1 Background

It is common, in investigations of linguistic meaning, to need to determine whether a given meaning is a semantic entailment of some kind or has the more tentative status of a conversational implicature. Section 3 of the ‘Conversational implicature’ handout discusses a number of important properties of conversational implicatures. The following are especially useful for identifying conversational implicatures in the wild:

- **Cancellation**: encoding semantically the negation of the target meaning. If the result seems consistent, then the target meaning is likely an implicature.

- **Suspension**: encoding semantically a lack of knowledge about the truth of the target meaning. If the result seems consistent, then the target meaning is likely an implicature.

- **Re-enforcement**: encoding semantically the target meaning itself. If the result seems non-redundant, then the target meaning is likely an implicature.

For re-enforcement, it is vital that one states exactly the target meaning. If one states something that entails the target meaning — something more informative than the target meaning — then the result will not seem redundant even for semantic entailments, because of the additional information.

2 Examples

1. **Example**: Some of the puppies escaped.
   a. **Target meaning**: not all of the puppies escaped
   b. **Cancellation**: Some — in fact all! — of the puppies escaped.
   c. **Suspension**: Some, maybe even all, of the puppies escaped.
   d. **Re-enforcement**: Some, but not all, of the puppies escaped.

2. **Example**: The play was good.
   a. **Target meaning**: the play was not excellent
   b. **Cancellation**: The play was good — in fact, it was excellent.
   c. **Suspension**: The play was good, maybe even excellent.
   d. **Re-enforcement**: The play was good, but not excellent.
Example: Everyone except Dr. Samuels has an alibi.

a. **Target meaning**: Dr. Samuels does not have an alibi
b. **Cancellation**: ??Everyone except Dr. Samuels has an alibi — and we can confirm that he does too.
c. **Suspension**: Everyone except Dr. Samuels has an alibi — let’s find out whether he does too.
d. **Re-enforcement**: Everyone except Dr. Samuels has an alibi — Samuels does not!

### 2.1 Target meanings that seem to be conversational implicatures

Example: The food was palatable.

a. **Target meaning**: the food was not delicious

b. **Cancellation**:

c. **Suspension**:

d. **Re-enforcement**:

Example: Carol tried to win the race.

a. **Target meaning**: Carol did not win the race

b. **Cancellation**:

c. **Suspension**:

d. **Re-enforcement**:
2.2 Target meanings that seem not to be conversational implicatures

(6) **Example**: Carol failed to win the race.
   a. **Target meaning**: *Carol did not win the race*

   b. **Cancellation**:

   c. **Suspension**:

   d. **Re-enforcement**:

(7) **Example**: Carol managed to win the race
   a. **Target meaning**: *Carol won the race*

   b. **Cancellation**:

   c. **Suspension**:

   d. **Re-enforcement**:
2.3 Unclear cases

(8) **Example:** Sam refuted the hypothesis that Jesse stole the cookies.
    a. **Target meaning:** Jesse didn’t steal the cookies
    b. **Cancellation:**
    c. **Suspension:**
    d. **Re-enforcement:**

(9) **Example:** Carol wishes that she could juggle
    a. **Target meaning:** Carol cannot juggle.
    b. **Cancellation:**
    c. **Suspension:**
    d. **Re-enforcement:**