

Hypothesising Annotation Guidelines

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Key Terms

- **Commitment:** By saying anything, you *commit* to certain things. If Hannah says *I'll do the washing* to Jessica, there is a social aspect: she commits to doing the washing. Should she break this commitment, there would be a social cost (e.g., Jessica would be annoyed). Commitment is a scale, where someone can be more or less committed to what they've said. There are different kinds of commitments: you can commit to doing the washing, but you also commit *propositionally*, where you commit to defending what you've said: one commitment is the action itself, and the other is to words you've uttered.
- **Asserting:** When someone asserts, they put forward a proposition, or claim, that they have justification for (even if that remains unsaid). They are taking on a responsibility that the claim is true. On the commitment scale, assertion is at the top, where the speaker is liable (in a social sense) if the claim is actually false. Whatever evidence or reason they have for the claim, they consider it to be enough to assert it.
- **Hypothesising:** When someone hypothesises, they are putting a proposition forward as a possibility. Whatever evidence or reason they have for hypothesising the claim is not enough (not sufficient) to make an assertion. On the commitment scale, it is less than assertion. There is more commitment from the speaker, however, than something like *guessing* (where you don't need any evidence). Since the speaker isn't committing to the truth of the proposition, they are (socially) liable to a lesser degree. They may be asked why their claim is a possibility, or why it should be considered, but not to defend the truth of it. Context is crucial: out of context, the claim can be differently interpreted.

Tests

In order to test the claim to determine if it's a hypothesis or assertion, there are two tests. They're used to check for the speaker's level of commitment. **For each sentence that you consider, use both tests.** Although the language used can be a tell for when someone is hypothesising, it is not the only, nor deciding, factor. Someone saying *I feel X* may, at first glance, appear to hedge what they're saying (as they could simply say *X*), but this doesn't automatically mean they're hypothesising. **Assertions of uncertainty exist, and are not hypothesising.** A speaker may want to assert the possibility of something, rather than hypothesise about it. The following two tests are used to draw out the commitment of the speakers, through intuition of the annotator, so that there isn't a focus on the language used, but rather the commitment behind it.

An important step for each test is to reconstruct each proposition as you would in analysis; e.g., take out the modal verbs. For example, the sentence you're looking at reads: *it could be that Cherie is behind this*. This reconstructs to "Cherie is behind this". Then use the reconstructed sentence, considering context, and apply the tests. As hypothesising is less demanding than assertion (less evidence, putting forward possibility not truth), **only one test needs to be positive for it to be deemed as hypothesising. If this is the case, make sure to apply step 2 of Test 2.** These tests are about determining whether or not the claim is an assertion or a hypothesis, but in step 2 of Test 2, the claim may not be a hypothesis, but instead *conjecture*. Should this be the case, annotate the text as *Conjecturing*.

Test 1: Willingness for Alternative

By putting forward an alternative to a speaker's claim, you test how willing they are to consider this alternative. If they asserted, and therefore uttered something they have justification to consider true (e.g., *it's raining outside*), they are unlikely to consider an alternative (e.g., it's not raining outside). However, if they're hypothesising, they are more likely to consider alternative hypotheses. Therefore, what is the speaker's probable response: more willing to consider the alternative (*hypothesising*), or not (*asserting*)? Act as a devil's advocate, where you don't have a stake in the conversation, but simply want to know more. You do not need to come up

with an alternative (*it's not raining outside, it's snowing outside, it's sunny outside*, etc) but use the abstract idea of *not the claim*.

Speaker: *claim*

Devil's Advocate: *not the claim*

Is the speaker more probable to say...

Speaker: I see; maybe it's *not the claim*

HYPOTHESISING

or

Speaker: No, it's *claim*

ASSERTING

Test 2: Enough Said

This test also asks you to imagine an abstract concept, this time *justification*, and asks you to imagine a speaker's response to whether or not you need more justification to reach the same conclusion they did.

As an example: someone asserted, and therefore uttered something true (e.g., *it's raining outside*), so you ask for justification and they provide it (*I can see it through the window*), it would be strange for you to further prompt them for more justification, so their response to your question would probably be negative (*no, what I've just said is enough*). An example for hypothesising however, would go differently. Someone hypothesises that *Chris is the culprit*, you ask for justification and receive it: *he's got the motivation*. Asking for further justification would be acceptable, and the speaker would be more likely to say that more justification is needed. You don't need to imagine the justification, just imagine that it exists and work from there. This test is context dependant: with the above example, they may have asserted and they believe their justification is enough. You must gauge their level of commitment from the context, their language use, and how they converse in the scenario.

Speaker: *claim*

Devil's Advocate: *why?*

Speaker: because *justification*

Devil's Advocate: Do I need additional justification to conclude *claim*?

Is the speaker more probable to say...

Speaker: Yes, *evidence* isn't quite enough

HYPOTHESISING

or

Speaker: No, *evidence* is enough

ASSERTING

Addendum to Test 2

Checking for either full commitment or anything less than does, however, bring with it problems, since it's not only *hypothesising* that operates like this (requiring less commitment, having less justification, are more about putting forward a possibility than the truth). Conjecturing, speculating, and guessing are all examples. Someone who guesses, rather than hypothesises, has less evidence behind their proposition. They're making leaps of logic, or connecting dots, rather than putting forward a considered possibility. Therefore, we add an addendum to Test 2. If they would be able to provide more justification or think what they've given is enough, they're hypothesising; however, if not, then they're conjecturing.

Speaker: Yes, *evidence* isn't quite enough

Is the speaker more probable to say...

Speaker: ... so here's some more evidence

HYPOTHESISING

or

Speaker: ... but I don't have any more

CONJECTURING

Worked Through Example

- (1) *Female 1*: Like, we're definitely missing something, but also, I feel like it's him.
Female 2: Yeah. I feel like it's him, but it's like maybe too obviously him.
Female 1: Uh-huh, yeah.
Female 2: Because, like, if we're also considering Cherie, she did go and then turn on the music, and like it's a bit strange. It's suspicious. She could have done that on purpose, like, like creating an alibi. For her, or maybe for Chris.

First utterance

Female 1's "*we're definitely missing something*" is quite clearly an assertion, but her "*I feel like it's him*" is less clear. So, we put the two tests to it. First, we strip the sentence back to it's basics: from "I feel like it's him" to "it's him".

- (2) **Test 1:**
Speaker: "it's him" (*claim*)
Devil's Advocate: *not the claim*
What's the more probable reply? Willingness to consider *not the claim* or sticking to their *claim*?

The surrounding text gives us some hints: she says how they're "missing something". This shows that the speaker is aware of something lacking in her argument. Therefore, would be more willing to consider to alternatives. Test 1 can then be answered that it is more likely that the speaker would consider alternatives. Therefore, this is *Hypothesising*.

Although only one test is necessary to test positive for *Hypothesising* for it to be annotated as such (due to it's lower stipulations than asserting), we still go through Test 2 as it is used to determine whether we use the addendum to Test 2.

- (3) **Test 2:**
Speaker: "it's him" (*claim*)
Devil's Advocate: *why?*
Speaker: because *justification*
Devil's Advocate: Do I need additional justification to conclude *claim*?
What's the more probable reply? It is more likely that the speaker says the *evidence* is not enough, or more likely to say that it is enough?

Once again looking for context, we can note the same that was used for the previous test. Female 1 says they're missing something, clearly signifying that additional justification would be necessary. Again, we can conclude *Hypothesising* here. Lastly, we need to check if this is indeed hypothesising or conjecturing with the addendum.

- (4) **Addendum to Test 2:**
Speaker: Yes, *evidence* isn't quite enough
Is the speaker more likely to give some evidence, or more likely to say they don't have any more?

Looking at the context, it reads like they have some evidence of what Female 1 is talking about. They clearly don't have everything, but they also think they have enough to conclude that it was "him". This situation reads like Female 1 would be more likely to offer some more evidence, rather than say she doesn't have any more. *Hypothesising*, and not *Conjecturing* then.

Ultimately, the sentence "it's him" is *Hypothesising*.

Second utterance

The next utterance in question is "it's like maybe too obviously him". Stripping this back, this becomes "it's too obviously him".

- (5) **Test 1:**
Speaker: "it's too obviously him" (*claim*)
Devil's Advocate: *not the claim*
What's the more probable reply? Willingness to consider *not the claim* or sticking to their *claim*?

Firstly, Female 2 agreed with what Female 1 said, and said something very similar. That she thinks "it's him", but then adds that it's too obvious. Despite the hedging, this reads that Female 2 would be less likely to consider alternatives. It feels like she would challenge someone's *not-claim* (e.g., it's not too obviously him) if

they put it forward instead. It is more likely that she would stick to her own claim. So this test is positive for *Asserting*.

(6) **Test 2:**

Speaker: “it’s too obviously him” (*claim*)

Devil’s Advocate: *why?*

Speaker: because *justification*

Devil’s Advocate: Do I need additional justification to conclude *claim*?

What’s the more probable reply? It is more likely that the speaker says the *evidence* is not enough, or more likely to say that it is enough?

In this case, it feels like Female 2 would reply that her *justification* would be enough to conclude that “it’s too obviously him”; additional evidence isn’t needed past whatever her justification would be. So again, *Asserting*.

Due to Test 2 being positive for Assertion, no addendum is necessary. The utterance “it’s too obviously him” can be annotated as *Asserting*.

Third utterance

The last sentence that is in question is “She could have done that on purpose, like, like creating an alibi”. This can be stripped back to “she did that on purpose to create an alibi”.

(7) **Test 1:** Speaker: “she did that on purpose to create an alibi” (*claim*)

Devil’s Advocate: *not the claim*

What’s the more probable reply? Willingness to consider *not the claim* or sticking to their *claim*?

Reading the context surrounding this sentence, it’s clear the speaker is generally suspicious of Cherie and appears to be thinking on her feet. So when answering what is more or less probable, it reads like it is more probable for Speaker 2 to consider other possibilities. Therefore: *Hypothesising*.

(8) **Test 2:**

Speaker: “she did that on purpose to create an alibi” (*claim*)

Devil’s Advocate: *why?*

Speaker: because *justification*

Devil’s Advocate: Do I need additional justification to conclude *claim*?

What’s the more probable reply? It is more likely that the speaker says the *evidence* is not enough, or more likely to say that it is enough?

Again, with the rest of the conversation here, it seems more probable for Female 2 to say that their evidence isn’t enough to conclude that Cherie “did that on purpose”; which puts this utterance as *Hypothesising*. Let’s move to the addendum to conclude whether this utterance is a hypothesis or conjecture.

(9) **Addendum to Test 2:**

Speaker: Yes, *evidence* isn’t quite enough

Is the speaker more likely to give some evidence, or more likely to say they don’t have any more?

It seems fairly clear from the context that Female 2 wouldn’t have any additional evidence than what they could already have given: the thinking on her feet, her apparent hesitance. This would mean this utterance is *Conjecturing*.

Further Example

Please read the following text, and find the hypotheses and conjecture within it. There’s more than one of either hypothesising or conjecturing.

(10) *Male 1:* Let me just read through these materials... I think Chris is suspicious. It’s weird that he has a girlfriend just making noise in the early morning. There’s something going on there, there’s something up with him.

Female 1: Making an alibi for him, perhaps. Is who the girlfriend is, important? Because we don’t know that.

Female 2: Well, the girlfriend is probably someone we know. So, his girlfriend could be Cherie.