

# Semantics: Tutorial Four —Implicature, Politeness, and Scalar Meaning

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In this tutorial, we'll examine how meaning goes beyond literal content —including implicatures, politeness strategies, and face-threatening acts.

1. Hedges are used when you know you will flout a maxim. Which maxim is flouted in the following hedges (and why)?:

- (1) *This may be a bit confusing, but I remember being in a car.*
- (2) *I may be mistaken, but I thought I saw a wedding ring on her finger.*
- (3) *I won't bore you with all the details, but it was an exciting trip.*
- (4) *I don't know if this is important, but some of the files are missing.*
- (5) *As far as I know, they're married.*
- (6) *This may sound like a dumb question, but whose handwriting is this?*
- (7) *I don't know if this is clear at all, but I think the other car was reversing.*
- (8) *As you probably know, I am afraid of dogs.*

2. Consider this sentence: "John **believes** that aliens exist."  
Why might it trigger an implicature based on a Horn scale?

3. What is the scalar implicature in this exchange?

**Boss:** Did you finish the report?

**Employee:** I **tried** to.

4. For the next questions on politeness, (i) answer the question and (ii) translate each example into a language you speak, and see if you would use a similar strategy.

- (a) Which face is threatened in this interaction?

**Boss:** I need that report on my desk in one hour.

- (b) Which face is threatened in this interaction?

**Peer:** Actually, that's not how it works —I think you misunderstood the instructions.

- (c) What kind of face is appealed to here?

**Friend:** You're so good at design stuff —can you help me make a poster?

- (d) How does this speaker preserve the hearer's face?  
**Colleague:** I'm sorry to bother you, but could you maybe take a look at this when you have a chance?
- (e) What politeness strategy is used in this refusal?  
**Student:** Could you write me a recommendation letter?  
**Lecturer:** I'd love to help, but I'm afraid I'm already overloaded with deadlines this month.
- (f) How does this strategy protect both positive and negative face?  
**Email:** I hope this finds you well. If it's not too much trouble, would you mind reviewing my draft by Friday?
5. Explain what is going on **here**:  
 (from *The Pink Panther Strikes Again* (1976))
- Clouseau:** Does your dog bite?  
**Hotel Clerk:** No.  
**Clouseau:** [bowing down to pet the dog] Nice doggie.  
 [Dog barks and bites Clouseau in the hand]  
**Clouseau:** I thought you said your dog did not bite!  
**Hotel Clerk:** That is not my dog.
6. Rephrase the following commands into indirect requests, first in English, then in another language:
- (a) Tell me the time
  - (b) Lend me money
  - (c) Give me your phone number
  - (d) Leave me alone