

Homework 2
Semantics I, Fall 2009, JHU
Assigned: 9/9, Due: 9/16

I Entailments and spatial prepositions

It is often convenient to think of word/lexical meanings in terms of a set of entailments that they introduce. Consider the 7 prepositions italicized in the examples below. Try to characterize as precisely and as generally as you can the entailments that each of these prepositions introduces.

- (1) The book is *on* the table.
- (2) The book is *above* the table.
- (3) The book is *over* the table.
- (4) The book is *under* the table.
- (5) The book is *in* the table.
- (6) The book is *inside* the table.
- (7) The book is *next to* the table.

Some tips: (i) All of the entailments you are looking for are about spatial relations between the subject of one of these sentences and the object of the preposition. (ii) Don't restrict yourself to just these examples; you want to understand entailments the prepositions introduce in any context. (iii) You needn't assume that each preposition introduces a single complex entailment – you can break it down as much as is useful. (iv) At some level you will have to describe entailments using more precise English. This is perfectly fine. (v) treat “next to” as a single complex preposition. (vi) Use the cancellation test to determine what is truly an entailment.