The surprising truth…
about what motivates e-learners

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Metaphor

- Embodies a concept
- Compact
- Vivid
- Describes unknown
- Describes abstract
- Indicates emotion

Delfino & Manca, (2007), Fainsilber & Ortony, (1987), Kövecses (2003), Lakoff & Johnson (1980), Ortony (1975)

Use of metaphor in online courses

design

student

Content:
new
hard
? interesting

→ metaphor →

Content:
familiar
easy
+ interesting

Activities:
new
hard
? interesting

→ metaphor →

Activities:
familiar
easy
+ interesting

Communicate
?

← metaphor ←

Communicate
self
others
content

The post-graduate course:
Masters in Education

The course objective :

students should learn how to design an online course and facilitate learning

Experience the strains of learning online

Approach: Design research over 10 years

Methodology: qualitative

Research question:

How do online students use metaphor in different communication media?

Previous metaphors: classroom

Teacher space: blackboard, notices, resources, listserv

Student spaces: desks with own created artefacts	
Student 1 ☺	
Student 2	
Student 3	
Student 4 ☎ etc	

Findings: students behaved like primary school kids, little originality apart from mischief

Previous metaphors: rag carnival

Student 1

Student 2

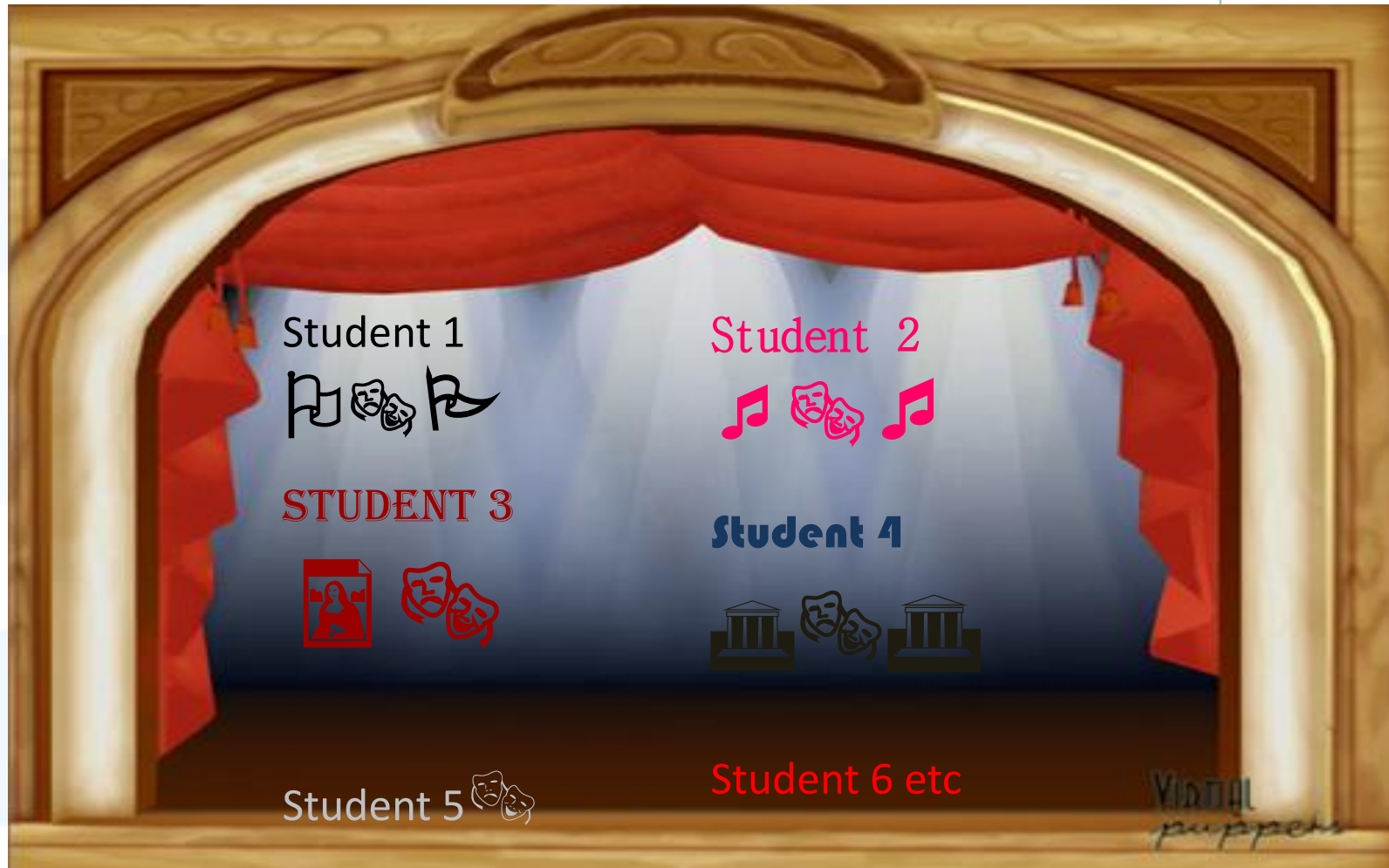Student 3

Student 4

Student 5

Student 6

Findings: highly individual artefacts, no collaborative work

Previous metaphors: opera

Findings: collaborative work,
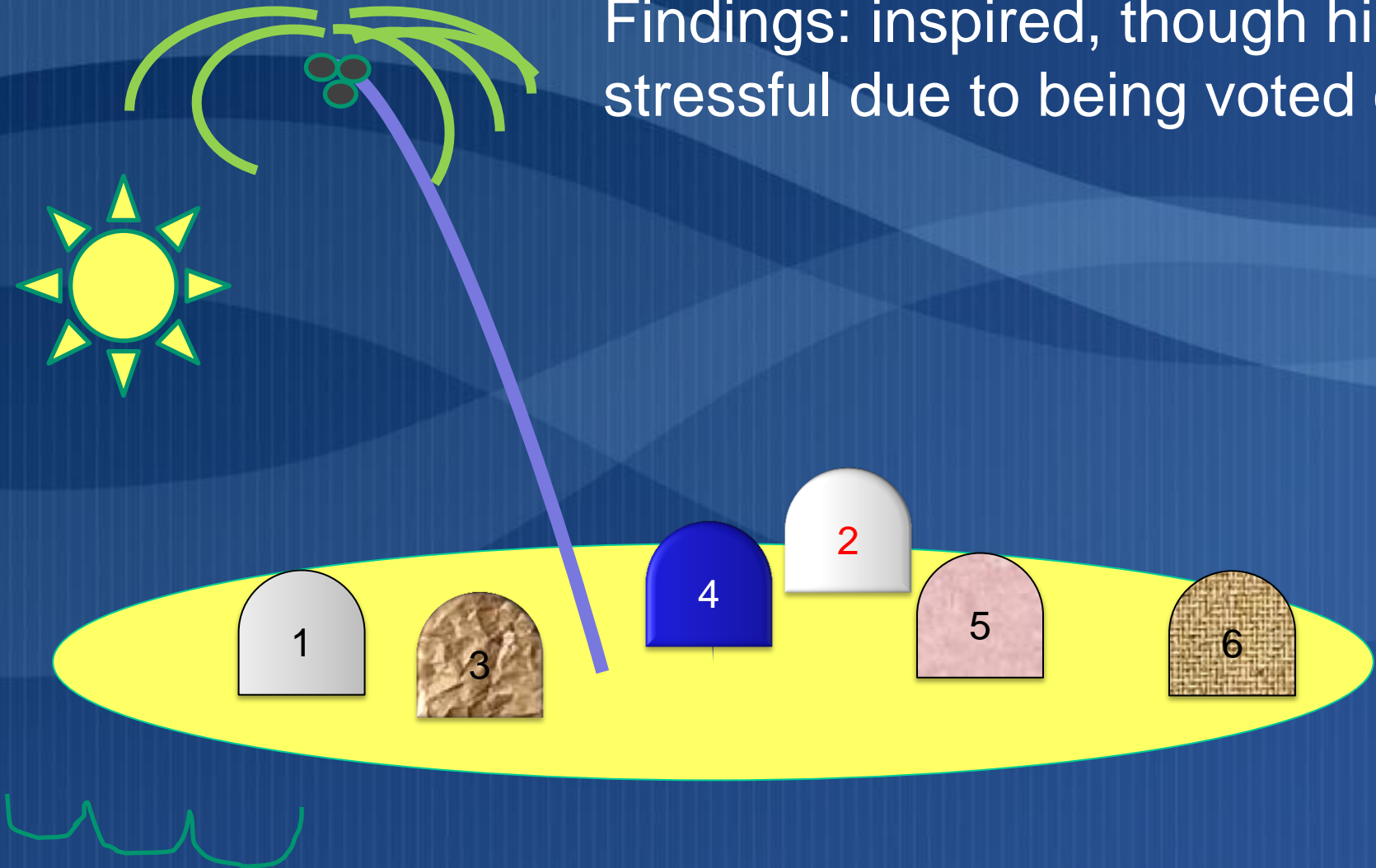   topic unfamiliar to some

Previous metaphors: Halloween

Findings: cultural objections

Previous metaphors: surfivor

Findings: inspired, though highly stressful due to being voted off

New metaphor: soccer world cup

- *ONLINE LEARNING IS SOCCER TOURNAMENT*

Metaphor: soccer world cup

Coach/Referee

Information Technology for Distance Education

Welcome to all participants in this Distance Learning Course. In previous courses, all kinds of metaphors were employed, for instance a Virtual Classroom, a virtual Rag Procession, a Virtual Opera, a Halloween Party, a Survivor Game on a virtual island, etcetera. In keeping with the tradition of this module, all that aspires inside it will again be moulded to a metaphor.

This year we are playing the IAO World Soccer Cup.

Each student **represents a country** somewhere on the globe. Countries will engage in virtual matches with allotted partners in which points can be scored. At the same time, each country has to attend to their public relations in order to market his team, procure sponsors, sell Television air time and generally attract crowds and fans. Luckily, living in the Global Village, communication across language barriers and time zones is no problem.

The rules to the match may be found on a page named "**Rules**"

The allotment of matches may be found in the "**Schedule**".

Let the Game begin!

Communication

- Chat =gym
- Discussions: given topics, rules, peer review =matches
- Discussions: social =practice
- Group discussions = team talks
- Blogs =home, private
- Reflective essays =final report

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Code	Number of metaphors in Social Discussions ⚽
Class, co-learners	11
Student problem	10
Technical problem	10
Falling behind	9
Facilitator	8
Course work	7
Competition	2
New metaphors	0
	57

Code	Number of metaphors in Social Discussions	Number of metaphors in Narrative essays
Class, co-learners	11	4
Student problem	10	0
Technical problem	10	1
Falling behind	9	2
Facilitator	8	4
Course work	7	12
Competition	2	7
New metaphors	0	6
	57	36

How does the use of metaphor indicate and influence motivation?

Meaning of metaphor use

Indicate emotionality

Fainsilber, L., & Ortony, A. (1987)

Delfino, M., & Manca, S. (2007).

Do rewards drive performance?

Dan Pink: the surprizing truth about what motivates us:

in cognitively challenging tasks, rewards undermine motivation

Do rewards drive performance?

- Verbal rewards in the form of positive feedback received in a supportive climate, was experienced as intrinsically motivating, particularly for college-age students

- Through provision of "more interesting learning activities, to provide more choice, and to ensure that tasks are optimally challenging…to promote creative task engagement, cognitive flexibility and conceptual understanding"
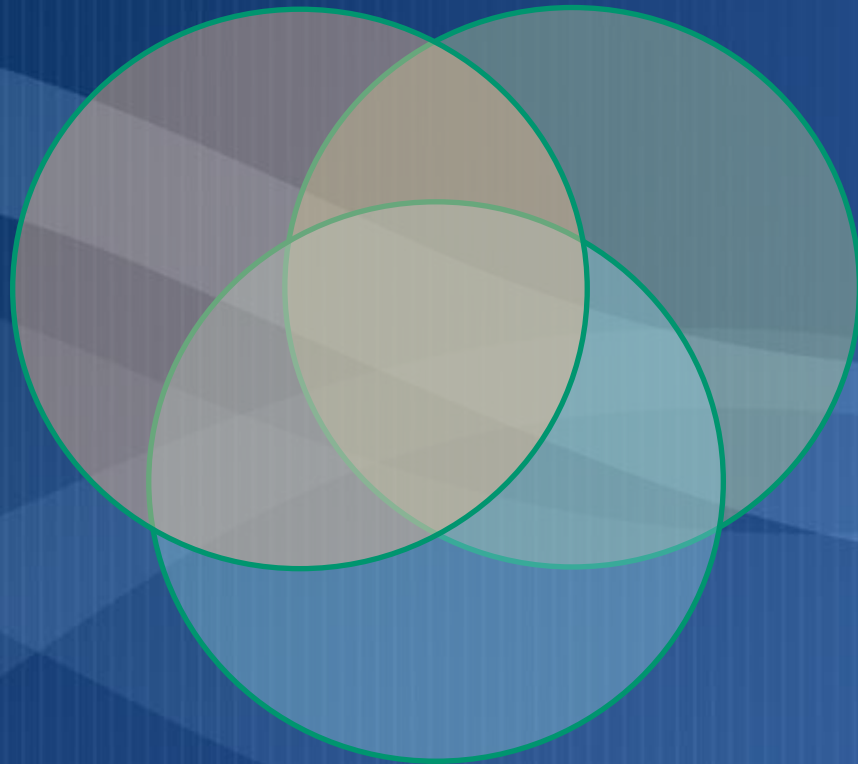
Deci, Koestner and Ryan (2001)

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Intrinsic motivation

- Belonging
- Competence
- Autonomy

Social forum: Feelings of belonging

- "Welcome to the team. It's good to have a fresh player on board (as the coaches say, 'A fresh pair of legs!')"
- "both of my opponents did not arrive at the stadium in time for the kick-off"

Social forum: Feelings of autonomy, disempowerment

- "but my ADSL line is soooo sloooowww!!I think at this stage you must regard me as a seriously injured player!"

Social forum: Feelings of (in)competence

- "Ref/Coach I somehow get the idea that I am not fit enough to be selected for any soccer team at this moment! I think I should rather take up a managerial position"

emotions were often quick flare-ups of anger or frustration,

caused by helplessness due to

- insufficient participation by co-students on whose contributions they relied,

- communications technology that did not function

Reflection: Coursework

- "so we played soccer all over the topics and tools of the e-learning industry"

- "My first injury was on field… when I bumped into JavaScript!"

Reflection: belonging

- "Working in a team online, there are still those who just don't get the meaning of the word team."
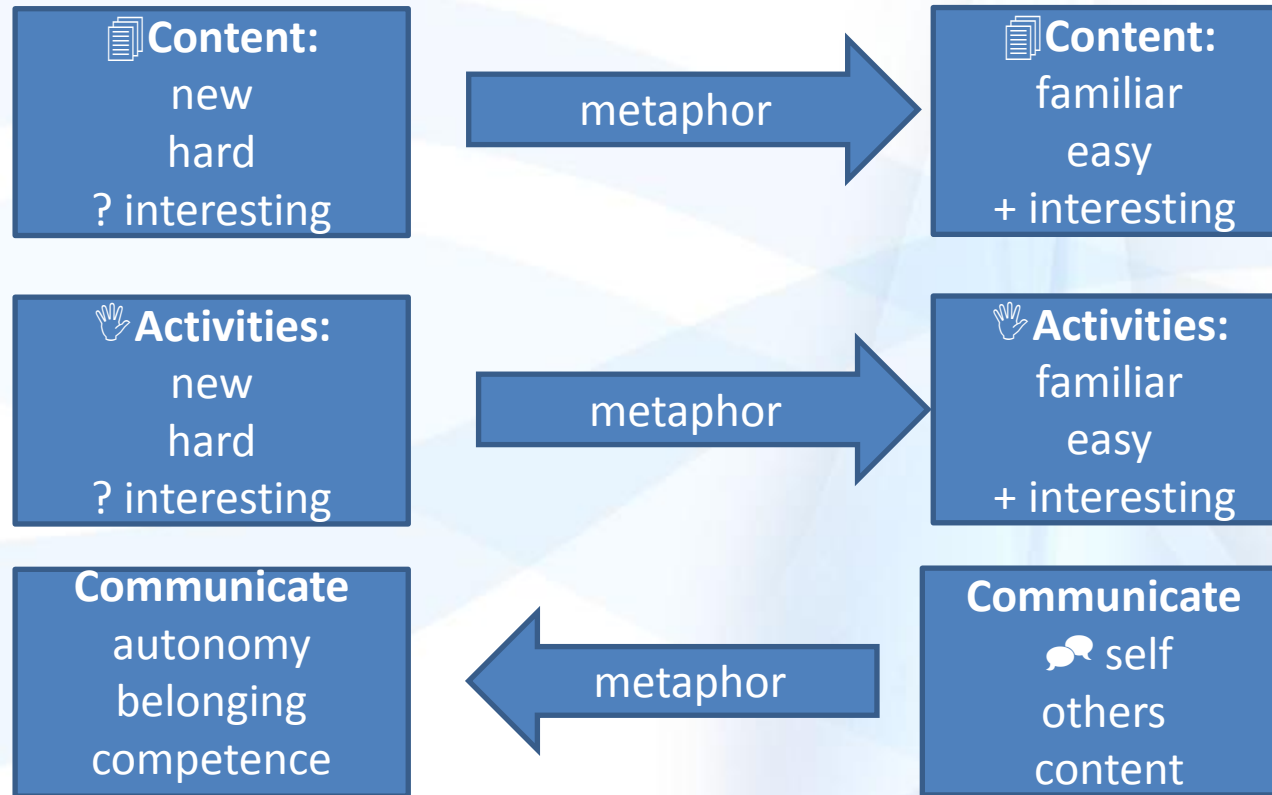
Reflection: new metaphor

- "the 'Dreamweaver' could help me weave and reach the dream!"
- "I'm no longer a digital immigrant. I'm a settler now"[

Use of metaphor in online courses

Conclusions

- RQ1

Metaphor can help students to address problems that would have been sensitive to address by literal names, enabling them to vent emotions

- RQ2

Metaphor can help express feelings of belonging in the class, to strengthen perceptions of autonomy and engender feelings of competence, as those feelings need to foster and safeguard students' intrinsic motivation

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