

RAAM SPECIALISED SEMINAR 2013: “METAPHOR, METONYMY AND EMOTION”

ABSTRACT (300 words):

Title: **Metaphor and Emotion in End of Life Care**

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In this presentation, we investigate the metaphors used to express emotions in the context of end-of-life care in the UK. More specifically, we look at the metaphors that unpaid family carers employ to talk about their own feelings, and compare them with the metaphors used by healthcare professionals when they attribute emotions to family carers.

In the first part of our study, we adopted the identification procedure proposed by Pragglejaz Group (2007) to collect the metaphoric expressions used to express family carers' emotions in two 15,000-word samples of interviews with, respectively, carers and hospice managers. This enabled us to identify the main semantic fields that are exploited in the expression of the carers' emotions. We then employed an adapted version of the UCREL Semantic Analysis System (USAS) tagger (Rayson et al. 2004) embedded within the Wmatrix software (Rayson 2008), in order to identify further instances of metaphors drawn from those semantic fields in a larger corpus of interviews, including approximately 180,000 words.

Common emotions associated with caring for someone with a terminal illness include anxiety, fear, isolation, guilt and, potentially, shame. In our data, recurring metaphors include:

VIOLENCE metaphors “that really knocked us both” (carer)

 “a lot of battling in the background” (professional)

MOVEMENT metaphors “there is not a great deal of guilt [...], which does creep in sometimes” (carer)

 “don't want to go there again” (professional)

CONTAINMENT metaphors “ways of releasing stress and frustration” (carer)

 “she had all this worry trapped inside and everything came gushing out” (professional)

By comparing the metaphors used by family carers and healthcare professionals, we aim to identify any areas with a potential for misunderstanding due to emotions being conceptualized in different and possibly incompatible terms.

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