Using our tests for different kinds of meaning

Chris Potts, Ling 130a/230a: Introduction to semantics and pragmatics, Winter 2024

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1   Presupposition tests

For each of the following, use Hypothesis N and Hypothesis Q to begin to see whether each of the target meanings is entailed or presupposed.

(1)   Bart managed to pass the test.

    a.   Negated version: **Bart didn't manage to pass the test.**

    b.   Interrogative version: **Did Bart manage to pass the test?**

    c.   Target meaning: Bart passed the test   ___ presupposed   **X** at-issue   ___ neither

(2)   It is noteworthy that Bart passed the test.

    a.   Negated version: **It was not noteworthy that Bart passed the test.**

    b.   Interrogative version: **Was it noteworthy that Bart passed the test?**

    c.   Target meaning: Bart passed the test   **X** presupposed   ___ at-issue   ___ neither

(3)   Sue believes that it is Tuesday.

    a.   Negated version: **Sue doesn't believe that it is Tuesday.**

    b.   Interrogative version: **Does Sue believe that it is Tuesday?**

    c.   Target meaning: it is Tuesday   ___ presupposed   ___ at-issue   **X** neither

(4)   Bart learned that Lisa passed the test.

    a.   Negated version: **Bart didn't learn that Lisa passed the test.**

    b.   Interrogative version: **Did Bart learn that Lisa passed the test.**

    c.   Lisa passed the test   ___ presupposed   ___ at-issue   **X** neither

(5)   Bart learned that our solar system has nine planets.

    a.   Negated version: **Bart didn't learn that our solar system has nine planets**

    b.   Interrogative version: **Did Bart learn that our solar system has nine planets?**

    c.   Target meaning: our solar system has nine planets

                                       ___ presupposed   ___ at-issue   **X** neither

2   Diagnosing different kinds of meaning

The handout 'Diagnosing different kinds of meaning' provides a flow-chart for classifying meanings as variously at-issue, conventionally implicated, presupposed, or conversationally implicated. Use that framework to classify meaning p in the following examples. Section 3 of the handout provides model answers.

(6)   Sam confirmed that Carol ran the marathon.

    $p =$ Carol ran the marathon.

    a. $^{\#}$**Sam confirmed that Carol ran the marathon, but Carol did not run the marathon.**
       (not cancellable $\Rightarrow$ Entailed)

    b.   **Sam didn't confirm that Carol ran the marathon.**
       (speaker commitment of the negated version $\Rightarrow$ Not at-issue)

    c.   **Carol ran the marathom, and Sam confirmed that she did.**
       (can be backgrounded $\Rightarrow$ Presupposition)

(7)   Carol proved that she was in Peru when the crime occurred.

   p = Carol was in Peru when the crime occurred.

   a. $^{\#}$**Carol proved that she was in Peru when the crime occurred, but she was not in Peru at that time.**
       (not cancellable ⇒ Entailed)

   b. **Carol didn't prove that she was in Peru when the crime occurred.**
       (not a speaker commitment of the negated version ⇒ At-issue)

(8)   Carol ran the race again.

   p = Carol ran the race at a previous time

   a. $^{\#}$**Carol ran the race again, but she had not run it at a previous time.**
       (not cancellable ⇒ Entailed)

   b. **Carol didn't run the race again.**
       (speaker commitment of the negated version ⇒ Not at-issue)

   c. **Carol ran the race at a previous time, and she ran it again.**
       (can be backgrounded ⇒ Presupposition)

(9)   Carol attempted to hide her feelings.

   p = Carol hid her feelings

   a. **Carol attempted to hide her feelings, but she did not hid them.   (cancellable ⇒ Conversational implicature)**

(10)   Carol used to be a vegetarian.

   p = Carol is not currently a vegetarian

   a. **Carol used to be a vegetarian, and she still is.   (cancellable ⇒ Conversational implicature)**