1 Conversational implicature?

The goal of this series of questions is to assess the reinforceability and cancellability tests for conversational implicatures. I'm hoping that working through these questions gives you a better sense for how the tests work, and I am planning to aggregate the responses to see how stable the judgments are across everyone in the class.

For each question, there is a sentence and a target meaning. For each test (reinforceability, cancellability), you should provide the following:

• The example that results from applying the test to the sentence to assess the status of the target meaning.

• A judgment as to whether the example supports or challenges the claim that the target meaning, where conveyed, is a conversational implicature.

Don't worry if the tests give conflicting results; you can treat each as independent of the other.

1.1 Cheap [1.5 points]

Sentence: The concert tickets are cheap.
Target meaning: the concert tickets are free

1.2 Exceptives [1.5 points]

Sentence: Everyone except for Dr. Samuels has an alibi.
Target meaning: Dr. Samuels does not have an alibi

1.3 Almost [1.5 points]

Sentence: Almost every student did the homework.
Target meaning: some students did not do the homework

1.4 Refute [1.5 points]

Sentence: Sam refuted the hypothesis that Jesse stole the cookies.
Target meaning: Jesse didn’t steal the cookies
2  A not-so-subtle scalar implicature  [4 points]

Note: this is not required for people doing a final project. Final projectors should answer the next question instead.

Read through the following example, paying special attention to the bold-faced sentence in Dwight’s utterance:

(1)  Source: The television show The Office (U.S. version), episode 3.12: ‘Traveling salesmen’.

Context: Dwight has a pathological love for the company. He openly scorns some of his colleagues. But he gets along with a few, and he had a secret romance with one of them. In this episode, he was forced to resign (only to return shortly after). The following is his resignation letter, which he abruptly read aloud to the entire office:

Utterance:

Although I love this company more than almost anything in the world, I have decided to step down from my post and spend more time with my family. I do not fear the unknown. I will meet my new challenges head on, and I will succeed. And I will laugh in the faces of those who doubt me. It’s been a pleasure working with some of you, and I will not forget those of you soon. But remember, while today it is me, we all shall fall. In other words, I’m quitting.

The underlining of some reflects Dwight’s focal stress on that word. Identify the central conversational implicature of Dwight’s utterance of this sentence, and then give a derivation of this implicature. (Examples of such derivations are given on the ‘Conversational implicatures’ handout.) It might be useful to look at an alternative, less marked sentence that Dwight might have used here.

Final project task  [4 points]

Note: this problem is required only for people doing a final project. Everyone else should answer question 2 instead.

Provide a two-paragraph description of your project idea and your current work plan. This can be informal and preliminary. The goal is to start a discussion with Chris.