

The Language of Pain: New Understandings

Thesis by compilation

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i) CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I, Imogene Munday, declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Graduate School of Health at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

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(Abstract, Ch 1. Introduction, Preambles, Ch 6. Discussion, and Ch 7. Conclusions)

iii) THESIS BY COMPILATION

This thesis by compilation is structured as a single manuscript comprised of four published/publishable works (i.e. papers) and chapters, including an Introduction and Discussion. Linking text is provided to establish the relationship between each chapter and the following.

iv) LIST OF PAPERS/PUBLICATIONS INCLUDED

Chapter Two (Paper 1)

Munday, I., Kneebone, I., & Newton-John, T. (2021). The language of chronic pain. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 43(3), 354-361.
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Chapter Three (Paper 2)

Munday, I., Newton-John, T., & Kneebone, I. (2020). ‘Barbed wire wrapped around my feet’: Metaphor use in chronic pain. *British Journal of Health Psychology*, 25(3), 814-830. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjhp.12432>

Chapter Four (Paper 3)

Munday, I., Kneebone, I., Rogers, K., & Newton-John, T. (2021). The Language of Pain: Is there a relationship between metaphor use and adjustment to chronic pain? *Pain Medicine*. Advanced online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pm/pnaa467>

Chapter Five (Paper 4)

Munday, I., Newton-John, T., & Kneebone, I. (2021). Clinician experience of metaphor in chronic pain communication. [Manuscript submitted for publication]. Graduate School of Health, University of Technology Sydney.

v) PRESENTATIONS BY THE PHD CANDIDATE

Munday, I., Kneebone, I. & Newton-John, T. (2018, April 8-11). *The language of chronic pain* [poster presentation]. Australian Pain Society 38th and New Zealand Pain Society Conjoint Annual Scientific Meeting, Sydney, NSW, Australia.

Munday, I., Kneebone, I. & Newton-John, T. (2019, April 7-10). *The language of chronic pain*. In M. Craigie (Chair), *Less than satisfactory communications about pain? Bridging the language and culture gap*. [Symposium]. Australian Pain Society 39th Annual Scientific Meeting, Gold Coast, QLD, Australia.

Munday, I., (August 28, 2020). *The language of pain: Is there a relationship between metaphor use and adjustment to chronic pain?* [Paper presentation] Graduate School of Health Research Student Seminar, University of Technology Sydney, conducted via Zoom.

Munday, I., Kneebone, I. & Newton-John, T. (September 2020 – March 2021). *Metaphor use and adjustment to chronic pain*. [Poster presentation] International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP). Virtual Series on Pain & Expo.*

*This 6 month virtual program was developed due to postponement of the IASP 2020 World Congress on Pain in Amsterdam owing to the Covid-19 pandemic.

vi) ABSTRACT

Chronic pain is a prevalent and costly condition, and is associated with a wide range of comorbidities such as depression, anxiety, substance misuse, and suicidality.

Although near universal, pain is an inherently private and subjective experience. In the absence of objective assessment measures, people with chronic pain rely primarily on language to communicate their experience.

The McGill Pain Questionnaire (MPQ) paved the way for incorporating language into pain assessment. However, it has received numerous criticisms because of its focus on adjectival, single-word descriptors that have been taken out of communicative context. An alternative naturalistic form of assessment and communication is that of metaphor, which may be a powerful tool for people with chronic pain.

Previous research has shown that metaphors are widely used by those with chronic pain and may have therapeutic value in this population. However, there is limited research in the area. The present study series addresses this gap in the literature through four empirical studies. The first study explored the language used by those with chronic pain to describe their pain experience. The second study used conceptual metaphor theory to analyse and catalogue the types of metaphors used by people with chronic pain. The third study explored the associations between metaphor use and chronic pain diagnosis and between metaphor use and adjustment to chronic pain. The final study examined health professionals' experience with their patients' use of metaphor in chronic pain consultations.

The results showed that people with chronic pain use a wide variety of metaphors in their pain communication, with the most frequently used category pertaining to metaphors of physical damage. Metaphor use was found to be associated with certain pain diagnoses, in particular endometriosis, complex regional pain syndrome, neuropathic pain, and hypermobility syndrome. Metaphor use was also associated with the extent to which pain interfered with daily life. However, its relationships with other aspects of adjustment such as pain intensity, depression, anxiety, or stress were not as strong. It was found that health professionals use metaphor in chronic pain consultations in a variety of interesting ways, for instance to inform their judgments about pain type, psychopathology, and understanding of pain.

Implications for clinical practice include the need for interdisciplinary care, education for health professionals on metaphor in chronic pain, and the integration of metaphor in the treatment of chronic pain. Areas for future research include metaphor and pain catastrophising and exploring metaphor as a treatment target.

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viii) ABBREVIATIONS

ACT	Acceptance and Commitment Therapy
BPI	Brief Pain Inventory
BNC	British National Corpus
CBT	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
CI	Confidence Interval
CMT	Conceptual Metaphor Theory
COREQ	Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research
CRPS	Complex regional pain syndrome
DASS	Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scales
HPA	Hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenocortical (axis)
IASP	International Association for the Study of Pain
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
LANSS	Leeds Assessment of Neuropathic Symptoms and Signs
MPQ	McGill Pain Questionnaire
MSK	Musculoskeletal (pain)
OR	Odds Ratio
SD	Standard Deviation