

## THREE TYPES OF SEMANTIC RESONANCE

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This poster presents a study in the non-literal meanings of words and phrases.

According to the Theory of Norms and Exploitations (Hanks 2013), words in isolation do not have meaning as such. Instead, they have meaning potential. Different aspects of a word's meaning potential are activated by different contexts. Context is phraseology. Phraseology consists of various different mixes of collocations and valencies. This (not logic, not syntax) is the key to understanding the meaning of texts and conversations.

The whole picture is complicated by the fact that speakers and writers not only use words normally and idiomatically, but also like to exploit normal patterns of word use in various different ways, creating non-literal meanings. In this poster, we look at three types of non-literal meaning. All three types create new and original meanings by some sort of resonance with some other, already established linguistic phenomenon.

### 1. Lexical resonance (metaphor and other types of figurative language)

Linguistic metaphors are secondary meanings of a word or phrase. Part of their meaning is achieved by resonance with a more usual, more literal, more boring meaning of the same word or expression. The function of a metaphor is to create a new meaning that can be understood. Example: a wind of change blowing through [[Location]]. Metaphors like this are established and conventional, but occasionally someone creates a new and original metaphor. Other kinds of figurative language have other functions. For example, the function of a simile is very often to shock the reader into attentiveness, rather than to communicate any particular meaning. Example: a single woman is like a demented lighthouse.

### 2. Intertextual resonance

The most obvious kinds of intertextually resonant expressions are those that repeat or exploit a famous phrase from a work of literature (typically, works such as the Bible, Shakespeare, and Aesop's Fables, e.g. sour grapes). But even more important, and much harder to trace, are expressions which Sinclair calls „semi-preconstructed phrases that constitute single choices“. Sometimes, such an expression will spread virally among ordinary, anonymous language users (not famous writers or politicians) – vogue words and expressions like a spot of bother, to go viral, to fuck you up, to love to do something.

### 3. Experiential resonance

Words like summer, winter, cold, snow, abuse have a particular ability to evoke a wide range of associated experiences in readers or hearers. Writers, especially poet, love to exploit such words. The poster shows how this works, with examples from the Sketch Engine.