Some Very Basic Questions on the Basics of Formal Semantics

(1)   **The Principle of Compositionality**

Please explain what the following statement means: "The meaning of a complex linguistic expression is usually *compositional*." What is the evidence for this claim?

(2)   **The Importance of Truth Conditions**

Please explain why semanticists are interested in developing a formal system that derives *truth conditions*. What do 'truth conditions' have to do with the study of meaning?

(3)   **Assertion, Presupposition, and Implicature**

Consider the following conversation:

> *Person A:*   "Have you seen any movies by Wener Herzog?"
> *Person B:*   "Well, I've seen his movie about Antarctica…"

a.   What is the *assertion* made by Person B?

b.   Are there any *presuppositions* made in Person B's response? If so, what are they? What is the evidence that they are presuppositions?

c.   Are there any *implicatures* made in Person B's response? If so, what are they? What is the evidence that they are implicatures?

(4)   **Metalanguage and Object Language**

For each of the Truth-Conditional statements below, please state which is the object language and which is the metalanguage: English or German.
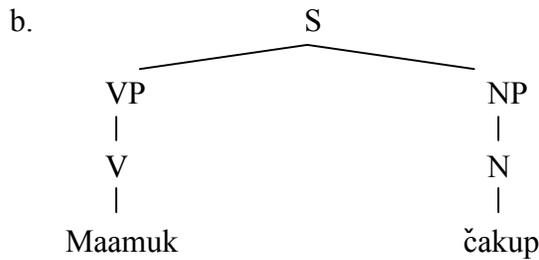
a.   "Mary smokes" is true if and only if Mary smokes.
b.   "Maria raucht" is true if and only if Mary smokes.
c.   "Mary smokes" ist wahr wenn und nur wenn Maria raucht.
d.   "Maria raucht" ist wahr wenn und nur wenn Maria raucht.

(5)   **The Computation of Truth-Conditions (and Cross-Linguistic Applicability)**

The language Nuu-chah-nulth (Wakashan; British Columbia) is a verb-initial language, as illustrated below.
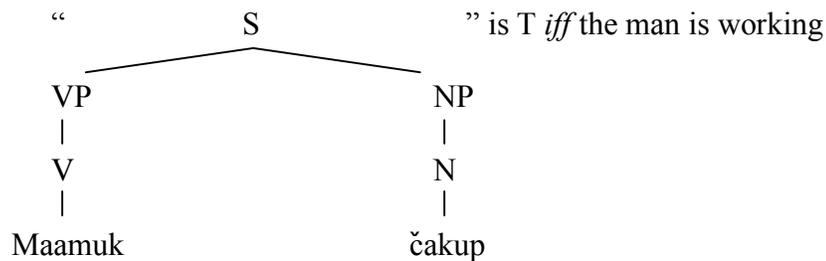
a.   Maamuk-ʔiš   čakup-ʔi
        work-PRES   man-the
        The man is working.   (Wojdak 2001)

Let us assume such sentences have the following structure in Nuu-chah-nulth (I'm ignoring the suffixes "-Ɂiš" and "-Ɂi" in order to simplify the problem).

b.

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                    S
        _____/  _____
       VP                      NP
       |                       |
       V                       N
       |                       |
     Maamuk                  čakup
```

The object of this assignment is to develop a very basic extensional semantics for Nuu-chah-nulth. This semantics should derive the following truth-conditional statement.

c.   Targeted T-Conditional Statement

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     "              S              " is T iff the man is working
        _____/  _____
       VP                    NP
       |                     |
       V                     N
       |                     |
     Maamuk               čakup
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In order to complete this assignment, here is what you need to do:

- Provide lexical entries stipulating the extensions of "maamuk" and "čakup"

- Using these lexical entries and the rules discussed in class (FA, NN, TN), provide a step-by-step proof of the T-conditional statement in (5c)