

What is this snowclone of which
you speak?

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Some examples

I'm not a programmer, I just play one on TV.

Location, location, location.

Manga, MP3s, and MMORPGs, oh my!

MILFs – it's what's for dinner.

If you build a better sonar, someone will build a better submarine.

Why “snowclone”?

If the Eskimos have N words for snow, then X must have M words for Z.

If Eskimos have 20 words for snow, Iranians should have 20 words for privacy.

If Eskimos have 50 different words for snow, Seattle Internet entrepreneurs are devising an equal number of ways to describe the painful topic of layoffs.

N: {20, 24, 40, 50, 52, 100,...} M: {20, 1000}

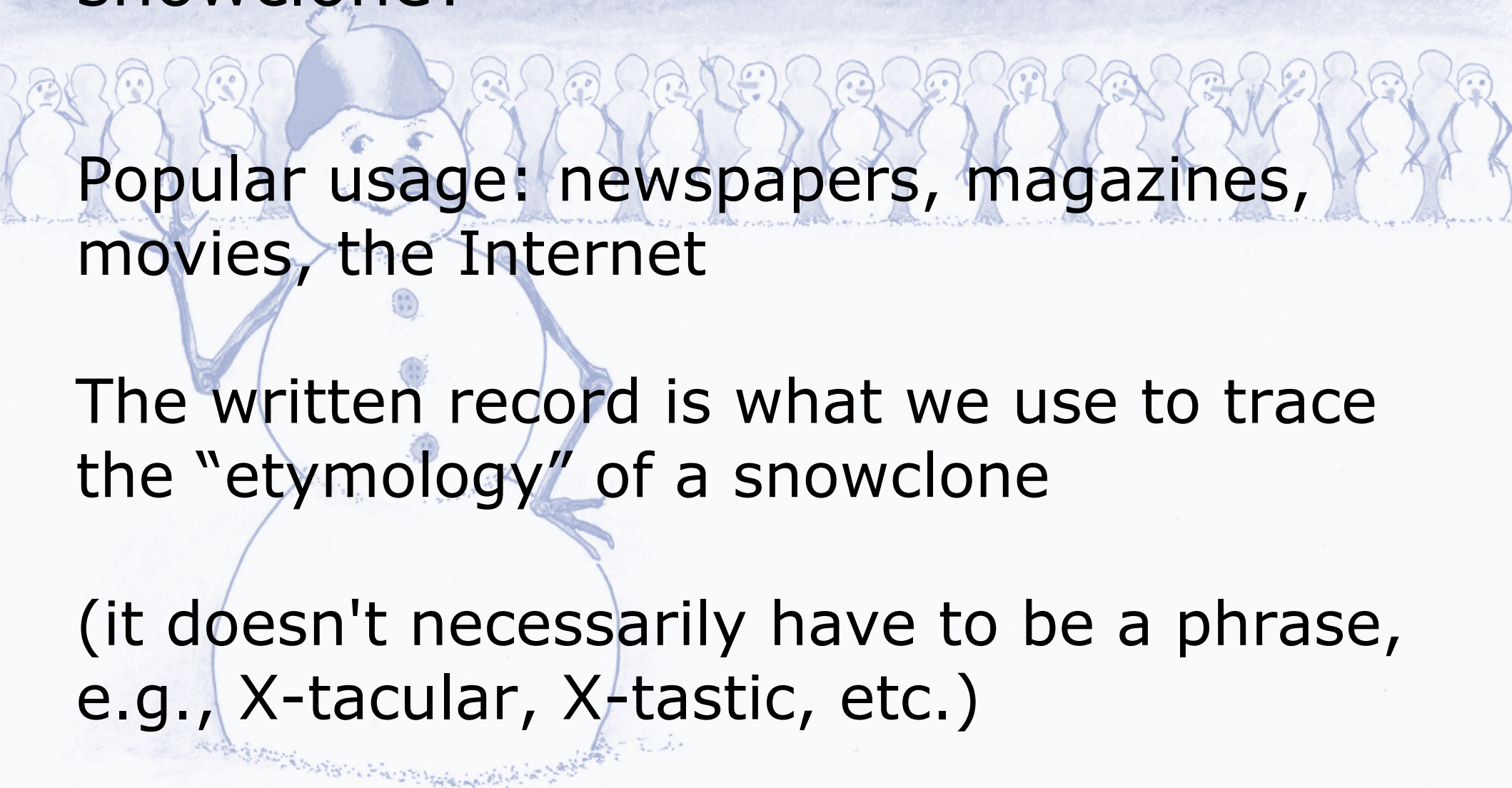
This is not a statement of fact, but a shorthand way of saying the number of words for something in a language reflects the speakers' familiarity with that something.

How does a phrase become a snowclone?

Popular usage: newspapers, magazines, movies, the Internet

The written record is what we use to trace the “etymology” of a snowclone

(it doesn't necessarily have to be a phrase, e.g., X-tacular, X-tastic, etc.)



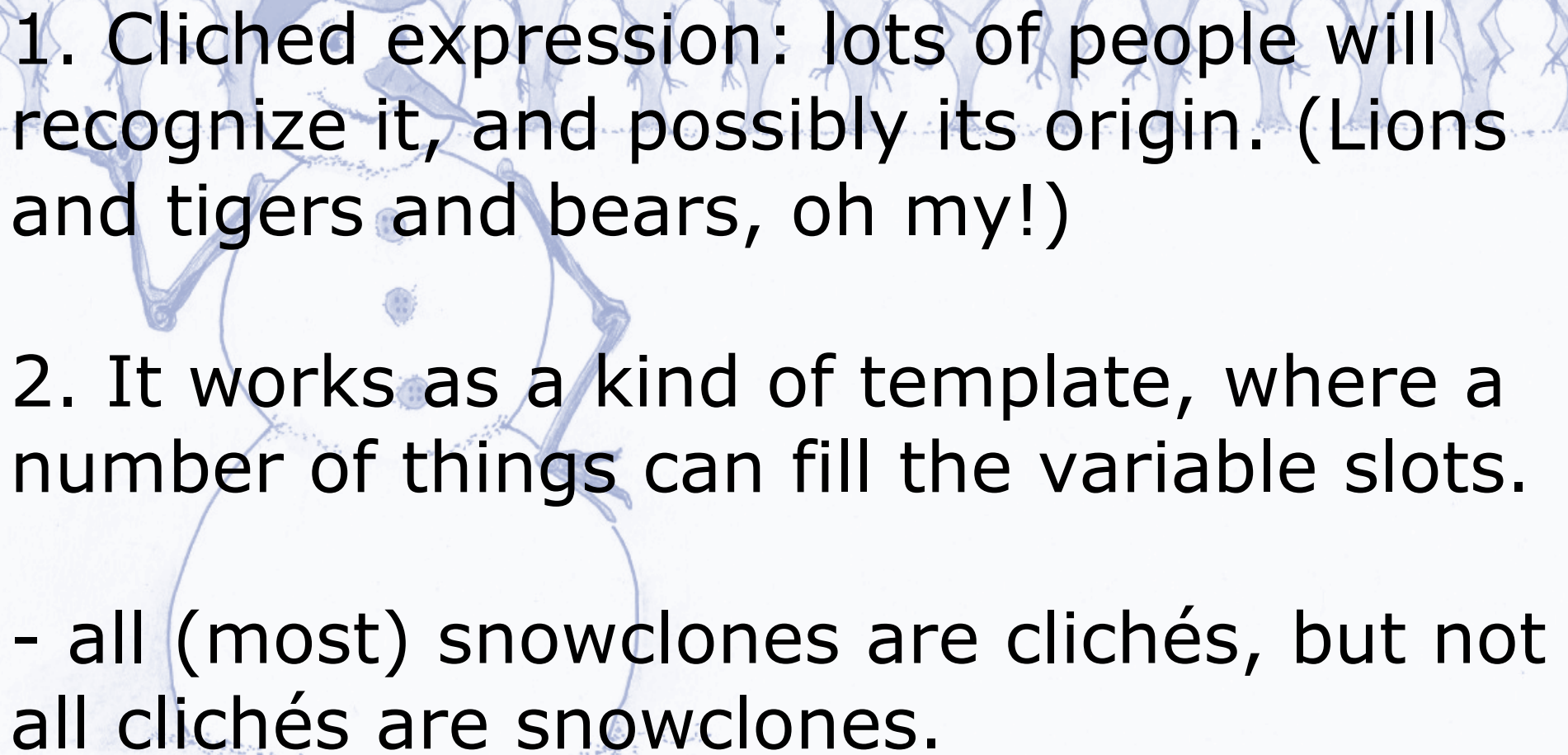
Shared knowledge

Untested code is the dark matter of **software**.

"If X is the dark matter of Y, then X is crucial to Y, is even the biggest part of Y, but it is not directly visible, and must be inferred because of the strong effects it has on visible things...This is a pretty efficient use of five little words."

<http://itre.cis.upenn.edu/~myl/languageblog/archives/000396.html>

Is it a snowclone?

- 
1. Clichéd expression: lots of people will recognize it, and possibly its origin. (Lions and tigers and bears, oh my!)
 2. It works as a kind of template, where a number of things can fill the variable slots.
 - all (most) snowclones are clichés, but not all clichés are snowclones.

More examples

Snowclones? We don't need no stinking snowclones.
(*Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, 1957)

I'm in ur blog, eatng ur snoclonz (200?, ...)

The first rule of snowclones is that you don't talk
about snowclones. (*Fight Club*, 1999)

This is a good snowclone ... for me to poop on!
(Triumph the insult comic dog, 1997)

To twitter or not to twitter? (Shakespeare's *Hamlet*,
1602)

The snowclones database

snowclones.org

dictionary-like entries:

1. template that captures identity of variable slots – constraints
2. semantics: usage
3. etymology/origin: earliest recorded appearance of phrase, (which may not directly reflect usage *as a snowclone*)