

## Degree Achievements and *again*

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This paper addresses the systematic ambiguity we find in sentences, such as (1), containing a Degree Achievement (DA) predicate and the modifier *again*. Previous work on *again*-based ambiguities has focused on sentences with Result State (RS) predicates and has proposed that the source of the ambiguity is due to the scopal possibilities of *again* with respect to a BECOME operator in a syntactically decomposed verb. In this paper, I argue that although *again*-sentences with DA predicates exhibit an ambiguity similar to those found in sentences with RS predicates, in the case of DAs the ambiguity cannot be due to the scopal possibilities of *again* with a BECOME operator. Instead, I argue for a different scopal analysis in which DAs are decomposed into comparative structures, with the two readings explained by the scopal possibilities of *again* with respect to a complex degree phrase (DegP).

Consider a sentence like (2), which is claimed to have two readings. Intuitively, both readings make the same assertion, namely that there is an event of the door opening; however, they differ in their presuppositional content. The repetitive reading of (2) presupposes the existence of a previous event in which the door opened, while the non-repetitive reading presupposes merely that the door was previously open. Such ambiguities, which I will henceforth call *again*-ambiguities, were first discussed in detail by McCawley (1973). McCawley proposed that a verb like *open* has a deep structure that contains multiple propositional levels, and thus multiple attachment sites for *again*. These two structures are shown in (3). Essentially, the ambiguity is given an explanation in terms of adverbial scope. When *again* scopes above BECOME (and in this case the subject as well) a repetitive reading is derived; when it scopes below BECOME a non-repetitive reading is derived (see also von Stechow 1996 and Beck & Johnson 2004). Note also that, given the above characterizations, the repetitive reading intuitively entails the non-repetitive reading. I show that this entailment can be easily derived in the *again*-BECOME scopal analysis given suitable assumptions for the meaning of *again*.

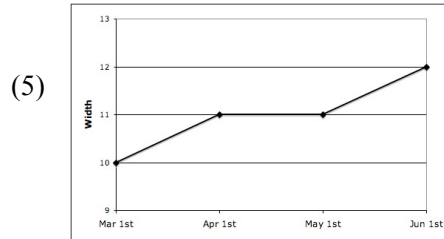
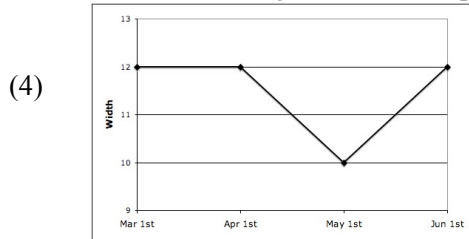
However, this analysis is problematic when we realize that not all ambiguous sentences containing *again* demonstrate such an entailment. Certain sentences, namely those containing DAs, exhibit an *again*-ambiguity in which neither reading entails the other. Consider (1). This sentence also contains two readings, both of which assert that the river widened. The repetitive reading presupposes that the river widened some time previously, whereas the non-repetitive reading presupposes only that the river narrowed before the asserted widening (see the diagram in (4) for an example of the latter). Given these characterizations, there are situations in which the repetitive reading is true but the non-repetitive reading false; such a situation is diagrammed in (5). Since, in such a case, neither reading entails the other, it follows that an explanation of the ambiguity cannot be given in terms of the scope of *again* with respect to a BECOME operator. It is worth pointing out that, while von Stechow (1996) does provide an analysis of *again*-sentences with DA predicates, he only considers situations like (4); according to his analysis, (1) cannot be uttered truthfully in a situation like (5), which runs counter to speaker intuitions.

Von Stechow assumes that DA predicates contain comparative structures in addition to BECOME in their decomposition; I follow him in the former, but not the latter respect. I argue that the ambiguity in (1) is in fact due to the scope *again* takes with respect to a complex DegP, rather than a BECOME operator. It has been independently proposed by Heim 2000, that DegP can covertly scope above and below certain elements. I argue that *again* should be added to the list of these elements. Adopting the account of comparatives in Heim 2000, and using a semantics relative to time intervals, I assume that a sentence like (1) is correctly analyzed as in (6); (6) can be roughly paraphrased as expressing that *the river is wider at the end of interval i than at the beginning of i*. The LFs corresponding to the repetitive and non-repetitive readings are those

shown in (7). Under this account, the correct presupposition is derived for the repetitive reading of (1), namely the presupposition only that the river widened in the past.

The account I give of the ambiguity in (1) provides evidence that not all *again*-ambiguities derive from the same source as is often assumed; it also provides evidence of the underlyingly comparative nature of DA predicates, which has been independently argued for recently (e.g. Kennedy & Levin 2006; Kearns 2007).

- (1) The river widened again.
- (2) The door opened again
- (3) a. [again [BECOME [the door open]]] - *repetitive*  
b. [BECOME [again [the door open]]] - *restitutive*



- (6) [<sub>S</sub> The river [<sub>DegP</sub> more than it was *wh* wide at BEG]] is wide at END]]
- (7) a. again [<sub>DegP</sub> more [*wh*<sub>2</sub> than it was *t*<sub>2</sub> wide at BEG]] 1 [<sub>S</sub> river is *t*<sub>1</sub> wide at END]] (*rep.*)  
b. [<sub>DegP</sub> more [*wh*<sub>2</sub> than it was *t*<sub>2</sub> wide at BEG]] 1 again [<sub>S</sub> river is *t*<sub>1</sub> wide at END]] (*count.*)

## References

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