a) cognitive, b) bodily, c) emotional.

In such as pertaining to such various levels of individual expression, metaphor can powerfully operate in time – within and beyond each session’s borders – as a



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Variation within the framework follows, according to the level the metaphorical transposition is primarily operating at.

#### **4.1 Metaphors activated at Thought Level**

The first category of metaphors considered are those most traditionally referred to in the psycho-practice: metaphors of symptoms/states produced, conceived and verbalized by the client ('external' metaphors, as the state is already 'externalized' by the client). The client creates metaphors to express her/his feelings/sensations, which in turn reflect body language/messages. In other words, reference is made here to those metaphors explicitly expressed by the client in verbal language to describe bodily sensations and/or feelings, emotions and moods, which in turn may be also reflected in her/his own body language and the specific messages the metaphor can send. In an interactive perspective, even the counsellor can stimulate and favour the creation of such metaphors through reformulations and open questions aimed at mutually clarifying the client's problem.

How to work with them once they have emerged? Letting the client describe, develop and possibly experience the source of the metaphor she/he has chosen and promoting awareness in the end. This variant is where metaphor is most typical in its form, in addition to the most evident and easy to be identified, as the source/target cross-domain mapping has a linguistic manifestation: examples of metaphorical expressions referring to this kind are: "I feel entrapped", "I'm in a cage".

#### 4.2 Metaphors activated at Body Level

The second category under consideration is that of bodily symptoms as metaphors (bodily and 'internal' metaphors, to communicate an unease to the external world). Bodily states can sometimes be potential 'internal' metaphors generated as forms of language of the self as an organism to express discomfort towards the environment. They are not conceived nor verbalized as metaphors, as the client tends not to be aware of them as such. Persons as complex systems often produce metaphors 'inside' themselves, they use their body to express emotional states. The case might be for the client to build and report these bodily symptoms in the counselling/therapeutic relationship, expressing and/or insisting for instance on a 'strong headache' or often reporting a sense of tiredness (e.g. "I'm always tired").

As far as this perspective is concerned, reference can be made to an integrated view of the human being in medicine:

From an approach that says you are not your illness, an attitude of curiosity, interest, and objectivity is cultivated. Such a patient may ask him or herself, "What is this symptom saying to me? What is it telling me about my body? What can I learn from this illness?" and an objective viewpoint that might even say, "Isn't this interesting?" (Ferendo, 2007: 113)

Specific clinical factors excluded, bodily symptoms can thus become an opportunity for personal exploration.

How to work with them? Notwithstanding the general clinical situation of the client, in these cases it is possible to suggest, in the here and now, according to the client's or patient's willingness, an intervention with reference to the bodily symptom as metaphor. The counsellor/therapist can focus on body language and such non-verbal

The 'transformative' power of 'integrated metaphor' in counselling messages and promote their proactive exploration. This means working with bodily states, letting the client express, describe and possibly develop these symptoms as potential clues for processing the present unease/problem within her/his personal development. The counsellor could for instance close the session with questions like: "What is this symptom [telling] me [/you]?" (also suggested in Ferendo, 2007: 113), and "May working with it lead us to somewhere? Where?"

#### 4.3 Metaphors activated at the Emotional Level

The most challenging and promising perspective is offered by the hypothesis of mood states/symptoms as metaphors ('internal' metaphors to communicate with 'myself', e.g. mood states/disorders). These metaphors are far more complex to be identified and treated as the communicative relationship is played 'internally' within the self, which comes out to be felt as fragmented.

A momentarily dysfunctional emotional condition of the client can become a potential source of the metaphor, i.e. a territory which the counsellor/therapist together with the client can explore to find her/his own meanings with respect to her/his own needs here and now, as well as with respect to her/his own evolution as an individual and life goals.

By accompanying the client in the emotional exploration, possibly with questions to promote her/his getting in touch with it, here and now – "How do you feel [...]" – even a temporarily dysfunctional emotional position can be faced as an expression of sides of the self willing to emerge. In a dynamic perspective, asking questions like: "Has anything changed in your emotions, here and now?", could activate an awareness process and foster change as well as ultimately favour more well-being for the client.

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Even a temporary depressive state could be meant as expression of an emotion, side of personality, part of the self which has been repressed for whatever kind of reason or process the person is experiencing. For example, developing the conventional conceptual metaphor GOOD IS UP vs. BAD IS DOWN (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003[1080]:15), PASSION (denied/repressed) IS DE-PRESSION. Passion, denied or repressed, is a movement or a drive down. A temporary dysfunctional emotion in the client potentially means that there might be a form of passion or desire of individual expression which has not been given yet the chance to express itself. In this sense, that emotional state as a source of exploration may become functional to change. In this case the operational principle would be that of: 'facing' the metaphor, which would consist in a metaphorical operative response on mood disorders promoting emotional development and change: "What is this state of [...] telling you?" This may lead the client to see, perceive, realize something which s/he might not have given her/himself the chance to express before.

Emotions, even when dysfunctional or problematic in the here and now may be explored as exquisitely creative ways of the individual to express her-himself this form of temporary discomfort. Through a kind of exploration which favours the creative expression of this emotional territory, alternative ways can be found to know, become aware of and face such discomfort as a peculiar form of language, in addition to promoting its emotional comprehension, transformation so as to develop alternative answers in terms of behaviour and action.

As for these kinds of metaphors, not only their identification is hard, as they are not necessarily linguistically expressed on the part of the client/patient, but their application is delicate in the psycho-practice: a keen account of the general clinical situation of the patient, along with the seriousness of the unease/disease, is an allotted

The ‘transformative’ power of ‘integrated metaphor’ in counselling priority before such an exploration of the symptom. Even when discomfort is evaluated as temporary in a general non pathological condition, a very cautious step-by-step processing of the metaphor is suggested here only if the client welcomes the metaphorical work as a viable and comforting option.

My theoretical-methodological proposal given, from an operative point of view I must point out that in Italy, cross-reference to the competent specialist (psychotherapist, psychiatrist) is compulsory for the counsellor, when dealing with psychopathological domains (e.g. depression as a serious clinical disease and not a personality trait and/or temporary state).

The working metaphors emerging in the counselling practice, be they primarily pertaining to thought, emotion or body level, once activated operate at all the levels. Their transformative power is evaluated accordingly thanks to a ‘measuring’ tool which has been specifically created.

## **5. Measure: The ‘M’ Psychometric Test**

To evaluate the validity of the proposed methodological framework in the practice, the ‘M’ psychometric test has been created as a ‘metric’ for observing and measuring the transformative power of metaphor in a diachronic perspective and centred upon the ‘feedback’ of the client.

Notwithstanding which level the metaphorical transposition is primarily operating in the client (thought/emotion/body), the test is designed with the intention to ‘measure’ the metaphor’s transformative power at all the levels. In other words, be the client’s metaphor primarily activated at thought, emotional or body level, the test systematically accounts for all the levels of transformation of the given metaphor as emerging from the counselling exploration and reflected in the client’s feedback.

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The test was designed with the supervision of the A.S.P.I.C<sup>6</sup>. centre, it has been produced in English and Italian, and shared with the centre, in order to promote consistent analysis (and scientific validation) and in the client's personal development interest. It is divided into two parts, to be given before and after the session, for cycles of minimum 5 sessions. For pragmatic reasons, transformations levels are asked in the following order: (1) mind/thought ("*What are you thinking right now?*"), (2) emotion ("*What are you feeling right now?*") and (3) body ("*What are you feeling in your body right now?*") and lists of states are suggested for each level. Metaphorical levels of transformation as emerged from the counselling explorations are evaluated by comparing answers after vs. before the session: see Figure 1 and Figure 2 below.

# The 'transformative' power of 'integrated metaphor' in counselling



(session nr.:..... date:.....)



(session nr.:..... date:.....)

## Psychometric Test – evaluating the transformative power of metaphor

*Metaphor is "a cross-domain mapping in our conceptual system" (Lakoff, 1993: 207). It is at the basis of our thoughts, emotions and everyday action (Lakoff, 1980: 3-5, my synthesis).*

### Before the session:

Balance exercise (aimed to gain awareness of our own 'being' at cognitive, emotional and body level, with a view to integration, cf. three-dimensional nature of metaphor: MIND/EMOTION/BODY-ACTION):

1) (THOUGHT) What are you thinking right now?

Free expression:

.....

2) (EMOTION) What are you feeling right now ?

Free expression:

.....

Emotion	T	F
'Butterflies'?		
Curiosity?		
Indifference?		
Joy?		
Anger?		
Disappointment?		
Satisfaction?		
Frustration?		
Sadness?		
Confidence?		
Fear?		
Other?		

3) (BODY/ACTION) What are you feeling in your body right now?

Free expression:

.....

Sensation	T	F
Warm.....		
Cold.....		
Strong.....		
Weak.....		
Energetic.....		
Lethargic.....		
Tired.....		
Rested.....		

Are you feeling physically well overall?.....

T	F

How well do you feel physically on a scale from 1 to 10:

0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10


Free expression:

.....

Figure 1. 'M' psycho-test – part 1 – before the session

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[score added to maintain the integrity of the remaining process] (session nr.:..... date:.....)



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**After the session:**

1) (THOUGHT) What are you thinking right now? Has anything changed in your thoughts?  
Free expression:.....

**What are your thoughts like right now?**

	T	F
brighter? .....		
darker? .....		
more fluid? .....		
more still? .....		
clearer? .....		
muddier? .....		

Has there been any evolution or transformation in your thoughts?  
.....


2) (EMOTION) What are you feeling right now? Has anything changed in your emotions?  
If, before the session, you chose one/more emotions in particular, say whether

- it has remained the same (=) → T
- it has transformed, (=) → F, indicate whether it has increased (+), diminished / disappeared (-), 'transformed' into another emotion
- with respect to your wellbeing: more wellbeing? T/F

Emotion	The same (=)		Transformed (into)		More well-being?	
	T	F	(+)	(-)	T	F
'Butterflies' .....						
Curiosity .....						
Indifference .....						
Joy .....						
Anger .....						
Disappointment .....						
Satisfaction .....						
Frustration .....						
Sadness .....						
Confidence .....						
Fear .....						
Other .....						

Are you feeling any new emotion(s)?  
.....

[score added to maintain the integrity of the remaining process] (session nr.:..... date:.....)



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3) (BODY/ACTION) What are you feeling in your body right now?  
If you chose some of the following sensations, indicate if/how it has changed, as suggested in the table:

**Sensation**

	T	F
Warmer? .....		
Colder? .....		
Stronger? .....		
Weaker? .....		
More energetic? .....		
More lethargic? .....		
More tired? .....		
More rested? .....		

Has any particular, new sensation come up, right now?  
.....

Right now, are you feeling physically well, overall? T   F

.....

How well do you feel physically, on a scale from 1 to 10:  
.....

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

**Awareness stage:**

Have you noticed a specific element (or metaphor) which has been particularly significant during the session?  
.....

Free feedback on the experience:  
.....  
.....  
.....

Figure 2. 'M' psycho-test – part 2 – after the session

The test corresponding to the final session has to be signalled with concluding remarks and comments on the part of the counsellor. Despite not being *per se* a 'scientific' metric, in so far as it is based on subjective feedback, the test can provide both qualitative and quantitative data, conflating into what I will define as a "Transformational score", and might function statistically as a 'metric' to test the transformational power of metaphor. Subjective satisfaction is also to be considered fundamental in measuring the effectiveness of psycho-practice. Moreover, data interpretation may offer further insights and operational guidelines to the counsellor.



## The 'transformative' power of 'integrated metaphor' in counselling

### 5.1 Transformational Score – calculation & operational notes

Starting from its definition, the transformational score has to do with the change, it is to measure the change happening in the client. As an example: conjuring up 'the desolate land' as a visual metaphor, allowed one particularly resistant client to get in touch with emotions she would not have dared to face otherwise, and suggested new lines of intervention.

The change promoted by the metaphor is reflected in the 'Transformational score' extrapolated from the test (each session and Total – entire exploration cycle).

The transformational score of the metaphor is evaluated for each case by associating quantitative scores and qualitative considerations of each session's psycho-test (after the session vs. before the session). More specifically, the change, translated into a "Transformational score", is evaluated by comparing the client's reported state after vs. before the session and over the entire cycle of sessions. Quantitative and qualitative data are further interpreted through counsellor's notes.

The basic rule for counting is: 'do not count the unchanged': '\*count positively' and 'no score for no change'.

Positivity or negativity of the change is not directly relevant for the transformational score and requires complex evaluation. It has to be evaluated in consideration of the context and in relation to the client's personal development stage

Quantitative calculation and notes follow, on how to measure the T. score comparing the pre and post session psycho-test data for each session, and on the total exploration.

- (1) THOUGHT: any semantically positive answer at this stage is considered as positive with respect to a transformational power of metaphor, +1, negative answer signals 'no change', i.e. it equals zero; 0 as well for no answer

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(2) EMOTION: any transformation is +1 (F\* for the same and +/-, and T for "more well being" is a point). Otherwise it creates ambiguity and confusion in test compiling.

(3) BODY/ACTION: Any modification answered yes is a point. Signal in counsellor's notes if the transformation has been negative in consideration of the context (e.g. if it is summer, and the client puts "wormer", it might not be positive cf. session 4 case "eating". Vice-versa, it can be positive if it is winter cf. sessions IV, V, VI in "the desolate land". Even a momentary negative change can be indirectly positive for the sake of the client's development.

Physical well-being a): if before the session the answer was negative, a positive answer signals a change = +1, and vice-versa (+1\*): any change is counted = +1(\*specify in counsellor's notes in case the change is negative); no change: 0 points.

Physical well-being b) (vs. before the session): quantitative score is calculated vs. before the session and any change is counted (\*specify in counsellor's notes in case the change is negative, see session 1 in "the desolate land"); no change = 0 points.

Awareness stage: consider client's comments

Transformational score - session:  $1) + 2) + 3) + a) + b) = x$  (of which y for a&b)

Counsellor's notes - session

Total transformational score - case: sum of sessions' transformational scores

## 6. Findings/Results

Following a public presentation of the project at the centre, initial clients were recruited, to experience such brief metaphor-based and -driven counselling explorations (min. 5 sessions each), according to their 'contract' and tested before and after each session.

Four preliminary cases, corresponding to four different Italian clients and their respective metaphors emerge, my own translation from Italian to English is provided, and the transformational power of each metaphor is translated into a transformational score. The four transformational metaphors are 1) 'the frog' (total T. score: 65), 2) 'eating' (total T. score: 14), 3) 'the hare', (total T. score: 39) and 4) 'the desolate land' (total T. score: 68), corresponding to each client and contract as follows.

The first client is a lady in her 30s, her contract being: integration at work. The frog ("*I feel like a boiled frog*"), a highly culturally biased metaphor, has emerged as a mutually constructed and comforting metaphor giving the client a means of identification with specific reference to her critical situation at work and has proved to be a transformative tool to orient her need for integration with respect to her problem.

The second is a young boy in his 20s (particularly 'resistant' case) – his contract being: to explore his 'uncategorizable' sense of discomfort with respect to life. 'Eating', proposed by the counsellor as a behavioural metaphor, has emerged as a potential metaphorical space for the client to start and get in touch with his feelings e.g. focusing on the idea of emptiness/fullness, create new responses for action and promote well-being.

As a third case we have a man in his 50s – his contract being to work on his problematic relationship with his son within the general context of a separated father. 'The hare' "[*my*] *animal guide, the hare*", has emerged as a choice metaphor and

The ‘transformative’ power of ‘integrated metaphor’ in counselling projection space (client’s identification / “animal guide”) for the client to explore his emotional conflicts and promote personal awareness.

Finally we have a lady in her 40s, particularly resistant to emotional disclosure – her contract being: to work on a problematic relationship with her son. In the background is her mother recent death and previous separation from her husband. ‘The desolate land’ has emerged as a visual metaphor and projection space for the client to start and make contact with her own emotional state of desperation, loneliness and anxiety, in order to start exploring and working on her emotional conflicts and declared needs.

In general, as will be evident from our findings and discussion, all the metaphors explored proved to be auto-transformative throughout the sessions in each case. In *‘the frog’* case, metaphor has proved to function (partially) automatically: once it has been initiated through the metaphor-based and –driven counselling relational practice, it can develop from one session to the other even without a direct and voluntary pressure on the part of the client. The case of *‘eating’* has made particularly evident how quantitative scores are relative and need to be confronted and implemented with qualitative data. *‘The hare’* highlights how this metaphor-based approach can be also crucial for awareness and personality fixing. The *‘desolate land’* has shown how shifting the attention to a metaphorical source can help the client getting in touch with emotional state which would have been difficult for her to be faced directly and accompany the client’s self-disclosure through the development of the sessions.

Let us now concentrate on ‘the desolate land’, the last of the four cases, in further details, to observe the working of the metaphor and its evaluation through each session by reporting counsellor’s notes on test evaluation and in consideration of the set contract.

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The 'desolate land' has been conjured up already from Session I – T. score:  $3+ 6+2 +0 -1= 10 -1 = 11^*$  (1 well-being shift\* - negative). The counsellor reports: 1) the client expresses in her own thoughts and words the metaphor which has been created (The client reporting: "*I think of the desolate and I visualize the image*"); 2) some doubts on the reliability of the emotional score (the test has previously manifested levels of criticality in this part; besides, when there is not any confirmation of the transformation (+/-) nor more/less corresponding well-being indication data are not certain). 3) Physical well-being shift: 7(before) vs. 6(after)= -1 (bodily shift in negative). A negative shift in the well-being is not necessarily to be considered as negative data if it happens in the course of a series of sessions. On the contrary, it may accompany an awareness stage and function as a fostering tool to promote further development (high dynamic instance). This is also reflected in the client's feedback on the metaphor work: "positive and powerful". With respect to the counting, any well-being shift, whether positive or negative (which has to be signalled), has to be considered however as a point.

In Session II – T. score:  $2+ 10 +1 +0 +0= 13$  (0 well-being shift), the counsellor reports: any transformation, even negative, is to be seen as positive in the course of an exploration, e.g.  $+2^*$  (negative) for thoughts. Transformations are interrelated amongst thoughts/emotions/body, and relate to the metaphor. Sometimes they may even affect test compiling: e.g. the client's emotions are confused and the test presents some issues in the emotional level section. Not by chance she signals "*confusion*" in the qualitative comments. Moreover, in correspondence with a negative shift in her thoughts and confusion in her emotions, the client feels colder, which is also associated to her choice metaphor: the desolate land (static instance to pin down the metaphor and identify the trauma). Additionally, the client expresses "frustration and

The 'transformative' power of 'integrated metaphor' in counselling anger" as key elements emerged in the interview, her feedback being: "*I feel confused and I am tired of being me, tired of being always willing to do everything and do it bad*".

Session III – T. score:  $3+7+2 +0 +0= 12$  (0 well-being shift) has been generally positive in the sense of the acquisition of more well-being cf. in particular the indication of "*comfort*" and the change in the body in the awareness stage, which tends to be the more immediate mirror of her general state. Not by chance the client feels warmer, which results in a positive change (+), in consideration of the season and choice metaphor.

In session IV – T. score:  $1+ 8 +1 +0+0= 10$  (0 well-being shift) the counsellor reports: though without any well-being amelioration, the session has been productive for the client's personal development as long as it has allowed her to change her thoughts: "*of course they have changed: I think of responsibilities*", her emotions: "*I am a little bit upset*", also reflecting it in her body: "*my hands and feet turned cold*". In focus is the element of the cold which comes out as a bodily metaphor correlated to the main one: the desolate land. In the end, the client expresses: "*yes everyone acts according to their own free will*", also adding as a free feedback on the experience: "*I realized I never asked anything...for a change*" (strong dynamic instance: the metaphor comes out as a powerful insight and fosters a change in the client's vision).

In Session V – T. score:  $2+ 3 +3 +1 +1= 10$  (2 well-being shift), according to counsellor's notes, here reported: the client reaches an important and unexpected insight by realizing the expectations she has on her son. Not only has she written "*I am thinking of my expectations*" in reference to her thoughts after the session, but she even specifies it as a transformation in her thoughts: "*Yes, I did not know I had expectations on my son, instead I have them and many*". This insight also reflects in her emotions:

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*"surprise: I surprise myself having expectations"*, which allow her to make a further step in her awareness, accompanied by a double well-being shift. Particularly important to this shift has been a previous metaphorical realization. In the previous session the client had her fists clenched, a bodily expression which by metaphorical reflection had allowed her to see her closeness with her son, despite the misunderstanding and apparent distance with him. This gesture could have been interpreted also in a different way, but the context, the problem of the client and the development of the 'desolate land' along the cycle of sessions confirmed this meaning in the client. Following this bodily metaphorical evidence and realization, it is a provocative direct question to allow her to disclose her own metaphor and to reach a new stage of awareness: "How many expectations did you have on your son?" – which is followed by silence and then welcomes the insight. Expectations turns out to be the key element of the session for the client, who also writes as a free feedback: *"I am happy I realized I have expectations on my son, maybe I will be able to correct myself now"* (strong dynamic instance).

Session VI – T. score: 3+ 4 +4 +0 +1= 12 (1 well-being shift), according to counsellor's notes: an extra session has been agreed with the client to allow her to close her contact cycle. The result is a very positive session in which the client could confirm more well-being corresponding to the changes happened previously. The client reports *"yes I feel more serene"* in general; which is reflected at thought level: *"my thoughts are more serene"*; at the emotional level: *"I am more serene"*; at the bodily level: *"warmer, stronger, more energetic, more rested"*. A general sense of getting warmer is signalled as a new emotion. The metaphor of the temperature has emerged as a corollary of the desolate land (cold/warm). In this regard, it has to be underlined that the season of this exploration was autumn/winter, therefore the higher temperature corresponds to more well-being. The client signals serenity as a key element in the session, adding as a free

The ‘transformative’ power of ‘integrated metaphor’ in counselling feedback: “*I feel more relaxed and more serene, practically more cuddled*” (static instance for closing the cycle).

The Total T. score of ‘the desolate land’ is 68 (\*6 sessions). As for the transformational power of the metaphor, the ‘desolate land’ has operated systematically and partially automatically: in addition to the transformation happening during each session, from one time to the other the metaphor had changed – systematically – even without deliberate work by the client. This allowed the client to develop her emotional conflicts and get to new stages of awareness, promoting new alternatives for action, well-being and personal development.

The ‘desolate land’ case shows how metaphor can be crucial for promoting awareness even and particularly when the immediate well-being shift is negative. Additionally, a certain criticality of the psycho-test as regards the emotional section reliability has emerged, suggesting a simplification (see §6, Discussion).

## **6. Discussion**

In the light of our findings some research results about the measurement of the transformative power of metaphor can be summarized as follows.

### **6.1 The transformational power of metaphor**

Metaphor has proved to be a transformative and activating tool, also promoting physical well-being. Cf. case 1, I., particularly thanks to its systematicity and automaticity.

Metaphor also proves to operate systematically as it produces correlates: e.g. emptiness/fullness for case 2 – ‘eating’; cold/warm opposition and relative emotional states (also see §3 for Integration) for case 4 – ‘the desolate land’.



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Metaphor is all the more powerful as it has proved to function (partially) automatically: once it has been initiated through the metaphor-based counselling relational practice, it will develop from a session to the other even without a direct and voluntary pressure on the part of the client. Cf. case 1 – 'the frog'.

## **6.2** Relativity of positive vs. negative states

Reported relativity of positive vs. negative states claim the need for complex evaluation (client's context and personal development stage).

More specifically, high emotion or bodily scores (dynamic instances) do not necessarily correspond to an amelioration of well-being states as the specific change might even be for the worse. Cf. case 1, V.

Additionally, no well-being shift reporting – be it due to negative change or to no indication – is not necessarily negative, but might prove the relativity of quantitative scores (see §4), or that some emotion still needs to be addressed. Depending on the stage of the exploration, similar psychological blockages might be functional to subsequent further steps/insights/awareness. Cf. case 1, II.

## **6.3** Integration & balance (quantitative scores)

Metaphor operates in an integrated way at 1) thought, 2) emotion, 3) body levels. Relationship between the relative quantitative scores can be used as an indication of integration and balance. Cf. case 1, III vs. 1, I & 1, II

## **6.4** Relativity of quantitative scores

Reported relativity of quantitative scores highlights the need to confront/implement them with qualitative data.

## The 'transformative' power of 'integrated metaphor' in counselling

Zero score as a well-being shift does not necessarily correspond to zero change: e.g. where despite 0 well-being shift, the client has manifested worse feelings than before, both emotionally and physically (dynamic instances, see previous point on relativity of positive vs. negative states). Cf. case 2, II.

Zero score as transformational score (static instances) is not necessarily indication of no change: e.g. where despite the transformational score is zero, the client qualitatively expresses to have even more positive thoughts than at the beginning of the session and to feel more relaxed in her/his body. Cf. case 2, III.

Zero to low scores (static instances) might indicate personality fixing: e.g. where the transformational score is low, but is not necessarily a negative point, when the client is fixing a change which has been fostered in the previous sessions as an awareness stage. Cf. case 3, IV.

### 6.5 Relativity of qualitative data

Depending on singular personal cases and contextual factors, the same change can be 'positive' or 'negative' (more/less well-being); e.g. indication of "warmer" in 3) BODY, is positive in case 4, VI, but nor necessarily positive in case 2, IV.

This can be related to an account of metaphor itself as evaluative.

### 6.6 Relativity of the psycho-test and added value

As a measuring means the test itself has limitations and is subject to subjective interpretation (counsellor) and appreciation (client).

A certain criticality of the psycho-test has emerged, particularly in the emotional section and with respect to its results' reliability. Cf. case 4, I.

A simplification of the test is needed in correspondence to the emotional level table, not to create ambiguity and confusion in test compiling Cf. case 2, V. More

The ‘transformative’ power of ‘integrated metaphor’ in counselling specifically, in correspondence to the first column of this table – F\* for “the same” – needs to be modified, so as to contain a ‘positive’ (e.g. transformed? “T”) selection to be chosen.

Emotional states can however affect test compiling, specifically the emotional change. Cf. case 4, II.

To sum up the discussion, dynamic vs. static instances do not merely correspond to positive vs. negative (§2) transformation score. This is to be related with the relativity of quantitative scores (§4) and the need to confront them with qualitative data). These , nevertheless, also depend on individual cases and contextual factors (cf. §5 relativity of qualitative data). This is reflected in integration and balance (§3), and confirms the transformational power of metaphor (§1). The ‘M’ psycho-test provides a measurement means despite limitations and relativity (§6).

Moreover, beyond offering a means to explore the transformational power of metaphor eventually proving the validity of the approach, test interpretation may also offer the counsellor further indication and operative guidelines on how to proceed with metaphor application according to each case specificities.

## **7. Conclusions**

By bridging the gap between the cognitive linguistics discoveries on metaphor and its use in the psycho-practice, this article has explored the transformational power of metaphor to offer perspectives for implementing its potential in counselling and therapy.

A new integrated definition of metaphor working at 1) thought, 2) emotional and 3) bodily levels has emerged and a practical proposal to be applied in counselling/therapy settings. The potential of metaphor as a client customized proactive

The 'transformative' power of 'integrated metaphor' in counselling tool which can be used to produce change has been further developed to craft it as a self-propelled means to promote better awareness and change. Subsequently, a consistent experimental framework to detect and work with integrated metaphor in the practice and variations within the framework have been presented according to the kind of metaphor at work, whether activated at thought, emotional or bodily level. To measure the transformative power of metaphor a test has been offered, which systematically accounts for all the levels of transformation of the given metaphor as emerging from the counselling exploration and reflected in the client's feedback. Evidence of real metaphor-based and –driven cases together with final test evaluation and discussion on the measure of the transformation has followed.

Of course the test can be further improved, further training on how to use the method is envisaged and the method should be tested on a larger scale. The research project might improve if other experts and expertises are involved (clients/patients, counsellors, psychotherapists, conversational analysts, neuroscientists).

The evidence gathered is promising for both metaphor application and its measurement. It shows that: 1) an implemented use of metaphor may help deal with resistant cases, foster personal development/change and improve personal well-being, awareness, integration as well as open new, experimental perspectives of intervention. Moreover, though test evaluation has suggested amelioration of it for the sake of a more user-friendly consumption and results reliability, 2) the M. test offers a promising way to measure the transformative power of metaphor in a dynamic and client-oriented way, also offering further indication and operative guidelines for the counsellor/therapist on specific metaphor application.

The implications for practice are promising: 1) applying a metaphor-based experimental integrated approach can offer alternatives for action in the practice; 2)

The 'transformative' power of 'integrated metaphor' in counselling measuring the transformational power of metaphor through 'M' test can offer further degree of awareness for both the counsellor/therapist and the client. The feedback offered by the test has also emerged as an effective tool for the counsellor/therapist to evaluate time by time the action of the metaphor at the various levels (Thought, Emotion, Body) and their relationship with each other, so as to affect her/his subsequent interventions to better accompany the client in her/his own exploration.

The transformative power of metaphor goes beyond the expectations and all the more, what might have seemed to be weakening the account on language at the beginning has proved to be instead empowering the importance of language and metaphor studies into clinical perspectives. Every 'symptom' is treated here in terms of a potential metaphor, as a communicative way of expression and a language instance. Treating it metaphorically, getting a metaphorical understanding of it, and then working it out metaphorically, represents the first step towards awareness, change and healing.

In practice, why can metaphor help? Because a) it offers alternatives, when other, more traditional approaches do not function, in integration or as choice method. Moreover, b) it promotes further understanding/awareness: when a state, albeit dysfunctional, loses its communicative function, it will automatically tend to downsize itself and change towards more awareness and well-being for the client. Therefore, thanks to its transformative power, metaphor fosters change.

These short and limited operative conclusions hopefully draw wider perspectives for application and suggest further research on how metaphor could be further worked out clinically also in an integrated interdisciplinary perspective.

Metaphor functions as a communicative device which is able to sympathise and cope with any symptom in a creative way. Metaphor power relies first and foremost in being a conceptual tool which is able to conceptualize beyond the limits of pre-existing

The 'transformative' power of 'integrated metaphor' in counselling concepts, comprehending new creative expressions as well as paradoxes, thus providing an understanding to the un-known and the otherwise un-understandable. Metaphor is a conceptual tool that is able to sympathise with the folly of our minds, and, for that reason, to some extent the only one which is able to work with it.

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1 The term psycho-practice is used here in reference to talking cure practices: counselling and psychotherapy.

2 For an exhaustive discussion of all the previous literature on metaphor see Ferrari (2018, 2020).

3 See Ferrari, 2020, for a more in-depth discussion on these different therapeutic approaches.

4 For an articulated discussion on the theoretical advancements of metaphor with respect to cognitive linguistics and application see Ferrari (2018, 2020).

5 Sessions can be recorded with the consent of the clients.

6 A.S.P.I.C. is an Italian association which promotes the development of the individual and community by providing integrated counselling masters and relative services. It is a founding member of E.A.C. (European Association for Counselling), and is related to B.A.C. / B.A.C.P. (British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy).

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