

**Title:**                   **Using Metaphors to Help Learners Using E-Learning Resources: a critical look**

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## **Abstract:**

### **Session Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the session participants will:

- Know more about research into the use of metaphors in designing e-learning resources
- Have seen Reusable Learning Objects developed with metaphors in mind.
- Be better able to evaluate potential metaphors to use in their own resource development

### **Session Outline**

This session will consider research in the field of human machine interaction into the benefits and drawbacks of using metaphors in the development of Reusable Learning Objects (RLOs) RLOs are a method of electronically delivering non subject specific learning. They can be embedded by subject tutors into other learning, and as such are ideal for cross curricula learning such as career management skills, reflection and other personal development areas.

Metaphors can facilitate learning as concepts are rapidly understood. One of the best examples of electronic metaphors is the Microsoft Recycle Bin function: electronic function maps well onto real world function therefore aiding learning. RLOs are often developed as an alternative to lecture delivered teaching, but is the metaphor of lecture an effective one for learners? Do learners approach RLOs in the same way as face to face learning opportunities?

Drawing on my experiences of developing RLOs; staff and student evaluations of these and research into this area I will present examples of effective RLOs from the field of personal development planning.

This interactive session will consider the potential difficulties of unlearning when using metaphors (Halasz & Moran, 1982) and considering the effort saved and taken by the use of metaphor (Anderson, Smyth et al, 1994). Participants will be able to evaluate potential metaphors for their own resource development and view interactive resources.

### **Session Activities and Approximate Timings**

- 15 minutes overview of research on metaphors in developing e-learning resources
- 10 minutes viewing of Reusable Learning Objects developed using the principles of this research
- 20 minutes questions and answers session

## References

Anderson, B., Smyth, M., Knot, R., Bergan, J. & Auty, J. (1994). Minimising conceptual baggage: making choices about metaphor. In G. Cockton, W. W. Draper & G. R. S. Weir (eds), *People and Computers IX*, Proceedings of HCI '94, Glasgow, 179-194.

Halsasz, F., & Moran, T. (1982). *Analogy Considered Harmful*. Proceedings of the Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems. Gaithersburg, MD, March, 383-386.