

2.2.1 Pragmatics Problems: Types of Communication

A. Answer each of the following questions about **literal/non-literal communication**.

1. Suki: Can I have your french fries?

Neko (angrily): Sure, you can eat my whole dinner while you're at it!

Does Neko mean her sentence to be read **literally**? (*Based on what she said, does it seem like Neko is OK with Suki eating her French fries?*)

2. Ace: I have to have my car's engine entirely rebuilt.

Rex: "Wow – that should cost a few bucks."

Should Rex's response be read **literally or non-literally**?

If it's meant non-literally, what **type** of non-literal communication is it?

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3. Suki is complaining about how hard it was to paint her apartment, and adds: It took forever to finish it.

Does Suki mean her sentence to be read **literally**? (That is: does Suki believe that *it took an infinite amount of time to finish the painting?*)

If it's meant non-literally, what **type** of non-literal communication is she engaging in?

4. Suki: I have literally a million things to do.

Does Suki mean the word "literally" **literally**?

If it's meant non-literally, what **type** of non-literal communication is she engaging in with her spoken sentence?

5. Student: Those chicks in the back of the room were talking all through your lecture today.

Beakley: Yeah, and what else is new?

Beakley asking “What *else* is new” suggests that *this event was new*; does Beakley really (**literally**) mean to communicate that their talking in class was new? (Why?)

6. Two students wake up in class a half-hour after everyone else has left.

First student: Damn, our professor is the sandman!

Should the student’s utterance be read **literally** (does he really mean that their professor is the Sandman?) If not, what **type** of non-literal communication was intended?

B. Answer each of the following questions about **literal/non-literal** and **direct/indirect communication**.

7. While planning the picnic, Rex worries that it might rain.

Suki shrugs and says: If it rains, it rains.

(a) Does Suki mean her sentence to be read **literally**? (That is: does Suki believe that if it rains, it rains?)

(b) Does Suki intend some **further, unspoken message** as well? (If so, what?)

8. Jack: Hey, where’s that sandwich I just made?

Neko shrugs, and tries to look innocent.

Jack: Well, it didn’t grow legs and walk away!

a) Does Jack mean that last sentence **literally**? (That is: does he genuinely believe that *the sandwich didn’t grow legs and walk away*?)

b) What second, **indirect claim** is Jack making by uttering this last sentence?

9. Kitty holds a pose for several minutes while Dr. Slim fiddles with his camera. Finally she says: Hey, I'm not getting any younger here.

a) Does Kitty mean this sentence **literally**? (That is: does she genuinely believe that *she's not getting any younger*?)

b) What second, **indirect** claim is Kitty making by uttering her sentence?

10. Dr Slim: Do you like making money?

Jake: Who doesn't?

a) Jake intends his question rhetorically – that is, takes the answer to his question to be obvious. What is the **obvious answer** to Jake's question?

b) Based on that intended answer, what is Jake's answer to Dr. Slim's question?

11. After Rex insists that he knows all about cultivating plants, Neko replies: If you're an expert on botany, then I'm Albert Einstein.

(a) While Neko believes the conditional she's directly communicated, she is obviously communicating a second message indirectly. What is Neko **indirectly** communicating (i.e., without saying it in so many words)?

(b) Note that the sentence Neko indirectly communicated – the answer to (a) – doesn't follow validly from the conditional she uttered. Find a **second (obvious but unstated) premise** (present in the Conversational Background) which, when added to the conditional, would **validly entail** the sentence she (indirectly) communicated.

That is: fill in the blank for Premise 2, to yield a valid argument.

1. If Rex is an expert on botany, then Neko is Albert Einstein

2. [Premise from Conversational Background]

∴ [Sentence (from (a)) which Neko indirectly communicated]