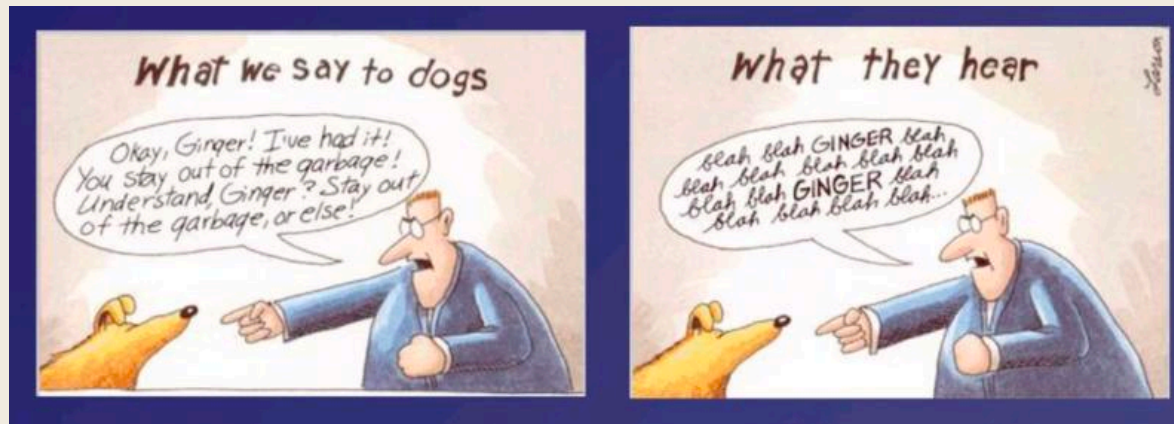


# Knowledge & Language

## Scope & Meaning TOK L22



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## Basic Assumptions

- **Language is Rule-Governed.** *Linguistics* is the science of language, but vocabulary is arbitrary. Prescriptivists & Descriptivists are forever in conflict.
  - **Language is Creative.** *Semantics* relates to the meaning of language, which is highly conceptual.
  - **Language is Intended.** Not all communication is language. A yawn might be communicating something... or not. In TOK we're concerned primarily with verbal language.
- “Colorless green ideas sleep furiously.” is a grammatically correct sentence...but what's it mean?

*Make up some new words, with definitions in mind.*

*Were your fellow students able to guess your meanings? Why or why not?*

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# The Problem of Meaning

You must know what a sentence means before you can decide whether it is true or false.



- *Definition Theory*
- *Denotation Theory*
- *Image Theory*
- *Meaning as a matter of know-how*

*Twas brillig, and the slithy tones did gyre and nimble in the wabe...*

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## PROBLEMATIC MEANING

### Language in practice

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Note the many differences between *literal* or *explicit* meaning and *implicit* or *metaphorical* meaning

Find some examples of idioms, vagueness, ambiguity, secondary meanings, euphemisms, metaphors, irony, etc.

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Prospero: “Our little life is rounded with a sleep.” - *The Tempest*





## WHAT'S IT MEAN?

**Explain the connotations of the following sets of words:**

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- Praise, flatter, commend
  - Energetic, spirited, frenzied
  - Gossip, chat, discuss
  - Stubborn, steadfast, firm
  - Obstinate, inflexible, fundamentalist
  - Passionate, addicted, fanatical
  - "My brother is a butcher" vs. "My doctor is a butcher"
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**How many connotations can you come up with for vomit, drunk, stupid, rock...**

## MEANING & INTERPRETATION



### What problems of interpretation are here?

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- If Zhang Wei works hard, he should do himself justice in the final exam.
  - It is as difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven as it is for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle.
  - After he had said this, he left her as on the previous evening.
  - What's up?
- 

Is it possible to ask a neutral or unbiased question?



*Define "Red"*