

Investigating the Depiction of Informal Mentoring Relationship between Two Fictional School Teachers in Rita TV Series: A Conversation Analysis Approach

Olusiji Adebola Lasekan^{1*}, Claudia Myrna Méndez Alarcón², Parimala Kamatar³

¹Universidad Católica de Temuco, Temuco 4780000, Chile. ²Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, Mexico. ³Central University of Andhra Pradesh, India. *Corresponding Author's Email: olasekan@uct.cl

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify the qualities of both the mentor and the mentee teacher in an informal mentoring relationship, their roles and responsibilities to each other, and the dynamics of the relationship. This study employs the instrument developed by Dobrosovestnova and team. to assess the informal mentoring relationship between two fictional characters, Rita and Hjordis, who serve as mentor and mentee teachers in the Rita TV Show, respectively. Drawing upon the theory of conversation analysis in movies as a tool to express and understand the reality of society, a qualitative research method was employed to identify the intents of each character, project labels in the relationship, and phases of the relationship. These identifications were used as predictors of the skills of a mentor and mentee teacher, their roles and responsibilities towards each other, and their stages of relationship. The result showed that the fictional mentor and mentee teachers demonstrated the required personal and professional skills needed for the relationship and that the symbiotic relationship helped both actors meet each other's career goals (training, guidance, induction) and personal goals (bonding, gifting). Also, it was revealed that the plot of the show corroborated and established the phase order of initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition, in which the first two stages are considered to be the most beneficial stages for the mentee. This suggests that early-career and experienced teachers can use the show as a reflective tool to construct and enhance their professional knowledge of mentoring.

Keywords: Informal mentoring, School teacher, Rita, Conversation analysis, TV series.

Introduction

Television series have become a powerful medium for transmitting knowledge, disseminating ideas, and facilitating both formal and informal learning due to the impactful multimodal literacy effect of videos (1, 2). For example, utilized "The Big Bang Theory" to develop academic and cultural competencies in doctoral students (1). Similarly, it found that medical dramas such as "Grey's Anatomy" positively impacted medical practitioners (2)' practices. Ambrosetti contends (3) that films like "Dead Poets Society" (1989), "Dangerous Minds" (1995), "Freedom Writers" (2007), and the Harry Potter film series (2001–2011) provide valuable insights into mentoring within the field of teacher education. Dobrosovestnova *et al.* (4) examined mentor-mentee dialogues in three movies, namely "Matrix" (1999), "Kung Fu Panda" (2008), and "Chasing Mavericks" (2012). The researchers

aimed to investigate the intentions of 2 fictional characters, significant events, and stages of their informal mentoring relationships. A TV show offers a more comprehensive narrative than three separate movies due to its multi-season and episodic structure.

Mentoring is a multifaceted relationship that develops between individuals of different experience and expertise levels. In this relationship, an expert, known as a mentor, assists their colleague in enhancing work efficiency and making contributions towards institutional goals. Based on reports (5, 6) it was identified two types of mentoring relationships: informal and formal. Research indicates that informal mentoring is associated with a more fulfilling mentor-mentee relationship (7) and offers enhanced career development and psychosocial benefits for both individuals involved (8). According to report (7), these

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findings can be attributed to the ability of individuals to select each other based on shared interests, which allows for the exchange of information and mutual advice without the need for strict organization or predetermined activities. Research has indicated that new teachers are more inclined to participate in informal mentoring relationships when they experience positive interactions with teachers both within and outside their immediate work unit. This is particularly true in a social environment that is characterized by trust, openness, and stability (9). Although informal mentoring is prevalent and effective, it has received less attention in case studies compared to formal mentoring, despite its non-time-limited nature (10). Further research is required to explore informal mentoring relationships between novice and experienced educators.

"Rita" is a Danish comedy-drama TV series developed by Christian Torpe. The show debuted in Denmark on February 9, 2012, and ended on July 20, 2020, spanning five seasons and consisting of 40 episodes. All episodes can be streamed internationally on Netflix. The series focuses on two primary fictional characters, Rita Madsen and Hjordis, played by Mille Dinesen and Lise Baastrup, respectively. The show can be seen as a tool for enhancing the professional knowledge of both preservice and in-service school teachers regarding informal mentoring relationships. This is demonstrated through the roles of Rita as an informal mentor and Hjordis as her mentee in seasons 1 to 4. Drawing upon the established film dialogue model of natural conversation developed by Dobrosovstnova *et al.* (4), this study aims to examine the depicted intents of Rita and Hjordis. Our objectives include determining their skills within the relationship, projecting labels to predict their roles and responsibilities, and exploring the phases of their relationship to gain insights into its dynamics. In other words, this investigation helps in identifying the characteristics, roles, and dynamics of an informal mentoring relationship between teacher mentors and mentees. We believe that this investigation will contribute to the resolution of challenges faced by early career teachers during their novice period, particularly addressing issues of vulnerability, fraught processes, high attrition rates, and slow

professional maturation among novice teachers (9).

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Conversation analysis (CA) is a systematic examination of verbal communication in typical human interactions (11). Interaction among interlocutors is a collectively organized event (12) that facilitates the accomplishment of social actions or goals through interaction (13). Conversational analysis (CA) is valuable for analyzing film dialogues, as it enables the examination and interpretation of the skills utilized by characters in socially organized and understandable interactions (14, 15).

Conversation analysis has been employed to investigate the dyadic relationship of informal mentoring (IMR) (4). In this approach, mentoring is viewed as an activity type or intent (16). Scholars argue that film dialogues can depict activity types identifiable in the interaction between mentor and mentee characters. These activities serve as themes to understand the symbiotic relationship and the professional development and psychosocial skills of both actors. Dobrosovstnova *et al.* (4) identified typical IMR intentions by analyzing mentor-mentee dialogues in the films *The Matrix* (1999), *Kung Fu Panda* (2008), and *Chasing Mavericks* (2016). The dialogues were examined at the level of single utterances, representing a series of activity types comprising ordered sequences that resulted in 22 and 21 local communication actions or intents for the mentor and mentee, respectively.

Moreover, the collaborative and dyadic nature of IMR allows for the investigation of pivotal processes and critical events occurring during the relationship. Using thematic analysis (4) identified 14 project labels that marked significant events in the IMR depicted in the three movies. These events aid in predicting the roles and responsibilities of the fictional characters within the relationship. Furthermore, the dynamics, phases, and evolution of IMR are essential areas of study. Dobrosovstnova *et al.* (4) argue that understanding the progression from initiation to cultivation, separation, and redefinition phases, as proposed by Kram (17), is crucial for comprehending the dynamics of the relationship.

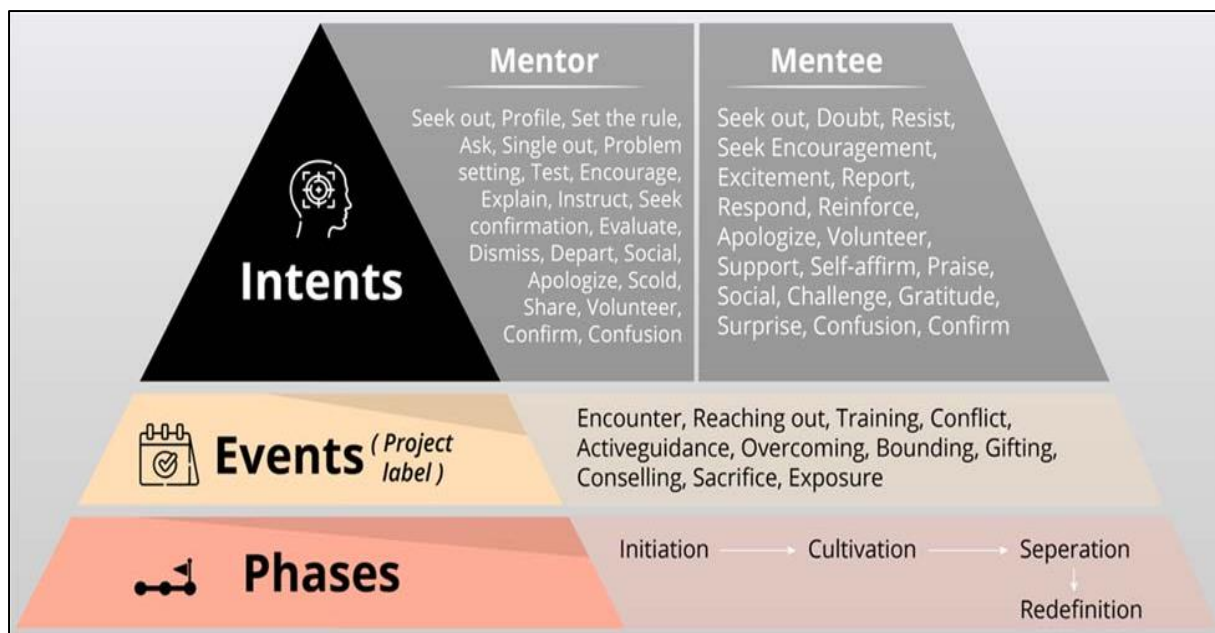


Figure 1: Intents of mentor and mentee in an informal mentoring relationship, its key events and phases of the relationship. Adapted (4)

Awareness of each phase contributes to the success of mentoring relationships, as neglecting any phase can have negative consequences (18). Thus, identifying and examining the corresponding intents, key events, and dynamics of the relationship between Rita, the mentor teacher, and Hjordis, the mentee teacher, in the TV series "Rita" are critical objectives of this study. Figure 1 can provide a comprehensive understanding of their professional and personal qualities, roles and responsibilities, and the evolution of their relationship based on model propound by Kram (17).

The original 14-project label has been adapted and reduced to 11, as certain labels, such as "mentoring contract," are not applicable to a typical IMR due to its informal nature. Additionally, the concept of separation is considered synonymous with conflict. With respect to phases of IMR as proposed by Kram (17), the initiation phase, characterized by a mentor's announcement signaling the end of training to the mentee, is an unlikely scenario in real-life situations.

A growing body of literature has explored the characteristics displayed by mentors and mentees in formal mentoring settings. Heeralal (19) investigated student teachers' perspectives on the desirable qualities of effective mentors. The study

found that mentors were required to have professional and personal qualities, including expertise, integrity, respectfulness, and delegation skills. Hudson (20) conducted a qualitative study using an extended response questionnaire to investigate mentor-teacher expectations. The results revealed that students preferred mentors who exhibited qualities such as enthusiasm, approachability, dedication to children's growth, a willingness to learn, resilience, and a sense of responsibility towards the learning process. In conclusion, mentor and mentee qualities are diverse and can vary depending on the specific context or situation.

The investigation of mentors' roles and responsibilities in formal mentoring has been conducted in various contexts. In a qualitative study of 264 American mentor teachers, Hall *et al.* (21) found that mentors were responsible for providing a range of support and guidance to their mentees, including feedback, encouragement, idea sharing, guidance, direction, modeling, demonstration, constructive criticism, reflection, problem-solving support, collaboration, and co-teaching. Jaipal (22) conducted interviews with five mentor teachers in Canada, who highlighted their roles as models, coaches, and scaffolders. In a study conducted in Hong Kong, Kwan (23) found that mentor teachers identified themselves as

feedback providers, counselors, role models, equal partners, and critical friends during semi-structured interviews with 259 participants. Freeman (24) found that setting personal goals, maintaining open communication with the mentor, and learning from their guidance were identified as important responsibilities for mentees by eight American mentor teachers and mentees. In contrast, a qualitative study conducted by Walkington (25) with 240 mentees revealed that their responsibilities included actively participating in the daily routine of the classroom, observing the mentor's teaching practices, delivering lessons, assessing their own performance, and engaging in reflective activities. Various viewpoints have been expressed regarding the functions of informal mentoring relationships. According to Desimone *et al.* (10), informal mentoring is considered more effective in addressing the professional and personal needs of mentors and mentees. However, study (9) contend that IMR primarily emphasizes career-related functions, such as lesson planning, instructional management, and understanding student issues. There is a lack of literature that specifically identifies the personal needs that should be targeted in IMR.

Several studies have examined the evolution of relationships over time, focusing on various stages. Kram (17) categorizes the stages of IMR as initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition. A study (26) propose a model that consists of four sequential phases: self-reflection, establishment, maintenance, and advancement. Furthermore, according to reprot (27), proposes a model focused on negotiation, consisting of preparing, negotiating, enabling, and coming to closure at each stage. Among these models, Kram (17) framework has gained significant recognition and application within the American Psychological Association. Chao (28) utilized Krams's mentoring phases to categorize the diverse forms of support mentors offer to their protégés at different stages. In their study, (29) investigated the mentoring stages proposed by Kram (17) among a sample of 88 professionals from the education and industry sectors. The results indicated that protégés in the separation phase reported the lowest levels of instrumental, psychosocial, and role-modeling support. The authors noted rapid changes between phases, which were influenced by the

distinct expectations of mentors and protégés in different organizational contexts. In summary, Kram (17) IMR suggests that protégés have unique needs and expectations from their mentors at various stages of personal and career development. Mentors and protégés establish expectations based on their respective needs and subsequently assess their level of satisfaction with the relationship (30).

Rita has been extensively studied in the field of education. Adebola *et al.* (31) conducted a study that analyzes the portrayal of servant teacher leadership in schools within the series. Mastandrea (32) utilizes the show as a means to exemplify the matter of educational inclusion and suggest potential remedies. The purpose of these studies is to encourage reflective practice, which is essential for the professional development of teachers (33). Films have been found to effectively stimulate interest, motivation, and reflection (34). According to Tan (35), films assist students in reflecting on personal beliefs, solving obstacles, applying ideas to the local context, addressing educational needs, and reviewing instructional objectives, methods, and resources. Franco (36) demonstrated the successful utilization of video clips from the film Rita in a teacher training program to facilitate reflective thinking. The integration of video in the classroom for reflection is rooted in the concept of thematic learning. This approach entails identifying themes within videos that facilitate students' acquisition of knowledge and skills, as well as their ability to connect these concepts to their immediate environment and real-life situations (37). In addition, "dialogue learning" is utilized in the classroom to promote idea exchange and improve students' understanding and acquisition of specific subjects or concepts (38). Reflective practice refers to the process of converting deliberate and thoughtful actions into possible avenues for learning (39).

Given the backdrop, there is a lacuna in the literature with regards to reporting IMR in films. Thus, having identified the Rita TV series as a recent TV show that portrays a typical IMR that exists between two fictional characters, namely Rita and Hjordis, the question underlining this research was:

1. What are the professional and personal skills expressed by the fictional mentor teacher in

the TV Show?

2. What are the professional and personal skills expressed by the fictional mentee teacher in the TV Show?
3. What were the key events in the IMR that occurred during the relationship between the fictional mentor and mentee?
4. What is the dynamic nature of the IMR between the fictional mentor and mentee teacher?

Material and methods

Research design

This study employs a qualitative approach using conversational analysis, which is based on the methodology adopted by Dobrovestnova *et al.*(4). The research design seeks to investigate and ascertain the intents of mentors and mentees in informal mentoring relationships portrayed between two characters in specific movies. This methodology is selected for its capacity to explore the intricacies of spoken interactions and uncover underlying intents, which is especially pertinent when examining the depiction of mentorship in film narratives.

Data source

The data used in this analysis was obtained from the TV series "Rita," which was written by Christian Torpe and produced by TV2. The series aired in Denmark from February 9, 2012, to July 20, 2020, with five seasons and 40 episodes. Rita, played by Mille Dinesen, is the protagonist of the show. This series was chosen due to the inclusion of Hjordis, portrayed by Lise Baastrup, who is introduced as a recent graduate from a teacher college and subsequently mentored by Rita in the first episode. Both characters have significant roles throughout the entire series, serving as the central focus of the storyline. Rita assumes the role of an instructional mentor and offers guidance and support to Hjordis in areas such as classroom management, student-teacher relationships, and pedagogy. The relationship between Hjordis and Rita evolves throughout the series, with Hjordis transferring to a different school in season 3 and ultimately concluding in season 4 when Hjordis chooses to become a principal at a school founded by her mentor.

This study utilizes visual observation and documentation as data collection techniques. The study analyzed all 32 episodes of the Netflix

series, which were divided into four seasons. The choice to have multiple seasons is consistent with (40) discovery that analyzing seven episodes from a TV season is sufficient for making inferences about characters. This study utilizes a comprehensive and systematic approach similar to the methodology used by Lasekan (41).

Data Collection Procedure and Justification

Rita was selected as the focal point of analysis due to its distinct portrayal of infant mortality rate (IMR) within the context of two school teachers in a television series. The decision to choose a series instead of a movie is influenced by the series' substantial and expansive content, which encompasses a duration of eight years and consists of 40 episodes. For this study, we only included 32 episodes from seasons 1 to 4, as the IMR took place during this period. The researchers thoroughly reviewed each significant interaction multiple times. The entire episode was initially observed, and relevant interactions meeting the evidential characteristics described by Dobrovestnova *et al.*(4), such as mentor and mentee intents, key events, and IMR phases, were manually recorded. In the second observation, the researcher transcribed the dialogue exchanged by the characters. During the final viewing, researchers observed and documented subtle verbal intonations and nonverbal cues. Afterwards, we manually assigned codes to each significant interaction to align with the intents of the mentor and mentee, key events, and phases of the relationship.

Regarding the instrumentation intent, Dobrovestnova *et al.*(4) identified and selected 22 intents depicted by mentors and 21 expressed by mentees from three movies. These intents are modified and classified into three categories, based on professional and personal skills. Professional skills refer to the abilities that guide the direction, process, and coordination of the IMR, while personal skills encompass behaviors that promote the moral responsibilities of mentorship. Additionally, there are skills that can be categorized as both personal and professional. The list of mentor and mentee intents is presented in Table 1 and 2.

The abilities that govern the direction, process, and coordination of the IMR are referred to as managerial skills, while personal skills encompass behaviors that uphold the moral responsibilities

of mentorship. Moreover, certain skills can be classified as both personal and professional. Table 2 displays the mentor and mentee intents.

Project label: Dobrovestnova *et al.*(4) emphasize the collaborative and dyadic nature of IMR, where activities extend beyond individual utterances, leading to the creation of a chain of events or project label that outlines the roles and responsibilities within the IMR. Therefore, a thematic analysis approach was employed to identify 14 project labels, which were subsequently reviewed and refined to yield 11 applicable labels for this study. The adaptation is based on overlap and similarity of definitions and what we considered not to be applicable to IMR. The definitions are as follows:

- Encounter: The mentor and mentee characters meet through social interaction, typically involving profiling, where they exchange questions and answers to get to know each other.
- Reaching Out: One character invites the other to establish a mentoring relationship.
- Active guidance: Guidance is provided by the mentor to the mentee in challenging situations.
- Conflict: Interpersonal conflict arises between the mentor and mentee characters, characterized by mutual dissatisfaction and a desire to terminate the relationship. This conflict may lead to either reconciliation and a stronger relationship, or the departure of one character who later returns as a new adversary to their former partner.
- Overcoming: One participant in the mentoring relationship experiences feelings of being overwhelmed by the challenges of the quest and harbors doubts about their ability to successfully complete it. The second character provides encouragement and emotional support to deter the partner from surrendering.
- Counseling: involves the mentee seeking guidance from the mentor regarding an immediate question or problem, and the mentor provides assistance in addressing it.
- Bonding: it occurs through an emotional and physical exchange between the characters, which serves to enhance their interpersonal relationship.
- Gifting: it occurs when one or both characters exchange symbolic gifts, which represent the quest and hold significance beyond their practical purpose in the quest.
- Exposure: The mentee's training culminates in a project that results in both individuals pursuing independent paths.
- Sacrifice: One character demonstrates selflessness by offering to sacrifice themselves in order to facilitate the escape of others.

Phases of IMR: Based on the timeframe of an IMR, it is important to investigate the interpersonal dynamics of the relationship. The implication is critical in determining the expectations of both characters at every level of the relationship. The Kram (17) model that follows the order of initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition was adopted to trace the phases of the IMR between Rita and Hjordis in the show. The definitions of the phases are as follows:

- Initiation Phase: The mentoring relationship is initiated by a matching process that takes into account professional or social interactions. Mentors and mentees form relationships based on mutual admiration, respect, and the perception of positive role modeling.
- Cultivation Phase: This represents the initial phase of learning and development. The mentor initially prioritizes providing guidance for the mentee's career objectives. As the mentor-mentee relationship develops, a psychosocial function arises in which the mentor affirms the mentee's professional identity, resulting in the formation of a robust friendship. Both mentors and mentees derive benefits from the exchange of valuable lessons based on their individual experiences and expertise.
- Separation Phase: The termination of a mentoring relationship can occur for several reasons, including the achievement of learning goals, the mentee's pursuit of individual identity, or the mentor's choice to allow the mentee to progress independently. Opposition to the desired outcome can result in stress and complications. The mentee might experience feelings of abandonment or

inadequacy if they perceive the timing of their separation as inappropriate.

- **Redefinition Phase:** Both the mentor and mentee recognize the potential for their relationship to evolve into a different dynamic. Successful renegotiation during the separation stage facilitates the transition of the relationship into a collegial or social friendship.

Data analysis

Protocol for intent identification analysis

The initial step in conducting a content analysis involves establishing research objectives. The primary aim of this study was to depict the fictional mentor and mentee characters in the Rita TV series by utilizing (4)'s mentor and mentee intent as a checklist for identifying action types between Rita and Hjordis. The primary focus of analysis centers on the characters' interactions. For an interaction to be deemed critical, it must have lasted at least 5 seconds and be significant for advancing the story. The rationale for assessing significance aligns with the analysis units outlined in a study (42). Furthermore, our analysis concentrates on examining the actions of characters at the moment of uttering a single phrase and the subsequent impact it has on the ensuing response. Essentially, we emphasize communication and responsive actions directed towards others. Specifically, the selected utterance is derived from natural and unscripted conversations and is expected to perform a single action, which can be either manifest or latent. A "manifest" utterance is explicitly explicit, articulated, and quoted (43), while a "latent"

utterance is implicitly conveyed and derived through data comprehension (44). The definitions of all the refined 20 intents for both mentors and mentees are presented in Table 1 and 2 respectively.

Protocol for the thematic analysis of events and phase identification of IMR

Qualitative thematic analysis was employed to analyze the dataset, focusing on event and phase identification within the relationship. This approach offers a more robust and rigorous method for evaluating a television show. While having a second rater can enhance the credibility of thematic analysis, utilizing a single coding technique is also acceptable and reliable when the coder possesses in-depth knowledge of the subject matter (45). As the sole researcher, I undertook several measures to enhance the analysis's reliability. Throughout the process, I engaged in discussions and shared the coding and analysis with fellow academics who are avid followers of Rita. This practice, known as "member checking," involved sharing coded field note excerpts and addressing any uncertainties or dilemmas related to coding and analysis, thereby generating peer support. Such discussions facilitated the alignment of perspectives regarding the ongoing rating of theme categories (46). Moreover, engaging in discussions provided an opportunity to articulate internal thought processes and fostered the emergence of new insights and a deeper understanding of the data.

Results

Table 1: Professional and personal skills of the mentor's intent as proposed by Dobrosovostnova *et al.* (4)

Skills	Mentor's Intent	Definition of intent	Manifest/latent	Scene description	Season, episode
Professional skill	Seek out	Mentor's direct or indirect invitation to join the training/quest	latent	She told her that the principal wants her to teach sex ed	Season 1, episode 4
	Profile	Mentor's questions aimed at exploring	manifest	"Why did you become an	Season 1, episode 4

	mentee's background, values, prior experiences and interest towards the quest		English teacher?"	
Set the rule	Mentor setting the terms and the rules that the mentee is to follow if he/she agrees to take part in the mentoring process			
Single out	Mentor acknowledging mentee's talent/gift	manifest	"Because you are a good teacher."	Season 4, episode 8
Problem setting	Mentor announcing a quest-related problem/challenge that needs to be addressed	latent	Mentor ask for strategy to prevent a situation where parents blame kids' stupidity on teacher.	Season 2, episode 2
Encourage	Mentor encouraging mentee to continue the training	manifest	"You will be fine"	Season 1, episode 4
Instruct	Mentor providing explicit instructions to action; Can be paraphrased as "do/don't do this"	manifest	"Hjordis, if they throw sharp objects, then you crack down on them at once-show them who's the boss"	Season 1, episode 1
Ask	Questions about the training process and the quest	manifest	"How did it go"	Season 1, episode 1
Seek confirmation	Seeking mentee's confirmation that the information presented was heard and understood	manifest	"What? Did you move herefor my sake"	Season 4, episode 4
Evaluate	Providing positive or negative feedback	manifest	"You love your job and yours pupils. You are an	Season 2, evaluate 4

	Test	Mentor challenging or provoking mentee	latent	excellent teacher” Challenge her mentee to tell other teachers that they can’t dictate what she does”	Season 1, episode 3
	Dismiss	Mentor denying mentee the right to be trained/participate in the quest	manifest	“you two (mentee and her husband) should live your lives and I will live mine”	Season 4, episode 4
	Depart	Mentor exiting mentoring relationship when they think mentee is ready to take over, or when they feel that there is nothing else, they can do to help mentee to improve	latent	Mentor announce the reason to her mentee she has to move to another school in her hometown	Season 4, episode 1
Personal skill	Social	Salutations, social pleasantries, small talk	manifest	“Hello, Hjordis”	Season 1, episode 3
			latent	Both sounding and mimicking cat	Season 1, episode 6
	Apologize	Mentor acknowledging their mistake/ wrong doing and asking for mentee’s forgiveness	manifest	“I am sorry-can you forgiveme”	Season 4, episode 8
	Scold	Mentor telling mentee off or sharing their dissatisfaction	manifest	“You stay completely out of this”!	Season 4, episode 2
	Share	Mentor sharing their personal story or emotional state	latent	Mentor share the grief of her broken relationship with her mentee	Season 4, episode 8
	Volunteer	Mentor takes on a challenging task; in some cases, means they might sacrifice	latent	She sacrifices her teaching job so that her school	Season 3, episode 8

		themselves to save other		can access state fund that will benefit everyone in the school including her mentee	
Professional- personal skill	Confirm	Mentor responding positively to preceding utterance	latent	Hjordis ask her mentor if she is asking her as a class teacher. She responded positively	Season 4, episode 7
	Confusion	Expressions of confusion/lack of understanding of the situat	manifest	Rita asked Hjordis whe she become teacher	Season 1, episode 2

Table 2: Professional and personal skills of the mentee's intent as proposed by Dobrosovstnova *et al.* (4)

Skills	Mentee's Intent	Definition of intent	Manifest/latent	Scene description	Season, episode
Professiona l skill	seek out	Mentee's attempt at initiating a mentoring relationship by asking to be trained	manifest	"In the Icelandic sagas, the heroes always have a bard;I would like to be your bard."	Season 1, episode 1
	Ask	Mentees are seeking more information about the task or quest.	latent	She asked about the acronym "CCW."	Season 1, episode 1
	Doubt	expressing doubts regarding their abilities to succeed in the quest	latent	She doubts her ability to teach sex education because she does not have personal experience with sex.	Season 1, episode 4
	Seek encourag ement	Seeking a mentor's support	latent	She sought the support of her mentor by asking her to be a judge in the musical talent show she organized.	Season 4, episode 8

	Resist	showing resistance towards the mentor and /or the quest; refusals to continue	latent	The IMR ended when the mentee refused to work as a teacher but chose to work as the principal of a school founded by her mentor.	Season 4, episode 8
	Excitement	Expressing excitement during training or in the face of a challenge	manifest	"Hurray! Talking worked." "I told you."	Season 2, episode 2
	Report	Sharing observations about the world or aspects of the training or quest	latent	She reported how the students bullied her.	Season 1, episode 1
	Respond	Responding to the mentor's questions	manifest	"It went well." Really well. "It was interesting and educational"	Season 3, episode 4
	Reinforce	Repeating the mentor's words or the newly learned information	latent	She followed up with the advice given to her by her mentor by not allowing other teachers to control her.	Season 3, episode 4
Personal skill	Apologize	Apologizing for a mistake or mishap	latent	She is surprised that her mentor dismisses her emotion for leaving her behind to take another in her hometown.	Season 4, episode 1
	Volunteer	Volunteering for a challenge or task	latent	The mentee volunteered to organize the funeral of a colleague who passed away.	Season 3, episode 2
	Support	Providing emotional support to their mentor	latent	She supported her mentor when she broke up with her best friend.	Season 4, episode 8
	Self-affirm	Asserting their abilities/power	latent	She reminds her mentor that she is a fantastic teacher during disagreements.	Season 4, episode 7
	Praise	Expressing admiration for the mentor	manifest	"You are good at giving advice."	Season 3, episode 8

	Social	Salutations, small talk, pleasantries	latent	Salutations and pleasantries are exchanged the first time they are introduced.	Season 1, episode 1
	Challenge	Confronting the mentor	latent	She challenged her mentor on why she feels she does not have anyone else when she cares for	Season 4, episode 8
	Gratitude	Expressing gratitude	manifest	She expresses her gratitude to her and says, "What am I going to do without you at school?"	Season 1, episode 8
Professional -personal skill	Surprise	Expressions of surprise following newly discovered facts or learned skills	latent	She was surprised that her mentor dismissed her emotional response by leaving her behind to take another teaching job in her hometown.	Season 4, episode 1
	Confusion	Expressing confusion about the information received or the current state of the world	latent	Mentee was confused because her mentor considered her action unprofessional while trying to help a student.	Season 4, episode 7
	Confirm	Agreement/display of understanding of the information presented by the mentor	latent	Hjordis agree with Rita that she has to show the students that she is the boss.	Season 1, Episode 1

Table 3: Evidence from different project labels proposed by Dobrosovestnova *et al.*(4) and themes as well as function are revealed by the characters

Project label	Character	Theme	Scene description	Function
Encounter	Mentor	induction	The mentor shows her the important places and unit the school and the roles workers play in the school	career
Reaching out	Mentee	initiating relationship	The relationship was initiated when Hjordis metaphorically ask Rita to allowher to be her bard.	career
Training	Mentor	Pedagogical support	The mentor provides her learning opportunity by giving her resources to teach sex Ed	career
Active guidance	Mentor	Classroom management advice	The mentor instructs her mentee on how to deal decisively with students that are violent against her in classroom	career
		Relationship with other teachers	The mentor guides her on how to express her feeling against controlling what she does in the school as a teacher	career
Conflict	Mentor	Anger	The mentor was angry when she found out that her mentee follows her to a new school.	personal
	Mentee	disagreement	The mentee was in disagreement with her mentor for socializing with the parents of one our students	career
Overcoming	Mentee	Get over agrief	Mentee help her mentor to get over hersense of loss when she fell out with her childhood friend	personal
Bonding	Mentor	socialization	Mentor invite her mentee to the wedding ceremony of her child	personal
Gifting	Mentee	Farewell gift	Mentee gifting her mentor a shirt that is designed with the symbol of a dashing eagle as a farewell gift	personal
Counselling	Mentor	Perception of good and evil students	During her induction, the mentor counsel her mentee on students that she should be careful with	career
	Mentor	Emotional needs	The mentor counsel her on how to strengthen her relationship with her boyfriend	personal
Sacrifice	Mentor	Love	She sacrifices her teaching profession so that her school can access huge grant that will foster several developmental projects for the school	personal
Exposure	Mentee	Redefinition of relationship	The mentee redefined the relationship by refusing to continue working as a teacher under her mentor in a school founded by her mentor	career

Project Label proposed by Dobrovestnova *et al.* (4)

Relationship phases

To investigate the dynamic nature of IMR that exists between the fictional mentor and mentee teacher, Kram (17) mentoring process is used to obtain the analytical results as follows:

- **Initiation phase:** this captures the entire first episode of the show. The potential mentee is introduced to the mentor by the principal, who asked Rita to show her around the school. Rita gives her induction and introduces her to her students. Rita initiates the relationship after she reports a case of a student bothering her in her class. While she was going to solve the problem, she requested that she want her to be her mentor. This study corroborated a previous study on the definition of initiation.
- **Cultivation phase:** This phase encompasses the entire first three seasons of the show. At first, the mentor is seen meeting the professional needs of the mentee. This includes giving her an induction on her first day at the school, giving her professional advice on how to manage her classroom and how to relate with other teachers, and giving her the opportunity to improve her pedagogical skills. This culminated in a strong friendship that motivated her mentor to begin meeting her psychosocial needs. For example, giving her advice on how to strengthen her romantic relationship. The first part of their relationship is characterized by the respect that the mentee has for her mentor. Because of the respect she has for him, she seeks help when she is bullied by the students and also dictates to another teacher (Torben). In addition, she asked for her collaboration to be a judge in a talent show because the students respect her. At the end of season 1, she expresses her gratitude for all her help. On the other hand, the mentor is always willing to help. She gives her a good induction, offers her the chance to improve her pedagogical skills by teaching sex education, and protects her from a student who bullies her. The desire to help her stems from the fact that she considers her inexperienced and amiable

(season 1, episode 8).

- **Separation phase:** It lasted the entire fourth season. The separation is forced by the fact that the mentor has to leave the school for another one in her hometown, though the mentee made an unsolicited and unnecessary sacrifice by relocating and joining her mentor at her new school. This decision later angered her mentor when she realized her mentee had followed her to her hometown. This is because the mentor is not willing to continue the IMR because of her new-found relationship with a childhood friend; the mentee feels abandoned, and that causes conflict accompanied by disaffection, leading to a clash that involves questioning each other's professionalism in the case of Allan, who is the child of Rita's friend. However, the mentee makes separate attempts to bridge the gap by meeting her mentor's psychosocial needs by gifting her a shirt and assisting her in overcoming her grief of loss when she breaks up with her childhood friend.
- **Redefinition phase:** This is the last episode of season 4. The suspension of IMR stopped when the mentee helped her mentor in her grieving period. This is followed by an event that forces the mentor to found a progressive school. The mentor invites her mentee to work for her as a teacher. The invitation caused the mentee to redefine their relationship by demanding to work as a principal and for her to work as a teacher. The mentee argues that she has discovered that she is better at administrative and managerial duties. Henceforth, the relationship will evolve into a collegial relationship or social friendship, as it is depicted through the remainder of the season.

Discussion

The initial objective of this paper was to identify the intents, key events, and phases present in the IMR of the fictional characters Rita and Hjordis in the Rita TV show. With respect to research question 1, the current study found that 20 out of the 22 intents proposed by Dobrovestnova *et al.* (4) are expressed by the fictional mentor, Rita. The intent to "set the rule" is not expressed due to the

nature of IMR, as creating rules that govern the relationship can only occur when the relationship is formalized. Conversely in research question 2, all the proposed intents are depicted by the mentee, Hjordis. By classifying these intents into professional, personal, and professional-personal skills and examining how they are portrayed by both characters, the show enhances our understanding of these intents. The positive findings are consistent with previous research on the portrayal of societal reality through television and cinema as mediums (47). Additionally, this study contributes to the knowledge base of the professional and personal skills expected of teachers, mentors, and mentees.

To address research question 3, the roles of the mentor and mentee in the IMR were determined. The project label of events proposed by Dobrosovestnova *et al.* (4) was adapted and adopted to identify the responsibilities of the mentor and mentee towards each other. The results demonstrate that both actors assume responsibility for nurturing each other's careers or personal goals. While the roles of the mentors include mentor induction, active guidance, counseling, training, and bonding, the roles of the mentee encompass overcoming grief, gifting, initiating a relationship, and redefining the relationship. Although the findings indicate that the mentor is more engaged in career-related functions, the mentee puts in more effort to fulfill the mentor's personal needs. It appears that the mentor utilizes her experience to assist the mentee, while the mentee reciprocates by meeting the mentor's psychosocial needs. This study supports previous research that portrays IMR as a symbiotic relationship benefiting both actors in terms of their professional and personal goals (10). Furthermore, this study expands our understanding of the roles and responsibilities within informal mentoring relationships, particularly highlighting the personal functions that mentees are expected to fulfill, such as helping to gift a mentor and assisting in overcoming grief. However, the labeling of "conflict," which encompasses anger and disagreement, as a form of responsibility poses some challenges. The best explanation is that anger and disagreement are personal traits that may arise or be expressed at certain points in the relationship, either to advance the relationship or strengthen it. Therefore, the

expression of anger and disagreement should be viewed as critical to achieving a goal within the relationship.

The fourth research question of this study aimed to examine the interpersonal dynamics of the relationship between the two fictional characters over time. The findings demonstrate that the plot and storyline of the show align with and validate (17) model of mentoring phases. The fictional characters in the show engage in a mentoring relationship, initiated by the mentee, followed by an extended period of mentor-led training to enhance the mentee's professional development. This is then followed by a phase of separation characterized by negative emotional experiences. Finally, the characters reconcile but redefine the terms of their relationship by agreeing not to continue the IMR. These findings validate (17) instrument and argument regarding the mentoring process within a relationship. Furthermore, they support the realism theory, which posits that popular culture accurately reflects society (48). Understanding the stages of mentoring is crucial for the mentee to anticipate and receive specific support from the mentor (28). For instance, the show illustrates that the separation stage is the shortest period during which the mentee can expect instrumental, psychosocial, or role-modeling support from the mentor (29). Therefore, identifying the expectations and needs of mentors and protégés at each stage of the relationship can aid in assessing their satisfaction with the relationship (30). Given that IMR is a temporal, long-term relationship, the first two phases, particularly the cultivation phase spanning seasons 1 to 3 of the show, are crucial for the mentee's development.

The development of a teaching model to enhance the professional knowledge and competency of mentor teachers is essential for effective in-service teacher education programs. Since IMR has been shown to be more effective than other types of relationships, and considering the limited research on this type of relationship, the findings of this study can inform the implementation of a competency-based mentoring program that can be institutionalized and formalized. The exploration of the three categories operating at the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of scripted conversations between mentors and mentees in the show provides insights into the expression of

characteristics and qualities of mentor and mentee teachers, their roles and responsibilities, as well as the stages of their relationship. Given the limited involvement of experienced teachers in IMR and its implementation, this study can assist principals and policymakers in developing and institutionalizing informal mentoring programs. The show can be utilized in classroom settings to teach mentoring courses by adopting a thematic approach that fosters mentoring skills for both pre-service and in-service teachers. This can be accomplished by identifying thematic video clips related to intent, project labels, and stages of the relationship in videos, which help students acquire knowledge and skills when they can relate them to real-world examples and their surroundings (37). Subsequently, facilitating conversations or discussions around the identified videos can enhance students' learning and comprehension of the topic or theme (38), and encouraging reflection on the discussions can transform thoughtful practice into potential learning opportunities (39).

The conversation analysis theory employed in this study proves effective in identifying and analyzing themes operating at different levels of conversations between fictional mentors and mentees. The application of the film dialogue system developed by Dobrosovstnova *et al.* (4) enables us to understand the competencies depicted, utilized, and relied upon by the characters in engaging in intelligible, socially organized interactions (15). This understanding aids in predicting their roles and responsibilities and investigating the trajectory of their relationship. While previous studies have utilized this approach to examine themes depicted by movie characters for educational purposes (41), this study is the first to adopt film dialogue to explore an informal mentoring relationship for educational purposes.

Conclusion

The primary objective of the current study was to identify the characteristics, roles, and dynamics of an informal mentoring relationship between teacher mentors and mentees. A notable finding is that the fictional mentor and mentee characters in the show exhibit professional and personal qualities, which are evident in the majority of the predicted intents. Furthermore, their symbiotic

relationship is characterized by mutual support in achieving career and personal goals. Additionally, the relationship aligns with established stages of initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition. This study responds to the scholarly call for the promotion and institutionalization of IMR in teacher education. A practical implication is the development of mentoring courses that utilize thematic video clips from the show to facilitate academic discussions and reflective learning in the classroom. This study contributes to our understanding of how popular culture portrays IMR in the context of teacher education. However, it is important to acknowledge limitations, such as the qualitative nature of the method employed, which did not quantify adjacency pairs in the dialogues between mentor and mentee characters (48), thus highlighting the need for a triangulation approach to gather more robust data. Further research is warranted to explore how this TV show can effectively foster philosophical reflection within mentoring programs.

Abbreviations

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