1   Characterizing ambiguity

The following sentence is ambiguous:

(1)   Kim read most of the books on the syllabus because Lee did.

Your task is to:

1. Provide unambiguous paraphrases (which do not involve VP-ellipsis) for each interpretation.

2. For each interpretation, try to make up a story or dialogue in which (1) occurs and can only be understood in that way.

3. Describe concrete scenarios in which the truth-values of the different interpretations differ. Can you find for each interpretation a context in which only this interpretation is true, or is there an entailment relation between the different interpretations?

Now do the same things for (2).

(2)   I recommended exactly one book to every student you did.

2   Some and Any

In class we discussed examples like (3), which seem to be problematic for the view that VP-ellipsis is licensed by a (syntactic or semantic) identity relation.

(3)   Kim didn't see any whales, but I did.

We also discussed a couple of ways to deal with this problem.

Hypothesis 1: Allomorphy   One possibility would be to assume that *some* and *any* are allomorphs: they represent different pronunciations of the same lexical item. Let's call the rule that relates *some* and *any* 'Polarity Alternation', and assume a formulation of it as shown in (4). Note that this rule is only relevant on the PF-side of the derivation of (2): since *some* and *any* are really different occurrences of the same lexical item, we expect their meanings to be the same.

(4)   *Polarity Alternation*
        Pronounce *some* as *any* when it is c-commanded by negation at S-Structure.

If this hypothesis is correct, then we can analyze VP-ellipsis in (3) in terms of a syntactic identity condition that requires identity of VPs at S-structure. The S-structure of (3) is (5); since VP_E is identical to VP_A, it can be deleted.

(5)   [$_{IP}$ Kim PAST NEG [$_{VP_A}$ see some whales]] but [$_{IP}$ I PAST [$_{VP_E}$ ~~see some whales~~]]

Hypothesis 2: Same meaning A second possibility is that *some* and *any* are in fact distinct lexical items, but they happen to have the same meaning. For present purposes, we can assume that they introduce a notion of existence: the interpretations of (6a-b) can be paraphrased as in (7a-b).

(6) a. Kim saw some whales.
     b. Kim didn't see any whales.

(7) a. There are some whales that Kim saw.
     b. It is false that there are some whales that Kim saw.

If this hypothesis is correct, then we can analyze VP-ellipsis in (3) in terms of semantic identity. (3) should have the S-structure in (8), in which VP_A and VP_E differ only in the lexical items *any* and *some*.

(8) [$_{IP}$ Kim PAST NEG [$_{VP_A}$ see any whales]] but [$_{IP}$ I PAST [$_{VP_E}$ ~~see some whales~~]]

Since *any* and *some* have the same meaning (by hypothesis), and the two VPs are the same in every other respect, they must have the same meanings, and ellipsis is licensed.

Your task Consider the following pair of sentences, which are both grammatical, but have different meanings.

(9) a. I didn't see any whales.
     b. I didn't see some whales.

First, say as clearly as you can how these sentences differ in meaning. Are the differences purely semantic (do the sentences have distinct truth conditions), purely pragmatic (do they have different implicatures), or both?

Next, discuss the implications of these examples for the choice between Hypothesis 1 (a syntactic identity condition on ellipsis plus a Polarity Alternation rule and *some/any* allomorphy) and Hypothesis 2 (a semantic identity condition on ellipsis plus the same meaning for the distinct lexical items *some* and *any*). Does the contrast in meaning between (9a) and (9b) help us choose between these two hypotheses? Be clear and complete in your argumentation, illustrating crucial points with examples, and justifying any new claims.