Author: Yorka Olavarría
Affiliation: Universidad de Chile

The language of abuse: Distorting perceptions
of reality through conceptual metaphors

Couples in Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) contexts are in a process of understanding what it means to be in the dynamic of violence, and this meaning construction is embedded in how they conceptualize themselves, each other, and the relationship itself (Cavanagh, 2003; Chang, 1996; Denzin, 1984). The objective of this study is to describe and analyse how batterers and victims conceptualize violence and each other's roles through metaphors found in interactive spoken speech, as there is a theoretical gap regarding the linguistic analysis of interactions in IPV contexts. The methodology is both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative section identifies the most frequent metaphors through the Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit (MIPVU) (Steen et al., 2010) and through the Discourse Dynamics Approach (DDA) (Gibbs & Cameron, 2008; Cameron 2009). The qualitative section analyses through Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) (Lakoff & Johnson, 1987) and through DDA how these metaphors help batterers conceptualize their roles and their victims' roles, showing the movement of metaphors and the sharing of framings of metaphorical expressions. The data was taken from online support forums in which victims shared conversations in audio formats of arguments they had with their respective batterers. The results showed a total density of 21% (DDA) and 6% (MIPVU) and victims presented a lower use of metaphors in comparison to the batterers, with a 20% in the case of DDA and an 18% in the case of MIPVU. The most frequent metaphors (or labels) according to CMT were IDEAS ARE OBJECTS, VICTIM IS HURTFUL, VICTIM IS INCAPABLE and VICTIM IS WORTHLESS. It was concluded that the usage of metaphors reflected the batterers' and victims' strategies in IPV contexts. Furthermore, the metaphorical expressions used by batterers were tentatively coincidental with narcissistic profiles. These findings are useful to describe the psychological profiles and interactions in IPV from an interdisciplinary point of view.

References:

Cameron, L. (2009). The Discourse Dynamics Approach to Metaphor and Metaphor-Led Discourse Analysis. Metaphor and Symbol, 24: 63–89, 2009,

Taylor & Francis Group, LLC.

Cavanagh, Kate (2003). Understanding women's responses to domestic violence. Qualitative Social Work, 2.

Chang, V.N. (1996). I Just Lost Myself: Psychological Abuse of Women in Marriage. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Denzin, N. (1984) 'Towards a Phenomenology of Domestic Family Violence', American Journal of Sociology 90.

Evans, V. (2007). A glossary of cognitive linguistics. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Gibbs, R., & Cameron, L. (2008). The social-cognitive dynamics of metaphor performance. Journal of Cognitive Systems Research, 9(1–2), 64–75.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). Metaphors we live by. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Pragglejaz group. (2007). MIP: A method for identifying metaphorically- used words in discourse. Metaphor and Symbol, 22(1).

Steen et al (2010). A method for linguistic metaphor identification: From MIP to MIPVU. John Benjamins