

Factivity Revisited

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Abstract The goal of this presentation is to explore the factivity of factive verbs, with special emphasis on the verbs *know* and *regret*. The hypothesis put forward here is that the factivity related to *know* and the factivity related to *regret* are two different phenomena, as the former is a semantic implication (an entailment) that is licensed by the conventional meaning of *know*, while the latter is a purely pragmatic phenomenon that arises conversationally. This might seem counterintuitive with respect to Karttunen's (1971) well-known distinction between *true factives* (that is, emotive factives such as *regret*) and *semifactives* (that is, cognitive factives such as *realize* and *discover*, the inchoative predicates of *know*). Karttunen's distinction, however, was based on the assumption that if someone regrets that *p*, then *p must* be true. I argue that this claim is not tenable. Moreover, Karttunen's distinction was grounded on projection tests. As shown in recent works (Beaver 2010, Simons *et al.* forthcoming, Tonhauser *et al.* 2013), these tests do not address the level of sentence meaning, but the utterance's information structure: they are not a diagnostic for presuppositionality, but rather for the discourse status of some implications. In other words, Karttunen's projective tests on factives just show that it is easier to embed asserted – as opposed to presupposed – propositions, that is, propositions expressing “at issue content”, under cognitive factives. These tests tell nothing about the relation between the sentence and the embedded proposition. Hence, I argue that by focussing on projection tests a fundamental distinction has been overlooked in the literature, the distinction between two different relations that cognitive and emotive factives give rise to at the level of sentence meaning.

Keywords – Factivity, *Know*, *Regret*, Semantic implication, Pragmatic implication, Projection

References

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