

### 7.3.1. Pragmatics Problems: Non-Literal Speech, Indirect Speech, and the Grice Maxims

Answer the following questions concerning **non-literal** and **indirect** speech and the **Grice Maxims**.

1. Kitty: Is this a good time to talk to Rex about investing in our new product?

Jack: Eh – Rex is a bear before he's had his morning coffee.

(a) Kitty assumes Jack's sentence should **not** be read **literally**, because if it were Jack would be violating the Maxim of:

\_\_\_\_\_.

(b) Kitty assumes Jack also intends an answers to her question, because if Jack had just been pointing out Rex's pre-coffee mood he'd be violating the Maxim of :

\_\_\_\_\_.

2. Neko: I'm starving! If I don't get something to eat soon I'm gonna chew off Jack's leg and swallow it whole.

Rex: Settle down – we'll be in Barstow in five minutes.

(a) Neko assumes that there'll be something to eat in Barstow, because if she was sure there wouldn't be food there Rex would have been violating the Maxim of:\_\_\_\_\_.

(b) What sort of non-literal communication is Neko engaging in when he says he's "starving"?

3. Barbie: Does your can-opener have a remote control?

Rex: Yeah, it's on the living room table. It's the small black one with the red button in the middle.

Given the detail Rex gave about the remote control, Barbie assumes there's probably more than one remote control on the living room table – because if there weren't, Rex's response would violate the Maxim of \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Rex tells his student: Well, there are four Grice Maxims, and in the first three problems we've gone through all but the Maxim of Manner. I leave it to you to figure out the answer to the fourth problem.

The student assumes that the fourth problem uses the Maxim of Manner, because otherwise Rex would be violating the Maxim of \_\_\_\_\_.

5. Letitia: I won't stand here and listen to any more of your Debbie Downer depressing discourse!

Lucretia: Well, there's the door.

Letitia assumes that Lucretia is **indirectly** communicating that she should leave, because if Lucretia had only been, 'out of the blue,' pointing out the door location she'd be violating the Maxim of \_\_\_\_\_.

6. Jack: Do want this last sardine?

Neko: That does sound good. On the other hand we'll be having dinner soon, and I don't want to spoil my appetite. But then again, a sardine would be a nice appetizer. Oh, but I should probably be watching my weight more....

Jack (impatiently): Look, you either want it or you don't.

(a) Does Jack mean his sentence to be interpreted **literally**? (That is: does Jack think it's true that Neko either wants it or doesn't want it?)

(b) What **second, unspoken message** is Jack communicating here?

(c) If Jack hadn't intended any second, unspoken message, he'd be violating the Maxim of \_\_\_\_\_.

7. Rex is discussing Jack's birthday present when Suki and Jack are nearby, and he asks Barbie: Did you pick up the S-U-R-F-B-O-A-R-D?

Hearing the word "surfboard" spelled out (rather than just uttered), Suki concludes that the information is being withheld from Jack; for if that weren't the case, Rex would have violated the Maxim of \_\_\_\_\_.

**8. Jack: Where's that last California roll?**

Suki: Somebody ate it.

As a matter of fact (and as Suki knows), Suki ate the last California roll. Now given that she ate the last California roll, it is true that somebody ate it – so she didn't tell a lie. Still, it seems that she misled Jack with her answer. What Grice Maxim is Suki violating in order to mislead him?

**9. Dr. Slim: I'm not sure Barbie is the right person to go onstage with you at the Vegas trade show. We need someone who will really get the buyers excited about our new product.**

Kitty: Don't worry: as a trained cheerleader, she's a real ball of fire.

(a) Does Kitty mean her sentence to be read literally? (That is: does she think that Barbie is a sphere of flame?)

(b) What is the further indirect (unspoken) second message Kitty intends here?

**10. Dr. Slim: If you act now I can let you in on this special business opportunity.**

Neko: Oh yeah, I'll invest my money with you. I wasn't born yesterday, you know!

Jack: You should ask Rex to invest. He's as dumb as a rock.

(a) Is Neko speaking literally or non-literally when she says "I'll invest my money with you"?

(b) Is Neko speaking literally or non-literally when she says "I wasn't born yesterday"? (That is: does she believe it's true that she wasn't born yesterday?)

(c) What further, unspoken message is Neko (indirectly) communicating when she says "I wasn't born yesterday"?

(d) If Neko hadn't intended any such further, indirect communication, she would have been violating the Maxim of \_\_\_\_\_.

(e) What sort of non-literal communication is Jack engaging in when he says that Rex is "as dumb as a rock"?