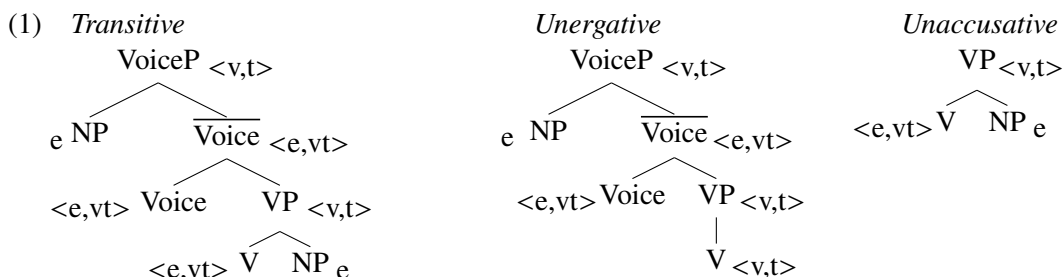


Subjectless Readings of *Again* and the Kratzerian Model of Argument Structure

1 Introduction. Since Kratzer (1996), much recent work has adopted the model of argument structure illustrated in (1). In this model, internal arguments are arguments of verbs, but external arguments are not, they are introduced by a functional head Voice. Voice introduces the external argument of unergative intransitives, as well as the external argument of both eventive and stative transitive verbs. Internal arguments include objects of transitives and subjects of unaccusatives.



Bale (2007), Smith and Yu (2021), and Ausensi et al. (2021) have challenged the Kratzerian model of argument structure based on so-called subjectless readings of *again*. This paper addresses their empirical claims and shows that subjectless readings of *again* actually precisely match what the model predicts.

2 *Again* and Subjectless Readings. The adverb *again* attaches to a node of type <v,t> and introduces the presupposition that an event of the type denoted by its sister occurred before (von Stechow 1995, 1996; Beck and Johnson 2004). In the Kratzerian model in (1), transitives and unergatives include a <v,t> node at VP that excludes the external argument. Hence, it is predicted that transitives and unergatives with *again* can presuppose that the event denoted by VP took place before to the exclusion of the subject (the subjectless reading; Bale 2007).

3 Stative Transitives and Unergatives. Bale (2007) and Smith and Yu (2021) claim that stative transitives like *own* and unergatives like *run* disallow the subjectless reading of *again*. This is unexpected if they have a VP of type <v,t> that *again* can attach to and exclude the external argument, as in (1).

- (2) Brendan owned the soccer ball but then he lost it. However, Jon found it. In accordance with the finders keepers rule, it is safe to say that **#Jon owns the soccer ball again.** (Bale 2007: 469, (48)).
- (3) Last week, Jon’s wife ran all morning. Then after she got home, Jon was able to do some exercise. So **#Jon ran again.** (Bale 2007: 471, (55)).

We contest this empirical claim. We find that these verbs do allow a subjectless reading in a felicitous context. The context has to be such that the type of event denoted by VP is important but the identity of its subject is not. The examples provided by Bale (2007) and Smith and Yu (2021) do not meet this criterion. When we construct examples that do, we find that they do allow the subjectless reading:

- (4) I have always been faithful, but every single girlfriend I have had has doubted my fidelity. My last two girlfriends broke up with me because of their doubts. And **now my new girlfriend doubts my fidelity again.**
- (5) I went to see a movie with Mary and John. During the first scene, Mary coughed. Because of that, I missed a line. Halfway through, **John coughed again.** Because of that, I missed another line.

Some English speakers do not accept the subjectless reading with unergatives like (5). We speculate that this is because, by default, what makes an event important is a participant in that event. This conjecture is supported by the fact that all our informants accept the subjectless reading with unergatives if a participant is added as a PP.

- (6) In the doctor’s waiting room, the person on my right coughed on me. A few minutes later, **the person on my left coughed on me again!**

Since the empirical claims of Bale (2007) and Smith and Yu (2021) are false, there is no need to adopt their suggestions to modify the Kratzerian model. Bale (2007) proposes that the subject of stative transitives and unergatives is an argument of the lexical verb. Smith and Yu (2021), on the other hand, claim that both external and internal arguments are introduced by a functional head. Neither proposal receives empirical support from subjectless readings of *again*. It is also worth noting that Smith and Yu's (2021) proposal to have internal arguments introduced by a functional head is not well-motivated considering the pattern of implicit arguments. According to Bruening (2021), individual verbs specify whether internal arguments can be implicit and how they are interpreted when they are, but they are silent about the external argument; the passive is responsible for leaving external arguments implicit. This asymmetry tells us that internal arguments are truly arguments of verbs, but external arguments are not, as in the model in (1).

4 Murder-type Verbs. Ausensi et al. (2021) claim that subjectless readings are also not available with *murder*-type verbs such as *murder* and *assassinate*. Below is one of their examples:

- (7) In a Hollywood slasher movie, Mike Myers murdered Bill. Bill was revived by a sorcerer, but after chasing the revived Bill down, **#Freddy murdered Bill again**. (Ausensi et al. (2021): 7, (19))

This is unexpected given the general assumption that such verbs are subsumed under eventive transitives. Based on this example and analogous ones, Ausensi et al. (2021) claim that *murder*-type verbs encode information about external arguments. However, their footnote 8 notes that two anonymous reviewers disagree with their judgments. We also disagree. So do our informants. In addition, using the kind of context described above makes the reading even easier to get:

- (8) In *South Park*, the character Kenny is always being killed, but then he's back alive in the next episode. In one episode, Ozzy Osbourne murders him by biting his head off. A few episodes later, Veronica murders him. In the next episode, he's accidentally pulled into a giant fan, but two episodes later, **a mutant murders him again**.

Therefore, the empirical claim of Ausensi et al. (2021) is unwarranted. Accordingly, there is no need to adopt their claim that the relevant verbs specify what kinds of external arguments must appear. External arguments are not arguments of verbs.

5 Unaccusatives and Passives. Importantly, even if we use an appropriate context of the type described above, unaccusatives ban subjectless readings. This is true even if a PP is added.

- (9) On Saturday uninvited guests kept arriving. First Brad arrived and I had to invite him in and offer him coffee. A few hours later Sally arrived. For a while no one arrived, but then later in the afternoon **#Carl arrived again**.
- (10) This morning the coffee mug fell on my foot. A few minutes later, **#the cereal bowl fell on my foot again!**

Passives also disallow the subjectless reading:

- (11) Things kept being delivered to my office by mistake. First a ham sandwich was delivered. Then a bunch of balloons was delivered. For a while I was able to work without interruption, but then **#a bouquet of flowers was delivered again**.

This is predicted by the Kratzerian model. In unaccusatives, every node that *again* can attach to includes the surface subject (the logical object). The same is true of passives. As a result, it is correctly predicted that their surface subjects cannot escape the presupposition of *again*.

6 Conclusion. We conclude that subjectless readings are available with all transitives and unergatives so long as they occur in an appropriate context. Subjectless readings are not available with unaccusatives or passives regardless of context. The observed pattern precisely matches what the Kratzerian model of argument structure predicts, contrary to the claims of Bale (2007), Smith and Yu (2021), and Ausensi et al. (2021). We conclude that all external arguments are introduced by a functional head, but internal arguments are arguments of the lexical verb.

References. Ausensi et al. (2021) in *Glossa*; Bale (2007) in *NLLT*; Bruening (2021) in *NLLT*; Kratzer (1996) in *Phrase structure and the lexicon*; Smith and Yu (2021) in *NLLT*.