

Metaphorically speaking:
how widespread is the use of
metaphor in English?

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metaphor

- Literary device used to create images
- The image relies on comparison
- The aim is to suggest similarity
- Used by writers
- Used consciously

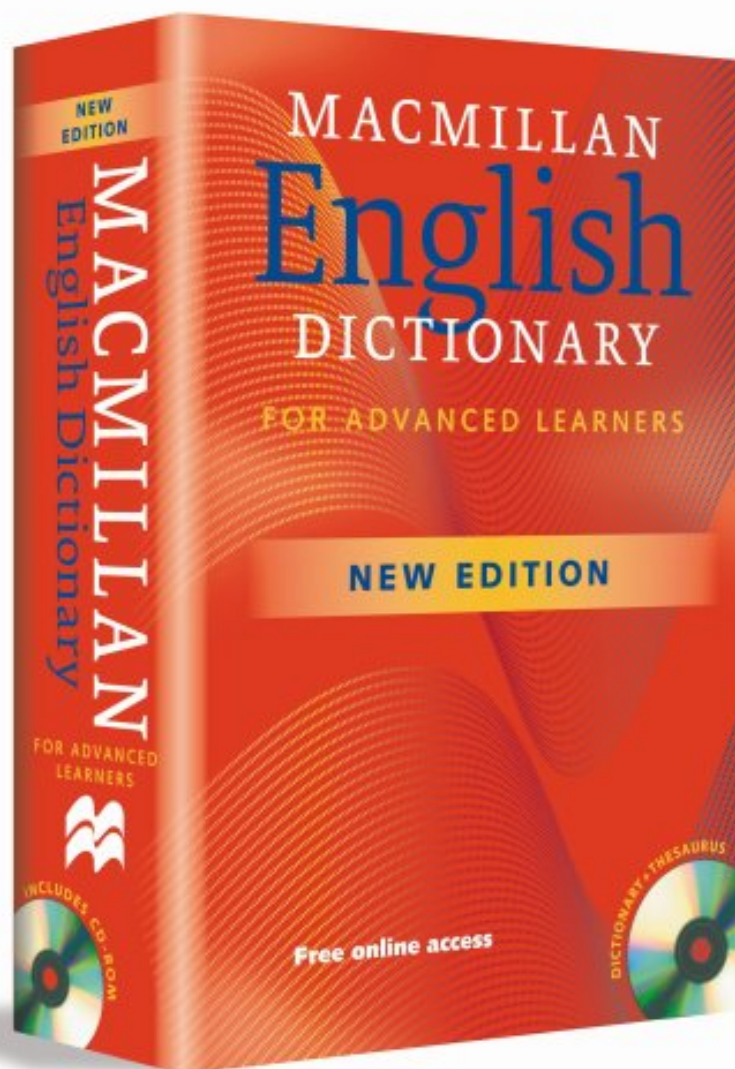
Her eyes were **jewels**, sparkling in the moonlight.

simile

- Literary device used to create images
- Similar to metaphor
- Uses 'like' or 'as'

She's like a **caged bird**.

metaphor



Metaphor

Being very busy at work is like being **covered with things** or **surrounded by** something such as water or the ground, so that you cannot move easily.

They keep piling more work on me. ♦ I'm up to my eyes/ears/eyeballs/neck in work. ♦ I'm drowning in paperwork. ♦ I have got a lot of work to wade through. ♦ I'm snowed under with work. ♦ I don't have time to turn around. ♦ We're absolutely swamped at the moment. ♦ We've been inundated with phone calls. ♦ They buried/immersed themselves in their work.

→ RESPONSIBILITY

metaphor

- Not just a literary device
- Not just used by writers
- Most often used unconsciously
- Absolutely fundamental to all communication

metaphor

- We need to make comparisons and analogies all the time.
- To talk about present/recent/new experience, often the easiest/best/clearest thing is to use a common language of past, shared experience.

- idioms/expressions: too many cooks spoil the broth
- verbs: dissect (a problem)
- nouns: the problem was a real headache
- adjectives: green fingers
- adverbs: she spoke to me sharply
- phrasal verbs: build up (e.g. support)
- collocations / fixed phrases: one-track mind, couch potato
- prepositions: in light of

I decided to **throw** so much at the media that they wouldn't quite know what to **make** of it all, and I gave them three stories at once: I would **fight** the third election but not the fourth; I had bought a house; I was having a heart operation. It was the only **way** to do it and I was **highly** amused by the **spluttering** and **reeling** as they tried to work out the 'true' significance of the stories being **released** simultaneously, since **of course** it wouldn't do simply to report these things as they were. David Hill **handled** it **brilliantly**. I had my operation. The house was bought. And **so was some time**.

How should that affect
what we do in the classroom?

Should we refer to and teach metaphor explicitly?

Should we just ignore it?

When we talk about X,
we sometimes use the language of Y.

When we talk about **abstract ideas**, we sometimes use the language of **the physical, concrete world**.

a difficult problem: a **headache**

the central issue: the **root** of the problem

an opinion: a **view**

a vague idea: at **the back** of my mind

When we talk about **emotions / psychological effects**, we sometimes use the language of **the physical, concrete world**.

anger: heat and combustion

He **exploded**.

He was **hot under the collar**.

It's difficult to **let off steam**.

I lost my **cool**.

When we talk about **intelligence**,
we sometimes use the language of
knives and blades:

a **stab** in the dark

a **razor-sharp** mind

She's very **sharp**.

Let's **dissect** the problem.

That was an **incisive** comment.

a **cutting** remark

When we talk about **intelligence**,
we sometimes use the language of
light:

a **bright** child

She's **brilliant**.

She **shines** at languages.

She **outshone** everyone else in the class.

a **flash** of inspiration

Enlighten me!

When we talk about **intelligence**,
we sometimes use the language of
light:

a **bright** child

She's **brilliant**.

She **shines** at languages.

She **outshone** everyone else in the class.

a **flash** of inspiration

Enlighten me!

He's a bit **dim**.

When we talk about **learning**,
we sometimes use the language of
travelling and movement:

I **started out** believing...

the first **step** was to realise...

I **approached** the subject...

I **explored** the subject...

It served as a good **guide** to...

It gave me some **pointers**...

in **unchartered** territory

I **reached / came to** the conclusion that...

When we talk about **time**,
we sometimes use the language of
money:

save time

spend time

waste time

buy time

run out of time

a **profitable** / **valuable** use of time

When we talk about X, we sometimes use the language of Y.

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 intelligence | a food and flavours |
| 2 mistakes | b light |
| 3 language / words | c being covered |
| 4 opportunity | d doors and entrances |
| 5 being busy | e digging in the ground |
| 6 searching | f walking (badly) |
| 7 illness | g war and battles |
| | h hunting |

When we talk about **X**, we sometimes use the language of **Y**.

- 1 intelligence
- 2 mistakes
- 3 language / words
- 4 opportunity
- 5 being busy
- 6 searching
- 7 illness

stumble over your words
fall flat on your face
slip of the tongue
not put a foot wrong
put your foot in it

h hunting

When we talk about X, we sometimes use the language of Y.

1 intelligence

2 mistakes

3 language / words

4 opportunity

5 being busy

6 searching

7 illness

a food and flavours

b light

eat your words

digest the news

a bit of a mouthful

speak bitterly

unpalatable

g war and battles

h hunting

When we talk about **X**, we sometimes use the language of **Y**.

1 intelligence

a food and flavours

2 mistakes

b light

3 language / words

c being covered

4 opportunity

d doors and entrances

5 being

the key to...

ing in the ground

6 search

opportunity knocks

ng (badly)

7 illness

an opening

and battles

on the threshold of...

ing

it unlocked...

When we talk about **X**, we sometimes use the language of **Y**.

- 1 intelligence
- 2 mistakes
- 3 language / words
- 4 opportunity
- 5 being busy
- 6 searching
- 7 illness

up to your eyes/neck/etc in work
pile work on somebody
wade through
snowed under
drowning in
swamped with
flooded with

h hunting

When we talk about **X**, we sometimes use the language of **Y**.

1 intelligence

a food and flavours

2 mistakes

b light

3 language / words

c being covered

4 opportunity

d doors and entrances

5 being busy

e digging in the ground

6 searching

f walking (badly)

7 illness

g war and battles

h hunting

When w

digging

dig up

turn up

unearth

come to light

spadework

leave no stone unturned

hunting

track down

on somebody's trail

hounded by

trawl through

sniff around

throw off scent

e sometimes
of Y.

1 intellige

nd flavours

2 mistake

3 languag

covered

4 opportu

and entrances

5 being b

g in the ground

6 searchin

g (badly)

7 illness

nd battles

ng

When we talk about **X**, we sometimes use the language of **Y**.

- 1 intelligence
- 2 mistakes
- 3 language / words
- 4 opportunity
- 5 being busy
- 6 searching
- 7 illness

fight/battle/combat disease
virus attacks...
a battle with an illness
fight off a cold
resistance to
guard against

g war and battles
h hunting

human universals

- location and position
stand your ground / be in a difficult position /
on the horizon / in the distant future

human universals

- location and position
- movement along the horizontal (travelling)
a **way** to do something / quickly **run** over
those points / **walk** me through the plans /
that **leads** me to...

human universals

- location and position
- movement along the horizontal (travelling)
- movement along the vertical (up and down)
things (e.g. prices) **rise** and **fall** / **look down on** or **look up to** / feel **down** (in the dumps) / feel **high** (as a kite)

Translate into L1 –
are they used metaphorically?

a difficult problem: a **headache**

the central issue: the **root** of the problem

an opinion: a **view**

a vague idea: at **the back** of my mind

He **exploded**.

He was **hot under the collar**.

It's difficult to **let off steam**.

I lost my **cool**.

domains = areas of specific activity

e.g. sailing / war / driving / cooking /
gambling / hunting / fashion / etc etc etc

Domains produce their own vocabulary.

Certain domains have such a cultural resonance that their specific language often starts to be used metaphorically outside of their domain.

domains = areas of specific activity

e.g. sailing / war / driving / cooking /
gambling / hunting / fashion / etc etc etc

If the domain is one of universal experience (e.g. war), then the metaphors are often cross-cultural.

If the domain is culturally specific, then the metaphors are often not cross-cultural.

What's the metaphorical domain?

What was your **part** in the coup?

They **staged** a coup.

It was a difficult **act** to follow.

Her painting took **centre stage** at the event.

Running a company is a difficult **balancing act**.

Don't be such a **clown**.

The media **circus** following them...

Plots were going on **behind the scenes**.

What's the metaphorical domain?

She doesn't miss a trick, does she?

I think I'll follow suit.

Keep your cards close to your chest.

raise/up the ante

hedge your bets

bet over the odds

poker face

What's the metaphorical domain?

a leading light

neck and neck

It's in the bag!

hook, line and sinker

lock, stock and barrel

below the belt

steer clear of

Call my bluff!

to be taken aback

= to be shocked or surprised

Domain: British seafaring

On a sailing ship, the wind would sometimes blow on the wrong side of the sails, and they were pushed backwards or 'taken aback'.

to be taken aback

= to be shocked or surprised

Domain: Crime and punishment

British prisoners were often transported to Australia. Usually, they would spend the rest of their lives there. Occasionally, they were returned to the UK. This was described as being 'taken aback', and always came as a surprise.

Useful phrases:

It comes from... / It all started when... / Imagine you're...

Call my bluff!

A last-ditch attempt

= a final attempt

Domain: Flood prevention

In low-lying areas that often flooded, ditches were sometimes dug around a town to take away the rainfall. The 'last ditch' was the one nearest the town. If that failed, they all got wet!

A last-ditch attempt

= a final attempt

Domain: War

The 'last ditch' was the last line of defence for the army, i.e. the ditch closest to the soldiers. If you were fighting in the last ditch, the enemy were nearly on top of you.

Non-random elements

He spent his forties **out and down** in London.

The situation is **dried and cut**.

The problem is **buried and dead**.

Non-random elements

- (chrono)logical progression
down and out / cut and dried / dead and
buried

Non-random elements

It's **dusted and done**.

I've learnt it **verse and chapter**.

Non-random elements

- from the more general to the more specific
done and dusted / chapter and verse

Non-random elements

Tourism is the country's **bread and margarine**.

It's a **tried and checked** way of doing it.

He's going to **fall flat on his head**.

Non-random elements

- alliteration

bread and butter / tried and tested / fall flat
on your face

Non-random elements

That's the **name of the sport**.

You're an **eager otter!**

I'm happy to **go with the current**.

Non-random elements

- rhyme

name of the game / eager beaver / go with
the flow

rebus

control

the situation

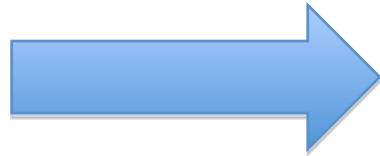
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arrest
you're

read



education

education

education

education

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act
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mind
matter

the weather
feeling

cut

cut cut cut cut cut cut

chance

chance

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in
a chance