

Lecture 23

Context in Language Processing

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ENLP | 25 April 2018



White House
10:27 AM ET



BREAKING NEWS

BANNON ACCEPTS DIMINISHED ROLE IN W.H.

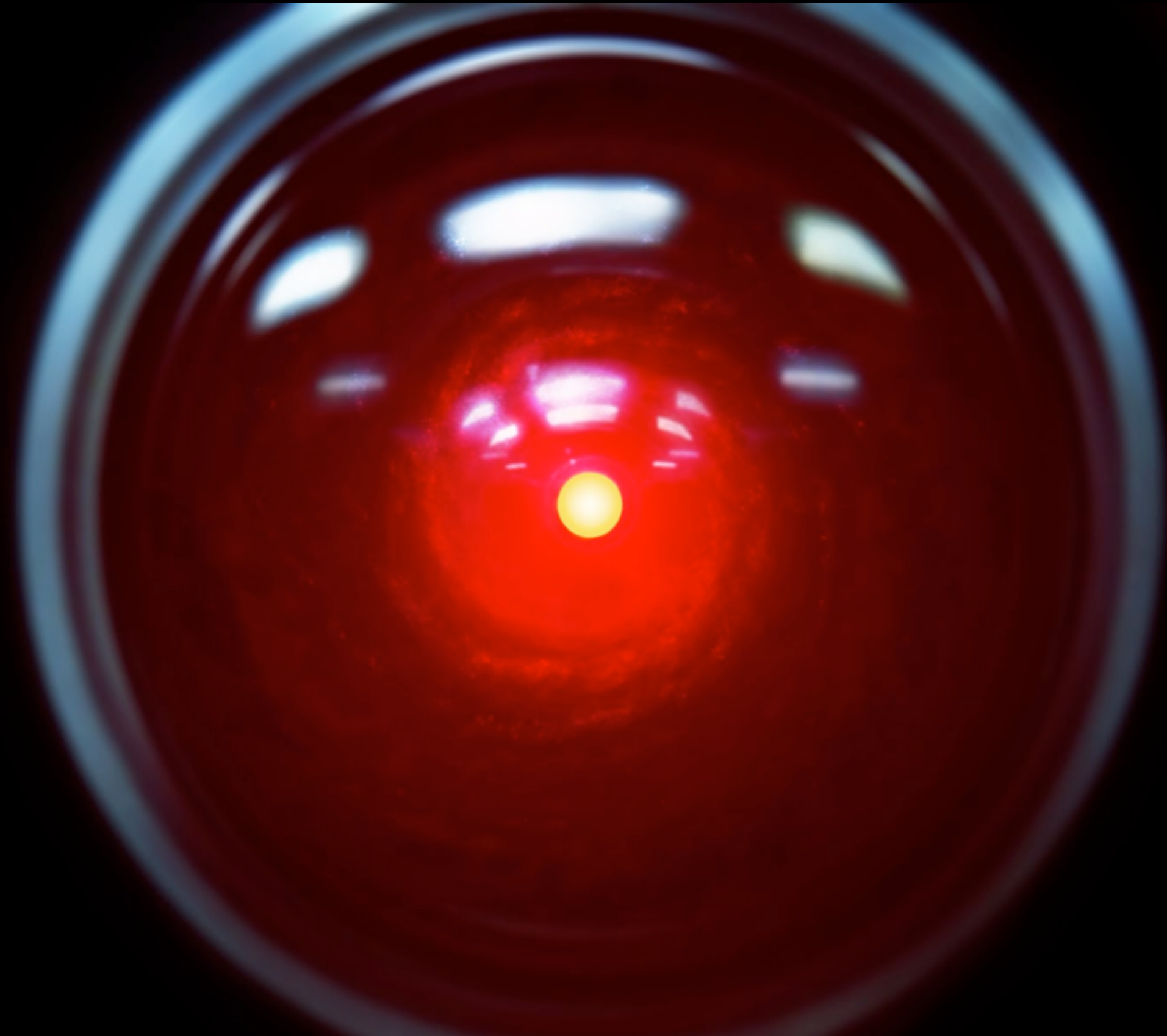
LIVE



DOW ▲ 87.99

CONGLOMERATES, INCLUDING SAMSUNG & LOTTE GROUP ▶ PARK IS ACC NEWSROOM

AI Ambitions



Semantic Analysis

- We've seen tasks that analyze the meanings or topics of documents, words, and sentences
 - ▶ document classification
 - ▶ topic models
 - ▶ word representations & similarity
 - ▶ word sense disambiguation
 - ▶ semantic role labeling
- These are challenging tasks. But even if we could automate them perfectly, we'd still be a long way from human-like automatic language processing.

Understanding: Beyond Semantics

What is required to understand this conversation?



- **Semantics of the expressions themselves**
 - ▶ coffee refers to the drink, not the tree or bean (WSD)
 - ▶ 4:00 and 3:00 are times (NER)
 - ▶ “at 4:00”: semantic role marking the time of an event
 - ▶ “?” indicates question
- **But there’s a lot more to understanding than just the explicit language....**



- **Encyclopedic knowledge about the world**
 - ▶ Nobody would think this means “Does coffee exist at 4:00?” We know about social activities associated with coffee.
 - ▶ Likely 4:00pm, because people are normally asleep at 4:00am. (And people generally don’t go for coffee in their sleep.) Unless.....



- **Knowledge of the situation/
conversational context/
common ground**
 - ▶ Perhaps it's 2:30am and we're working to finish something for a deadline. Or we both are back from a conference and are severely jetlagged.
 - ▶ Perhaps we have a habit of going to a certain place for coffee, so it can be left implicit.



- **Discourse coherence**

- ▶ We normally assume that interlocutors are “cooperative” (H.P. Grice): They respond with relevant information, say what they believe to be true, don’t change topics without suitable pause or warning, etc.
- ▶ Here, we interpret the second question as *proposing an alternative* time, and requesting confirmation.



- **Relationship to action**

- ▶ A truly intelligent app would offer information that would help my decision (e.g., when the café closes)
- ▶ and put the event on my calendar at the agreed-upon time
- ▶ and remind me to leave in time to arrive at the agreed-upon meeting place at that time.
- ▶ If it is unsure of details, it should confirm with me rather than do the wrong thing.
- ▶ Industry is already moving in this direction with personal assistants.



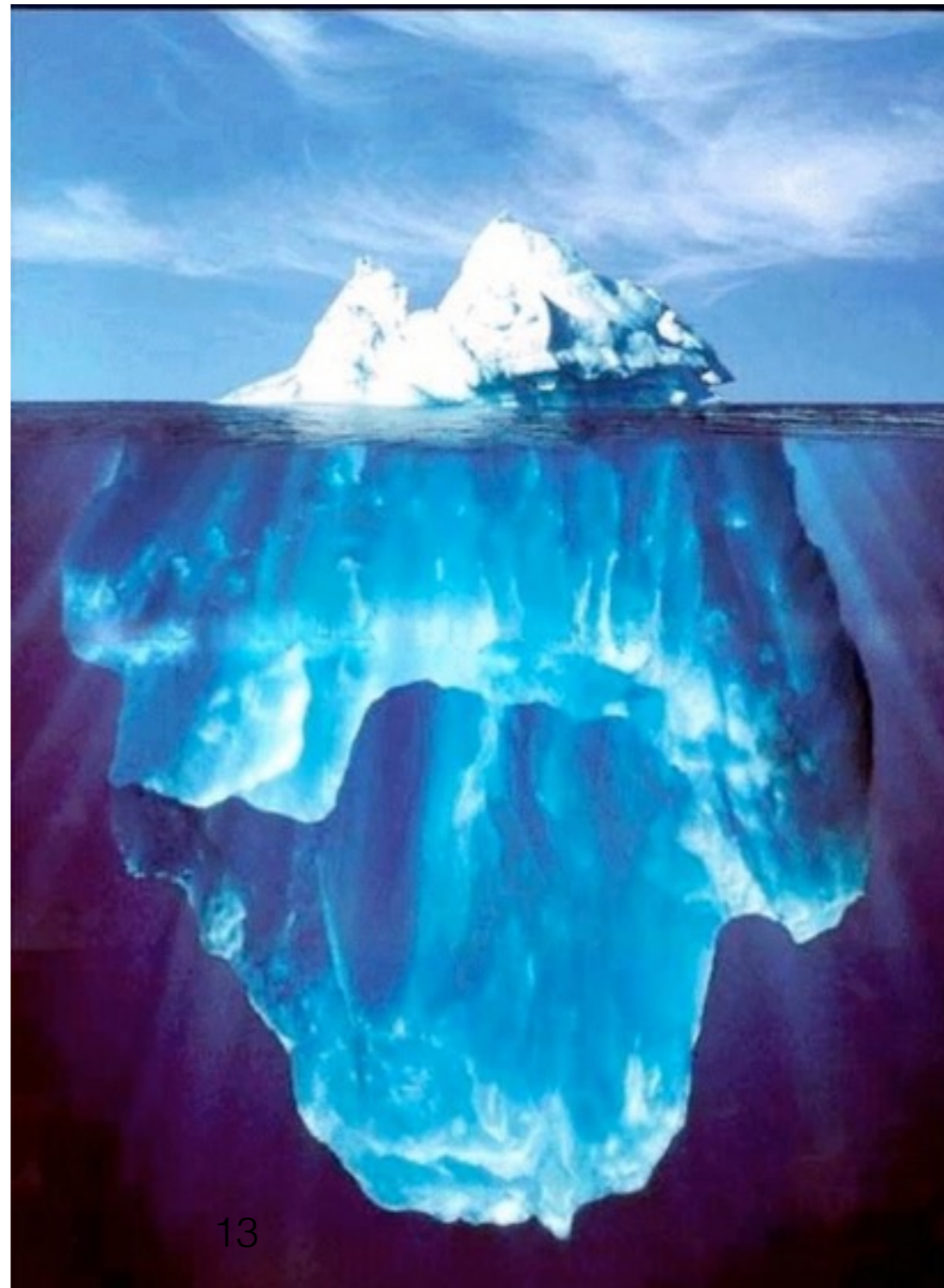
Understanding: It's Not Just the Words

- Actually understanding such conversations requires a lot of inferences based on world knowledge and context (**pragmatics**).

Understanding: It's Not Just the Words

WHAT IS SAID

WHAT IS UNDERSTOOD



Understanding: It's Not Just the Words

- Actually understanding such conversations requires a lot of inferences based on world knowledge and context (**pragmatics**).
- But is that only true of conversations? What about unidirectional language use (books, articles)?

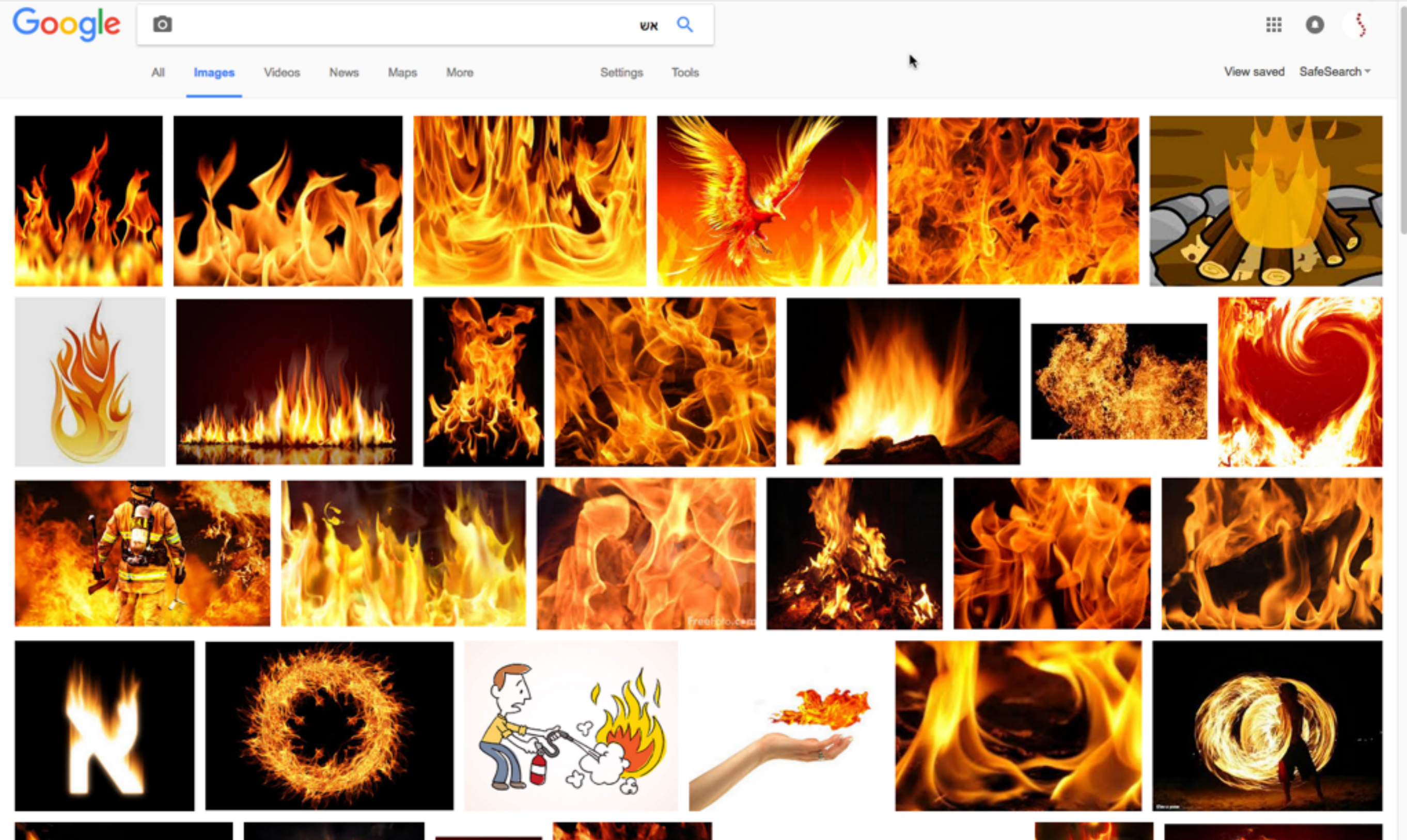
“Sherwood Park had its third fire in less than a month on Tuesday. However, there were no injuries” (<http://www.sherwoodparknews.com/2016/01/14/no-injuries-in-park-fire>)

- **Semantics:** Sherwood Park is a neighborhood (not a literal park); this fire is no longer active
- **Discourse + world knowledge:**
 - ▶ *no humans injured in this fire* (unknown whether any ants were harmed)
 - ▶ “However” signals a contrast with an expectation raised by the first sentence: injuries might have been expected from an unintentional fire
 - ▶ Harm to humans is highly newsworthy, so it’s important for the story to inform us of an event that DIDN’T occur
 - ▶ Likely inference: there is a pattern of fires in Sherwood Park (why?)
 - ▶ Were there injuries in previous fires? Unspecified.
 - ▶ What would have to change for the information to be presented in the opposite order?

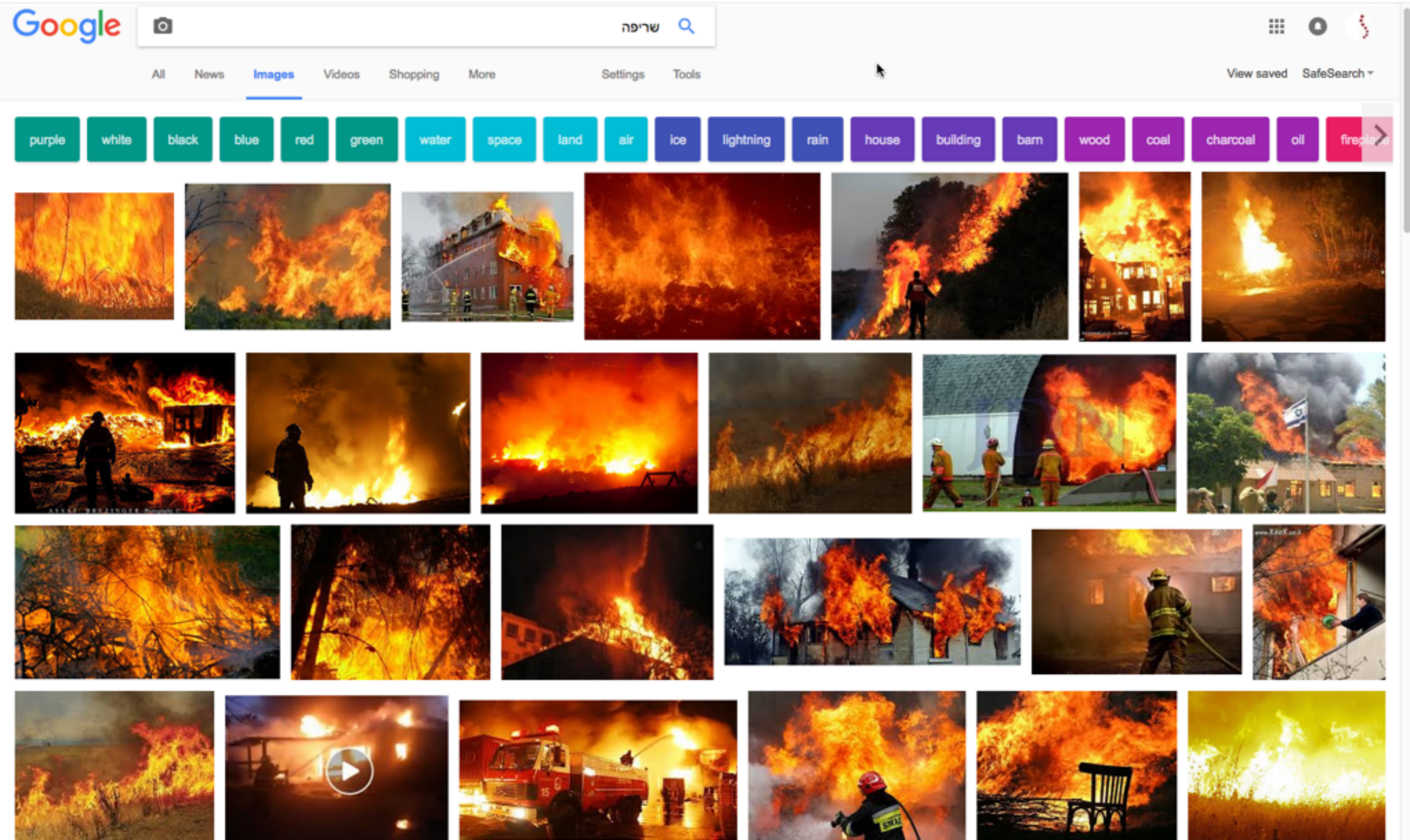
Understanding: It's Not Just the Words

- Different aspects of meaning are required to be explicit in different languages. E.g., **lexicalization** patterns in Hebrew vs. English:

eish אש



שריפה *srefa*



Understanding: It's Not Just the Words

- Different aspects of meaning are required to be explicit in different languages. E.g., **lexicalization** patterns in Hebrew vs. English:
 - ▶ EN “fire” ↔ HE {*eish* ‘purposeful fire’, *srefa* ‘destructive fire’}
 - ▶ EN {“color”, “paint”} ↔ HE *tseva*
- **formality/social status:** Which 2nd person pronoun to use in German or French?
- **evidentiality:** How does the speaker know the information? (directly observed, secondhand, etc.)
- **spatial systems:** absolute (compass directions) or relative

Understanding: It's Not Just the Words

- Some information can be made “minimally explicit”, requiring discourse-level inference.
- **anaphora** (pronouns): *He* sells the greatest soup *you*'ve ever eaten.
 - ▶ Need to decide which pronouns are **referential**, and resolve their antecedents.
 - ▶ Special case of **coreference resolution** (grouping referring expressions that indicate the same entity).
- **pro-drop**: In many languages, pronominal subjects can be dropped (verb agreement helps disambiguate): *Quiero un taco.*

Perspective in language

- The choice of language can put a “spin” on the information being conveyed, emphasizing certain nuances or dimensions of meaning. Sometimes called **construal**.
- May indicate a social perspective (**framing**)
 - ▶ *Mistakes were made.*
 - ▶ “thrifty” vs. “stingy”
 - ▶ “terrorists” vs. “freedom fighters”
- May be mundane and subtle: **on** *the bus* vs. **in** *the bus*

Understanding: It's Complicated

- Lots of implicit information, even in expository text.
- How to even evaluate whether a system is comprehending the story?
 - ▶ Give the system an **exam**—multiple choice or fill-in-the-blank. Challenge datasets based on actual exam questions (reading comprehension, mathematical reasoning, biology).
 - ▶ Test the system's **decision-making** skills, such as controlling a robot or making moves in a game based on language. Requires link between comprehension and action/grounding.
 - ▶ **Multimodal**: Link text to image, video, or action.

Automatic Caption Generation

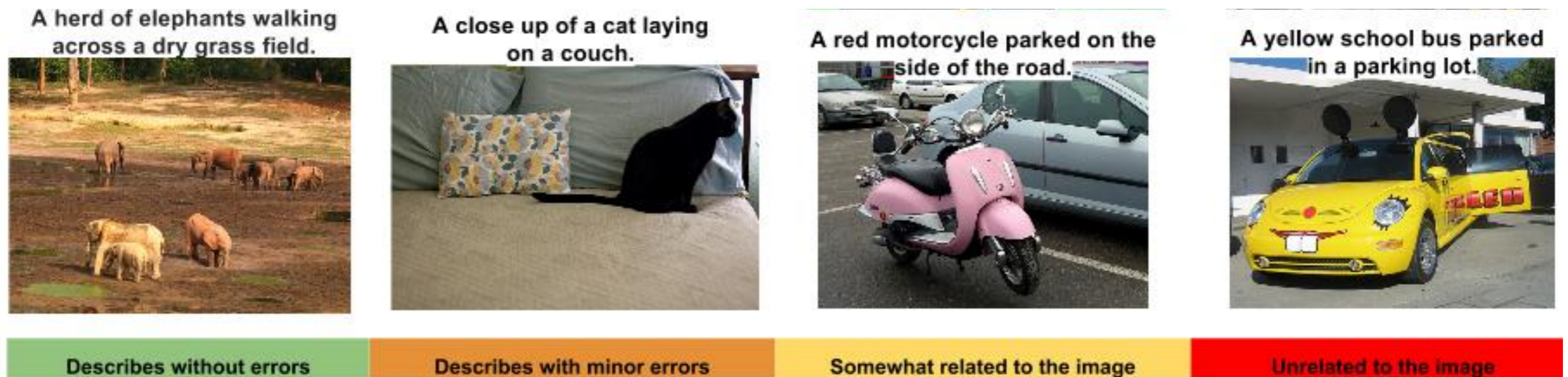
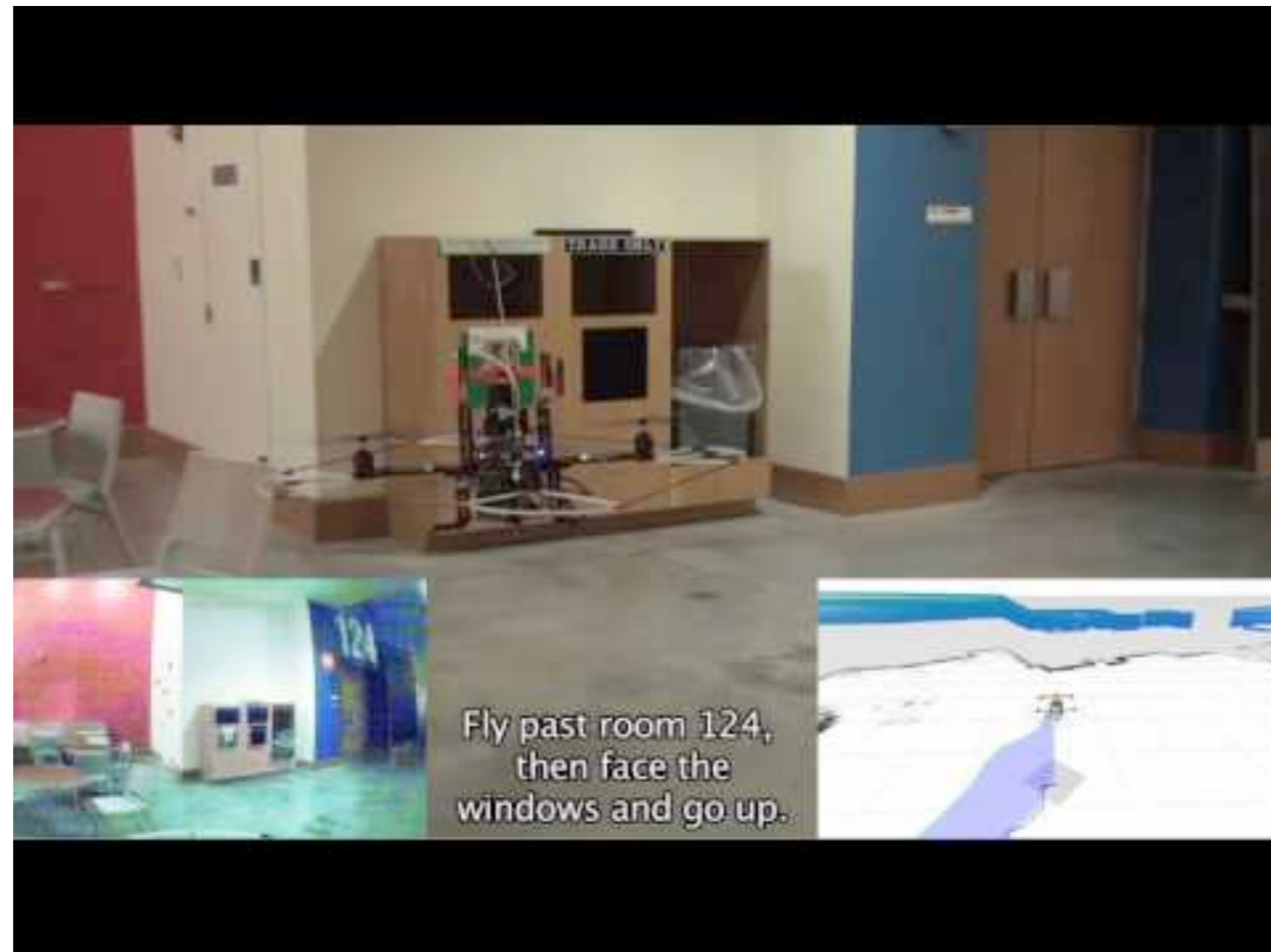


Figure 5. A selection of evaluation results, grouped by human rating.

Vinyals et al., CVPR 2015

http://www.cv-foundation.org/openaccess/content_cvpr_2015/papers/Vinyals_Show_and_Tell_2015_CVPR_paper.pdf

Language-Directed Robot Navigation



Fly past room 124,
then face the
windows and go up.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7nUq28utuGM&list=PL6SYoj2z5jWfBFhZQdxF_luQ-sgpDXAO4&index=1

Summary

- The techniques discussed in this course were aimed at classifying documents, or analyzing words and sentences.
- But much of human language exploits our awareness of discourse, pragmatics, perspectives, other modalities, and the world.
- Different languages have different requirements for what needs to be explicit.
- Tasks like **coreference resolution**, **automatic caption generation**, and **language-directed robot tasks** are important for stimulating research along dimensions beyond local and explicit linguistic communication.