

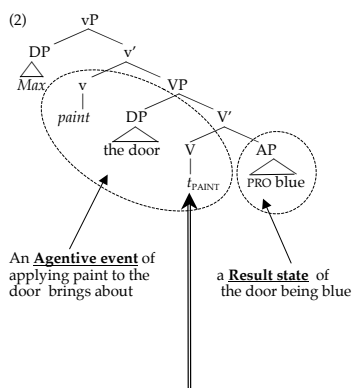
Decomposing Resultatives: Two kinds of restitutive reading with 'again'

Jon Nissenbaum, McGill University

1. Background: Decompositional theories of VP structure

- VPs that denote actions with result states

(1) Max painted the door blue



- The verb root plays the crucial role; It denotes a causative operator:

(3) $\llbracket \text{PAINT} \rrbracket = \lambda p \lambda x \lambda s. [s \text{ is a door-painting event and } \exists s' [p(s')=1 \text{ and } \text{CAUSE}(s')(s)]]$

2. Using 'Again' as a structural diagnostic

- An ambiguity

(4) Max painted the door blue again.

– **Repetitive reading** ~ **An action is repeated**

(4) Could be true in virtue of the fact that Max had painted the door blue once before, and did so a second time.

– **Restitutive reading** ~ **A state is restored**

Alternatively, (4) could be true even if Max never painted the door before — for instance if the door had originally been blue, had been painted orange, and Max's painting it blue restored it to its earlier blue state.

- 'Again' introduces a presupposition

(5) Bob sneezed again

– Can be neither true nor false if Bob hadn't sneezed before...

– 'Again' introduces the presupposition that Bob sneezed before

– (5) asserts merely that Bob sneezed, but presupposes that he had done so before as well.

- The structural theory of 'Again' (von Stechow 1996)

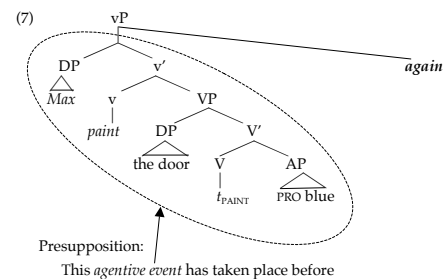
– The presupposition is determined syntactically, by 'again's' sister:

(6) $\llbracket \text{again} \rrbracket = \lambda p \lambda s: \exists s' [s' \text{ prior to } s \text{ and } p(s')=1] \cdot p(s)=1$

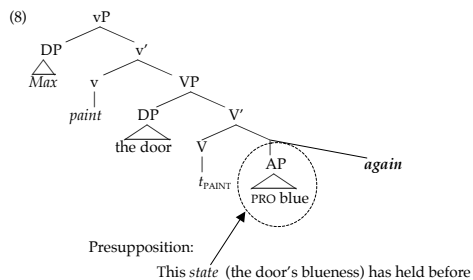
- Von Stechow's discovery:

The structural theory of 'Again' + **the decompositional theory**
 = **An explanation for the ambiguity**

– **Repetitive readings** result from **high attachment** of 'again':



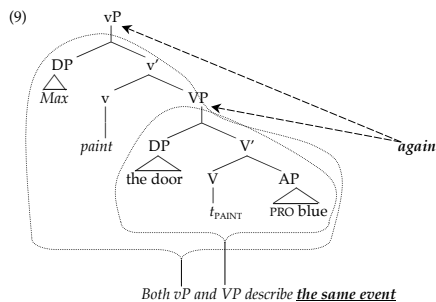
– Restitutive readings result from **LOW** attachment of *again*:



• However ...

The explanation has a peculiar property

→ TWO structures should yield semantically equivalent Repetitive readings



– This is a consequence of a widely held view of little *v* [Kratzer 1996]

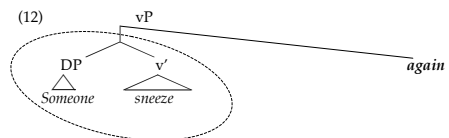
- § The *v* denotes a relation between individuals and events (and *not* a causative operator)
- § ... *v* composes with VP by Event Identification (= Predicate Modification of event argument, plus introduction of agent arg.)
- § Consequently, the VP and vP describe the same event (e.g. a door-painting).

3. Existential operators and 'again'

(10) Someone sneezed again.

- (11) a. Once again, there was a person who sneezed.
 b. There is a person who, once again, sneezed.

• Existentials within the scope of 'again'



– *Again* attached high (to vP)

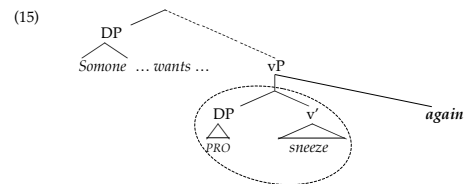
– Existential DP subject reconstructs into its theta position (spec-vP)

→ *Existential presupposition* results.

• Existentials outside the scope of 'again'

(13) Someone wants to sneeze again tomorrow.

(14) There's someone who sneezed before and who desires that he himself will sneeze again.



– *Again* attached lower than theta position of Existential DP

– Existential DP can't reconstruct into *again*'s scope

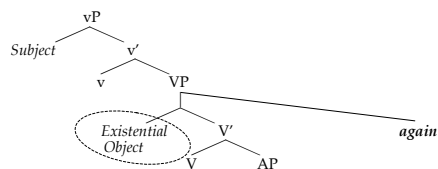
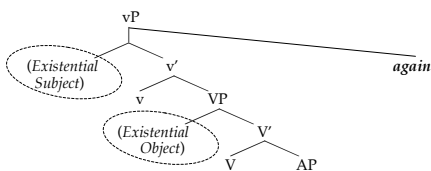
→ *NON-existential presupposition*

4. Putting it all together:

... Result-State VPs + 'Again' + Existential presuppositions

- What the theory predicts.

– Remember that there are **two** attachment sites for Repetitive Readings
... Both of which could have scope over existential DPs in the verb phrase:



→ Existential presuppositions should **ALWAYS** be available for Repetitive readings

- The prediction about Repetitive readings is borne out.

Existential Subject:

(16) Someone painted the door blue again.

(17) Possible interpretation:

There was someone who painted the door blue before, and once again there's someone who painted the door blue.

Existential Object:

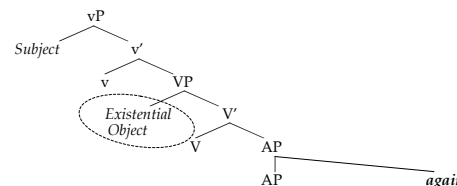
(18) Max painted a door blue again.

(19) Possible interpretation:

There's some door that Max painted blue before, and once again there's some door that Max painted ...

- What about Restitutive readings?

– Remember that only one attachment site ought to be possible...
... And it's **BELOW** the theta-position of the direct object.



→ **Consequence:**

Existential presuppositions should **NEVER** be available for Restitutive readings

• **WHOOOPS!**

– The prediction is wrong, however (apparently) ...

Existential presupposition in a Restitutive reading:

[Beck & Johnson 2004]:

(20) Max painted a door blue again

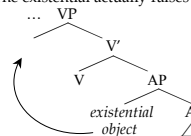
→ Can be true if there was some door that was blue before, and Max paints some other door blue

- i.e. **There was a door that was blue before**, and once again there's some door that is blue
- Max need only have painted the second one!

– Beck and Johnson's fix-up: PRO interpreted as a higher-order variable?

- Unattractive!
- § Ad hoc
- § PRO doesn't seem to have that option elsewhere — e.g. (13)/(15).

– An alternative fix-up: The existential actually raises out of the AP small clause (hence could reconstruct)

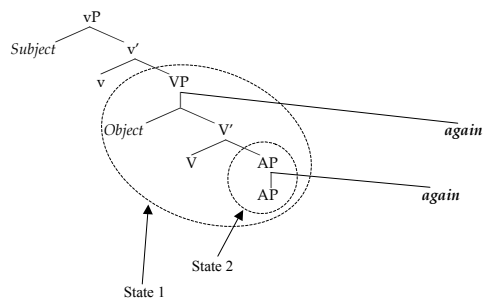


- Unattractive!
- § Would entail that the object is not an argument of the verb
- § Predicts that the object (=small clause subject) is an island for extraction
- (21) *What person did you keep [a friend of t] waiting?
- (22) What house did you paint [a door of t] blue?

– A fix-up is not what's needed. Perhaps we've been looking at this the wrong way.

5. One of the underlying assumptions was wrong.

→ What if there aren't two *Repetitive* positions, but rather two *Restitutive* positions?



• [PAINT_v] as a stative root?

(23) $\llbracket \text{paint} \rrbracket = \lambda p \lambda x \lambda e. [e \text{ is an eventuality such that the property of being painted holds of } x \text{ in } e, \text{ and for some } e', p(e')=1 \text{ in virtue of } e.]$

– The VP [v_v the door [v_v paint [AP blue]]] expresses the property that is true of an eventuality *e* just in case *the door* (a) is in a state of being painted, and (b) is blue in virtue of being painted.

→ That is, the property of being a painted-blue object holds of the door.

• The **eventive part** of the verb phrase's meaning must come from *little-v*

(24) $\llbracket v \rrbracket = \lambda p \lambda x \lambda e. [e \text{ is an event whose agent is } x, \text{ and, for some } e' \text{ such that } p(e')=1, e' \text{ is caused by } e.]$

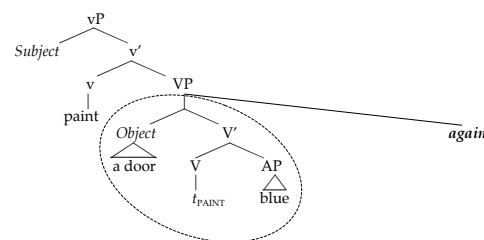
– In other words, *v* denotes a causative operator, that could take an essentially stative VP denotation as its first argument, and give it a causing event.

• What about Beck & Johnson's Restitutive reading?

(20) Max painted a door blue again

(In a situation in which there was some door that was blue before, and Max paints some other door blue)

→ Now, the Existential presupposition is predicted, if *again* can attach to the higher Restitutive spot:



→ The presupposition is that There was a painted-blue door before

- It is a fact about objects like doors that if they are blue, they are that way in virtue of being painted blue.
- It seems plausible that this is really the existential presupposition in examples like Beck & Johnson's.
- If so, we need not conclude that *again* is attached lower than the existential for the available restitutive.

→ Thus, under the *stative* assumption about Verb roots, the bad prediction is reversed.

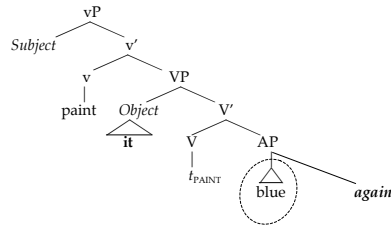
6. Evidence for the alternative assumption?

- We need to try scenarios in which the *higher* restitutive reading would be false...
- Unlike 'doors', natural objects like 'trees' do not typically have their color in virtue of being painted...
- Consider the following scenario...
 - It ensures that *Again* can only be attached to the AP

Scenario A.

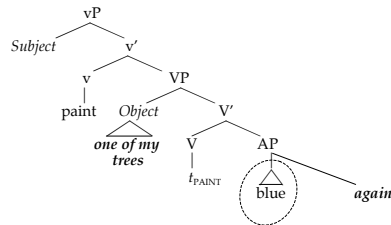
One of my birch trees came up blue when it was a sapling; it later turned white like the rest. But I liked the idea of a blue birch tree so much that...

(25) a. I painted it blue again.



→ Low-restitutive reading with **NO** existential presupposition is fine
 (once before, it was blue)

b. #I painted one of my trees blue again.



→ Existential is *higher* than *Again*
 (≠ once before, one of them was blue)

- Under a slightly different scenario, things change...

Scenario B.

All of my birch trees were blue when they were saplings; they later turned white like birch trees are supposed to be. But I liked the idea of a blue birch tree so much that...

(25) b. ✓ I painted one of my trees blue again.

→ Existential is still *higher* than *Again*, but the presup isn't existential.

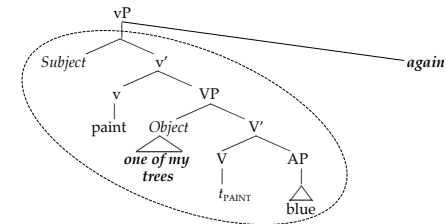
One of my trees is such that: I painted it blue (and it had been blue before)

- Finally, just to show that existential presuppositions *can* arise in this kind of sentence, as long as the scenario is compatible with a *Repetitive* reading (i.e. *Again* attached at vP)

Scenario C.

One of my birch trees had been painted blue when I moved in. It later died and had to be cut down. But I liked the idea of a blue birch tree so much that...

(25) b. ✓ I painted one of my trees blue again.



- In short, existential presuppositions are possible when '*again*' can be attached high, as in the repetitive reading (**scenario C**).
 - And they're possible when '*again*' is attached in the middle — to the VP — which should now be a kind of restitutive reading (Beck & Johnson's example)
- But if '*again*' is attached at the lowest position (*at the AP*), there's **no existential presupposition** after all.

8. Conclusions

- At least some verb roots have essentially stative meanings.
- Eventive *little-v* is a causative operator (contra Kratzer 1996).
- New support for the decompositional theory of VP meanings **AND** for the structural theory of *Again*.