1 ACD in negative polarity items

Consider the following constraint on the distribution of ‘negative polarity items’ (NPIs), which in English include *any* and *a damn thing*.

(1) Negative polarity items must be in the c-command domain of negation.

This constraint accounts for the contrasts in (2) and (3):

(2) a. The witness didn’t recognize any suspects in the lineup.
    b. *The witness recognized any suspects in the lineup.

(3) a. Ralph didn’t read a damn thing.
    b. *Ralph read a damn thing.

If you look around, you will find examples that appear to violate this constraint; for the purposes of this assignment, however, assume that it is correct. You can further assume that this constraint holds at both LF and at S-structure.

Now consider the following examples, all of which involve ACD:

(4) a. The witness didn’t recognize any suspects (that) you did.
    b. Ralph didn’t read a damn thing (that) I asked him to.

1. These examples appear to be problematic for the QR analysis of ACD. Say why.

2. Propose a solution to this problem, and show how one of the examples in (4) is derived. Specifically, you should say precisely what we need to assume in order to explain these facts, and show that your proposal gives us an interpretable Logical Form. For the purposes of this assignment, you can assume that the NPIs in these examples are roughly the same meanings as existential quantifiers. I.e., *any* has a denotation along the lines of (5).

(5) \[
\text{[any]} = [\lambda f \in D_{et}[\lambda g \in D_{et}, \text{for some } x \text{ such that } f(x) = 1, g(x) = 1]]
\]

As you can work for yourself, as long as *any* stays under the scope of negation at LF, the denotation in (5) will give us the right truth conditions for the entire sentence.

Hints: While working out a solution to this assignment, be sure to think about our discussion last week about what sort of constituent QR targets — what its semantic type must be as opposed to what its syntactic category must be.

You might also consider one of the ‘problems’ for QR that we discussed, namely the fact that the preferred scopal interpretation of a sentence like (6) is the one in which the subject takes scope over the object.

(6) Two tourists visited every shrine.
However, as we saw in class, the LF corresponding to the other reading — the one in which the object takes scope over the subject — is actually simpler. If ‘preferred reading’ correlates with ‘simpler structure’, this is a puzzle.

2 An ambiguity revisited

In the first assignment of the semester, you looked at an example very similar to (7), which has (among other readings) the two interpretations paraphrased in (7a) and (7b).

(7) Kim read most books by Melville because Lee did.
    a. Kim read most books by Melville because Lee read most books by Melville.
    b. Kim read most books by Melville because Lee read them.

1. Show that (7a) and (7b) are truth-conditionally distinct by describing situations in which one is true and the other false.

2. Does our current set of assumptions predict this ambiguity? If so, say precisely how. If not, revise it so that it does, and show how it works. Justify all new assumptions, illustrate crucial points with derivations and trees, and be sure to consider any important implications of your proposals. Be sure to show precisely how the two readings are derived, focusing in particular on how ellipsis is licensed for each of the interpretations.