There and back again...Span. *volver + a INF*

1. *volver + a INF* as an eventuality-modification periphrasis

Romance ‘aspectual’ periphrases distribute over at least two levels of structure, a more internal level expressing eventuality modification operators and a more external level expressing time-relational aspect (Laca 2002, 2004).

1. Juan *acaba de terminar de escribir su tesis.*
   - Juan *finish.PRES.3.SG of finish.INF of write.INF* his thesis
   - ‘Juan has just finished writing his thesis’.

2. [Tense *pres* [Asp *TR acaba* [Asp *EM de terminar* [v/VP (Juan) de escribir su tesis]]
   - event(uality) description
   |
   ------------derived event(uality) description-----------]

*volver + a INF* (lit. ‘return, go back to V’) qualifies as an eventuality modification periphrasis on the grounds of (i) linear position wrt. time-relational periphrases (3a-b), (ii) lack of tense restrictions (4a-b).

3. a. Juan *va a volver a escribir un libro.*
   - Juan *go.PRES.3.SG to return.INF to write.INF* a book.
   - ‘Juan is going to write a book again’.

   b. #Juan *vuelve a ir a escribir un libro.*
   - Juan *return.PRES.3.SG to go.INF to write.INF* a book.
   - ‘Juan goes to write a book again’

4. a. #Fue a lllover.
   - go.SP.3.SG to rain.INF
   - ‘It went to rain’

   b. Volvió a lllover.
   - return.SP.3.SG to rain.INF
   - ‘It rained again’

By contrast with other eventuality modification periphrases, *volver + a INF* can combine with any type of temporal structure, including states and habituals:

5. a. No *volvió a poder escribir.*
   - not.return.SP.3.SG to CAN write.
   - ‘S/he wasn’t able to write again’

   b. Había vuelto a fumar mucho.
   - have.IMPF.3.SG return.PP to smoke.INF much
   - ‘S/he was smoking a lot again’

Eventuality modification periphrases express aspectual operators that have a specific temporal structure as output. *Volver + a INF* is clearly non-stative, since (i) it gives rise to
forward-shifting effects in conditional antecedents (6a-c), (ii) it is awkward in contexts requiring stative predicates (7a-c), and (iii) it is acceptable in contexts excluding stative predicates (8a-b).

6. a. Si María está enferma, perderá su trabajo. [SIMUL >SETTLED >EPST]
   if María LOC-be.PRES.3.SG ill, lose.PRES.3.SG her job
   'If Maria is ill, she will lose her job'
   b. Si María cae enferma [FWD-SHIFTED> NOT-YET-SETTLED]
   if María fall.PRES.3.SG ill
   'If Maria falls ill…'
   c. Si María vuelve a estar enferma [FWD-SHIFTED> NOT-YET-SETTLED]
   if María return.PRES.3.SG to LOC-be ill
   'If Maria falls ill again…'

7. a. María cree estar enferma.
   María believe.PRES.3.SG be.INF ill
   'Maria believes to be ill'
   b. *María cree caer enferma.
   María believe.PRES.3.SG fall.INF ill
   *‘Maria believes to fall ill’
   c. *María cree volver a estar enferma.
   María believe.PRES.3.SG return.INF to be ill
   *’Maria believes to fall ill again’

8. a. *La respiración va siendo normal.
   the breathing go.PRES.3.SG be.GER normal
   *‘His/her breathing is gradually being normal’
   b. La respiración va volviendo a ser normal.
   the breathing go.PRES.3.SG return.GER to be normal
   ‘His/her breathing is gradually going back to normal’

The output of volver + a INF is arguably a CHANGE OF STATE (+TELIC, -DUR). This would explain why it can only marginally be preceded by phasal periphrases, and then only if the usual coercion effects (iteration, habituality, derived accomplishments) obtain:

9. a. un libro que no dejo de volver a leer
   a book that not leave.PRES.1.SG of return.INF to read.INF
   ‘a book I haven’t stopped reading over and over again’
   b. La tasa de natalidad empezó a volver a subir en los setenta.
   the rate of birth begin.SP.3.SG to return.INF to rise.INF in the seventies
   ‘Birth rates started rising again in the seventies’.

However, volver + a INF appears in certain cases to inherit the temporal structure of the VP it combines with. The frequentative andar + GER cannot combine with +TELIC predicates, but it can precede volver + a INF, provided that the embedded eventuality description is -TELIC.
10. a. #El río anda creciendo.
   the river walk.PRES.3.SG grow.GER
   #‘The river is rising around’

   b. #El río anda volviendo a crecer.
   the river walk.PRES.3.SG return.GER to grow.INF
   #‘The river is rising around again’

11. a. Anda diciendo tonterías.
    walk.PRES.3.SG say.GER silly things
    ‘S/he is saying silly things’

    b. Anda volviendo a decir tonterías.
    walk.PRES.3.SG return.GER to say.INF silly things
    ‘S/he is saying silly things again’

2. The presupposition(s) of volver + a INF

As evidenced by the translations, volver + a INF contributes a temporal presupposition to the effect that another instance of the eventuality has obtained before. In a first approximation, it can be given the semantics proposed by von Stechow (2007) for Germ. wieder ‘again’:

12. $[\text{volver + a INF}] = \lambda P_R \lambda t : \exists t' [t' < t \land P(t')]$. $P(t)$
    where $P_R$ is the type of an eventuality description/a proposition, and the underlined conjunct is a presupposition.

A compositional treatment such as attempted by von Stechow (1996, 2001, 2007) would require that the sister constituent of volver + a INF delivers the content of the presupposition. As is the case for its adverbial counterparts, sentences containing the periphrasis exhibit a wide range of scope-like ambiguities which render the task of determining $P_R$ quite formidable.

(i) The repetitive – restitutive ambiguity arises with change-of-state verbs, whereby $P_R$ may be the change of state itself or the result state.

13. A las 5 volvió a salir.
    at the 5 return.SP.3SG. to go-out.INF
    ‘At 5 o’clock he went out again’

   C1. (Juan salió a las 3)
      E2 (E ↓) (S ↓) E1
      ‘Juan went out at 3 o’clock’
      $\neg O(j)\ |\ 0(j)\ |\ 0(j)\ |

   C2. (Juan entró a las 3)
      S (E2 ↓) (S ↓) E1
      ‘Juan came in at 3 o’clock’
      $O(j)\ |\ \neg O(j)\ |\ 0(j)\ |

- In the repetitive reading, $E2$ instantiates the same event-type as $E1$. The interval between $E1$ and the relevant $E2$ may contain other instantiations of this event-type.
- In the restitutive reading, $S$ instantiates the same state which constitutes the result state of $E1$. This entails a counterdirectional change of state $E2 ↓$ prior to $E1 ↑$. 
Two competing analyses for restitutives:
(i) uniform analysis, where \( P_r = S \), entailing decomposition of the change-of-state-verb;
(ii) ambiguity analysis, with a counterdirectional presupposition (see Kamp & Rossdeutscher 1994 on wieder, Beck 2006 on again)

(ii) Indefinites and quantifiers may have the same or different witness sets in assertion and presupposition ('wide' scope vs 'narrow' scope).

14. a. A Juan le volvieron a editar una novela.
   to Juan CL.DAT return.SP.3PL. to publish.INF a novel
   (i) 'One of Juan’s novels was published again'.
   (ii) 'Juan got another novel of his published'.

b. Volvieron a romper todos los platos.
   return.SP.3PL. to break all the dishes
   'They broke all the dishes again'

(iii) The reference of definites may vary in assertion and presupposition (Kamp 2001)

15. Juan volvió a chocar su coche.
   Juan return.SP.3SG. to crash.INF his car
   'Juan crashed his car again'

(iv) \( P_r \) need not contain "peripheral" arguments, such as Agents or Datives (16), which behave in this regard like adjuncts (17a-b)(cf. Bale 2006 on Agents).

16. El segundo examinador le volvió a preguntar a Juan la fecha de Waterloo
   the second examiner CL.DAT return.SP.3SG. to ask.INF to Juan the date of Waterloo
   'The second examiner asked Juan again the date of the Battle of Waterloo'
   
   **C1. El primer examinador le preguntó a Juan la fecha de Waterloo**.
   'The first examiner asked Juan the date of the Battle of Waterloo'

   **C2. El segundo examinador le preguntó a María la fecha de Waterloo**.
   'The second examiner asked Maria the date of the Battle of Waterloo'
   
   **#C3. El segundo examinador le preguntó a Juan la fecha de Austerlitz**
   'The second examiner asked Juan the date of the Battle of Austerlitz'

17. a. Volvió a enterrar la caja en el jardín.
   return.SP.3SG. to bury.INF the box in the garden
   'S/he buried the box again in the garden'

b. Volvió a poner la caja en el jardín.
   return.SP.3SG. to put.INF the box in the garden
   'S/he put the box back in the garden'
   
   **C1. La caja había estado enterrada en el garaje.**
   'The box had been buried in the garage'
   √(17a) #(17b)

These ambiguities are in principle independent from one another, as shown by their conditions:
(i) differences in the witness sets for indefinites and quantifiers and in the reference of definites are (by and large) independent from the argument and aspectual structure of the predicate.

(ii) restitutive readings require predicates with a result state.

(iii) “agent-less” or “dative-less” presuppositions do not require predicates with a result state (in fact, they can only be clearly distinguished from restitutive readings in the absence of a result state).

Furthermore, the independence of restitutive readings and “agentless” presuppositions can be confirmed by the behavior of *por segunda vez* ‘for the second time’. This expression blocks restitutive interpretations, but does not require agent-identity between asserted and presupposed events.

18. *Juan volvió a vaciar la botella por segunda vez.*

Juan return.SP.3SG. to empty.INF the bottle for the second time.

‘John emptied the bottle for the second time’

\#C1. La botella había estado vacía.

‘The bottle had been empty’

\#C2. Alguien había vaciado la botella.

‘Somebody had emptied the bottle’

The difference between restitutive readings and “agent-less” presuppositions can be captured by decomposition analyses that (i) express result states as (sub-)eventualities and (ii) sever the agent-argument. Out of several competing proposals, Ramchand’s First-Phase Syntax (2006) seems particularly adapted, because it allows to detect minimal “sublexical” eventuality descriptions and distinguishes neatly between the event-argument-structure of such eventuality descriptions and “rhematic” material that does not determine an independent subevent, but simply further modifies the relevant subevent. *Pace* Bale (2006), it is not simply contrasts like stative-eventive and transitive-intransitive that determine “minimal” eventuality descriptions.

- Full Template

19. vP (=AspP, causing projection)

      v'
    /   \
  NP3   VP (=AspP, process projection)

      v'
    /   \
  NP2   V'

      V
    /   \ 
  UNDERGOER V

      R'
    /   \ 
  RESULTEE R

19’a. *Juan volvió a salir.*

Juan return.SP.3SG. to go-out.INF

INITIATOR=UNDERGOER=RESULTEE
'Juan went out again'

\[ P = \text{RP} \quad \text{restitutive} \]
\[ P = \text{VP} / v\text{P} \quad \text{repetitive} \]

b. Juan volvió a vaciar la botella. UNDERGOER=RESULTEE

Juan return.SG. to empty.INF the bottle

'Juan emptied the bottle again'

\[ P = \text{RP} \quad \text{restitutive} \]
\[ P = \text{VP} \quad \text{“agent-less” repetitive} \]
\[ P = v\text{P} \quad \text{repetitive} \]

- Process-Transitives Template

20. \( v\text{P} \quad (=\text{AspP, causing projection}) \)

\[ \begin{array}{c}
\text{NP3} \\
\text{subject of 'Cause'}
\end{array} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\text{v'} \\
\text{INITIATOR} \\
\end{array} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\text{v} \\
\text{VP} (=\text{AspP, process projection})
\end{array} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\text{NP2} \\
\text{subject of 'Process'}
\end{array} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\text{V'} \\
\text{UNDERGOER} \\
\end{array} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\text{V} \\
\text{XP}
\end{array} \\
\text{20'. Juan volvió a interrogar al testigo}

Juan return.SG. to question.INF to+the witness

'Juan questioned the witness again'

\[ P = \text{VP} \quad \text{“agent-less” repetitive} \]
\[ P = v\text{P} \quad \text{repetitive} \]

- Process-Intransitives Template

21. \( v\text{P} \quad (=\text{AspP, causing projection}) \)

\[ \begin{array}{c}
\text{NP3} \\
\text{subject of 'Cause'}
\end{array} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\text{v'} \\
\text{INITIATOR}=\text{UNDERGOER}
\end{array} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\text{v} \\
\text{VP} (=\text{AspP, process projection})
\end{array} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\text{NP2} \\
\text{subject of 'Process'}
\end{array} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\text{V'} \\
\text{UNDERGOER} \\
\end{array} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\text{V} \\
\text{XP (RHEME)}
\end{array} \\
\text{21'. Juan volvió a bailar el Cascanueces.}

Juan return.SG. to dance.INF the Nutcracker

'Juan danced the Nutcracker again'

\[ P = \text{VP} / v\text{P} \quad \text{repetitive} \]
22. **States Template**

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{vP} \\
\text{DP} \\
\text{v} \\
\text{DP/NP} \\
\text{RHEME}
\end{array}
\]

22'. *Juan volvió a detestar los domingos*

Juan return._Sp.3SG. to hate._Inf the Sundays

‘Juan hated Sundays again’

\( P = \text{vP} \) repetitive

**(23) A tentative generalization:**

The minimal presupposition of *volver + a Inf* encompasses the minimal eventuality description determined by the template to which the lexical verb is associated.

- Only minimal presuppositions can be tested. The reason is that potential presuppositions are not logically independent, but in asymmetric entailment relations.

24. a. John emptied the bottle.
   b. Somebody emptied the bottle.
   c. The bottle was empty.

Therefore, a positive answer as to a stronger context supporting the presupposition does not tell us anything, because the stronger context entails the weaker one, and the presupposition might well be supported by this entailment. Only negative answers tell us something, and they tell us something about minimal presuppositions.

Accommodation contexts could help determine the availability/salience of stronger presuppositions. But *volver + a Inf*, like its adverbial counterparts, belongs to the class of presupposition triggers that are “anaphoric” in a non-trivial sense: they resist accommodation contexts and look for support in the previous context.

“The content of the presupposition triggered by *again* depends on an anaphoric element –i.e. what presupposition precisely is triggered depends on the context. This is not a property of all presuppositions”. (Beck 2006)

- By contrast with *again/wieder*, the periphrasis *volver + a Inf* has a single adjunction site: it takes a v/VP as complement. Its minimal presupposition is determined by the “minimal event” in the template. The “upper limit” of its potential presuppositions in context is possibly determined by the background-focus articulation of the sentence (which presents some information as given).

25. a. I met Esme *again* at the station on a rainy day.
   b. I met Esme at the station *again* on a rainy day.
   c. I met Esme at the station on a rainy day *again*.  (Bale 2006)
26. Volví a ver a Esme en la estación un día de lluvia.
returned.SP.1.SG to see to Esme in the station a day of rain

3. Periphrases, prefixes and adverbs.

Spanish has a series of “repetition” adverbs (de nuevo, otra vez…) and a prefix, re-, with at first sight analogous presuppositions.

By contrast with the adverbs, volver + a INF has an influence on the temporal structure: its output is clearly eventive. The adverbs do not have any influence on temporal structure.

27. a. Si María está enferma de nuevo, perderá su trabajo. [SIMUL >SETTLED >EPIST]
   if Maria be.PRES.3.SG ill of new, lose.FUT.3.SG her job
   'If Maria is ill again, she will lose her job'

   b. Si María vuelve a estar enferma [FWD-SHIFTED > NOT-YET-SETTLED]
   if Maria return.PRES.3.SG to LOC-be ill
   'If Maria falls ill again…'

28. a. María cree estar enferma de nuevo.
   Maria believe.PRES.3.SG be.INF ill of new
   'Maria believes to be ill again'

   b. *María cree volver a estar enferma.
   Maria believe.PRES.3.SG return.INF to be ill
   '*Maria believes to fall ill again'

29. a. *La respiración va siendo de nuevo normal.
   the breathing go.PRES.3.SG be.GER of new normal
   *'His/her breathing is gradually being normal again'

   b. La respiración va volviendo a ser normal.
   the breathing go.PRES.3.SG return.GER to be normal
   'His/her breathing is gradually going back to normal'

   PERFECT- contexts confirm the eventive nature of volver + a INF:

30. a. La región ha vuelto a ser rica. POSTSTATE of volver a ser rico
   the region has returned to be rich.
   'The region has become rich again'

   b. *La región ha sido rica de nuevo. POSTSTATE of ser rico
   the region has been rich of new
   'The region has been rich again'

   By contrast with the adverbs, the presupposition of volver + a INF relies on the temporal order of events. The adverbs can build on other orders.

31. a. En la primera esquina hay un semáforo. En la segunda y en la tercera no. En la cuarta, hay otra vez un semáforo.
   'In the first corner there's a traffic light. There's none in the second, nor in the third one. In the fourth, there's again a traffic light'
b. #En la cuarta vuelve a haber un semáforo.
in the fourth return to have a traffic-light

Prefixation with re- is much more restricted in Spanish than in the other Romance languages. It selects for transitive verbs with 'affected' objects (Martín García 1998). By contrast with the periphrasis and with adverbs, it cannot have scope over indefinite or quantified arguments (same witness set required), which indicates that only the lexical verb is in its scope.

32. a. A Jorge le reeditaron una novela.
to Jorge him republish SP.3.PL a novel.
'One of Jorge’s novels was republished'
b. A Jorge le volvieron a editar una novela.
to Jorge him return SP.3.PL to publish a novel
'One of Jorge's novels was published again'
'Jorge got another novel of his published'

33. a. Revendieron todos los libros que tenían.
resell SP.3.PL all the books that have IMPF.3.PL
'They resold all the books they owned'
b. Volvieron a vender todos los libros que tenían.
return SP.3.PL to sell all the books that have IMPF.3.PL
'They sold all the books they owned again'

"Concord"-like phenomena
The periphrasis can co-occur with re-prefix verbs or with adverbs presupposing only one repetition

34. a. En 1892, el antiguo presidente Cleveland volvió a ser reelegido. La segunda presidencia de Cleveland...
In 1892, former president Cleveland was reelected again. Cleveland’s second term...
b. Volvió a hablarme de nuevo...
'S/he talked to me again…'
References

Bale, A. 2006. Quantifiers, *again* and the complexity of verb phrases, *SALT XV*


Ramchand, G. 2006. *First Phase Syntax*,

www.hum.uit.no/a/ramchand/rdownloads/antilex.pdf
