

# Feature Article

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## An Android's Progress: Pragmatics and *Star Trek: The Next Generation*

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### Introduction

When I had recently begun (re)viewing the first season of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, I had watched up to the sixth episode in the series, *Where None Have Gone Before* (Duane & Reaves, 1987), when I realized that at one point that Lieutenant Commander Data (hereafter referred to as "Data"), an android member of the crew, had violated Grice's maxim of quantity, by listing, in inordinate detail, the time it would take for a message to get to Starfleet:

GEORDI

Message on this has been transmitted to Starfleet, sir.

DATA

Which, traveling subspace, they should receive in fifty-one years, ten months...

PICARD (interrupting; irritated)

Mister Data !

DATA

Sir?

As the dialogue above indicates, Captain Picard's response was annoyance, which I soon realized was a fairly regular reaction to Data's utterances. My first thought, after saying aloud, "Data, you've violated the maxim of quantity!" was, "How many other maxims had he violated?" Did he violate some maxims more than others? Did he do it on purpose? What other pragmatic problems was Data having during his first tour of duty on the *Enterprise*? Was pragmatics the answer to Data's search for humanity; in other words, to understand and be understood by human beings?

### Method

As a first step in attempting to answer the above questions, I downloaded all twenty-six scripts from the first season and began examining them for patterns. The dialogues used for

analysis were taken verbatim with stage directions from the original scripts. For the purposes of this essay, I examined how many instances of pragmatic failure took place (here “pragmatic failure” means any negative consequences from Data’s utterances, whether verbal or non-verbal), who Data was conversing with and what the context of the situation was when the failure occurred, what the resulting response of the interlocutor was, and what kinds of pragmatic failures seemed to be the most common. I also examined whether or not Data made any progress in developing pragmatic competence throughout his first year on board the starship *Enterprise*. Finally, I recommend some ways that Starfleet could help its personnel avoid such pragmatic failures in the future.

To aid the “non-Trekkie” reader, the following is the cast of characters referred to in this paper:

Captain Jean-Luc Picard – Captain of the *Enterprise*

Commander William Riker – First officer

Lieutenant Commander Data – Android

Lieutenant Commander Geordi La Forge – Crew member

Lieutenant Tasha Yar – Chief of Security

Lieutenant Worf – Crew member

Commander Dr. Beverly Crusher – Ship’s doctor

## Results

### *Instances of Pragmatic Failure*

Table 1 below outlines the number of times pragmatic failure occurred from the first to the last episode of the first season. Throughout the first season, Data made a total of 35 pragmatic errors. The number of occurrences at the beginning of the series was higher than at the end. From the first to the halfway point (thirteenth episode), Data made an average of 2.4 faux pas, with an average of 3.25 gaffes in the first nine episodes. In the second half of the season, though, he made 0.46 blunders per episode, a considerable decrease. Please see Appendix A for a list of pragmatic failures by episode.

Table 1

*Number of occurrences of pragmatic failure*

|          |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----------|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Episode  | 1-2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| # errors | 4   | 5 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 0  | 1  | 2  | 0  | 2  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 0  |

*Interlocutors Most Frequently Affected by Data’s Pragmatic Failure*

Table 2 highlights the number of instances of pragmatic failure by interlocutor, listed in order of rank. It is clear that Captain Picard and Commander Riker, the two most senior crewmembers (Admiral McCoy appears only once in the initial episode), react the most strongly to Data’s pragmatic failures.

Table 2

*Number of instances of pragmatic failure by interlocutor*

|              |                  |                   |                    |                   |                        |                             |                           |                     |                         |
|--------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Interlocutor | Admiral<br>McCoy | Captain<br>Picard | Commander<br>Riker | Doctor<br>Crusher | Lieutenant<br>La Forge | Bridge<br>Crew<br>(various) | Away<br>team<br>(various) | Ship’ s<br>computer | Holodeck<br>Inhabitants |
| # incidents  | 1                | 15                | 11                 | 3                 | 3                      | 3                           | 1                         | 1                   | 1                       |

*Responses to Pragmatic Failure*

Table 3 highlights the most common responses to Data’s pragmatic failure. These can be divided into verbal and non-verbal categories. It is interesting to note that the strongest forms of verbal or non-verbal responses were usually exhibited by Captain Picard and Commander Riker.

Table 3

*Common responses to Data's pragmatic failure*

| Verbal  | Non-verbal   |
|---|--|
| Attempting to cut the conversation short/demanding the topic be dropped/telling Data to "Shut up" | Looking angry<br>Looking uncomfortable<br>Hesitating |
| Using an angry tone of voice  | Looking bewildered                                   |
| Using an irritated tone of voice  | Looking surprised                                    |
| Giving a reprimand  | Looking annoyed                                      |
| Changing the subject  | Looking embarrassed                                  |
| Using a piqued tone of voice  | Not giving a response/Giving a cold response         |
| Interrupting (politely or impolitely)   | Looking shocked                                      |
| Paraphrasing  | Looking irritated                                    |
| Dismissing a proposal   | Waving Data away                                     |
| Using sarcasm   | Looking impatient                                    |
| Telling Data to get to the point  |  |

*Types of Pragmatic Failure*

Three types of pragmatic failure seem to occur with regularity; the first is a violation of Grice's (1975) category of quantity, relating to the amount of information that should be provided. The two maxims contained here recommend that one "make [one's] contribution as informative as required (for the current purpose of the exchange), and "not make [one's] contribution more informative than is required" (p. 45). The second type of pragmatic failure falls under Grice's category of manner related to how something is said. While his utterances are generally unambiguous and orderly, Data may tend towards obscurity in a few cases, and prolixity in many (as already discussed under the heading "maxim of quantity"). The foci however, will be on Data's expressionless delivery and tendency toward ambiguity. The third type of failure is an inability to understand relevance, as explained by Grice, and/or situational appropriateness, as explicated by Cohen (1990): "successful speaking is not just a matter of using the correct words and forms. It means evoking whatever strategies are necessary for us to

learn *what* to use them for, *when* to use them, and *how* to use them” (p. 64). Table 4 indicates the frequency of occurrence of each type of pragmatic failure. It is interesting to note that all three types of pragmatic failure occur in roughly equal proportions:

Table 4

*Type and frequency of pragmatic failure*

| Quantity     | Manner       | Relevance/Situational<br>Appropriateness |
|--------------|--------------|--|
| 12 instances | 12 instances | 11 instances                             |

*A Word About Androids Failing to Fulfill Maxims*

It is relevant here to re-iterate Grice’s (1975) explanation of the various ways in which participants fail to fulfill maxims. Table 5 summarizes the four types of failures and their consequences:

Table 5

*Maxim failures and consequences*

| Type   | Result   |
|--|--|
| Someone may violate a maxim.                                 | She will mislead the listener                                      |
| Someone may opt out from the maxim and cooperative principle | She will give no information.                                      |
| Someone may be faced by a clash.                             | She will be unable to fulfill one maxim without violating another. |
| Someone may flout a maxim deliberately.                      | A conversational implicature will be generated.                    |

It is relevant to mention this because Data’s interlocutors may assume that his failure to fulfill these maxims is deliberate and that he is perhaps implying something. However, it is important

to keep in mind that Data, while having a human form, is, in fact, a machine: an ambulatory computer. According to Dvorak and Horan (n.d. retrieved June 1, 2006), “despite the fact that some (computers) are able to make very intelligent decisions, they still make these decisions by only using logic. It has been suggested that until artificial intelligence agents can utilize or recognize emotion, they will never be anything more than elaborate machines that rely on logic to keep up the appearance of intelligence” (no page). Thus, it is not logical to assume that Data is manipulating language to serve purposes other than direct communication.

### *Maxim of Quantity*

Regarding the first type of failure, Data, walking encyclopedia that he is, has a propensity not to fulfill the second of the two maxims of quantity. Out of all 35 instances of pragmatic failure, 12 examples fall into this category, which are further sub-divided here under the headings “synonym overload”, “informational overkill” and “down-to-the-last-decimal-place excess”. Following are examples of each (please see Appendix B, particularly dialogues taken from episodes 3, 4, 6, 9, 14, 24, and 25 for more examples).

#### *Synonym overload*

When Data understands a new term or seeks to explain one to someone, he tends to go too far; the result is usually a negative reaction on the part of his interlocutor. The following dialogue, from *Episode 1: Encounter at Farpoint* (Fontana and Roddenberry, 1987a) illustrates this point:

PICARD

The problem, Data, is that another life form built that base. How do I negotiate a friendly agreement for Starfleet to use it while at the same time snoop around finding how and why they built it?

DATA

Inquiry ... the word snoop ... ?

PICARD

Data, how can you be programmed as a virtual encyclopedia of human information without knowing a simple word like snoop?

DATA

Possibility ... a kind of human behavior I was not designed to emulate?

PICARD

It means 'to spy, to sneak' ...

DATA (interrupting; delighted)

Ah! To seek covertly, to go stealthily, to slink, slither ...

PICARD (wanting to cut it off)

Exactly, yes ...

DATA

... to glide, creep, skulk, pussyfoot, gumshoe ...

(Data trails off his words, finally becoming aware of the annoyance registering on Picard's face.)

### *Informational Overkill.*

In this extract from *Episode 8: Justice* (Black & Thorne, 1987), Data is attempting to explain why an alien species attempted to contact him exclusively. Captain Picard responds in an abrupt manner:

DATA

I was an excellent choice for them, Captain. They could communicate with me quite... (shakes head) ... I was about to say quite "easily," but there was nothing "easy" about it. Fortunately, they stopped short of overloading my circuitry...

PICARD (interrupting)

You're saying they. It is a vessel of some sort...

DATA (interrupting)

Definitely not a single "entity" if that's what you mean, sir... although they know the Edo worship them as a "God thing."

PICARD

They know.?

DATA (nods)

They recognize that this is quite expected and harmless at the present Edo stage of evolution, and...

PICARD (interrupting)

What kind of vessel?

DATA (without pause)

It is perhaps not what we'd understand as a "vessel," sir. The dimensions this one occupies allows them to... well, to be in several places at once. But they consider this entire star cluster to be theirs, and it was probably unwise of us to attempt to place a human colony in this area. Of course, there are three thousand four other planets in this general star cluster in which we...

PICARD

Data, don't babble!

DATA

"Babble," sir? I am not aware that I ever babble, sir. It may be that from time to time I have considerable information to communicate, and you may question the way I organize it... (Data trails off as he becomes aware of Picard's expression.)

PICARD

Please "organize" it into brief answers to my questions. Do they accept our presence at this planet?

*Down-to-the-last decimal-place excess.*

Having a computerized and highly accurate brain, Data is able to make quick and thorough calculations. Generally speaking, however, such accuracy goes unappreciated by the crew of the *Enterprise*. In this dialogue, taken from *Episode 11: Haven* (Torme, 1987), Data is asked to estimate the time it will take for the ship to travel to its destination:

PICARD

Unfortunately, we had believed the last Tarellian vessel was destroyed eight years ago by the Alcyones.

(to Data) Exactly when will they reach Haven?

DATA

Exactly thirteen hours, nine minutes, twenty-one...

PICARD (interrupting; to all)

Which will create a very difficult problem for the *Enterprise* at that time. Our treaty here requires us to protect Haven from alien threats ... and a plague ship certainly qualifies as that. But Federation policy requires us to assist life forms in need ... which qualifies the Tarellians too. I'll want you to help me find some answers by then.

Grice (1975) mentions that this second maxim may be "disputable; it might be said that to be overinformative is not a transgression of the CP (cooperative principle) but merely a waste of time" (p. 46). It would appear, from the above examples, that Data's propensity to give more information than necessary irritates his interlocutors for that very reason; I would argue that it does violate the cooperative principle; however, particularly in a situation where the lives of the crew are in danger, time-wasting may result in fatalities.

*Maxim of Manner*

Regarding violations of the maxim of manner, Data unintentionally commits pragmatic errors in his quest for accuracy. If his interlocutors think he is implying something, they are mistaken, for, as mentioned above, he is a machine, guided by intellectual rather than emotional intelligence. However, Data's direct, deadpan delivery usually provokes interlocutors to

assume he is bragging, making an overt display of knowledge, disparaging them, or underestimating their knowledge. In terms of obscurity, Data does have a tendency to use overly formal language at inappropriate moments. Following are some examples illustrating each point (for more examples, please refer to Appendix B, particularly dialogues taken from episodes 1, 5, 8, 9, and 12) :

*Bragging.*

In the following dialogue excerpted from *Episode 3: The Naked Now* (Fontana & Roddenberry, 1987b), Dr. Crusher has just examined Data and is making a kind remark. His response is clearly not what she expected and she is dumbfounded:

BEVERLY

If you were any more perfect, Data, I'd write you up in a Starfleet medical textbook.

DATA

I am already listed in several biomechanical texts, Doctor.

(Beverly doesn't quite yet know how to take Data. Riker does, and grins.)

BEVERLY

Yes... of course.

*Displaying knowledge.*

Below is an instance, also from *Episode 3: The Naked Now* (Fontana & Roddenberry, 1987b), where Data persists in correcting Commander Riker about a common scientific mistake.

Instead of appreciating the assistance and sympathy, Riker becomes annoyed:

RIKER

You were right. Somebody blew the hatch and they were all sucked out into space..

DATA

Correction, sir, blown out.

RIKER

Thank you, Data.

DATA

A common mistake, sir...

RIKER (emphasis)

I know! Thank you, Data

*Disparaging others.*

In the following dialogue, taken from *Episode 4: Code of Honour* (Powers & Baron, 1987), Data is attempting to explain an “obscure” French term in a time where it seems English

has become the intergalactic lingua franca. Captain Picard, who claims French ancestry and who, for some unknown reason, speaks English with a British accent, takes umbrage.

Commander Riker feels called upon to intervene before a fight ensues:

DATA

It is a highly structured society in which people live by strict codes of honor. For example, what Lutan has done is similar to what certain American Indians once did, called "counting coup." That's from an obscure language called French –

PICARD

A language which for centuries on Earth represented civilization, Mister Data.

DATA

Indeed?

RIKER

I suggest you drop it, Mister Data.

Data also has a tendency to talk about humans and human culture in a rather politically-incorrect, third-person-like manner. His scientific curiosity about motherhood in *Episode 8: Justice* (Black & Thorne, 1987) causes Dr. Crusher to lash out at him. Her violent response however, does result in Data reflecting on his verbal behaviour:

DATA

Most interesting, sir. The emotion of motherhood, compared to all others felt by humans...

(Beverly whirls on Data now.)

BEVERLY

SHUT UP! (She DASHES angrily from the room. Data looks from Picard, to her, to Picard. Then he nods):

DATA

You were right, sir. I do tend to babble.

*Underestimating others' knowledge.*

It may not be surprising that because Data holds an encyclopedic knowledge in his neural network, he may have a propensity to misjudge the knowledge base of his interlocutors. Unfortunately, in the following dialogue from *Episode 16: Too Short a Season* (Michaelian, 1987), he seems to forget that Picard, as ship's captain, must have an intimate knowledge of Starfleet weaponry:

DATA

Their phasers, sir -- set on kill.

PICARD (drily)

Thank you, Mister Data. I have heard the sound before.

*Using obscure language.*

Finally, Data, like many EFL students, has an encyclopedic formal vocabulary; when he uses it, however, he may confuse rather than edify his listeners. In the following extract from *Episode 7: Lonely Among Us* (Halperin, 1987), Commander Riker feels compelled to paraphrase Data's utterance to make it more comprehensible:

DATA

If the *Enterprise* were really this fragile, sir, she never would have gotten out of spacedock. Therefore, her systems failures are not endemic to the ship, but are more likely the result of the actions of an unknown adversary.

RIKER

We have a saboteur aboard.

DATA

I believe I said that.

#### *Relevance/Situational appropriateness*

The last type of pragmatic failure involves cases where Data doesn't respond in a relevant manner, or where he fails to recognize that his utterances are inappropriate for certain types of situations (See Appendix B for more examples, particularly dialogues taken from episodes 1, 4, 5, and 12). Regarding relevance, during a particularly critical time, when crew members are being infected by a serious and deadly virus (*Episode 3: The Naked Now*, Fontana & Roddenberry, 1987b), Data asks for clarification of a racy limerick someone has put into the ship's computer. Fortunately, Lieutenant Worf empathizes with Data's plight:

DATA

Confirmed, sir. And there is a rather peculiar limerick being delivered by someone in the shuttlecraft bay.

I am not sure I understand it... (quoting)

There was a young lady from Venus

whose body was shaped like –

PICARD (interrupting)

Captain to Security, come in!

DATA (to Worf)

Did I say something wrong?

WORF (shrugs)

I don't understand their humor either.

In *Episode 4: Code of Honour* (Powers & Baron, 1987), Data misinterprets an unusual command as a joke. Luckily, his friend Lieutenant La Forge helps to disabuse him of that notion:

DATA

Most interesting. (to Geordi) Could this be human joke number six hundred sixty-three?

GEORDI

Negative, Data! It's a captain's order!

With regard to situational appropriateness in the following examples, Data fails to realize that age and suggestions of infirmity, no matter how well intentioned, may be ill received. In the following extract, taken from *Episode 1: Encounter at Farpoint* (Fontana and Roddenberry, 1987a), Admiral McCoy, in a cameo appearance, resents Data's concern about his age:

ADMIRAL

Have you got some reason to want my atoms scattered all over space?

DATA

No sir. But at your age, sir, I thought you shouldn't have to put up with the time and trouble of a shuttlecraft.

(The admiral stops. Facing Data, he draws himself. Up as straight as he can. His voice is crotchety and trembly -- and fiercely stubborn.)

ADMIRAL

My age? Hold it right there, boy, what about my age?

DATA

Sorry, sir. If that subject troubles you...

ADMIRAL

Troubles me? What's so damned troubling about not having died? How old do you think I am?

DATA

One hundred forty-seven years, Admiral. According to Starfleet records.

In the next extract, taken from *Episode 19: Coming of Age* (Fries, 1987), Data attempts to find out how old Dr. Crusher is, with unpleasant results. I say "unpleasant" here, because although he gets cake in return for his "rudeness", it is unlikely that he can taste, *and* therefore enjoy it. The silver lining is that Captain Picard helps Data to understand what has happened:

BEVERLY

Is there something wrong?

DATA

No. I am simply trying to understand the celebration of aging. And how old were you when Wesley was born, Doctor?

(Beverly shoves her piece of cake at him.)

BEVERLY

Have some cake, Data. (She LEAVES him standing there with Picard.)

DATA

I do not understand, sir. Why...

PICARD

You never ask a woman her age, Mister Data.

DATA

I am very confused, sir.

PICARD

Some customs will never change.

Finally, sex, like age, is another taboo subject. After Riker explains the meaning of “aphrodisiac” to Data (*Episode 14: Angel One*, Barry, 1987), who has noticed a bottle of perfume, no one helps Data, who probably has no sense of smell, understand the connection between it and the act of love:

TASHA

Certain cultures consider perfume an aphrodisiac.

DATA

I am unfamiliar with that term.

RIKER

An aphrodisiac is something designed to stimulate or enhance sexual pleasure.

DATA

How does stimulation of the olfactory nerve affect the enjoyment of sex?

(All look to the other to field this one. They are saved by the door. Trent ENTERS.)

### Discussion

An analysis of the data has provided much interesting information. As mentioned above, the number of occurrences of pragmatic failure decreases over time. There may be several explanations for this. One may be that the series’ writers became tired of incorporating the same types of problems into their scripts, and having dealt with sufficient character introduction and development, went on to concentrate more on interesting plot lines. However, I tend to believe that these writers were aware of pragmatics and wished to demonstrate that Data did indeed

learn from his mistakes and evolve pragmatically. The last section of this essay, entitled “An android pilgrim’s progress” addresses this more fully.

As mentioned above, it is significant that Data’s pragmatic failure has the strongest effect where one would hope for the opposite: on his “employers”. There may be several explanations for why Captain Picard and Commander Riker would react most strongly and more often than others, based on not only what Data says, but also on how he says it. Regarding the former, due to the nature of the work hierarchy, Data must report to his superiors; in short, give them information when they require it. However, in his quest to fulfill his duty to the utmost, Data generally gives far more information more than necessary; in a situation where the ship is under attack and lives are at risk, this behaviour may be completely inappropriate. Perhaps because Data looks human and speaks English with grammatical correctness, perhaps they mistake violations of the cooperative principle as implicature; however, this is likely an erroneous assumption, as Data is an android - a walking encyclopedia of sorts - and *is* therefore not capable of implying something other than what he says outright. Basically, Data can be accused of unwitting sociopragmatic failure, which according to Thomas (1983) “stems from cross-culturally different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour” (p. 99).

The violence of some interlocutor’s reactions, especially with regard to Data’s violations of the maxim of manner, in which he appears to be bragging, disparaging others, or underestimating their knowledge all appear to be consistent with what Brown and Levinson (1987) explain about a speaker not caring about or being indifferent to the hearer’s positive face. To his interlocutors, Data’s utterances may give the impression that he doesn’t care about their feelings. This is particularly problematic when these kinds of face-threatening acts are committed against superiors, where there is an implication of more power and distance. Especially galling to them may be Data’s tendency to state the obvious. As Sacks’ (1971)

asserted, “it is a general rule about conversation that it is your business not to tell people what you can suppose they know” (quoted in Coulthard, 1985, p. 79).

Or, perhaps the problem lies with Data’s confident, logical delivery; in short, how he speaks. Scollon and Scollon (1983) citing Bateson (1972) mention that the use of “hesitation and faltering syntax” is viewed positively as deference by American audiences; the same audiences would regard a sure and error-free delivery as a sign of arrogance (p. 174). And, perhaps because Data’s command of English grammar and syntax is faultless, his interlocutors may believe he has the same social understanding as they as to how messages are to be interpreted. According to Gumperz (1982),

By signaling a speech activity, a speaker also signals the social presuppositions in terms of which a message is to be interpreted. Notions of normality differ within what, on other grounds, counts as a single speech community. When this is the case, and especially when participants think they understand each other’s words, miscommunication resulting in mutual frustration can occur. (p. 132).

#### An android’s progress

As shown above, a little less than halfway after his first tour of duty, Data begins to exhibit fewer pragmatic errors. The number of errors begins to decrease dramatically until there are several episodes where no errors occur at all. From the outset of the series, however, Data notices that there are times when his words cause problems, and he learns from his experiences. Following are the six instances of pragmatic “growth” he exhibits throughout the first season on board the *Enterprise*.

#### *Data becomes aware of his propensity to state the obvious*

In *Episode 1: Encounter at Farpoint* (Fontana & Roddenberry, 1987a), Data realizes that his tendencies to vocalize his observations may be annoying to others. However, his apology for doing so wins him approval from Commander Riker, and even an unusual request to continue speaking:

DATA

Most intriguing again. The place that this vessel was firing upon... (abruptly stops; to Riker) Sorry, sir, I seem to be commenting on everything.

RIKER (small smile)

Good. Don't stop it, my friend.

*Data realizes that others don't view his utterances in the same way*

In *Episode 3: The Naked Now* (Fontana & Roddenberry, 1987b), Data suddenly realizes that his comments on his superior ability and textbook appearances may make his interlocutors think he is bragging.

DATA

About that... did the doctor believe I was boasting?

RIKER (dryly)

Probably. (indicates viewer) This may take some time?

DATA

At least several hours. (looks up) But what I said was a statement of fact. Perhaps she will look it up.

RIKER

You can depend on it.

*Data asks for explanations about humor*

In *Episode 4: Code of Honor* (Powers & Baron, 1987), Data, in attempting to understand and master humor, as any foreign language student strives to do, enlists the help of his friend and peer Lieutenant La Forge. Unfortunately, La Forge is not really of much help in this instance. But Data should still be given credit for trying.

DATA

... How do you know when something's funny?

GEORDI

It's not explainable. You just do.

*Data tells Captain Picard how to ask for information more effectively*

In the *Episode 8: Justice* (Black & Thorne, 1987), Data, perhaps tired of Captain Picard's usual irritated responses, bravely and straightforwardly tells the Captain to be more specific about how he puts his requests for information if he wants to get desired responses. The captain, somewhat grudgingly, complies:

PICARD

Data, don't babble!

DATA

"Babble," sir? I am not aware that I ever babble, sir. It may be that from time to time I have considerable information to communicate, and you may question the way I organize it... (Data trails off as he becomes aware of Picard's expression.)

PICARD

Please "organize" it into brief answers to my questions. Do they accept our presence at this planet?

*Data gains confidence and is no longer silenced by interruptions*

In *Episode 14: Angel One* (Barry, 1987), Data decides to put his foot down about rude interruptions while he is doing his best to provide accurate information:

RIKER

Assuming any survivors made it this far. Admittedly, it's the closest planet to the Odin. But the distance we've traveled in the past two days at warp one would've taken the Odin escape pods five months.

DATA

Five months, fourteen days, eleven hours, two minutes –

RIKER

Thank you, Data.

DATA

...and fifty-seven seconds

*Data learns to recognize non-verbal cues and metaphors*

In *Episode 17: When the Bough Breaks* (Shearer, 1987), Data has finally learned to “read” Captain Picard’s facial expressions and make inferences:

PICARD

Oh, they'll negotiate, Number One. Or call it that. They took what they wanted, now they'll rationalize it by throwing us some sort of bone.

(Data is puzzled by this.)

DATA

A bone, sir? In exchange for the children?

(Picard just looks at him.)

DATA (continuing)

Oh. A metaphor.

*Data learns when to stop giving too much unwanted detail*

It seems wonderfully fitting that Data manages to overcome one of his most persistent problems in the final episode of the season, *Episode 26: The Neutral Zone* (Hurley, 1988):

SONNY

The whole deal was a long shot... but I figured... what the hell, might as well give them the dough instead of leaving it to my ex-wives. (to Data) But you know, son, I figured it was just so much hooley.

DATA

Hooey? Accessing. (pause) Ah, as in malarkey... jive... bull... hogwash... an intentional fabrication.

SONNY

There you go, now you got it.

### Conclusion

It appears that Data has had some success in navigating his way through a difficult journey to humanity. As can be seen, he goes from making many pragmatic mistakes and incurring the annoyance of his interlocutors, especially his superiors in the workplace, to becoming a smooth and almost error-free communicator. The kinds of errors that an android are likely to make are similar to those of any foreign-language learner. It is clear that a large lexis and solid knowledge of grammar are, in themselves, insufficient for effective communication. Added to them must be pragmatic awareness.

There are two ways that Starfleet can prevent the kinds of problems encountered by Data and ensure that androids adapt to their new working environments with ease. The first is to discontinue designing androids with a human appearance, and revert to manufacturing the aesthetically unpleasing pile-of-recycled-Electrolux-parts-type-robot, like Robbie from “Lost in Space”. However, since this is unlikely to occur given advances in artificial intelligence and design, the second course of action is recommended: that Starfleet Academy requires all androids to take courses in pragmatics, focusing primarily on Grice’s maxims, situationally-appropriate discussion topics, and face-saving strategies. This is necessary, because, as Dvorak and Horan state: “A machine cannot simply be trained to perform an algorithm; it has to be trained to learn the emotional significance of human communication” (no page). Pragmatic theories will be helpful in this training as, according to Cook (1989),

...in production, learners need to choose the words which most suitably realize their intention, and this does not always entail the most closely related form; in receptions of language, given the **human** [emphasis mine] penchant for indirection, they also need to be able to move from the form to the function” (p. 41).

In a statement that is quite relevant to this situation, Cook continues, “all learners of a foreign language are familiar with the disturbing sensation of understanding every word, and the literal meaning, but somehow missing the point” (p. 41).

#### References

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## Appendix A

### Analysis of Data's Problem Areas

| Episode                             | Data's Interlocutor               | Incident and context  | Interlocutor's Response   | Possible Problem/Maxim Violation   |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|--|
| 1-2<br><i>Encounter at Farpoint</i> | Captain Picard                    | In a friendly chat introducing the mystery of Farpoint Station, Data learns a slang term and offers a too-long list of synonyms in response | An attempt to cut off the speaker, a non-verbal show of annoyance | A failure to understand how much detail is required. (Quantity)  |
| 1-2                                 | Admiral McCoy                     | In escorting the admiral around the ship, Data comments on his advanced age   | Anger, a reprimand  | A failure to understand that age and suggestions of infirmity may be delicate topics in some cultures. (Situational appropriacy)   |
| 1-2                                 | Commander Riker                   | At their first meeting, Data wishes he could whistle like a human   | Discomfort, changing the subject                                  | A failure to understand that excessive flattery may make an interlocutor uncomfortable/a failure to understand that speaking about a "species" in front in the third person of said species may be discomfiting. (Situational appropriacy) |
| 1-2                                 | Commander Riker                   | Data uses a phrase which uses highly formal lexis   | Hesitation, bewilderment  | A failure to understand when formal and informal lexis should be used (Manner – obscure language)  |
| 3<br><i>The Naked Now</i>           | Commander Riker                   | Data persists in correcting a scientific mistake  | Pique   | A failure to understand that some people don't like to be corrected (Manner)   |
| 3                                   | Dr. Crusher                       | Data comments to the doctor after a physical examination  | Surprise  | A failure to understand that, even if true, commenting on one's own superiority may be construed as bragging (Manner)  |
| 3                                   | Commander Riker                   | After learning a new idiom, Data offers a too-long list of synonyms   | Interruption, changing the subject                                | A failure to understand when to cease speaking. (Quantity)   |
| 3                                   | Captain Picard                    | Data asks for the meaning of a word   | Annoyance, a demand to drop the subject                           | (Data innocently asks for clarification of lexis, but the Captain anticipating a flood of synonyms, decides to end the topic at that moment.) (Quantity)   |
| 3                                   | Bridge crew                       | During a critical computer malfunction, Data asks for clarification of a racy limerick  | Interruption  | A failure to understand when some subjects are inappropriate (Situational appropriacy/relevance)   |
| 4<br><i>Code of Honor</i>           | Captain Picard<br>Commander Riker | Data is explaining the term "counting coup" and makes a reference to Picard's ancestral language  | Anger, a request to drop the topic                                | A failure to understand that calling one's ancestral language "obscure" may be perceived as insulting (Manner)   |
| 4                                   | Lieutenant Laforge                | Geordi is trying to explain why Data fails at joke-telling  | Cold response   | A failure to understand what is funny and how to tell a joke. (Situational appropriacy/Relevance)  |
| 4                                   | Lieutenant Laforge                | Data misinterprets an order as a joke   | Shock, slight reprimand   | A failure to understand when people are joking and when they're not. (Situational appropriacy/Relevance)   |
| 4                                   | Captain Picard                    | Data offers up the possible uses of some metal poles  | Polite interruption   | A failure to understand when enough information has been given. (Quantity)   |
| 5<br><i>The Last Outpost</i>        | Captain Picard<br>Commander Riker | Data defines the word "slang"   | Pique   | A failure to accurately assess the knowledge base of one's interlocutor. (Manner)  |
| 5                                   | Captain Picard                    | Data offers up a list of flag colours in response to Captain Picard's utterance   | Annoyance, a strong request to stop talking                       | A failure to understand the point of someone's discourse. (Manner)   |
| 5                                   | Captain Picard                    | Data states the obvious   | Irritation, sarcasm   | A failure to understand when NOT to speak. (Situational appropriacy)   |
| 5                                   | Commander Riker                   | Data attempts to use slang  | Surprise, annoyance, changing the topic                           | A failure to understand when to use slang. (Situational appropriacy/Relevance)   |
| 6<br><i>Where None</i>              | Bridge crew                       | Data gives an estimate on the time  | Irritation, interruption  | A failure to understand when too much detail is unnecessary. (Quantity)  |

|                                     |                                   |  |  |  |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|--|
| <i>Have Gone Before</i>             |                                   | a message should take to reach Starfleet   |  |  |
| 6                                   | Lieutenant Laforge                | Data asks for clarification of an idiomatic expression                           | Being waved off                                    | (Data innocently asks for clarification of lexis, but the Captain anticipating a flood of synonyms, decides to end the topic at that moment.) (Quantity) |
| 7<br><i>Lonely Among Us</i>         | Captain Picard<br>Commander Riker | Data uses overly-formal language to explain a situation                          | He is paraphrased by another                       | A failure to understand when formal and informal lexis should be used (Manner)   |
| 8<br><i>Justice</i>                 | Captain Picard                    | Data is explaining why an entity attempted to contact him                        | Interruption, anger, a request to cease "babbling" | A failure to understand when too much detail is unnecessary. (Quantity)  |
| 8                                   | Captain Picard<br>Doctor Crusher  | Data comments on human material behaviour  | Anger, a request to "shut up"                      | A failure to understand that speaking about a "species" in front in the third person of said species may be discomfiting. (Manner)                       |
| 8                                   | Captain Picard                    | Data asks Captain Picard to be specific about how much detail he should give     | Annoyance  | A failure to understand that people don't want to be reminded of their rude behaviour. (Manner)  |
| 9<br><i>The Battle</i>              | Captain Picard                    | Data interrupts a diplomatic discussion with a point of reality                  | A signal to stop talking                           | A failure to understand when the truth should be kept under wraps. (Relevance)   |
| 9                                   | Commander Riker                   | Data is explaining the term "checksum"   | Interruption, a request for brevity                | A failure to understand when too much detail is unnecessary. (Quantity)  |
| 9                                   | Commander Riker                   | Answers a question about his correct assessment of a situation                   | Annoyed facial expression                          | A failure to understand that, even if true, commenting on one's own ability may be construed as bragging (Manner)  |
| 10<br><i>Hide and Q</i>             |                                   |  |  | No problems  |
| 11<br><i>Haven</i>                  | Captain Picard                    | Data is estimating the time to reach a destination                               | Interruption                                       | A failure to understand when too much detail is unnecessary. (Quantity)  |
| 12<br><i>The Big Good-bye</i>       | Bridge Crew                       | Data is highlighting the consequences of a diplomatic mission by Captain Picard  | Interruption, dismissal of a proposal              | A failure to understand when to drop an uncomfortable topic. (Situational appropriacy/relevance)   |
| 12                                  | Holodeck inhabitants              | Data attempts to explain that Captain Picard is not really a fictional detective | Sarcasm  | A failure to realize what language may be considered insulting. (manner)   |
| 13<br><i>Datalore</i>               |                                   |  |  | No problems  |
| 14<br><i>Angel One</i>              | Commander Riker                   | Data is estimating distance travelled  | Interruption                                       | A failure to understand when too much detail is unnecessary. (Quantity)  |
| 14                                  | Away team                         | Data is puzzled by perfume   | Uncomfortable silence, embarrassment               | A failure to understand which topics are inappropriate. (Situational appropriacy/Relevance)  |
| 15<br><i>11001001</i>               |                                   |  |  | No problems  |
| 16<br><i>Too Short a Season</i>     | Captain Picard                    | Data comments on phaser settings   | Dry sarcasm  | A failure to accurately assess the knowledge base of one's interlocutor. (Manner)  |
| 17<br><i>When the Bough Breaks</i>  |                                   |  |  | No problems  |
| 18<br><i>Home Soil</i>              |                                   |  |  | No problems  |
| 19<br><i>Coming of Age</i>          | Doctor Crusher                    | Data asks her age  | Change of topic                                    | A failure to understand which questions are inappropriate. (Situational appropriacy)   |
| 20<br><i>Heart of Glory</i>         |                                   |  |  | No problems  |
| 21<br><i>The Arsenal of Freedom</i> |                                   |  |  | No problems  |
| 22<br><i>Skin of Evil</i>           |                                   |  |  | No problems  |
| 23<br><i>Symbiosis</i>              |                                   |  |  | No problems  |
| 24                                  | Captain                           | Data is explicating  | Impatience, a                                      | A failure to understand when too much detail is  |

|                                |          |  |                             |   |
|--------------------------------|----------|--|-----------------------------|---|
| <i>We'll Always Have Paris</i> | Picard   | about the work of a particular Doctor Mannheim | request to get to the point | unnecessary. (Quantity)   |
| 25<br><i>Conspiracy</i>        | Computer | Data is talking to himself                     | interruption                | A failure to understand when too much detail is unnecessary. (Quantity) |
| 26<br><i>The Neutral Zone</i>  |          |  |                             | No problems.  |

## Appendix B

### Dialogues used for analysis

| Episode | Dialogue  |
|---------|---|
| 1       | <p>PICARD<br/>The problem, Data, is that another life form built that base. How do I negotiate a friendly agreement for Starfleet to use it while at the same time snoop around finding how and why they built it?</p> <p>DATA<br/>Inquiry ... the word snoop ... ?</p> <p>PICARD<br/>Data, how can you be programmed as a virtual encyclopedia of human information without knowing a simple word like snoop?</p> <p>DATA<br/>Possibility ... a kind of human behavior I was not designed to emulate?</p> <p>PICARD<br/>It means 'to spy, to sneak' ...</p> <p>DATA (interrupting; delighted)<br/>Ah! To seek covertly, to go stealthily, to slink, slither ...</p> <p>PICARD (wanting to cut it off)<br/>Exactly, yes ...</p> <p>DATA<br/>... to glide, creep, skulk, pussyfoot, gumshoe ...<br/>(Data trails off his words, finally becoming aware of the annoyance registering on Picard's face.)</p> |
| 1-2     | <p>ADMIRAL<br/>Have you got some reason to want my atoms scattered all over space?</p> <p>DATA<br/>No sir. But at your age, sir, I thought you shouldn't have to put up with the time and trouble of a shuttlecraft.<br/>(The admiral stops. Facing Data, he draws himself. Up as straight as he can. His voice is crotchety and trembly -- and fiercely stubborn.)</p> <p>ADMIRAL<br/>My age? Hold it right there, boy, what about my age?</p> <p>DATA<br/>Sorry, sir. If that subject troubles you...</p> <p>ADMIRAL<br/>Troubles me? What's so damned troubling about not having died? How old do you think I am?</p> <p>DATA<br/>One hundred forty-seven years, Admiral. According to Starfleet records.</p>  |
| 1-2     | <p>DATA<br/>Marvelous how easily humans do that, sir. I still need much practice.<br/>(Riker, acting uncomfortable, avoids the subject. He hesitates, then):</p> <p>RIKER<br/>There are some puzzles down on the planet that Captain Picard wants answered. He suggests I put you on the away team I'll be using.</p> <p>DATA<br/>I shall endeavor to give satisfaction, sir.<br/>(Riker hesitates, wanting to say something but not sure how to begin.)</p>  |
| 3       | <p>RIKER<br/>You were right. Somebody blew the hatch and they were all sucked out into space..</p> <p>DATA<br/>Correction, sir, blown out.</p> <p>RIKER<br/>Thank you, Data.</p> <p>DATA<br/>A common mistake, sir...</p> <p>RIKER (emphasis)<br/>I know! Thank you, Data</p>   |
| 3       | <p>BEVERLY<br/>If you were any more perfect, Data, I'd write you up in a Starfleet medical textbook.</p> <p>DATA<br/>I am already listed in several biomechanical texts, Doctor.<br/>(Beverly doesn't quite yet know how to take Data. Riker does, and grins.)</p> <p>BEVERLY<br/>Yes... of course.</p>   |
| 3       | <p>DATA<br/>Ah, a human proverb! As in folklore, or an historical allusion, or tribal memories, or...</p> <p>RIKER (interrupting)<br/>That's it! Historical! I remember now that I was reading a history of all the past starships named <i>Enterprise</i>.</p>   |
| 3       | <p>PICARD<br/>Thank you, Counselor. (to Riker)<br/>Number One, our security chief has the equivalent of a snootful.</p> <p>DATA (to Picard)<br/>Inquiry, sir... 'snootful'?</p> <p>PICARD</p>   |

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | Forget it!  |
| 3 | <p>DATA<br/>Confirmed, sir. And there is a rather peculiar limerick being delivered by someone in the shuttlecraft bay. I am not sure I understand it... (quoting)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">There was a young lady from Venus<br/>whose body was shaped like –</p> <p>PICARD (interrupting)<br/>Captain to Security, come in!<br/>DATA (to Worf)<br/>Did I say something wrong?<br/>WORF (shrugs)<br/>I don't understand their humor either.</p>  |
| 4 | <p>DATA<br/>It is a highly structured society in which people live by strict codes of honor. For example, what Lutan has done is similar to what certain American Indians once did, called "counting coup." That's from an obscure language called French –</p> <p>PICARD<br/>A language which for centuries on Earth represented civilization, Mister Data.</p> <p>DATA<br/>Indeed?<br/>RIKER<br/>I suggest you drop it, Mister Data.</p>  |
| 4 | <p>DATA (nods)<br/>Particularly human humor. For example, a man goes to a store to buy some kidneys. He says to the shopkeeper, "I'd like a pound kiddillies, please." The shopkeeper says to him, "You mean kidneys, don't you?" The man says, "I said kiddillies, diddle I?" (Long silence.)</p> <p>GEORDI<br/>It's too old. And you didn't tell it very well.</p> <p>DATA<br/>... How do you know when something's funny?</p> <p>GEORDI<br/>It's not explainable. You just do.</p> <p>DATA<br/>Perhaps it is you, Geordi. Including the kiddillies, I've learned six hundred sixty-two jokes, and you haven't... (Data stops, realizing Geordi is laughing.)</p> <p>GEORDI (still chuckling)<br/>"Including the kiddillies!" Now that's funny.</p> <p>DATA<br/>It was not meant as a joke! The tongue slipped!</p> |
| 4 | <p>DATA<br/>Most interesting. (to Geordi) Could this be human joke number six hundred sixty-three?</p> <p>GEORDI<br/>Negative, Data! It's a captain's order!</p>  |
| 4 | <p>PICARD<br/>What about those lengths of metal in the yard outside?</p> <p>DATA<br/>Uncertain, sir. However, joined together they would make a rectangle or square enclosing one hundred twenty-one square meters. If put end-to-end vertically, they would make a pole forty-four meters high, or two of twenty-two meters, or...</p> <p>PICARD<br/>Thank you, Data.</p>  |
| 5 | <p>DATA<br/>I'm not sure, sir. That entry was only identified as "slang", terms or expressions which typify everyday language of...</p> <p>PICARD I know what slang is, Data. I just haven't heard of that particular saying.</p>   |
| 5 | <p>PICARD<br/>Yes, I understand the allusion. (nods) Colors that once identified nations during the time when they competed against each other. Red, white and blue for the United States... (muses) Whereas the French oddly used the same colors in the order of blue, white, and red...</p> <p>DATA<br/>... and the German nation black, red and gold; the Italians green, white and red; the British...</p> <p>PICARD (annoyed)<br/>Enough, Data!<br/>DATA Sir, it was you who...<br/>PICARD (snaps)<br/>We're discussing the Ferengi, Data!</p>  |
| 5 | <p>DATA<br/>Given what is occurring to our vessel, Captain, their weapons could be vastly superior to ours.<br/>(Picard has to fight off irritation again.)<br/>PICARD Yes, Data. That seems a reasonable assumption.</p>   |
| 5 | <p>RIKER<br/>Unfortunately. (indicates trees) What do you make of these?</p> <p>DATA<br/>Crystalline, quite inert. "Nothing to write home about."</p> <p>RIKER (delayed take)<br/>Excuse me?</p> <p>DATA<br/>That is slang, sir. (concern) I did use it correctly, did I not?</p>   |

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | RIKER (why me?)<br>Let's find the others...   |
| 6 | GEORDI<br>Message on this has been transmitted to Starfleet, sir.<br>DATA<br>Which, traveling subspace, they should receive in fifty-one years, ten months...<br>PICARD(interrupting; irritated)<br>Mister Data !<br>DATA<br>Sir?   |
| 6 | GEORDI<br>Our position reads exactly what it was before this sleigh-ride began, sir.<br>DATA Sleigh-ride?<br>(Picard waves Data off.)<br>GEORDI Or whatever you want to call it, Data. I don't have a name for it.  |
| 7 | DATA<br>If the <i>Enterprise</i> were really this fragile, sir, she never would have gotten out of spacedock. Therefore, her systems failures are not endemic to the ship, but are more likely the result of the actions of an unknown adversary.<br>RIKER<br>We have a saboteur aboard.<br>DATA<br>I believe I said that.  |
| 8 | DATA<br>I was an excellent choice for them, Captain. They could communicate with me quite... (shakes head) ... I was about to say quite "easily," but there was nothing "easy" about it. Fortunately, they stopped short of overloading my circuitry...<br>PICARD (interrupting)<br>You're saying they. It is a vessel of some sort...<br>DATA (interrupting)<br>Definitely not a single "entity" if that's what you mean, sir... although they know the Edo worship them as a "God thing."<br>PICARD<br>They know.?<br>DATA (nods)<br>They recognize that this is quite expected and harmless at the present Edo stage of evolution, and...<br>PICARD (interrupting)<br>What kind of vessel?<br>DATA (without pause)<br>It is perhaps not what we'd understand as a "vessel," sir. The dimensions this one occupies allows them to... well, to be in several places at once. But they consider this entire star cluster to be theirs, and it was probably unwise of us to attempt to place a human colony in this area. Of course, there are three thousand four other planets in this general star cluster in which we...<br>PICARD<br>Data, don't babble!<br>DATA<br>"Babble," sir? I am not aware that I ever babble, sir. It may be that from time to time I have considerable information to communicate, and you may question the way I organize it... (Data trails off as he becomes aware of Picard's expression.)<br>PICARD<br>Please "organize" it into brief answers to my questions. Do they accept our presence at this planet? |
| 8 | DATA<br>Most interesting, sir. The emotion of motherhood, compared to all others felt by humans...<br>(Beverly whirls on Data now.)<br>BEVERLY<br>SHUT UP! (She DASHES angrily from the room. Data looks from Picard, to her, to Picard. Then he nods):<br>DATA<br>You were right, sir. I do tend to babble.  |
| 8 | PICARD<br>Let's talk some more, Data.<br>DATA<br>Yes sir. What level of communication? (Picard gives him an annoyed look.)<br>PICARD<br>Any. My apologies for saying you babbled.   |
| 9 | BOK (beat)<br>Such mistakes happen in space.<br>DATA (to Picard)<br>Hardly a "mistake," sir. Your report showed it deliberately attacked...<br>(Picard is signaling Data to forget it)  |
| 9 | DATA<br>By comparing the main Stargazer computer log with Captain Picard's personal log, I have found "checksum" discrepancies, sir.<br>RIKER<br>What does that mean?<br>DATA<br>All information is time-coded by entry, and the bits when totaled produce an aggregate amount which...<br>RIKER (interrupts)<br>I don't want a lesson in computer science! Bottom line?  |
| 9 | RIKER (fast)<br>In our captain's words... make it so! Set sensors, tractor beam... (waiting) I hope you're right, Data...<br>DATA   |

|    |   |
|----|---|
|    | No question of it, sir...<br>(Riker throws him an annoyed look.)  |
| 11 | PICARD<br>Unfortunately, we had believed the last Tarellian vessel was destroyed eight years ago by the Alcyones. (to Data) Exactly when will they reach Haven?<br>DATA<br>Exactly thirteen hours, nine minutes, twenty-one...<br>PICARD (interrupting; to all)<br>Which will create a very difficult problem for the <i>Enterprise</i> at that time. Our treaty here requires us to protect Haven from alien threats ... and a plague ship certainly qualifies as that. But Federation policy requires us to assist life forms in need ... which qualifies the Tarellians too. I'll want you to help me find some answers by then. |
| 12 | DATA (straightforward)<br>Yes. If, on the other hand, the captain makes even the slightest error –<br>TASHA<br>The captain is well aware of the gravity of the situation, Commander.<br>DATA<br>I have located a history tape of the last Federation starship to come in contact with the Jarada. It graphically demonstrates what happened when that captain offended them.<br>TROI<br>The captain is familiar with that, Data.<br>DATA<br>Should we not run it?<br>PICARD<br>It's not necessary. Meeting adjourned.   |
| 12 | DATA (to Redblock)<br>He speaks the truth, sir. From your point of view, he is only a fiction, a facsimile, a knock-off, a cheap imitation.<br>PICARD<br>Thank you, Mister Data.<br>DATA (to Picard, chagrined)<br>Sorry sir, that did not come out quite the way I intended.   |
| 14 | RIKER<br>Assuming any survivors made it this far. Admittedly, it's the closest planet to the Odin. But the distance we've traveled in the past two days at warp one would've taken the Odin escape pods five months.<br>DATA<br>Five months, fourteen days, eleven hours, two minutes –<br>RIKER<br>Thank you, Data.<br>DATA<br>-- and fifty-seven seconds.   |
| 14 | TASHA<br>Certain cultures consider perfume an aphrodisiac.<br>DATA<br>I am unfamiliar with that term.<br>RIKER<br>An aphrodisiac is something designed to stimulate or enhance sexual pleasure.<br>DATA<br>How does stimulation of the olfactory nerve affect the enjoyment of sex?<br>(All look to the other to field this one. They are saved by the door. Trent ENTERS.)   |
| 16 | DATA<br>Their phasers, sir -- set on kill.<br>PICARD (drily)<br>Thank you, Mister Data. I have heard the sound before.  |
| 19 | BEVERLY<br>Is there something wrong?<br>DATA<br>No. I am simply trying to understand the celebration of aging. And how old were you when Wesley was born, Doctor?<br>(Beverly shoves her piece of cake at him.)<br>BEVERLY<br>Have some cake, Data. (She LEAVES him standing there with Picard.)<br>DATA<br>I do not understand, sir. Why...<br>PICARD<br>You never ask a woman her age, Mister Data.<br>DATA<br>I am very confused, sir.<br>PICARD<br>Some customs will never change.  |
| 24 | DATA<br>About this particular work, sir. Professor Manheim is renowned for his work in perfecting subspace communications, and thermodynamics, but those particular achievements seem to have no bearing on what he is trying to do on Vandor.<br>PICARD (impatient.)<br>To the point, Mister Data.   |
| 25 | COMPUTER VOICE<br>Directions unclear. Please repeat request.<br>DATA  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | That was not a request. I was simply... talking to myself. (smiles, pleased) A human idiosyncrasy triggered by fascination with a particular set of facts. Or sometimes brought about by senility. Or, used as a means of weighing information before reaching a conclusion. Or, as a –<br>COMPUTER VOICE<br>-- Thank you, sir. I comprehend. |
|--|---|

Signs of Progress

| Episode | Incident  |  |
|---------|---|--|
| 1-2     | Data becomes aware of his propensity to state the obvious   | DATA<br>Most intriguing again. The place that this vessel was firing upon... (abruptly stops; to Riker)<br>Sorry, sir, I seem to be commenting on everything.<br>RIKER (small smile)<br>Good. Don't stop it, my friend.  |
| 3       | Data wonders if the doctor thinks he was bragging. (However, he continues to be puzzled by her response). | DATA<br>About that... did the doctor believe I was boasting?<br>RIKER (dryly)<br>Probably. (indicates viewer)<br>This may take some time?<br>DATA<br>At least several hours. (looks up)<br>But what I said was a statement of fact. Perhaps she will look it up.<br>RIKER<br>You can depend on it.   |
| 4       | Data asks for explanations about humour   | DATA<br>... How do you know when something's funny?<br>GEORDI<br>It's not explainable. You just do.  |
| 8       | Data tells Captain Picard how to ask for information more effectively                                     | PICARD<br>Data, don't babble!<br>DATA<br>"Babble," sir? I am not aware that I ever babble, sir. It may be that from time to time I have considerable information to communicate, and you may question the way I organize it... (Data trails off as he becomes aware of Picard's expression.)<br>PICARD<br>Please "organize" it into brief answers to my questions. Do they accept our presence at this planet? |
| 14      | Data is no longer silenced by interruptions   | RIKER<br>Assuming any survivors made it this far. Admittedly, it's the closest planet to the Odin. But the distance we've traveled in the past two days at warp one would've taken the Odin escape pods five months.<br>DATA<br>Five months, fourteen days, eleven hours, two minutes –<br>RIKER<br>Thank you, Data.<br>DATA<br>-- and fifty-seven seconds.  |
| 17      | Data has learned to recognize metaphor  | PICARD<br>Oh, they'll negotiate, Number One. Or call it that. They took what they wanted, now they'll rationalize it by throwing us some sort of bone. (Data is puzzled by this.)<br>DATA<br>A bone, sir? In exchange for the children?<br>(Picard just looks at him.)<br>DATA (continuing)<br>Oh. A metaphor.   |
| 26      | Data learns when to stop giving too much unwanted detail  | SONNY<br>The whole deal was a long shot... but I figured... what the hell, might as well give them the dough instead of leaving it to my ex-wives. (to Data) But you know, son, I figured it was just so much hooey.<br>DATA<br>Hooey? Accessing. (pause) Ah, as in malarkey... jive... bull... hogwash... an intentional fabrication.<br>SONNY<br>There you go, now you got it.                               |