Part 1: Ambiguity

I’m a linguist. I like ambiguity more than most people.
— Ana Elisa Vianna (shared on the Facebook page “Trust Me, I’m a ‘Linguist’)

Fill in two different disambiguating paraphrases for the following ambiguous sentences.

**LEXICAL AMBIGUITY**

(1)  Let’s go to the bank.
Paraphrase 1: Let’s go to the financial institution.
Paraphrase 2: Let’s go to the riverbank.

(2)  Paul wrote a few letters.
Paraphrase 1: Paul wrote a few alphabetical characters.
Paraphrase 2: Paul wrote a few letters of mail.

**STRUCTURAL AMBIGUITY**

(3)  The spy saw the man with the telescope.
Paraphrase 1: The spy saw the man while using the telescope.
Paraphrase 2: The spy saw the man who was using the telescope.

(4)  This door is unlockable.
Paraphrase 1: It is possible to unlock this door.
Paraphrase 2: It is not possible to lock this door.

**PRONOMINAL (/CONTEXTUAL) AMBIGUITY**

(5)  Susan invited Mary to the party. She was happy about it.
Paraphrase 1: Susan invited Mary to the party. Susan was happy about it.
Paraphrase 2: Susan invited Mary to the party. Mary was happy about it.

(6)  Susan likes her sister, and Mary does, too.
Paraphrase 1: Susan likes her sister, and Mary likes Susan’s sister, too.
Paraphrase 2: Susan likes her sister, and Mary likes her own sister, too.

**QUANTIFIER SCOPE AMBIGUITY**

(7)  Every student didn’t turn in their paper.
Paraphrase 1: None of the students turned in their paper.
Paraphrase 2: Not every student turned in their paper.

(8)  Two TAs are grading half of the papers.
Paraphrase 1: Two TAs grade half of the papers each.
Paraphrase 2: Two TAs grade half of the papers together.
Part 2: Antonymy and Opposition

- **Contraries (Opposites):**
  Cannot be true at the same time.

- **Contradictories:**
  Cannot be true at the same time and cannot be false at the same time.

**PRACTICE:**
Indicate whether the following pairs of sentences are opposites, contradictories, or neither.

**Sentence 1:** It is raining.
**Sentence 2:** The sun is shining.

**The sentences are:** Opposites □ Contradictories □ Neither ☑

**Explanation:** The sentences can be true at the same time. For example in a situation where there both rain and sunshine (like a sunshower).

**Sentence 1:** I never go to the movies.
**Sentence 2:** I sometimes go to the movies.

**The sentences are:** Opposites □ Contradictories ☑ Neither □

**Explanation:** The sentences cannot be true at the same time. This can be justified in the following way: Imagine a situation that makes the first sentence true: Out of all the possible times that I could go to the movies, I actually go to the movie at none of these times. Sentence 2 is false in this situation. Therefore, whenever sentence 1 is true, sentence 2 is false. The same is the case the other way round: Imagine a situation where sentence 2 is true: Out of all the possible times that I could go to the movies, I actually go to the movies at at least one of these times. Sentence 1 is false in this situation. Therefore, whenever sentence 2 is true, sentence 1 is false.

In addition, the sentences cannot be false at the same time. This can be justified in the following way: Imagine a situation that makes sentence 1 false: It’s not true that I never go to the movies, when out of all the possible times that I could go to the movies, I actually go to the movies at least one of these times. Remember that this is exactly the kind of situation where sentence 2 is true. Therefore, whenever sentence 1 is false, sentence 2 is true. Now imagine a situation where sentence 2 is false: It’s not true that I sometimes go to the movies, when out of all the possible times that I could go to the movies, I actually go to the movies none of these times. Remember that this is exactly the kind of situation where sentence 1 is true. Therefore, whenever sentence 2 is false, sentence 1 is true.

**Sentence 1:** It is hot.
**Sentence 2:** It is cold.

**The sentences are:** Opposites ☑ Contradictories □ Neither □

**Explanation:** The sentences cannot be true at the same time. This can be justified in the following way: Imagine a situation that makes the first sentence true: The temperature is high
enough to be described as *hot*. In that situation, the temperature is not low enough to be described as *cold*, and sentence 2 is false. The other way round is similar. Imagine a situation where sentence 2 is true: The temperature is low enough to be described as *cold*. In that case, the temperature surely isn’t high enough to be considered *hot*, and sentence 1 is false. Whenever one of them is true, the other will be false, and they cannot be true at the same time.

But the two sentences could be false at the same time. To illustrate, imagine a situation with a medium temperature, which is not high enough to be considered *hot*, but not low enough to be considered *cold*. In this situation, both sentences are false.

**Sentence 1:** I’m always cold.

**Sentence 2:** Sometimes, I’m not cold.

The sentences are: Opposites ☐ Contradictories ☒ Neither ☐

**Explanation:** The sentences cannot be true at the same time. This can be justified in the following way: Imagine a situation that makes the first sentence true: Out of all the times where I could be cold, I am actually cold at all of these times. In this situation, it’s false that *Sometimes, I’m not cold*. Therefore, whenever sentence 1 is true, sentence 2 is false. How about the other way round? Imagine the second sentence is true: Out of all the times where I could be cold, there is at least some time when I’m not cold. In this situation it’s false that *I’m always cold*. Therefore, whenever sentence 2 is true, sentence 1 is false, and the sentences cannot be true at the same time.

Similarly, the sentences cannot be false at the same time. This can be justified as follows: Imagine sentence 1 is false. Then, out of all the times where I could be cold, there is at least some time when I’m not cold. That is exactly the kind of situation where sentence 2 is true. Therefore, whenever sentence 1 is false, sentence 2 is true. The same is the case the other way round. Imagine sentence 2 is false. That means that out of all the times where I could be cold, I am actually cold at all of these times. That is exactly the kind of situation where sentence 1 is true. So, whenever sentence 2 is false, sentence 1 is true, and the two sentences cannot be false at the same time.

**Sentence 1:** The queen is dead.

**Sentence 2:** The queen is alive.

The sentences are: Opposites ☐ Contradictories ☒ Neither ☐

**Explanation:** The sentences cannot be true at the same time. This can be justified in the following way: Imagine it’s true that *The queen is dead*. In that case, it’s false that *The queen is alive*. In reverse, when it’s true that *The queen is alive*, it’s false that *The queen is dead*. Therefore, whenever one sentence is true, the other is false.

In addition, the sentences cannot be false at the same time. Imagine it’s false that *The queen is dead*. In that case, it has to be true that *The queen is alive*. The other way round is similar: Imagine that it’s false that *The queen is alive*. Then it has to be true that *The queen is dead*. Whenever one of the sentences is false, the other is false.
EXTRA ONE (HARD):

Sentence 1: The previous two sentences are opposites.
Sentence 2: The previous two sentences are contradictories.

The sentences are: Opposites ☐  Contradictories ☐  Neither ☑

Explanation: The sentences can be true at the same time. We can find a situation where both are true. Imagine a situation where sentence 2 is true. That means it’s true that *The previous two sentences are contradictories*. By the definition of contradictories, that would be a situation in which the previous two sentences cannot be true at the same time, and they cannot be false at the same time. Of course, in that case it would also be true that the previous two sentences cannot be true at the same time, and the definition of opposites is satisfied in this situation. This is because every pair of contradictory sentences are also opposites. As a result, sentence 1 is also true in this situation.