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

(2) $\begin{array}{l}
\text{Max} \\
\text{vP} \\
\text{VP} \\
\text{AP} \\
\text{DP} \\
\text{vP'} \\
\text{v''} \\
\text{paint} \\
\text{the door} \\
\text{V} \\
\text{PAINT} \\
\text{PRO} \\
\text{blue} \\
\text{p} \\
\text{s'} \\
\text{s''} \\
\text{g} \\
\text{h} \\
\end{array}$

• An Agentive event of applying paint to the door brings about a Result state of the door being blue

• The verb root plays the crucial role; it denotes a causative operator:

(3) $\text{[[PAINT]]} = \lambda s \in \text{a\ door\-painting\ event\ and\ }\exists s' (\text{prior\ to}\ s\ \text{and}\ p(s') = 1) . p(s) = 1$

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 blue — 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.
Restitutive readings result from LOW attachment of again:

- This is a consequence of a widely held view of little $\mathcal{v}$ [Kratzer 1996]
  
  § The $\mathcal{v}$ denotes a relation between individuals and events (and not a causative operator)
  
  § $\mathcal{v}$ composes with VP by Event Identification
  (Predicates Modification of event argument, plus introduction of agent arg.)
  
  § Consequently, the VP and $\mathcal{v}$P describe the same event (e.g. door-painting).

However...

The explanation has a peculiar property

→ TWO structures should yield semantically equivalent Repetitive readings

Existential operators and ‘again’

3. (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 $\mathcal{v}$P)
   — Existential DP subject reconstructs into its theta position (spec-$\mathcal{v}$P)
   → 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.

(15) 1) DP 29 PRO

   Someone … wants …
   $\mathcal{v}$P

   → 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:

  ![Diagram of sentence structure]

  ⇒ 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.

  ![Diagram of sentence structure]

  ⇒ Consequence:
  Existential presuppositions should NEVER be available for Restitutive readings

• WHOOPS!
  – 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)

    ![Diagram of sentence structure]

    • 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,] as a stative root?

\[(23) \| \text{paint} \| = \lambda x \lambda e. [\text{e 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 \[\lambda x \lambda y. [\text{the door } y \text{ paint } x \text{ blue }]]\] 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) \| v \| = \lambda x \lambda y. [\text{e is an event whose agent is } y, \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) \text{Max painted a door blue again}
\[(\text{In a situation in which there is 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.

```
ially
  Subject
  v
  paint
  Object
  v'
  VP
  again
  AP
  BLUE
```

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

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

```
ially
  Subject
  v
  paint
  one of my trees
  v'
  VP
  again
  AP
  BLUE
```

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

```
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*)

```
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.

⇒ 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 *v*)
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.