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:

    b.   Interrogative version:

    c.   Target meaning: Bart passed the test   ___presupposed   ___at-issue   ___neither

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

    a.   Negated version:

    b.   Interrogative version:

    c.   Target meaning: Bart passed the test   ___presupposed   ___at-issue   ___neither

(3)   Sue believes that it is Tuesday.

    a.   Negated version:

    b.   Interrogative version:

    c.   Target meaning: it is Tuesday   ___presupposed   ___at-issue   ___neither

(4)   Bart learned that Lisa passed the test.

    a.   Negated version:

    b.   Interrogative version:

    c.   Lisa passed the test   ___presupposed   ___at-issue   ___neither

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

    a.   Negated version:

    b.   Interrogative version:

    c.   Target meaning: our solar system has nine planets
                                         ___presupposed   ___at-issue   ___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.

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

       p = Carol was in Peru when the crime occurred.

(8)   Carol ran the race again.

       p = Carol ran the race at a previous time

(9)   Carol attempted to hide her feelings.

       p = Carol hid her feelings

(10)   Carol used to be a vegetarian.

       p = Carol is not currently a vegetarian