

Abstract

This thesis is a pilot study of how people who act as mentors construct their mentoring identity, drawing on theory and methodology from the disciplines of sociolinguistics and management. It examines how mentors in a variety of New Zealand workplaces 'do mentoring' discursively in the workplace. The study examines the linguistic strategies the mentors use and evaluates the effectiveness of these different strategies from the perspective of their mentees.

Two principal models of mentoring have been proposed in the literature based on research in North America (Kram 1988 [1985]), and in Europe (Clutterbuck 2001). Using these models of mentoring, this study analyzes the ways mentoring is accomplished in four New Zealand organizations, addressing the core research question of whether the models are appropriate for describing mentoring in New Zealand.

The data used for the analysis comprises 12 recorded mentoring meetings: six from participants employed in three corporate environments and six from participants employed as academics in a tertiary institution. The analysis is based on data consisting of recorded mentoring meetings; interviews with mentors, mentees and practitioners who provide mentoring services; and questionnaires completed by mentees. It is the first study to analyze mentoring meetings from a sociolinguistic perspective.

Adopting a social constructionist stance, analysis identifies the discourse characteristics of mentors during mentoring sessions and compares and contrasts how the recorded mentors from the two different employment sectors discursively enact the identity of mentor in the context of a mentoring meeting. The analysis also considers the expectations of the mentors' organizations, and addresses the extent to which the type of programme the mentor belongs to influences the way the mentoring identity is discursively enacted.

To further illuminate the interpretation of the recorded data, interviews were conducted with mentors, mentees, and a number of business practitioners who provide mentoring services; questionnaires also were completed by the mentees who participated in the recording of mentoring meetings. The questionnaire addressed how positively the mentees regarded various discursive characteristics of mentoring.

The results of the analysis indicate that, as in other countries, there is no single satisfactory definition of mentoring. It also suggests that the style of mentoring used in New Zealand tends more towards a European 'developmental' model than towards a North American 'sponsorship' model. The results also suggest that the way the identity of mentor is constructed discursively is more dependent on the constraints of the specific type of mentoring programme in which participants are involved than the type of organization (eg. corporate vs academic) they are employed in.

This thesis thus makes an important contribution to both sociolinguistics and mentoring research, examining the under-researched topic of mentoring in the New Zealand context. This is the first research project to use authentic recorded data to examine the ways that the mentoring identity is enacted using language. It is also the

first study to assess the extent to which the predominant European and American models of mentoring are relevant in New Zealand. This thesis provides a sound starting point for further research into the construction of mentoring identity both in New Zealand and overseas, and a useful resource for training and development purposes in mentoring programmes internationally.