

‘Again’ separation in Italian

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1 Introduction

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

(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).

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

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. Lo₁ volevo [vP vedere-t₁ subito].
him want.IMPF.1SG see.INF at.once
‘I wanted to see him at once.’
- b. *Lo₁ detesto [CP vedere-t₁ 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.

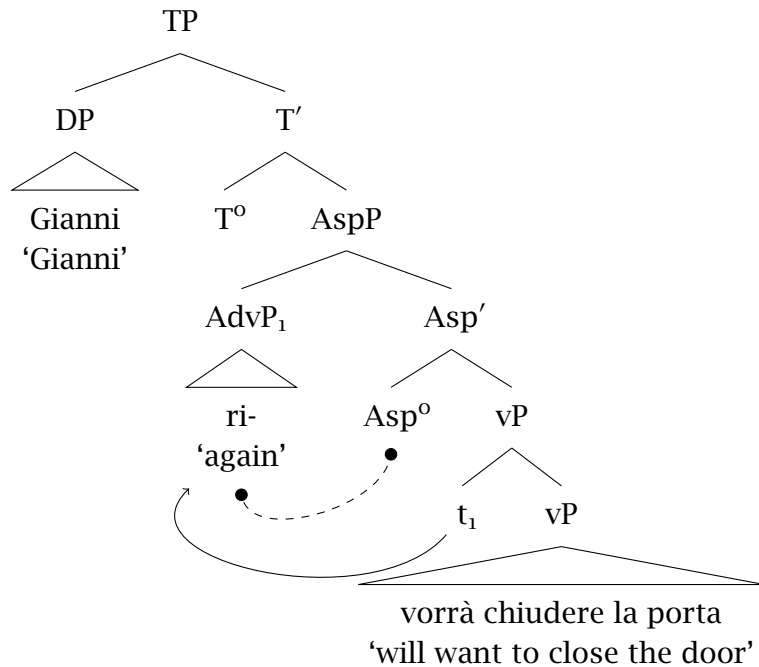
Verbs that allow ‘again’ separation are restructuring verbs, which take either a vP or an AspP as their complement.

3 Analysis

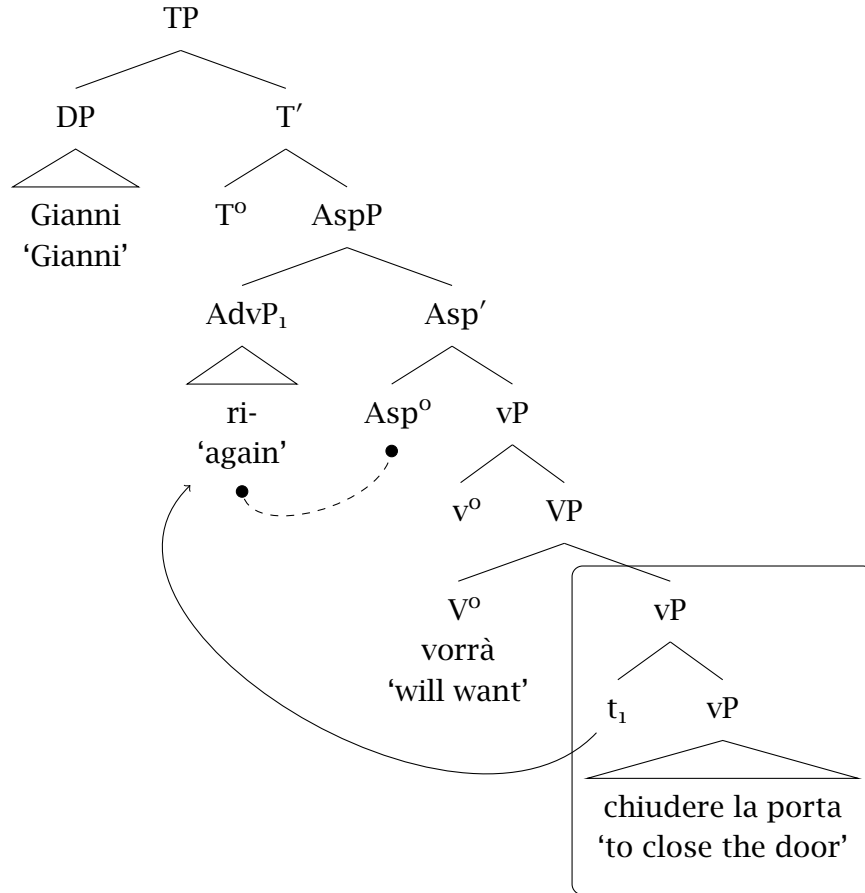
(10) *Proposal*

- 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^0 .
- d. *Ri-* is interpreted in its base-generated position by reconstruction (in the sense of Lechner 1998).

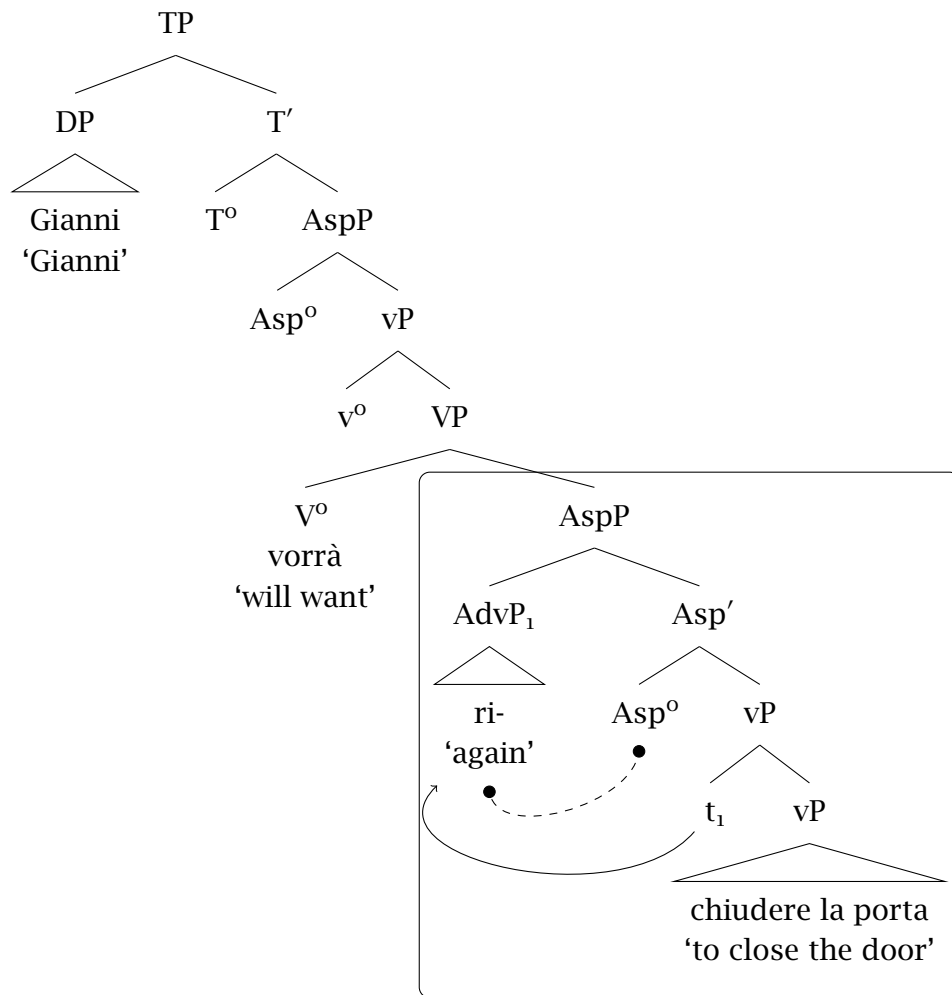
- (11) *High surface position, **high** reading*



(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.'

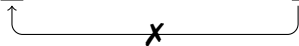
b. *~~'Gianni will want to **jump up** again and close the door.'~~

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.

(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 ...

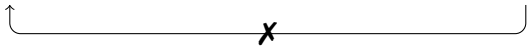
a. ‘He **wanted** to close the door before.’

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.

(19) *Gianni ri₁-vorrà [completamente t₁-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. *rezistere* ‘to resist’, *dezistere* ‘to desist’
- b. *risalutare* ‘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.’

high reading

b. ‘He has made her **redo** her homework.’

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.’

high reading

b. ‘Xiaoming wants to again **close** the door.’

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).

(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.