

# Engineering and metaphor assignment

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What is a Metaphor ? A Metaphor is an “ expression of an understanding of one concept in terms of another concept, where there is some similarity or correlation between the two” according to the LinguaLinks Library.

Metaphors are used by anyone trying to convey an idea in an indirect manner. We use them daily without realizing it. Metaphors put a twist in daily language in that they are a unique way of describing a concept. There are common metaphors that we use everyday and not so common ones which are used specifically in some kind of field for example engineering.

Since engineers usually work as a team to accomplish a goal, they use metaphors to communicate with each other exclusively. Metaphors everyday There are thousands of metaphors that are used almost unconsciously every day. They are viewed as ways to encode different points of views in regular conversations. An example of a common metaphor is “ jumping for joy. ” In order to understand this metaphor, we have to look for the concept first. The concept is Joy or Happiness and the action of jumping is used to convey the significance of joy. For example when a High

School student receives his/her acceptance letter from a university they applied to, they get overwhelmed with happiness, so they “ jump for joy. ” Another common metaphor is “ you are the light in my life. ” Here the concept is life and the quality of life is signified by the word “ light. ” We abstractly view light as a positive occurrence, so in this metaphor, someone or something is a positive influence in the person’s life. This metaphor is used frequently between two people in a relationship. Among the most common metaphors are ones that refer to our senses such as touch, taste, sight etc (Sensory Metaphors).

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For example in the metaphor previously used, light can be referred to as a sight. A common metaphor that is used occasionally, but one that is not as clear as the subsequent ones is, “ I was left saddled with the blame. ” This metaphor claims that responsibilities are Burdens, so if you are not responsible for your actions, then you are the one to blame and your responsibility is no longer a burden. One can put this metaphor in contrast to a student in college. Students are responsible for doing homework and investing time studying in order to complete their college education.

Their education is a burden because a degree is a load carried with someone that helps in discovering a dream job for instance. Engineering Metaphors In Engineering, metaphors facilitate the communication process. “ Out of phase” is an informal phrase that can be used in various contexts. The origin of this phrase comes from the misalignment of the parts of one mechanical or electrical cycle with another (The Engineer). For things to work simultaneously, they have to be in phase. When they are out of phase, the parts tend to not be conforming to each other. Since many engineers work as a team, each part of the team must be in phase to complete a specific project. A lead engineer may say “ let’s not get out of phase with our objectives” to the other engineers. He is trying to convey to the engineers the importance of working together in order to reach a goal. The engineers have to conform collectively within the team to have a chance of being successful and fulfill their purpose. This metaphor is used widely in the engineering field and is extremely effective because it describes the concept of togetherness. A sparingly used metaphor in the engineering field is “ equilibrium. Equilibrium is defined to be the steady state in a certain

condition. It can be referred to as psychological poise (The Engineer). The source of this metaphor originated in the world of fluid mechanics. In fluid mechanics, something is said to have equilibrium when all the forces effectively cancel each other out. Engineers use this term to refer to anything that is steady or balanced. It can also be used to describe the poise a person has. Engineers must have great poise in what they do, so “equilibrium” is much needed in the engineering profession. This metaphor is very helpful to engineers.

Since it originated as an engineering phrase in the study of fluid mechanics, it is still used in the work place. That brings up a metaphor that is hardly used. The “ Big Wheel” originated from large engines. They are the most important wheels that carry the power from one part of the machine to another (The Engineer). In speech, “ Big Wheel” describes someone important. Like every company, there is a hierarchy in job position. In engineering for example, there are managers, directors, CEO’s and owners that are termed the big wheel because of their importance and significance to the company.

These important people are the driving force within the company. Because they are so important, they also have the biggest responsibility within the company. The “ big wheel” may be scrutinized heavily for any wrong doings or bad judgments. So even though there is a pride in being the “ big wheel,” there is also a bigger responsibility. Conclusion Every metaphor has its origin. Metaphors grow to accommodate language in everyday life and the work place. Engineers have a tendency to rely on metaphors as a complex way of describing things. Metaphors put a twist to language as well.

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Metaphors should be continued to be used in all professions including engineering. Engineers use metaphors to communicate in groups, teams, and individually as well. One can never underestimate the power of a metaphor.

**Audience Analysis** The audience here can be any college student as well as students majoring in engineering. People in the workplace may also see this essay as a helpful tool in overcoming language in their profession. These people have a wide range of educational background and are reading this to gain a better understanding of the benefits of metaphors.

**Works Cited** “ The Engineer. Metaphors at work. The helix press. 21 February 2007. ; <http://www.metaphorsatwork.com/fs06.html>; “ What is a metaphor? ” Lingulinks. 5 January 2004. Version 5. 0 CD-ROM. 21 February 2007. ; <http://www.sil.org/linguistics/GlossaryOfLinguisticTerms/WhatIsAMetaphor.htm>; “ Index of Metaphors. ” Metaphors. UC-Berkeley: Cognitive Science. 21 February 2007. ; <http://cogsci.berkeley.edu/lakoff/metaphors/>; “ Examples of Sensory Metaphors. ” Metaphor. Knowgramming. com. 21 February 2007 ; [http://knowgramming.com/metaphors/metaphor\\_chapters/metaphor\\_examples-sensory.htm](http://knowgramming.com/metaphors/metaphor_chapters/metaphor_examples-sensory.htm); **MLA FORMAT**