



Subjectless readings of *again* and the Kratzerian model of argument structure

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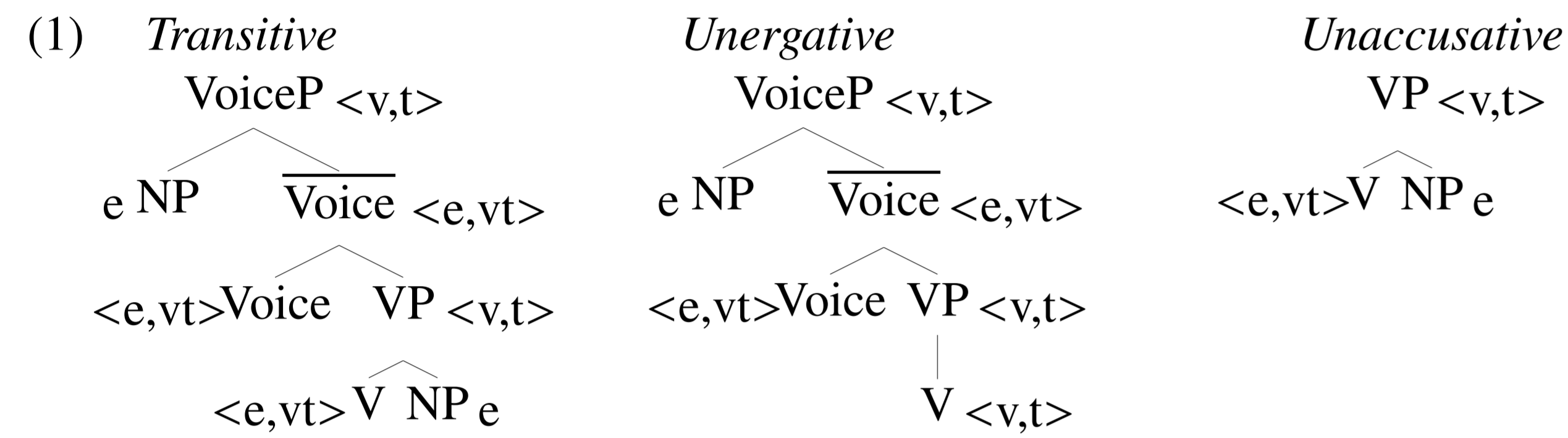


Paper manuscript

Introduction: Kratzer model and *Again*

Kratzer's (1996) model of argument structure:

- Voice introduces external arguments of eventive and stative transitives, as well as unergatives.
- V introduces internal arguments (i.e., objects of transitives and subjects of unaccusatives).



Again and subjectless reading:

$$(2) \llbracket \text{again} \rrbracket = \lambda f \langle v,t \rangle \lambda e.f(e) : \exists e'. \tau(e') < \tau(e) \ \& \ f(e')$$

- *Again* attaches to a <v,t> node.
- Presupposition: The eventuality denoted by its sister occurred before (von Stechow 1995, 1996; Beck and Johnson 2004).
- In (1), transitives and unergatives include a <v,t> node at VP that excludes the external argument.
- Prediction: 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).
- Bale (2007), Smith and Yu (2021), and Ausensi et al. (2021) present data inconsistent with this prediction.

• We show that the pattern of subjectless readings of *again* precisely matches what the Kratzer model predicts.

Eventive Transitives and the Importance of Context

- Bale (2007:466–467): Not all eventive transitives allow the subjectless reading.
- (3) Fred read the article about how to be successful in business. After he was finished, he suggested to Seymour that he might be interested in it. **So #Seymour read the article again.** (Bale 2007:466, (37))
- Bale: Changing the context enables it for *read*.
- (4) Before Esme goes to sleep, her mother and father both read her one story each. On Monday, Esme's mother read her Little Red Riding Hood. Then, not knowing what the previous story was, **Esme's father read it again the very same night.** (Bale 2007:467, (42))
- We find that this also works for *look at*.
- (5) Jon and Mary's mother forbade them from looking at their dead grandfather's picture. However, Mary looked at it two days ago while their mother was out. After hearing about the image from his sister, Jon felt he needed to have a look. So when his mother left **#Jon looked at it again.** (Bale 2007:466, (38))
- (6) I got tennis elbow from playing tennis too much. I first went to a local hospital. The surgeon there looked at my elbow and said that I should get surgery. To get a second opinion, I then went to a larger hospital. **The surgeon there looked at my elbow again** and said that I didn't need surgery.

Contexts Necessary to Test for Subjectless Reading

- Occurrence of type of event described by VP must be salient and relevant;
- Identity of subject is not important.

Stative Transitives

- In (1), external arguments of stative transitive verbs are arguments of Voice.
 - Prediction: Stative transitives should allow subjectless readings.
 - Bale (2007): They disallow subjectless readings.
- (7) 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)).
- We find that they do allow subjectless readings with a felicitous context.
- (8) Sauron can wreak havoc on the world through his Ring of Power, but someone needs to possess it. For a long time an elvish king possessed it and Sauron was able to work a lot of mischief. The ring was lost for a long time, but now **a hobbit possesses it again.**
- (9) 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.**

Unergatives

- In (1), unergatives have an external argument introduced by Voice.
 - Prediction: Subjectless readings of *again* should be possible with them.
 - Bale (2007) and Smith and Yu (2021): Unergatives disallow subjectless readings.
- (10) 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 find that they do allow subjectless readings with a felicitous context.
- (11) Children are not allowed to run at the pool, it's too dangerous. Yesterday Ralph ran and wasn't punished. **Today Sally ran again.** We need to start punishing violators.
- (12) 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.

Note on the importance of a participant in an event:

- Some English speakers do not accept subjectless readings with unergatives.
 - We hypothesize that by default, what makes an event relevant/important is a participant in that event (at least one).
 - If we add a PP, 100% of our informants accept subjectless readings with unergatives.
- (13) 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!**
- (14) This puzzle seems to be taking forever. I worked on it this morning and thought it was almost done. **Mary worked on it again this afternoon** but it still isn't finished.

Murder-Type Verbs

- Ausensi et al. (2021): Subjectless presuppositions are not available with verbs of deliberate killing like *murder*.
- (15) 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))
- Their footnote 8 says that two reviewers disagree with their judgments.
 - The second author and our informants also disagree.
 - The use of a felicitous context also makes the subjectless reading easier to get.
- (16) 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.**

Internal Arguments

- In (1), the first <v,t> node always includes an internal argument unless the verb is unergative.
- Prediction: Internal arguments cannot be excluded from presupposition.

Internal arguments of transitives:

- (17) When I go for walks, I greet all the neighbors that I see outside. This morning I greeted the neighbor out walking her dachshund. Then I greeted the neighbor walking his pug. There's one woman who never acknowledges me, so I didn't bother to greet her. But then **#I greeted the neighbor out jogging again.**

Subjects of passives:

- (18) 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.**

Subjects of unaccusatives:

- (19) Seymour's wife was the first person ever to arrive at the new airport. Then a week later **#Seymour arrived again.** (Bale 2007:471, (54))
- Changing the context does not help.
- (20) 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.**

Conclusion

- Eventive and stative transitives allow subjectless readings;
- Unergatives also allow them.
- Internal arguments never escape from the presupposition of *again*.
- **The observed pattern is exactly what the Kratzer model predicts.**

Selected References

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