Diagnosing different kinds of meaning

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1 Diagnostic chart

Is the meaning cancellable or at least suspendible?

No

Entailed

Is the meaning a speaker commitment of the negated version of the sentence (Hypothesis N; ‘Presupposition’, §5.1)?

No

At-issue entailment

Yes

Conversational implicature

Our theory leads us to expect it to be reinforceable and calculable as well.¹

Is the meaning a speaker commitment of the interrogative version of the sentence (Hypothesis Q; ‘Presupposition’, §5.2) and of the conditional version where the sentence is the antecedent clause (Hypothesis C; ‘Presupposition’, §5.3).

Can the meaning be backgrounded without creating a redundancy (‘Presupposition’ §4.1)?

No

Conventional implicature

Yes

Presupposition

¹ Connotations are likely to fall into this category, but that might be inappropriate. In his 2014 Stanford thesis Pragmatics and the Social Meaning of Determiners, Eric Acton argues for an expanded Gricean framework with associative meanings that would cover connotations.
2 How to apply the tests

- **Cancellation**: encoding semantically the *negation* of the target meaning.
- **Suspension**: encoding semantically a *lack of knowledge* about the truth of the target meaning.
- **Re-enforcement**: encoding semantically the target meaning itself.
- **Presupposition tests**: the question is whether the speaker remains committed to the supposed presupposition if the original sentence is (i) negated; (ii) turned into a question; (iii) used as the antecedent of a conditional sentence. If the resulting sentences require that the speaker is committed to the supposed presupposition, that’s evidence that the supposed presupposition is indeed a presupposition. For the conditional-antecedent test, the content of the consequent shouldn’t matter.

3 Examples

(1) Some cyclists wore spandex.
   Meaning of interest: *not all cyclists wore spandex*.
   a. Some, in fact all, cyclists wore spandex. (cancellable ⇒ Conversational implicature)

(2) Kim managed to finish the exam.
   Meaning of interest: *Kim finished the exam*
   a. # Kim managed to finish the exam, but she didn’t finish it. (not cancellable ⇒ Entailed)
   b. Kim didn’t manage to finish the exam.
      (not a speaker commitment of the negated version ⇒ At-issue)

(3) Sandy stopped smoking.
   Meaning of interest: *Sandy smoked in the past*
   a. # Sandy stopped smoking — in fact, she never smoked. (not cancellable ⇒ Entailed)
   b. Sandy didn’t stop smoking.
      (speaker commitment of the negated version ⇒ Not at-issue)
   c. Sandy smoked in the past, but she stopped smoking.
      (can be backgrounded ⇒ Presupposition)

(4) Richard met Barbara, who is a linguist.
   Meaning of interest: *Barbara is a linguist*
   a. # Richard met Barbara, who is a linguist, but Barbara is not a linguist. (not cancellable ⇒ Entailed)
   b. Richard didn’t meet Barbara, who is a linguist.
      (speaker commitment of the negated version ⇒ Not at-issue)
   c. # Barbara is a linguist and David is a philosopher. Richard met Barbara, who is a linguist.
      (redundant when backgrounded ⇒ Conventional implicature)