

Metaphors we learn by: Children's understanding of science

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Project summary

The purpose of this project is to study how children use what they already know when trying to learn something new. When confronted with the task of coming to grips with what for the individual is novel knowledge, children as well as adults tend to speak of and understand the new in terms of something more familiar. One way of analysing this foundational characteristic of children's learning is to study how metaphors are used as resources to 'bridge the gap' between the familiar and the as yet unfamiliar. This feature of learning is particularly evident in the case of abstract and complex forms of knowledge, such as scientific knowledge. The present project aims at analysing the use of metaphors in teaching and learning in early childhood education and the first year of primary school. Teacher organised instruction about nature/in the domain of science will be recorded with video camera and analysed as text. In recent years, new theoretical understandings of metaphors and their impact on learning as well as analytical tools for analysing the use of metaphorical language have evolved. However, empirical studies of metaphorical use of language in learning and instruction within the early childhood and transitory settings are rare. This study therefore should be able to provide substantial and foundational contributions to this line of research.