ARGUMENTLESS PRESUPPOSITIONS IN KANIEN'KÉHA

WILLIE MYERS | willie.myers@mail.mcgill.ca | McGill University

McGill

CRBLM
Centre for Research on Brain, Language and Music

PUZZLE: UNDOCUMENTED PRESUPPOSITIONS

- The **repetitive prefix s-** is typically equated with English *again*.

- Like *again*, it introduces a **repetitive presupposition**.

(1) Context: you've swam.
   S-k-atá:wen-s.
   REP-1sgA-swim-HAB
   'I'm swimming again.'

(2) Context: you've never swam.
   #Iah te-**s**-k-atá:wen-s.
   NEG NEG-REP-1sgA-swim-HAB
   'I'm not swimming again.'

- Unlike *again*, it gives rise to an **unexpected array of presuppositions**:

   – subjectless presuppositions with stative and intransitive verbs
   – objectless presuppositions

- **Novel empirical observation**: <u>argumentless presuppositions!</u>

- **PUZZLE:** why are these presuppositions possible in Kanien'kéha?

SUBJECTLESS WITH STATIVE VERB

(3) Context: Mary loved John but then they broke up. John began dating Helen and...

   Helen **s**-a-ho-norónhhkw-e'.
   Helen REP-FACT-FZsg>Msg-love-PUNC
   'Helen loved him.'
   Literally: 'Helen [loved him] again.'

SUBJECTLESS WITH INTRANSITIVE VERB

(4) Context: John died last week. Then, this week...

   Kó:r **s**-a-h-rénhe-ie'.
   Paul REP-FACT-MsgA-die-PUNC
   'Paul died.'
   Literally: 'Paul [died] again.'

OBJECTLESS WITH TRANSITIVE VERB

(5) Context: Yesterday, Paul went to his favorite restaurant. He didn't eat anything all day beforehand. At the restaurant, he ate cherries first. Then...

   Kítkit **s**-a-ha-'wà:ra-k-e'.
   chicken REP-FACT-MsgA-meat-eat-PUNC
   'He ate chicken.'
   Literally: 'He [ate] chicken again.'

⇒ **Never before documented (to my knowledge)!**

PROPOSAL: STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

- The repetitive prefix is associated with a **repetitive operator** that shares its semantics with repetitive *again*.

- Following a structural analysis, the operator can **adjoin at different levels** of the derivation, resulting in presuppositions with different scopes.

- The availability of **objectless presuppositions** suggests that there is an adjunction site between the verb and the internal argument.

SEMANTICS OF THE REPETITIVE

- The prefix *s-* indicates the presence of a repetitive operator REP-Op.

- REP-Op is a **modifier of properties** of events ($\langle\langle v,t\rangle,\langle v,t\rangle\rangle$).

- REP-Op introduces a **presupposition** that a similar event occurs temporally prior to the asserted event (van Stechow 1996, Beck and Johnson 2004, a.o.)

(6) $[\![\text{REP-Op}]\!]P(e)$ is defined iff $\exists e^1[e^1 \prec e \ \& \ P(e^1)]$.
   When defined, $[\![\text{REP-Op}]\!]P(e) = P(e)$.

AVAILABLE ADJUNCTION SITES

- Presuppositional scope is determined by the syntactic complement of REP-Op.

- Therefore, scope indicates adjunction site.

(7) Argument-related adjunction sites

Presupposition	Declarative	Subjectless	Objectless
Syntactic content	[S V O]	[V O]	[V]
Level of adjunction	sentence	verb phrase	verb

- **Claim 1**: there must be an adjunction site above the verb but below the experience/theme/object.

- **Claim 2**: this node must denote a predicate of events.
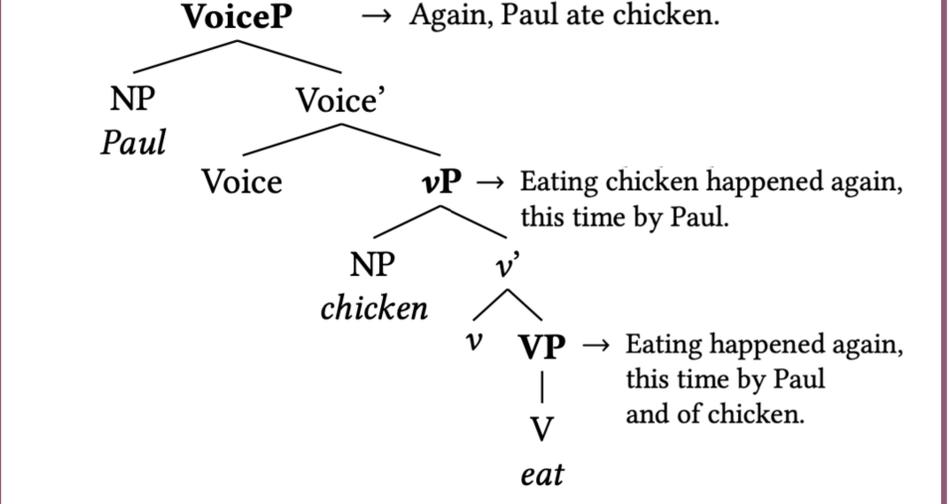
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONSEQUENCES: ARGUMENT STRUCTURE

- **Sever the external argument**: availability of subjectless presuppositions supports claims that the external argument is severed from the verb (Kratzer 1996).

- **Sever the internal argument**: availability of objectless presuppositions supports claims that the internal argument is also severed from the verb (Schein 1993, Champollion 2010, Lohndal 2012).

- The verb/root is a **bare event predicate** and all arguments are added later, via functional projections

(8) $[\![EAT]\!] = \lambda e\text{EAT}(e)$

(9) Deriving repetitive presuppositions in Kanien'kéha

VoiceP → Again, Paul ate chicken.
NP *Paul* Voice'
Voice ***v*P** → Eating chicken happened again, this time by Paul.
NP *chicken* ***v*'**
v **VP** → Eating happened again, this time by Paul and of chicken.
V *eat*

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

- **Cross-linguistic variation**: do languages vary in argument structure or in adverbial modifiers? why don't other languages have objectless presuppositions?

- **Verb/root modification**: growing evidence that this is possible (Pylkkänen 2008 on *partway*, Ahn 2021 on *out-*).

- **Extension to restitutive readings**: support for decompositional approach; sever result state predicates from V.

(10) Context: John lost his toy and I found it. Then...
   Tont-a-hí:-ion-'.
   REP.CIS-FACT-1sg>Msg-give-PUNC
   'I gave it back to him.'
   (I gave it to him and he has it again)

- **Alternative analyses**: is the cost of a lexical analysis—positing at least 4 separate lexical entries for REP-op—worth it?