

XPRAG Proposal: Processing Presuppositions of German *Wieder* (“Again”) 1.

1. Researchers Involved

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2. Background

While the recent literature has seen a renewed peak in discussion of theoretical frameworks for the analysis of presuppositions, together with consideration of ever more intricate data (see Schlenker 2010 and Beaver and Geurts, to appear, for recent surveys), experimental approaches to investigating presupposition-related phenomena are still in their beginnings. Based on the general notion, adopted in one form or another by almost all currently considered theoretical approaches, that presuppositions by default require the presence of some form of contextual support, a number of previous experimental investigations have found that lack of contextual support for a presupposition gives rise to various processing effects, e.g., regarding the choice of interpretation of a syntactically ambiguous structure (Schwarz 2007) and increase in reading times due to presupposition failure (Schwarz 2007) or the need for accommodation (Tiemann et al. to appear; see also Chemla & Schlenker, 2009, and Chemla & Bott 2010 for other recent experimental studies of presuppositional phenomena).

Since different expressions that introduce presuppositions seem to vary in terms of ease of accommodation and other general properties (see, for example, the distinction between soft and hard triggers in Abusch 2009), it seems most prudent to focus experimental investigations on one presupposition trigger at a time. The present project will focus on German *wieder* (“again”). The presupposition that the adverb *again* introduces consists of two parts; one which says that the relevant type of state or event exists at a time different from the time the sentence containing *again* is about, and one which says that this time precedes the time the sentence is about. Thus the sentence in (1a) is said to presuppose (1b). This means that (1a) can only be uttered felicitously in a context where (1b) holds. (1c) expresses (1b) slightly more formally where t_1 stands for the time that the sentence in (1a) is about.

- 1)
 - a) Susan sang again.
 - b) Susan had sung before.
 - c) $\exists t' [t' < t_1 \ \& \ \text{Susan sang at } t']$

Soames (1989) and Heim (1990) have argued that the presupposition *again* introduces is rather about a specific than an existential time. An example from Heim (1990) is given in (2) on the next page.

2) We will have pizza on John's birthday, so we shouldn't have pizza again on Mary's birthday.

In this example, the hearer infers that John's birthday precedes Mary's birthday. Following the argument of Kamp & Rossdeutscher (1994) that the content of the presupposition triggered by *again* depends on an anaphoric element, Beck (2007) suggests the following lexical entry for *again*:

- 3) $[[\text{again}]] (t') (p) (t) (w) = 1 \text{ if } p(t)(w) \ \& \ p(t')(w) \ \& \ t' < t$
 $= 0 \text{ if } \sim p(t)(w) \ \& \ p(t')(w) \ \& \ t' < t$
 undefined otherwise

In (2), the variable assignment function picks up "John's birthday" as a salient referent time for t' . However, it is not explicitly mentioned that John's birthday precedes Mary's birthday. This means that only the first part of the presupposition is given by the context. The fact that John's birthday precedes Mary's birthday should then be resolved by a process that Lewis (1979) calls accommodation.

3. Planned Method and Goals

The project will utilize reading time studies using an Eyalink 1000 eye tracker to investigate processing effects based on presupposed and accommodated content, focusing on the presupposition trigger *wieder* ("again") in various environments. The general approach is to present target sentences containing *wieder* in minimally varied contexts that affect the status of (aspects of) the presupposition of *wieder*. The first study will investigate a) whether there is an increase in reading time when the presupposition of *wieder* is not supported by the context sentence, and b) whether such an effect differs based on the relative scope of negation.