Dr. Elizabeth Coppock
coppock@phil.hhu.de
Tues. October 25th, 2011
Time: 16:30–18:00

Seminar on Presupposition
Heinrich Heine University
Winter Semester 2011/12
Room: 23.21-U1.46

Comments on Homework 1

1 Sorry

It was too long. The assignments will be shorter in the future.

2 New assessment criteria

For a Beteiligungsnachweis (BN), you need 50% of the total possible homework points. For an Abschlussprüfung (AP), you need more:

50-60%	5
60-70%	4
70-80%	3
80-90%	2
90-100%	1

For this assignment there were 63 possible points, so if you got more than 31.5, then you can consider yourself to have passed. See Figure 1 for a histogram of scores on the first assignment.

So your grade will be entirely based on the homework assignments. *No exam.*

3 Don't cheat

Do not turn in answers that you blindly copied from your neighbor. Do not turn in answers that you do not understand yourself. Make sure that you can explain how you arrived at your answer. If you spend your time in class blindly copying down somebody else's answer that you don't even understand instead of paying attention to the lecture, then you're wasting your own time and mine. If you are not really interested in presupposition and are only taking this class in order to get credit, then this is not the right class for you. This is an advanced reading seminar, and you are expected to bring a mature, scientific attitude, and a commitment to understanding the material for yourself. If you are not really interested in presupposition, then do not take this class. If you are interested, but you don't understand something, raise your hand, or send me an email. Do not blindly copy from your neighbor. That is total bullshit.
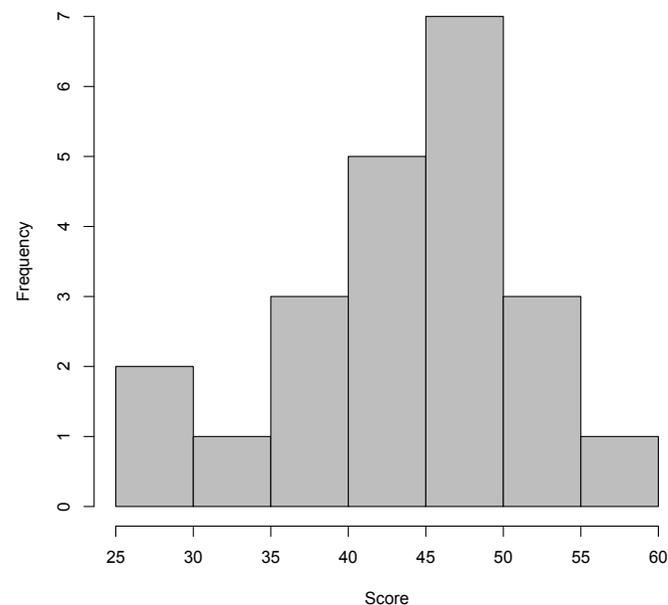

Figure 1: Histogram of scores on Homework 1

4 Academic writing

4.1 Linguistics

Object and meta-language. In linguistics, it is always important to distinguish object language (the language we are theorizing about) and meta-language (the language in which we theorize) somehow. The most common ways are by using italics or quotes. For example:

The word *nur* gives rise to the same two inferences. [italics]

The word "nur" gives rise to the same two inferences. [quotes]

I usually use quotes when I'm quoting an author, and italics for object language. You can use whatever style you want, but have a consistent way of indicating object language.

Say something about every example. Whenever you give an example, say something about it. For example,

(2b) does not follow as an inference from (2a)

Example (2b) is infelicitous.

Applying a test does not involve simply giving an example; it involves giving an example and pointing out what the reader should notice about it, for example, that it is pragmatically feliticous or infelicitous or that it follows or does not follow as an inference from some other sentence. (In some contexts, it is not necessary to put the 'comment' in words; for example, sometimes it suffices to put a #-mark indicating pragmatic infelicity.)

Be precise. Make sure that everything you write is literally true, and make sure that *you* understand and believe what you are writing.

4.2 English writing conventions

Quotes. Use English-style quotes when writing in English. For example:

Beaver and Clark say that a vanilla entailment is "something that gets, e.g., asserted by an assertion, negated by a negation, and questioned by a question."

Not:

Beaver and Clark say that a vanilla entailment is „something that gets, e.g., asserted by an assertion, negated by a negation, and questioned by a question."

English only, please. Do not insert German words, like *oder* and *ist*. For example, the following is **not acceptable**:

According to Chierchia and McConnell-Ginet the first axis of classification for inferences ist what licenses oder underwrites an implication.

Capitalization. Do not capitalize common nouns, as in German. (When I put a tilted slash across a letter, that means it should not be capitalized. When I put three underlines beneath a letter, that means it should be capitalized.) Note: the word *English* as in *the English language* is considered a proper noun, and is therefore capitalized.

Use a spell-checker. A spell-checker would tell you that, for example, "Englisch" is not an English word.

Use English word order. Put the verb after the subject, not at the end. This is not English (and false):

According to Beaver and Clark, "vanilla entailment" is the negative component of the meaning of *only* called.

Remember *do*-support.

Peter does not smoke. [correct]

*Peter smokes not. [**incorrect**]

Kein *kein* auf Englisch. We do not use "no" when denying an predicate attribution:

Peter is not a teacher. [correct]

*Peter is no teacher. [**incorrect**]

Use *it*, not *he* for inanimate referents. Inanimate (non-living) objects cannot be referred to using *he* or *she* in English, only *it*.

The flying saucer came in the past, and indeed it/*he came again.

Referring to kinds. More subtle: We do not use the definite article for kinds in the same way that you do in German. *The presupposition* does not refer to presupposition as a kind; use the plural, *presuppositions* instead, if you wish to say something about the category of presuppositions.

Commas. Also more subtle: No comma before most subordinate clauses in English:

It does not matter whether Mary is in New York or not. [correct]

It does not matter, whether Mary is in New York or not. [**incorrect**]

No comma in restrictive relative clauses either.

Presuppositions are things that the speaker takes for granted. [correct]

Presuppositions are things, that the speaker takes for granted. [**incorrect**]

5 Answers to the homework

5.1 Terms & Definitions

implication: Any kind of inference, including implicatures, entailments, and presuppositions. (Not to be confused with **implicatures**.)

implicature: B is an implicature of A if it is not an entailment of A but a hearer can reason based on the fact that a speaker says A that the speaker must believe B.

presupposition: A proposition that the speaker takes for granted, treats as uncontroversial.

assertion: The type of speech act that a declarative sentence is used to perform.

asserted content: The part of the meaning of a declarative sentence that answers the question under discussion; the 'point' of the assertion.

at-issue content: The part of the meaning of a sentence is asserted by an assertion, questioned by a question, etc. (In an assertion, the asserted content is the at-issue content.)

entailment: A entails B if and only if: Whenever A is true, B is true too.

ordinary entailment: B is an ordinary entailment of A if A entails B and B is part of the at-issue content of A (i.e. B is not a presupposition of A).

vanilla entailment: An ordinary entailment (as opposed to more exciting types of entailments, such as presuppositional ones).

By "vanilla", Beaver and Clark meant something like "boring" or "simple" (as opposed to more exciting flavors like chocolate and strawberry and pistachio and coffee and tiramisu...........). Presuppositions are arguably entailments, but if so they are exciting, flavorful entailments, not boring, regular, "vanilla" entailments. (They are also arguably not entailments at all.) So by "vanilla entailment" they mean "ordinary entailment".

family of sentences: The family of sentences associated with a declarative sentence A includes the negation of A, the yes/no question corresponding to A, and any conditional statement of the form "If A then B".

When they say "presuppositions come in families," Chierchia and McConnell-Ginet mean that if A presupposes B, then all of the sentences in A's family also presuppose B.

5.2 Diagnosing different types of implication

See Figure 2 for a simple way to diagnose the relation that holds between two sentences.
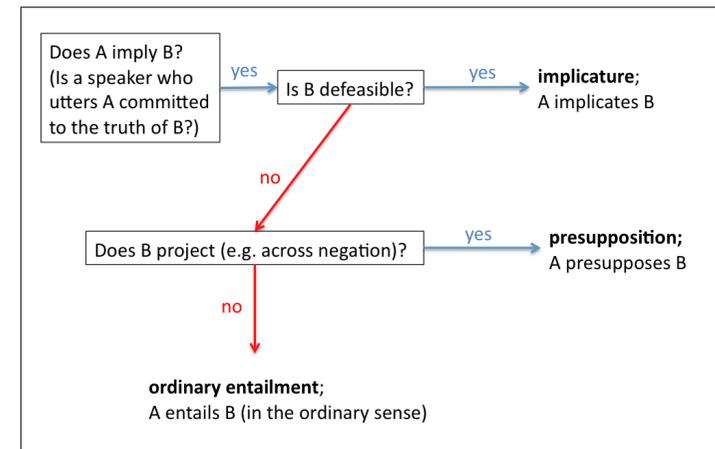
Figure 2: A simple method for diagnosing implication relations

Perfect answer to Question A5-(6)

6a. Someone cheated on the exam.
6b. John cheated on the exam.

6a does not imply 6b, but 6b implies 6a; any speaker who uttered 6b would be committed to the truth of 6a. The question is what type of implication it is. The first thing to check is whether it is an implicature or an entailment. To do this we can check whether it is defeasible/cancellable:

6'. #John cheated on the exam, but nobody cheated on the exam.

Example 6' is pragmatically infelicitous (as indicated by the hashmark symbol '#'). More specifically, the second clause (the negation of 6a) contradicts the first clause (6b). So the inference from 6b to 6a is not defeasible. This suggests that the inference is not an implicature, but rather an entailment of some kind.

Now the question is whether this is an ordinary entailment or a presupposition. To test for this, we can see whether the inference projects, i.e., whether the family of sentences associated with 6b also imply 6a:

6b': John did not cheat on the exam.	[negation]
6b": Did John cheat on the exam?	[question]
6b"': If John cheated on the exam, then he could be in trouble.	[conditional]

None of these variants (6b', 6b'', or 6b''') implies 6a (that someone cheated on the exam), so the inference does not project. This means that the inference from 6b to 6a is not a presupposition, but rather an ordinary entailment.

Perfect answer to Question A5-(7)

7a. If John discovers that Mary is in New York, he will get angry.
7b. Mary is in New York.

7a implies 7b, in the sense that any speaker who utters 7a will be committed to the truth of 7b. The question is what type of implication it is. The first thing to check is whether it is an implicature or an entailment. To do this we can check whether it is defeasible/cancellable:

7'. #If John discovers that Mary is in New York, he will get angry, but Mary is not in New York.

Example 7' is infelicitous; a speaker cannot utter 7a and then deny 7b without contradicting himself. So the inference is not defeasible. This suggests that the inference is not an implicature, but rather an enailment of some kind.

Now the question is whether this is an ordinary entailment or a presupposition. To test for this, we can see whether the inference projects, i.e., whether the family of sentences associated with 7a also imply 7b.

7a': If John discovers that Mary is in New York, he will not get angry.
7a'': If John discovers that Mary is in New York, will he get angry?
7a''': If it is the case that if John discovers that Mary is in New York, he will not get angry, then Mary could be in trouble.

All of these variants (7a', 7a'', or 7a''') imply 7b (that Mary is in New York), so the inference does project. This means that the inference from 7a to 7b is a presupposition, and not an ordinary entailment.

Note on A5-(8):

8a. Seeing is believing.
8b. If John sees a riot, he will believes it.

Common incorrect answer: "If it's not the case that if John sees a riot, he believes it, then seeing is not believing." That statement is true, but this only shows that B does not presuppose A. That alone does not suffice to show that B entails A.

In fact, 8b does not imply 8a at all. A speaker who said 8b would not be committed to the truth of 8a. Rather, 8a seems like a more general rule, of which 8b is an instance. The meanings could be represented like this:

$$\forall x, y[S(x, y) \rightarrow B(x, y)]$$

$$\forall y[S(j, y) \rightarrow B(j, y)]$$

This would predict that 8a implies 8b, and the inference is an ordinary entailment (hence not defeasible, and non-projective). Can it be cancelled? No:

8'. #Seeing is believing, but if John sees a riot, he won't believe it.

So it is not defeasible, like an entailment. Does it project?
8a': Seeing is not believing.
8a'': Is seeing believing?
8a''': If seeing is believing, then I believe it.

None of these imply 8b. Hence the inference does not project, so it does indeed appear to be an ordinary entailment, as our analysis predicted.