1 Characterizing ambiguity

The following sentence is ambiguous:

(1) Kim completed most of the problems on the exam before Lee did.

**Your task** First, provide unambiguous paraphrases (which do not involve VP-ellipsis) for each interpretation. Second, for each interpretation, try to make up a story or dialogue in which (1) occurs and can only be understood in that way. Third, prove that there is a genuine ambiguity by providing concrete scenarios in which the truth values of the different interpretations are distinct. Finally, do the same things for (2).

(2) Lee recommended exactly one book to every student Kim did.

2 Some and Any

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

(3) a. Kim didn’t see any whales, but I did.
   b. Kim didn’t see any whales, but I saw some (whales).

We also discussed a couple of ways to deal with the problem of apparent non-identity between the VPs *see any whales* and *see some whales*.

**Hypothesis 1: Allomorphy** One possibility is to assume that *some* and *any* are allomorphs: they are 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 in the mapping from syntax to phonology: since *some* and *any* are really different phonological realizations of the same lexical item, their meanings should 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 (3a) in terms of condition that requires syntactic identity of VPs. The structure of (3a) is (5); since $\text{VP}_E$ is identical to $\text{VP}_A$, it can be deleted.

(5) $[\text{TP} \text{ Kim PAST NEG } [\text{VP}_A \text{ see some whales}]]$ but $[\text{TP} \text{ I PAST } [\text{VP}_E \text{ see some whales}]]$
Hypothesis 2: Semantic equivalence  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, given the fact that the interpretations of (6a-b) can be paraphrased as in (7a-b), respectively.

(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 (3a) in terms of semantic identity. On this view, (3a) has the structure in (8), in which VP\textsubscript{A} and VP\textsubscript{E} differ only in the lexical items *any* and *some*.

(8) \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{TP} & \text{Kim PAST NEG [VP\textsubscript{A} see any whales]] but [TP I PAST [VP\textsubscript{E} see some whales]]}
\end{array}
\]

Syntactic identity fails to hold here, but 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 conditions on use), 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 semantic equivalence of 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.

You may find it useful in thinking about this problem and constructing your arguments to develop more precise licensing conditions on ellipsis under the two hypotheses (i.e., a more precisely stated syntactic licensing condition and a more precisely stated semantic one), though this is not required.