



The business of learning to teach: A Critical Metaphor Analysis of one Teacher's journey



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HIGHLIGHTS

- We analyze one novice teacher's perceptions of her learning to teach process.
- Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) reveals conflicting frames of learning to teach.
- We discuss potential consequences of learning to teach in neoliberal contexts.
- We use CMA to make visible the realities many teachers face within these contexts.

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the learning to teach process of one novice teacher, Rachael, enrolled in an Urban Teacher Residency (UTR) in Harbor City, United States. Building on Loh and Hu's (2014) scholarship on neoliberalism and novice teachers, we employ Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) to make visible the ways in which Rachael contends with conflicting frames of learning to teach—TEACHING IS A JOURNEY vs. TEACHING IS A BUSINESS—within her program. Rachael encounters three primary obstacles: programmatic incompatibility, pedagogical paralysis, and, ultimately, programmatic abandonment. The discussion explores the potential consequences of learning to teach in neoliberal contexts.

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1. Introduction

Throughout the last twenty years, educators have grown more attuned to how neoliberal ideologies shape the profession of teaching as well as the structure and aims of schooling. Broadly, neoliberalism is a “theory of political and economic practices” (Harvey, 2007, p. 2) that advances the notion that market-based solutions and privatization best promote opportunity. Kretchmar, Sondel, and Ferrare (2014) provide a useful synthesis of neoliberalism:

Neoliberalism prioritizes freedom and individualism over the collective, and defines freedom and individualism in commercial and consumer terms ... In language, it sounds like ‘public is bad, private is good’ rhetoric. In action, neoliberalism favors increased privatization and deregulation and decreased state

intervention, coupled with the defunding of public services, such as higher education, libraries, and healthcare (Apple, 2006; Ball, 2007; Burch, 2009; Harvey, 2005; Hursh, 2005). (p. 3).

Loh and Hu (2014) note that the United States and the UK are two of the most well-known neoliberal states; however, the orientation to market-based solutions, individualism, and privatization has been occurring globally since the 1970s. Neoliberalism, however, is not a coherent set of explicit beliefs, and thus does not play out in the same ways around the world (or even within a country): neoliberalism in Chile is not the same as neoliberalism in China, or in Spain, or in Singapore (Freidrich, 2014). Despite differences within and among different countries, globally neoliberalism has become “ingrained in popular consciousness as a kind of common-sense” (Harvey, 2007, p. 3).

In this article, we build on Loh and Hu's (2014) scholarship exploring how novice teachers learn to teach within neoliberal policy contexts. One reason why Loh and Hu's (2014) scholarship is so useful is because it moves beyond conceptual work in the field

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and into the empirical documentation of how neoliberal common sense shapes teacher learning. Our work aims to add to this growing base of empirical work on neoliberalism and teacher education so that we might understand in more concrete ways the ways in which neoliberal contexts shape teachers' conceptions of themselves, their students, and the aims of teaching. Using Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA), we analyze one teacher's experience of learning to teach within an Urban Teacher Residency (UTR), an innovative and rapidly growing model of teacher preparation in the United States. While each of the 17 residencies that are part of the Urban Teacher Residency United network (<http://www.utrUnited.org/>) approach their residency model a bit differently, commonalities among UTRs include a paid, year-long classroom apprenticeship with concurrent Masters-level coursework; a cohort-based experience; and a commitment to teaching three years in one of the district's schools. During that time, the residents receive intensive induction and professional development support.

Although our analysis focuses on one teacher learning within a UTR, a unique pathway gaining traction in the United States, it is important to note that both "alternative" and "traditional" programs in national and international contexts are similarly shaped by neoliberal common sense. In the United States, this includes traditional university-based teacher education as well as alternative routes like Teach for America (TFA) and the Teaching Fellows; on the global level this comprises "Teach for All" programs (the international expressions of TFA) including Teach for India, Teach for China, and Teach for Argentina (Freidrich, 2014). A growing body of research explores how neoliberal common sense shapes teacher education writ large (Apple, 2001; Zeichner, 2010; Zeichner & Sandoval, 2015), whether that be the preparation of teachers as technicians, the focus on teachers' testable content knowledge, and the shortening (or even bypassing) of teacher preparation altogether (Sleeter, 2008).

In this article, we aim to contribute to this growing body of research on neoliberalism and teacher education (i.e., Loh & Hu, 2014) through an analysis of one novice teacher, Rachael, enrolled in an Urban Teacher Residency (UTR). In particular, we show how Rachael encountered two diametrically opposed frames for learning to teach: her own conception of TEACHING IS A JOURNEY and the program's conception of TEACHING IS A BUSINESS. It is this conflict of frames that we work to make visible in this paper to help illuminate the struggle that novice teachers—nationally and internationally, in "traditional" and "alternative" programs—might encounter while learning to teach in settings where neoliberal ideologies animate policies, practices, and program structures.

2. Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Critical Metaphor Analysis

The theoretical lens of Cognitive Linguistics (CL) is a powerful approach to the study of language, conceptual systems, human cognition, and general meaning construction thus providing a "window into the mind" of the teacher as she engages in the social practice of learning to teach (Fauconnier, 1999, p. 96). Incorporating CL into analyses of interview data (as opposed to analysis of other types of discourse such as media discourse where CL is frequently incorporated) is a relatively new approach that is particularly useful in combination with other approaches to qualitative analysis, allowing for deepened understanding of how the participant conceives of the topic at hand (Catalano & Creswell, 2013). Like other approaches to qualitative analysis, the use of CL depends on whether the analysts' interests lie in the content, structure, performance, or context of the narrative (Reissman, 2008) or case study. In this article, where we seek to better understand how Rachael, the focal participant, constructs the learning to teach

process in her mind, CL—and in particular, Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)—is decidedly helpful.

As a theory within the field of cognitive linguistics, CMT is largely known to the public through the work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980). According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), the concepts that control our thought also structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to people. "Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 3). However, we are often unconscious of our conceptual system, merely thinking or acting automatically along certain lines that are not obvious to us. Because communication is based on the same conceptual system that we use in thinking and acting, looking at language is one way that we can find evidence of what that system is like (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Through examining linguistic evidence, Lakoff and Johnson have found that most of our conceptual system is metaphorical in nature, meaning that we structure how we think and what we do through metaphorical thought. Thus, metaphor is a "cognitive operation performed in order to make sense of experience" (Hart, 2010, p. 126) that involves "understanding and experiencing one thing in terms of another" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 5).

This process can be demonstrated more easily through a common metaphor example such as LIFE IS A JOURNEY.¹ In the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, the concept of LIFE (known as the TARGET domain) is comprehended in terms of the SOURCE domain, JOURNEY. This connection is systematic, and involves the mapping of correspondences between the two domains such as in the following (taken from Kövecses, 2006, p. 116):

JOURNEY → LIFE

Traveler → person leading a life
 Journey/motion (toward a destination) → leading a life (with a purpose)
 Destination → purpose of life
 Obstacles → difficulties (in life)
 Distance covered → progress made
 Path/way of the journey → manner/way of living
 Choices about the path → choices in life

As shown above, certain elements of the JOURNEY domain are mapped onto elements of the LIFE domain or frame.² This type of mapping, where there is a connection between two concepts and where we use our understanding of one element (SOURCE) to help us comprehend another (usually more abstract) one called the TARGET, is what we mean by metaphor. Some examples of how we might see evidence of this metaphor in discourse include the following:

- "I came to a **crossroads** in my life where there was **no turning back**."
- "I'm not going to worry about college yet. I guess I will just **cross that bridge** when I get to it."

As Santa Ana (2013) explains, "Metaphor is more than poetic color and superficial ornamentation. It shapes everyday discourse, and by this means it shapes how people discern and enact the everyday" (p. 26). Metaphors can highlight certain aspects of a concept, and hide others by "focusing on (or keeping us from

¹ In CL, the convention for writing metaphors is to refer to them in small capitals.

² Another way to refer to domain is the term "frame" or ICM (Idealized Conceptual Model), which can be defined as a structured mental representation of a conceptual category or the way we view the world (Kövecses, 2006).

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