

Language metaphors by Simon Mumford

Age:	Teenagers / Adults
Level:	Intermediate and above
Time:	45 mins
Aim:	To revise nine language points (present perfect vs past; gradable and ungradable adjectives; relative clauses; reduced relative clauses; phrasal verbs; strong and weak forms of <i>can</i> ; the different meanings of <i>as</i> ; first conditional vs second conditional; action vs stative verbs)
Key skills:	Speaking, reading
Materials:	One copy of Worksheets 1 and 2 per student; one copy of the Solutions sheet per student

This lesson revises and clarifies nine language points using metaphors of familiar objects. The students should already have met these language points, as this lesson is designed to reinforce them in a memorable way.

Procedure

- Describe some of the objects in the lesson (see Worksheet 1) and ask students to guess what they are. For example:

T: It's made of metal and you can use it for cutting things.

S: Scissors?

T: No, it's only got one blade.

S: A knife?

T: That's right!

- Give each student a copy of Worksheet 1 and ask the class to identify the objects.

Key: *A. pencil sharpener; B. glasses and glasses case; C. catapult; D. penknife; E. telescope; F. can; G. stapler; H. corkscrew and bottle opener; I. door*

Then ask students to match the objects with the sentences that describe how to use them. Give them a few minutes to do this individually. Give students any vocabulary they may need, e.g. *sharp, crush, blade*.

- Check students have the correct answers.

Key: 1. G; 2. H; 3. C; 4. B; 5. F; 6. I; 7. D; 8. A; 9. E

- Give each student a copy of Worksheet 2. Point to the first language point and explain that the difference between the present perfect and the

past is like the difference between looking at the moon with your eye and with a telescope: you find the moon with your eye first, then use a telescope to see the details. Similarly, you use the present perfect tense to find whether an event happened (*Have you ever been to London? – Yes, I have*), and the past tense to get the details (*When did you go? – I went last year*). Explain that this is called a metaphor: you compare two completely different things to emphasize their similar qualities.

- Ask students to look at the other language points while you briefly explain each one. Put students in groups and tell them to try to find a metaphor for each grammar point. To do this they will need to look at both Worksheets 1 and 2. Draw their attention to the clues on Worksheet 2 and ask them to write the name of the object in the metaphor column. When the groups have all finished, hold a feedback session, asking which metaphor they chose for each point and why, but do not give them the solutions at this stage. Alternatively, let them swap papers and read each other's metaphors.
- Finally, give out the Solutions sheet, and give students a few minutes to read it. Answer any questions students may have about the language points. Ask if students' metaphors are the same as or different from the solutions given. Note that students may find different but equally valid metaphors to the ones given, so be careful not to reject students' interpretations.

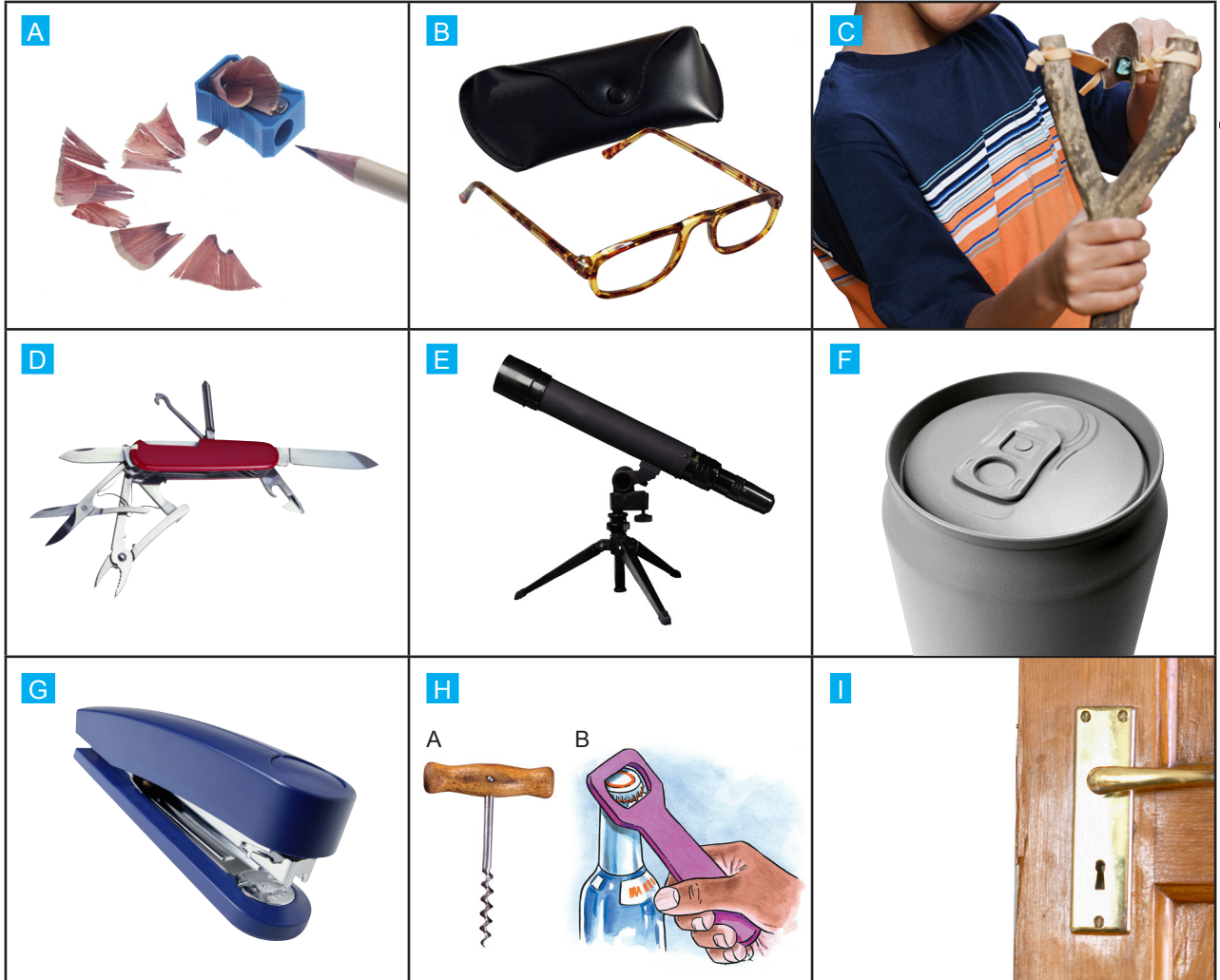
Extension activities

- Use real objects to demonstrate the metaphors to the class, then let students use the objects to explain the language points to each other in groups.
- Cut up the pictures to make sets of cards. In groups, students take turns to turn over a card and give the name of the object and the grammar point it is associated with.

Variation

The metaphors can be used on their own. For example, the telescope metaphor could be used in a lesson consolidating present perfect vs past tense.

Match the objects and instructions.



- Put pieces of paper between the two parts, press down and release. The pieces are now joined together. G
- Item A: Push in and turn several times, then pull out carefully. Item B: Put over the top and pull it off quickly.
- Pull back as far as you can, then let go.
- Take them out of the case, unfold them and put them in front of your eyes. Fold them again and put them back in the case.
- Pull the small ring on the top to open it. When you have finished, crush and recycle it.
- To open, press the handle down and pull it towards you. Walk through. Pull it behind you.
- Choose the blade you need and carefully pull it out with your fingers.
- Put a pencil in the hole and turn until it is sharp. Remove the unwanted pieces of wood.
- Point it at an object and look through the small hole at the end.

language point	example	clue	metaphor
1. present perfect (indefinite time in the past) vs past (definite time)	A. Have you been to London? B. Yes, I have. A. When did you go? B. I went last year.	getting the details	telescope: something that lets you see details – you need the past tense to get the details of a past event
2. gradable vs ungradable adjectives	a little/quite/very surprising a little/quite/very amazing	How elastic is it?	
3. relative clauses	This car is mine. It is the fastest. = The car that is the fastest is mine.	holding ideas together	
4. reduced relative clauses	That's the house (that) I live in.	take away part of something to make it easier	
5. phrasal verbs	give up <u>smoking</u> give it up give up it	inside or outside?	
6. strong vs weak forms of <i>can</i>	A. <i>Can</i> you swim? (weak) B. Yes, I <i>can</i> . (strong)	Is it full or not?	
7. different meanings of <i>as</i>	1. It's <i>as big as</i> a house. (comparative) 2. <i>As</i> I was walking, I saw a cat. (= <i>while</i>) 3. <i>As</i> it is a nice day, we are going out. (= <i>because</i>)	something that has more than one use	
8. first conditional vs second conditional	1. If I go to the party, I will see John. 2. If I went to the party, I would see John.	Is the way clear for this action or is it blocked?	
9. action vs stative verbs	I play football. I am playing football. I like tea. I am liking tea.	Is it a process or not?	

Solutions

1. Present perfect vs past – telescope

You start with the present perfect to find the event in the past (*Have you ever ...?*), but you need the past tense for the details (*I went last year*). If you want to examine the moon, first you find it with your eye, then you use a telescope for a closer view to see the details. The past tense is the telescope that gives us the details.

2. Gradable vs ungradable adjectives – catapult

Gradable adjectives are elastic; they can be stretched (e.g. *a little surprised, quite surprised, very surprised*). Ungradable adjectives, e.g. *amazed*, are already stretched as far as they will go and cannot be stretched any further.

3. Relative clauses – stapler

A stapler joins two or more pieces of paper. Relative clauses join sentences. The staple represents the relative pronoun *that*.

4. Reduced relative clauses – pencil sharpener

Removing part of the pencil makes it sharper and easier to use. Removing the relative pronoun makes it easier to say.

5. Phrasal verbs – glasses and glasses case

When the glasses are folded, they are inside the glass case, and when unfolded, they are outside. With phrasal verbs, when you use a pronoun, it must be inside (between the two parts of the verb). When you use a noun, it is usually outside (after the phrasal verb). In this metaphor, the folded glasses represent the pronoun, and the unfolded glasses represent the noun.

6. Strong vs weak forms of the auxiliary verb *can* – can

Can is pronounced in two ways. It has a weak and a strong form. At the beginning of a sentence, it is usually weak. At the end of a sentence, it is strong. Cans can also be strong (full) or weak (empty and crushed).

7. Different meanings of *as* – penknife

Some knives have one function, but others – multi-purpose knives – have many. Similarly, some words have more than one function.

8. First and second conditionals – doors

The first conditional describes a real possibility, so the door is open. The second conditional describes something unlikely, so the door is closed. The door is made of wood, which sounds the same as *would*. The possibility of the action happening is blocked by *wood/would* when the door is closed.

9. Action vs stative verbs – corkscrew and bottle opener

Action verbs are processes and can be used with continuous tenses. Stative verbs are usually only used with simple tenses, not continuous tenses, because they are not actions. There are two ways of opening bottles: opening wine bottles with a corkscrew is a process that takes some time; in contrast, bottles with lids are opened with a bottle opener, which takes no time at all – there is no process. In this metaphor, action verbs are corkscrews and stative verbs are bottle openers.