

7.4. Pragmatics and Logic

“I’m gonna die if you touch me one more time.
Well, I guess that I’m gonna die no matter what.”

– They Might Be Giants, **I’ve Got a Match**

Group A. In each of the following examples, a sentence is uttered which is **true** in that situation, but still **misleading**.

1. **Jack:** Are you going to the surfing competition?

Suki: If the shop is busy that day I won’t go.

(But in fact Suki’s made up her mind not to go, regardless of whether the shop is busy.)

2. **Letitia:** what grade are you getting in Logic?

Trixie: I’m getting either a B or a C.

(But in fact Trixie knows she’s getting a C.)

3. **Rex:** Where are the leftover California rolls?

Neko: Someone must have eaten them.

(Where in fact Neko ate them.)

4. **Dr. Slim:** At least one member of the board of directors was convicted.

(When, as he knows, all the members were convicted.)

Group B. In each of the following example, the argument meets our technical definition of a **valid argument** (an argument with no validity counterexamples), but we wouldn't intuitively say that the conclusion "follows from" the premise(s).

1. If an argument is valid, **adding premises** (however irrelevant) **can't make it invalid**.

1. We're having either chicken or tacos.
2. We're not having chicken.

∴ We're having tacos.

1. We're having either chicken or tacos.
2. We're not having chicken.
3. Squirrels are mammals.

∴ We're having tacos.

[2. Any argument whose **conclusion is a tautology** is valid (however irrelevant the premises are to that conclusion).

1. Squirrels are mammals.

∴ Either your house is on fire or it's not.

3. Any argument with a **contradictory premise** is valid (however irrelevant that premise is to the conclusion).¹

1. Zebras both exist and don't exist.

∴ Your house is on fire.]

¹ More generally: if the premises of the argument are inconsistent, then the argument is valid (however irrelevant the premises are to the conclusion). For example, the argument "P, ~P ∴ X" is valid.