Hi! My name is Dennis Tay, author of the Cambridge Element in Cognitive Linguistics, titled ‘Navigating the realities of metaphor and psychotherapy research’. If you’re watching this, chances are you have an interest in metaphor – not necessarily in how it’s used in psychotherapy, but various other applied contexts like advertising or education. Perhaps you are a beginning researcher thinking about conducting some applied, collaborative research in one of these areas. After all, collaboration with industry and societal partners is increasingly important to demonstrate innovation, vision, and research impact in the humanities and social sciences.

Now, let’s face it. Many academics, especially early career ones, may not possess actual practical experience in these areas. The research we do as a result may be disconnected from practical expectations. We must realize that applied research involves much more than simply superimposing academic theoretical know-how onto some setting of interest. It is vital to stand in the shoes of those we presume to impact – in other words, to allow stakeholders' knowledge, expectations, variabilities, and the opportunities and constraints inherent in the real-world setting to actually influence our decisions as metaphor researchers.

This Element is meant to share my self-reflection on the above issues, drawing from experience working with psychotherapists, counselors, and clients. I will identify three foundational components of psychotherapy – the therapist, the client, and the interactional setting itself. I then discuss issues within each component, like how to engage therapists in research design and data analysis, how to deal with underexplored variabilities in client responses, and manage the inherent tension between spontaneity and control in an interactional setting like therapy. I hope you’ll find this useful, and if you’re not working on psychotherapy, be able to apply the ideas to other real-world settings. If that’s the case, get in touch with me and share your feedback. I look forward to hearing from you, and enjoy the Element!