One sentence two readings

How can punctuation change the way an invented message is understood?

Use the same words to compare direct address with the object of a sentence.

Investigate | 10–20 minutes, or one small comparison | Scrap paper and a pencil or pen, The supplied original model; no account, purchase or online search needed

Start here Write two messages about an imaginary robot: Let's draw, Pip. and Let's draw Pip.



A comma changes Pip's role

1 Keep the words fixed

Both messages use Let's, draw and Pip in the same order. Only the comma changes.

2 Read the first

Let's draw, Pip. addresses Pip: it invites the fictional robot to join the drawing. Pip is the listener.

3 Read the second

Let's draw Pip. proposes drawing a picture of Pip. Pip is what the drawing will show.

4 Make the task explicit

Write a short explanation or add a sketch for each reading. You can compare silently; no particular voice or accent is required.

Original example Pip the invented robot

Pip is a fictional robot, not a real person or an existing character.

• With the comma: Pip is being addressed and invited to draw.

• Without the comma: Pip is the subject to be depicted in a drawing.

• A small punctuation mark changes the grammatical role of the same name.

What this example can show Context and speech can add clues too. This pair illustrates one English sentence distinction, not a rule for every language.

A different way

Sort the two messages beside supplied sketches, point to the comma, or ask someone else to read them. Speaking is optional.

If you want to go further

Try Let's build, Pip. and Let's build Pip. Explain the two tasks before deciding whether punctuation alone gives enough context.

Something to notice

Which role changed when I moved from one reading to the other?

Read or explore more

Horizon topic Punctuation Meaning

https://launchhorizonhq.com/learn/punctuation-meaning/

Horizon topic Word Order

https://launchhorizonhq.com/learn/word-order/

Horizon topic Languages

https://launchhorizonhq.com/learn/languages/

Australian Government Style Manual Commas

https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/grammar-punctuation-and-conventions/punctuation/commas

Australian Government Style Manual Sentences

https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/writing-and-designing-content/clear-language-and-writing-style/sentences

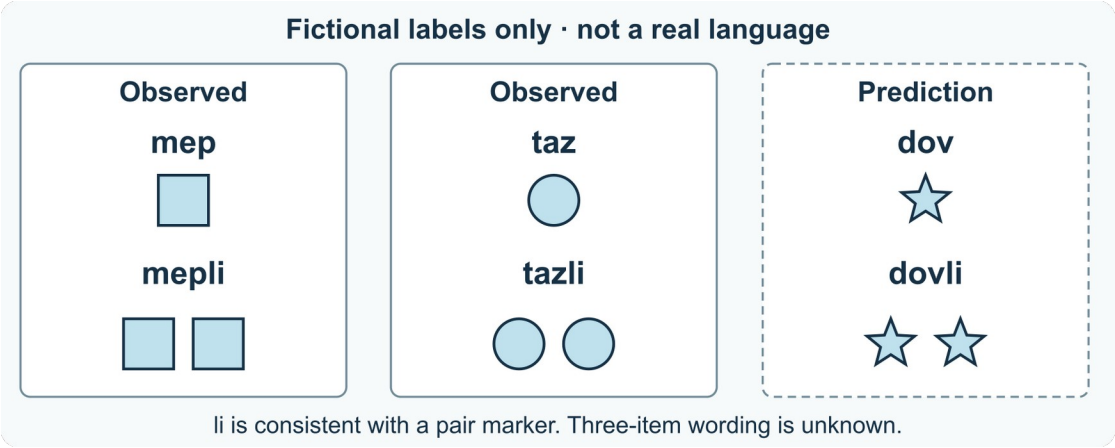
Find a rule in invented words

What pattern can a small set of made-up words support?

Find a pattern in a tiny fictional label system and state how far the evidence goes.

Investigate | 10-20 minutes, or one small comparison | Scrap paper and a pencil or pen, The supplied original model; no account, purchase or online search needed

Start here Read the supplied made-up pairs: mep labels one box; mepli labels two boxes. taz labels one circle; tazli labels two circles.



An observed ending and a prediction

1 Compare pairs

Underline the ending li in the two-item labels. These are invented puzzle labels, not words presented as a real language.

2 Propose a narrow rule

Try the hypothesis: adding li marks a pair of the named item in this toy system. Do not assume it means any number greater than one.

3 Make a prediction

A new card says dov labels one star. Predict dovli for two stars and mark it as a prediction, not another observed card.

4 Choose a test

A two-star label would check that prediction. A three-star card would help distinguish pair from a wider plural rule; its label is not supplied.

Original model a made up pair marker

All labels and meanings in this small dataset were invented for the puzzle.

• mep → one box; mepli → two boxes. taz → one circle; tazli → two circles.

• The shared ending li is consistent with a pair marker in both observed examples.

• Given dov for one star, dovli is a prediction for two stars. The label for three stars remains unknown.

What this example can show A small set can support a useful hypothesis without proving every future case. No claim is made about an actual language or culture.

A different way

Match labels to simple drawings, point to the repeated ending or direct someone else's underlining. Pronouncing the invented labels is optional.

If you want to go further

Invent a separate marker for exactly three items and supply two worked pairs. Keep your invented rule distinct from the observed dataset.

Something to notice

Which examples did I observe, and which result did I predict?

Read or explore more

Horizon topic Word Building

https://launchhorizonhq.com/learn/word-building/

Horizon topic Sounds Grammar

https://launchhorizonhq.com/learn/sounds-grammar/

Horizon topic Languages

https://launchhorizonhq.com/learn/languages/

NSW Education Standards Authority English K-10 Syllabus (2022): Glossary

https://curriculum.nsw.edu.au/learning-areas/english/english-k-10-2022/glossary

The Open University, OpenLearn Describing language

https://www.open.edu/openlearn/languages/describing-language

Two ways to express one idea

Which part of a meaning survives when the wording changes?

Compare paraphrases by checking which details they preserve.

Investigate | 10-20 minutes, or one small comparison | Scrap paper and a pencil or pen, The supplied original model; no account, purchase or online search needed

Start here Write the fictional instruction: After the bell, place the blue card inside the tray.

Version	When	What	Where
Original	after bell	blue card	inside tray
Paraphrase A	after bell	blue card	inside tray
Paraphrase B	before bell	a card	near tray

A preserves the needed details. B changes the task.

Same idea, different words-or a changed task

1 Break up the meaning

Name the action, the blue card, the inside of the tray and the timing after the bell. These are the details to track.

2 Compare a paraphrase

Put the blue card in the tray once the bell has sounded keeps those details, despite changing several words.

3 Spot a changed instruction

Put a card near the tray before the bell changes colour information, destination and timing. It is not equivalent for this task.

4 Choose an audience

Write a clear version for an invented display sign or a longer explanation. Keep the required meaning, while noting that real translation also depends on context.

Original example a card and a tray

The bell, card and instruction are fictional. No real translation or delivery task is being assessed.

• Original: after the bell; blue card; inside the tray.

• Paraphrase A preserves those three details using once the bell has sounded and in the tray.

• Paraphrase B says before, drops blue and changes inside to near, so it changes the required task.

What this example can show Near-equivalent wording can still differ in tone or context. Comparing English paraphrases does not qualify someone to translate another language.

A different way

Use three labelled cards for when, what and where, point to matching details, or dictate a paraphrase. No other language knowledge is needed.

If you want to go further

Make the instruction shorter for a small sign. Ask whether a reader can still recover the timing, blue card and inside-tray destination.

Something to notice

Did I preserve the needed meaning or only reuse some of the same words?

Read or explore more

Horizon topic Translation Meaning

https://launchhorizonhq.com/learn/translation-meaning/

Horizon topic Writing Purposes

https://launchhorizonhq.com/learn/writing-purposes/

Horizon topic Metaphor Comparison

https://launchhorizonhq.com/learn/metaphor-comparison/

The Open University, OpenLearn Semantic vs communicative translation, part 1

https://www.open.edu/openlearn/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=66419&section=4.1

Monash University Purpose and audience

https://www.monash.edu/student-academic-success/advance-your-graduate-studies/write-for-the-general-public/purpose-and-audience