Sample HW assignment

Consider the following sets of sentences in (1-3). In each of these examples, the (a) sentences presuppose and/or entail the other sentences. Specify which (of the non-(a) sentences) is a presupposition and which is a simple entailment. Explain (briefly!) what test(s) convinced you of your answer.

1. (a) Confirm your eBay transaction.

   (b) You have a recent eBay transaction.

Sample HW answer

(1b) is presupposed by (1a):

- **Denial test:** A "No" response fails to reject (1b) and is infelicitous, whereas "Hey wait a minute" is fine ("#" indicates my evaluation, confirmed by a couple other native speakers). Only entailments are easy to deny, hence conclude **presupposition**.

A: Confirm your eBay transaction
B: #No.

A: Confirm your eBay transaction.
B: Hey, wait a minute, I don't have any recent eBay transactions.

- **Negation test**: The status of (1b) under negation remains the same. Note that the test is designed for propositions (declaratives, not imperatives); here, I have negated the verb:

   Negation of (1a): **Don't** confirm your eBay transaction (because that email could be SPAM)

   Status of (1b) under negation: survives, therefore conclude **presupposition**

Advice on writing up your assignment:

- The content is the most important part – make your reasoning clear.

- Make it easy for me to mark your answer and your reasoning: use bullet points / bolding / indentation / etc.

- If the tests are hard to interpret, explain how they conflict and why this might be the case.

- Ground your reasoning in the assigned sentences/dialogues, explaining how you see their meaning arising. Be specific about what meaning is signaled (by the speaker) and what meaning is interpreted (by the hearer), particularly if those differ. Likewise be specific about what meaning is asserted/implied or entailed/presupposed/implicated by which expression.

- I want to see your reasoning with **examples** rather than cites to other literature. This is not an essay (which would have an Intro, etc.). The assignments are problem sets designed for you to show that you understand how to analyse a data set.

- The word count includes all the sample sentences as well.