

‘Again’ separation in Italian*

Yuyang Liu
Yale University

1 Introduction

English sentences with *again* like (1) are ambiguous between **high** and **low** readings.¹

- (1) John will want to close the door again.
‘John will want to close the door, and ...’
- a. ‘He **wanted** to do that before.’ *high reading*
b. ‘He **closed** it before.’ *low reading*

This ambiguity of *again* is frequently analyzed as a structural one (Morgan 1969, Dowty 1979, von Stechow 1995, 1996, Beck & Johnson 2004, Beck 2005, Bale 2005, 2007) (2).

- (2) a. Again *modifying the matrix vP* → *high reading (1a)*
John will [_{VP} want to [_{VP} close the door]] again.
b. Again *modifying the embedded vP* → *low reading (1b)*
John will [_{VP} want to [_{VP} close the door] again].

If the structural account is on the right track, a prediction is (3).

- (3) *Prediction*
In a head-initial language, if ‘again’ precedes the **matrix** verb:
- a. ‘Again’ can modify the **matrix** vP but not the **embedded** vP;
b. The **high** reading is possible, but the **low** reading is not; and
c. Sentences like (4) are infelicitous in a **low** reading context.

- (4) John will again [want to [close the door]].

This prediction is borne out for English *again* and *re-* (Horn 1980, Beck & Johnson 2004, Bale 2007) but not for Italian *ri-* ‘again’ (Cardinaletti 2003) (5).²

* I am grateful to Nicoletta Loccioni and Raffaella Zanuttini for Italian data and judgments. I also thank Hailey Dykstra, Pearl Hwang, Theodore Sandstrom, Isabella Senturia, Jim Wood and Ka-Fai Yip for helpful comments. All errors are mine.

¹ There is a third reading called *restitutive* reading, in which the presuppositional content of *again* is that the resulting state of the current event has held before. This talk will not cover restitutive readings, but the analysis offered in this talk may be extended to restitutive readings.

² Glossing abbreviations: 1 = first person, 3 = third person, CLF = classifier, FUT = future, IMPF = imperfect, INF = infinitive, PRS = present, PST = past, PTCP = participle, SG = singular.

- (5) Gianni ri-[vorrà [chiudere la porta]].
 Gianni again-want.FUT.3SG close.INF the door
 ‘Gianni will want to close the door, and ...’
- a. ‘He **wanted** to do that before.’ high reading
 b. ‘He **closed** it before.’ low reading
- (Nicoletta Loccioni & Raffaella Zanuttini, pers. comms.)

The structural account is challenged by (5b): *ri*- is separated from the **embedded** vP in (5) but can still yield the **low** reading. This phenomenon is dubbed *ri-separation* (i.e., ‘again’ separation) by Cardinaletti.

To rescue the structural account, this talk accounts for ‘again’ separation by proposing that *ri*- moves and reconstructs (6).

- (6) *Overview of the proposal*
- a. *Ri*- is base-generated in the **embedded** vP with an unvalued aspect feature.
 - b. *Ri*- moves to the specifier position of the **matrix** AspP and agrees with the **matrix** Asp⁰.
 - c. *Ri*- is interpreted at its base-generated position by reconstruction.

Roadmap

- ii. Data
- iii. Analysis
- iv. Evidence
- v. Conclusion

2 Data

- (7) *Example of nonrestructuring embedding verb disallowing ‘again’ separation*
- Gianni ri-deciderà [CP di chiudere la porta].
 Gianni again-decide.FUT.3SG of close.INF the door
 ‘Gianni will decide to close the door, and ...’
- a. ‘He **decided** to do that before.’ high reading
 b. *‘He **closed** it before.’ no low reading
- (Nicoletta Loccioni & Raffaella Zanuttini, pers. comms.)

Q: Which verbs allow ‘again’ separation?

A: restructuring verbs.

<i>andare</i> 'to go'	✓	<i>chiedere</i> 'to ask'	*
<i>dovere</i> 'to be obliged'	✓	<i>credere</i> 'to believe'	*
<i>fare</i> 'to make'	✓	<i>decidere</i> 'to decide'	*
<i>potere</i> 'to be able'	✓	<i>impedire</i> 'to impede'	*
<i>venire</i> 'to come'	✓	<i>minacciare</i> 'to threaten'	*
<i>volere</i> 'to want'	✓	<i>pensare</i> 'to think'	*
		<i>permettere</i> 'to permit'	*
		<i>raccomandare</i> 'to recommend'	*

Table 1 Some Italian embedding verbs and whether they allow 'again' separation (Nicoletta Loccioni, pers. comm.)

Verbs that allow 'again' separation pattern with those that allow clitic climbing, a test for Italian restructuring verbs (among others: Rizzi 1978, Wurmbrand 1998, 2001, 2004, 2016, Cinque 1999, 2006, Matushansky 2006):

(8) *Clitic climbing*

- a. Lo_1 volevo [vP vedere- t_1 subito].
him want.IMPF.1SG see.INF at.once
'I wanted to see him at once.'
- b. * Lo_1 detesto [CP vedere- t_1 in quello stato].
him detest.PRS.1SG see.INF in that state
Intended: 'I hate to see him in that state.'

(Cinque 2004: 132)

(9) *Complement sizes* (cf. Cinque 1999, Wurmbrand 2004, Matushansky 2006)

- a. Restructuring verb: vP or AspP.
- b. Nonrestructuring embedding verb: CP.

Verbs that allow 'again' separation are restructuring verbs, which take either a vP or an AspP as their complement.

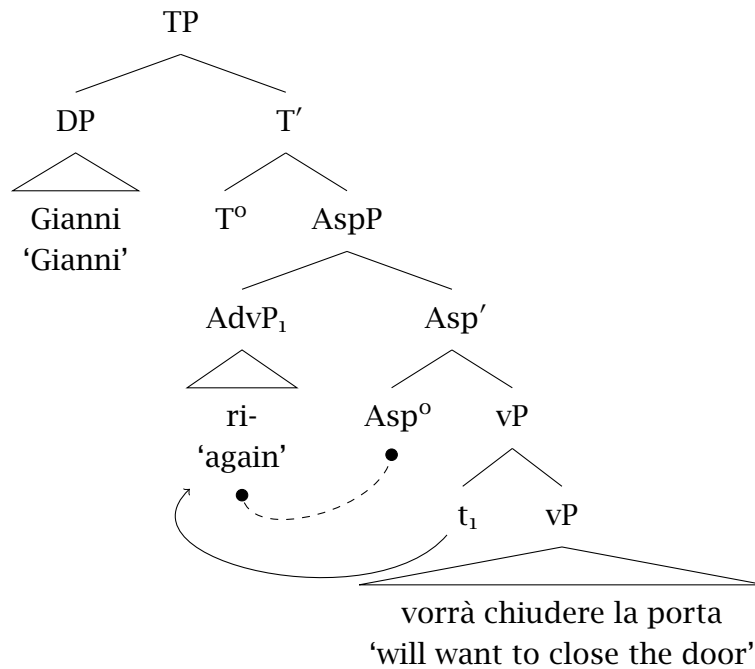
3 Analysis

(10) *Proposal*

- a. *Ri*- may be base-generated in either the **matrix** vP (**high** reading) or the **embedded** vP (**low** reading).
- b. *Ri*- is base-generated with an unvalued aspect feature that must be checked via spec-head agreement with the closest Asp^0 probe.

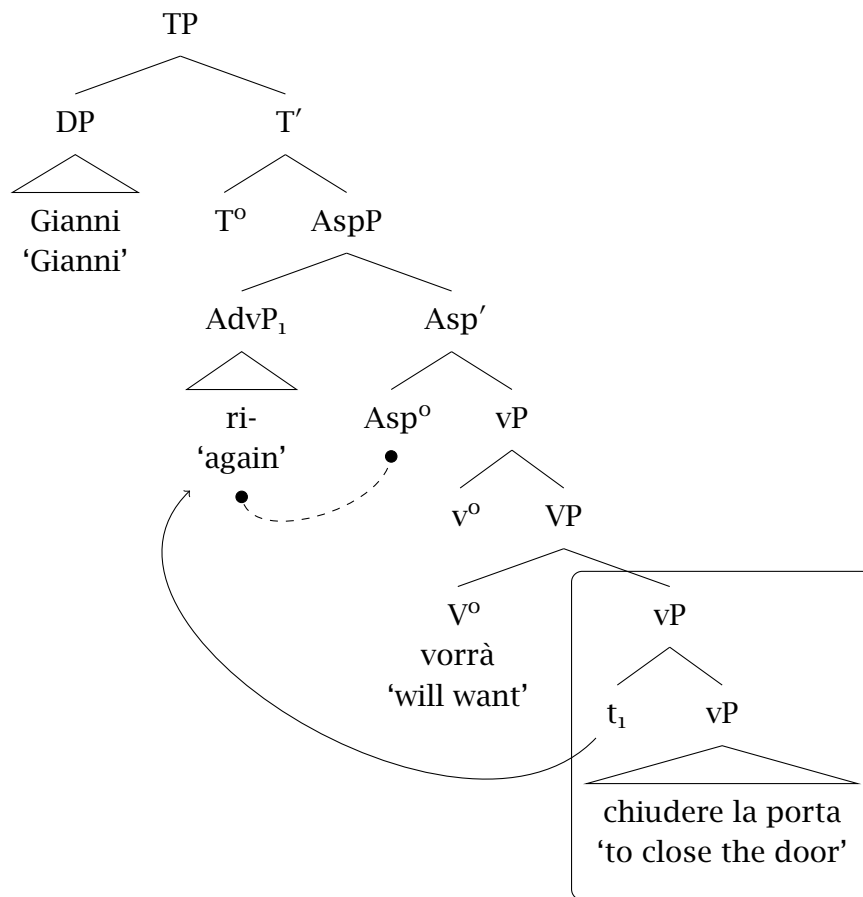
- c. When the matrix verb is a restructuring verb and does not embed an AspP, in order to check its aspect feature, *ri-* must move to the specifier position of the **matrix** AspP and agrees with **matrix** Asp^o.
- d. *Ri-* is interpreted in its base-generated position by reconstruction (in the sense of Lechner 1998).

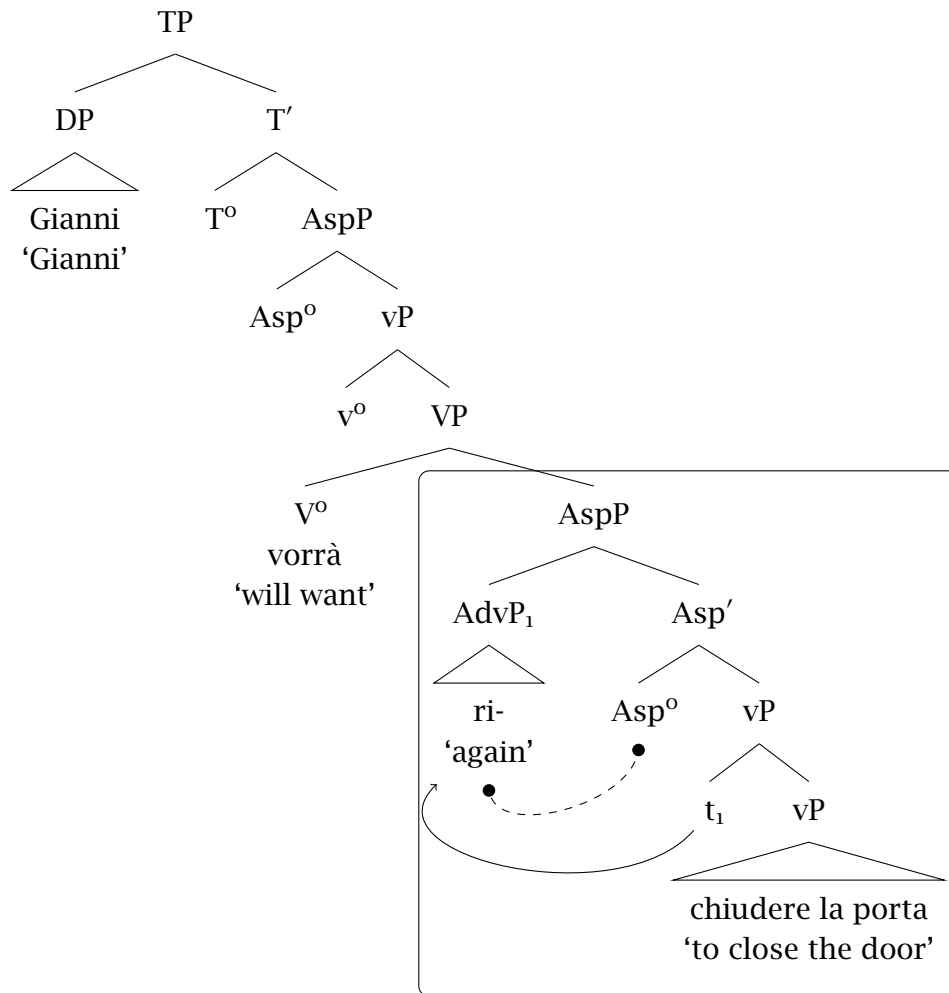
(11) *High surface position, **high** reading*



'Again' separation in Italian

(12) *High surface position, low reading ('again' separation)*



(13) *Low surface position, low reading***4 Evidence**

Two pieces of evidence in favor of the current movement and reconstruction analysis are that 'again' separation is subject to *Coordinate Structure Constraint* (CSC; Ross 1967) (14) and *Relativized Minimality* (RM; Rizzi 1990, 2001, 2004) (15).

(14) *Coordinate Structure Constraint*

In a coordinate structure, no conjunct may be moved, nor may any element contained in a conjunct be moved out of that conjunct. (Ross 1967: 161)

(15) *Paraphrased Relativized Minimality*

Moving *X* across *Y* is prohibited if *X* and *Y* have certain characteristics in common (e.g., when both are adverbials). (Rizzi 1990: 1, adapted)

CSC Example (16) contains a sentence minimally different from the baseline example (5) in that the embedded predicate contains a conjunction. In (16), high *ri-* can only be interpreted as modifying the matrix verb but not as modifying any of the embedded conjunct.

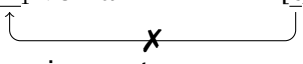
(16) *CSC example*

Gianni ri-vorrà [saltare in piedi e chiudere la porta].
Gianni again-want.FUT.3SG jump.INF in feet and close.INF the door

- a. 'Gianni will again **want** to jump up and close the door.'
- b. *'Gianni will want to **jump up** again and close the door.'
- c. *'Gianni will want to jump up and again **close** the door.'

(Raffaella Zanuttini, pers. comm.)

This may be explained by CSC: movement of *ri-* from an embedded conjunct is prohibited.³

- (17) *Gianni ri₁-vorrà [t₁-saltare in piedi e chiudere la porta].

Gianni again-want.FUT.3SG jump.INF in feet and close.INF the door
Intended: 'Gianni will want to **jump up** again and close the door.'

RM Example (18) contains a sentence minimally different from the baseline example (5) in that an adverb is inserted between the **matrix** verb and the **embedded** verb. In (18), high *ri-* can only be interpreted **high** but not **low**.

(18) *RM example*

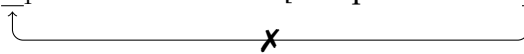
Gianni ri-vorrà [completamente chiudere la porta].
Gianni again-want.FUT.3SG completely close.INF the door
'Gianni will want to close the door completely, and ...

- a. 'He **wanted** to close the door before.'
- b. *'He **closed** it before.'

(Raffaella Zanuttini, pers. comm.)

This may be explained by RM: movement of an adverb (*ri-*) across another adverb (the inserted adverb 'completely') is prohibited.

³ It is yet unclear why ATB movement of *ri-* is impossible: (16) cannot be interpreted as 'Gianni will want to jump up again and close the door again' (Raffaella Zanuttini, pers. comm.).

- (19) *Gianni ri_i-vorrà [completamente t_i-chiudere la porta].

 Gianni again-want.FUT.3SG completely close.INF the door
 Intended: 'Gianni will want to close the door again completely.'

The evidence in (20–21) shows that *ri-* is very different from other prefixes in Italian.

(20) *S-sonorization*

- a. *re*zistere 'to resist', *de*zistere 'to desist'
- b. *ri*salutare 'to greet again'

(Cardinaletti 2003: 9)

(21) *Vowel deletion*

- a. *re*-inviare > rinviare 'to postpone'
- b. *ri*-inviare > riinviare 'to send again'

(Cardinaletti 2003: 9)

Crosslinguistic evidence Phenomena resembling 'again' separation are found in French (22) and Mandarin (23) as well (Liu 2021, to appear).

(22) *French re-*

Il lui a re-fait [faire son devoir].
 he her have.PRS.3SG again-make.PST.PTCP do.INF her homework

- a. 'He has again **made** her do her homework.'
- b. 'He has made her **redo** her homework.'

high reading

low reading

(Vincent Homer, pers. comm.)

(23) *Mandarin you*

Xiaoming you xiang [guanshang na shan men].
 Xiaoming again want close that CLF door

- a. 'Xiaoming again **wants** to close the door.'
- b. 'Xiaoming wants to again **close** the door.'

high reading

low reading

(Liu to appear)

In these two languages, we also found a similar correlation between 'again' separation effects and restructuring.

In Mandarin, *aspect lowering* refers to the phenomenon in which an aspect marker, such as the experiential marker *-guo*, appears low but can only receive a high interpretation (C.-T. J. Huang 1989, Li 1990, Lin 2006, Grano 2014).⁴

⁴ The experiential aspect means that "an event has been experienced with respect to some reference time" (Li & Thompson 1981: 226). It is translated into English as present perfect in the examples.

(24) *Mandarin aspect lowering*

- a. *Restructuring verb: High interpretation of -guo*
Lisi shefa [xiuli-guo zhe tai jiqi].
Lisi try repair-EXP this CLF machine
'Lisi **has tried** to repair this machine.'
Not: 'Lisi tries to have repaired this machine.'
- b. *Nonrestructuring embedding verb: Low interpretation of -guo*
Lisi xiangxin [wo mai-guo zhe zhong baoxian].
Lisi believe 1SG buy-EXP this kind insurance
'Lisi believes that I **have bought** this kind of insurance.'
Not: 'Lisi has believed that I buy this kind of insurance.'

(N. Huang 2018: 351)

Mandarin verbs that allow 'again' separation pattern with those that allow aspect lowering.

5 Conclusion

Takeaways

- Italian *ri*- 'again' can surface high but be interpreted low, challenging the structural account for the ambiguity of 'again'.
- A movement and reconstruction analysis of 'again' separation is proposed to rescue the structural account.
- 'Again' separation can be used as a test for restructuring verbs, whose complement size may be variable: either vP or AspP.
- Adverbs move.

References

- Bale, Alan. 2005. Quantifiers, *again* and the complexity of verb phrases. *Semantics and Linguistic Theory (SALT)* 15. 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.3765/salt.v15io.2928>.
- Bale, Alan. 2007. Quantifiers and verb phrases: An exploration of propositional complexity. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 25(3). 447–483. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11049-007-9019-8>.
- Beck, Sigrid. 2005. There and back again: A semantic analysis. *Journal of Semantics* 22(1). 3–51. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jos/ffho16>.
- Beck, Sigrid & Kyle Johnson. 2004. Double objects again. *Linguistic Inquiry* 35(1). 97–123. <https://doi.org/10.1162/002438904322793356>.
- Cardinaletti, Anna. 2003. On the Italian repetitive prefix *ri*-. Incorporation vs. cliticization. *University of Venice Working Papers in Linguistics* 13. 7–29.

- Cinque, Guglielmo. 1999. *Adverbs and functional heads: A cross-linguistic perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Cinque, Guglielmo. 2004. "Restructuring" and functional structure. In Adriana Belletti (ed.), *Structures and beyond: The cartography of syntactic structures, volume 3*, 132–191. New York: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780195171976.003.0005>.
- Cinque, Guglielmo. 2006. *Restructuring and functional heads: The cartography of syntactic structures, volume 4*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dowty, David. 1979. *Word meaning and Montague grammar: The semantics of verbs and times in generative semantics and in Montague's PTQ*. Dordrecht: Kluwer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-009-9473-7>.
- Grano, Thomas. 2014. Control without finiteness contrasts: Aspect and complement size in Mandarin Chinese. Ms., Indiana University, Bloomington.
- Horn, Laurence. 1980. Affixation and the Unaccusative Hypothesis. *Chicago Linguistic Society (CLS)* 16(1). 134–146.
- Huang, Cheng-Teh James. 1989. Pro-drop in Chinese: A generalized control theory. In Osvaldo Jaeggli & Kenneth Safir (eds.), *The null subject parameter*, 185–214. Dordrecht: Kluwer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-009-2540-3_6.
- Huang, Nick. 2018. Control complements in Mandarin Chinese: Implications for restructuring and the Chinese finiteness debate. *Journal of East Asian Linguistics* 27(4). 347–376. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10831-018-9185-1>.
- Lechner, Winfried. 1998. Two kinds of reconstruction. *Studia Linguistica* 52(3). 276–310. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9582.00037>.
- Li, Charles Na & Sandra Thompson. 1981. *Mandarin Chinese: A functional reference grammar*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Li, Yen-Hui Audrey. 1990. *Order and constituency in Mandarin Chinese*. Dordrecht: Kluwer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-009-1898-6>.
- Lin, Jo-Wang. 2006. Time in a language without tense: The case of Chinese. *Journal of Semantics* 23(1). 1–53. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jos/ffh033>.
- Liu, Yuyang. 2021. *'Again' skipping in Mandarin Chinese*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts BA thesis.
- Liu, Yuyang. To appear. 'Again' skipping in Mandarin Chinese: A syntactic approach. *West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics (WCCFL)* 40.
- Matushansky, Ora. 2006. Head movement in linguistic theory. *Linguistic Inquiry* 37(1). 69–109. <https://doi.org/10.1162/002438906775321184>.
- Morgan, Jerry. 1969. On arguing about semantics. *Papers in Linguistics* 1(1). 49–70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08351816909389106>.
- Rizzi, Luigi. 1978. A restructuring rule in Italian syntax. In Samuel Jay Keyser (ed.), *Recent transformational studies in European languages*, 113–158. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Rizzi, Luigi. 1990. *Relativized Minimality*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Rizzi, Luigi. 2001. Relativized Minimality effects. In Mark Baltin & Chris Collins (eds.), *The handbook of contemporary syntactic theory*, 89–110. Oxford: Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470756416.ch4>.

- Rizzi, Luigi. 2004. Locality and left periphery. In Adriana Belletti (ed.), *Structures and beyond: The cartography of syntactic structures, volume 3*, 223–251. New York: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780195171976.003.0008>.
- Ross, John. 1967. *Constraints on variables in syntax*. Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology dissertation.
- von Stechow, Arnim. 1995. Lexical decomposition in syntax. In Urs Egli, Peter Pause, Christoph Schwarze, Arnim von Stechow & Götz Wienold (eds.), *Lexical knowledge in the organization of language*, 81–120. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/cilt.114.05ste>.
- von Stechow, Arnim. 1996. The different readings of *wieder* 'again': A structural account. *Journal of Semantics* 13(2). 87–138. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jos/13.2.87>.
- Wurmbrand, Susanne. 1998. *Infinitives*. Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology dissertation.
- Wurmbrand, Susanne. 2001. *Infinitives: Restructuring and clause structure*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110908329>.
- Wurmbrand, Susanne. 2004. Two types of restructuring—lexical vs. functional. *Lingua* 114(8). 991–1014. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0024-3841\(03\)00102-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0024-3841(03)00102-5).
- Wurmbrand, Susanne. 2016. Complex predicate formation via voice incorporation. In Léa Nash & Pollet Samvelian (eds.), *Approaches to complex predicates*, 248–290. Leiden: Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004307094_010.

Yuyang Liu
Department of Linguistics
Yale University
370 Temple St
New Haven, CT 06511
yuyang.liu.yl2472@yale.edu