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On the Use and Meaning of "Already"

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ON THE USE AND MEANING OF *ALREADY*1. INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

The adverbs *already* and *still* express the presence of a state at a given reference time. In contrast to temporal adverbs like *yesterday* and *now*, *already* and *still* are compatible with any tense specification (past, present, future). There is a strong intuition that each of these adverbs denotes a state defined relative to a prior state, and a large number of recent analyses have framed the contrast between *already* and *still* as one involving the presence versus absence of a transition at some time prior to reference time. One influential analysis, associated with Löbner (1989), holds that these two adverbs participate in a duality opposition, such that (1a) is equivalent to (1b):

- (1)a. Harry is already here.  
 b. It's not the case that Harry is still not here.

In his 1993 paper, ‘“Already” and “Still”: Beyond Duality’, Johan van der Auwera rejects the duality hypothesis. He argues that *already* does not merely express the termination of a negative state (*still not x*). Instead, the state flagged by *already* is one defined in opposition to TWO (pre-supposed) negative states: the prior negative state (in (1a), the state of Harry's not yet being here) and a negative state situated in a counterfactual world of speaker or hearer EXPECTATIONS (in (1a), the state of Harry's not yet being here). The latter negative state is itself defined with respect to a positive state (Harry's being here) which obtains within the counterfactual world at some point following reference time. A diagrammatic representation of (1a) that is consistent with the van der Auwera analysis is given in Figure 1.

On this analysis, which is fundamentally the same as that of Hoepelman and Rohrer (1981), *already* codes EARLY EVENTUATION: a state of affairs has come about prior to the time at which speaker or hearer expected it

<sup>1</sup> This paper has benefited greatly from discussions with Johan van der Auwera, Michael Israel, Knud Lambrecht, Adele Goldberg, Charles Fillmore, Paul Kay, Manfred Krifka, Bill Ladusaw, Gregory Ward and John Haiman.

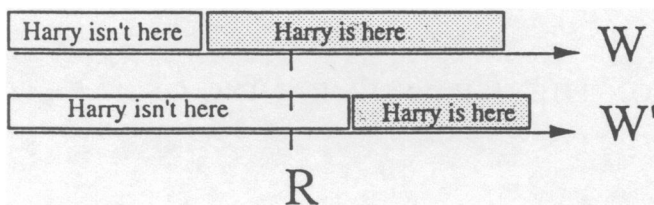


Fig. 1.

to begin.<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that the early-eventuation analysis is also applicable to examples like (2), in which the relevant state of affairs is not a scheduled one, but one to which someone could assign a CANONICAL point of inception:

- (2) When we arrived, before noon, Huey was already drunk.  
Ken Kelley, 'Huey Newton', *California Magazine* 8/90

In interpreting (2), one need not presuppose that the inception of Huey's drunken state is a scheduled event. Instead, one need only evoke a conception of social convention in which, minimally, drinking (and therefore drunken behavior) does not begin prior to noon.

It is also worth noting that the early-eventuation analysis can be extended to cases in which the proposition scoped by *already* is expressed not by a simple stative clause but by a perfect-form clause:

- (3) She's already put in for a transfer.

Perfect-form sentences count as stative sentences according to numerous stativity tests (Michaelis 1993a),<sup>3</sup> and Herweg (1991: 390) analyzes the perfect as an operator whose function is to "map event radicals onto

<sup>2</sup> J. van der Auwera (p.c.) has objected to my characterization of his analysis as one in which *already* encodes early eventuation, since, as he points out, his analysis, which is depicted in Figure 1, involves two interacting models. (I refer to these models as the presuppositions of prior noninstantiation and expected noninstantiation at reference time.) Van der Auwera (1993) argues that only in one of these two models, the expected-noninstantiation model, does earliness play a role. However, I regard the term *early eventuation* as an appropriate label for the scenario depicted in figure 1, since earliness is intrinsic to the second model and the characterization of the situation as an eventuation is intrinsic to the second model. The term *eventuation* is meant to refer to the inception of a state, and to say that a state began at some point is equivalent to saying that this state did not exist at times prior to that point.

<sup>3</sup> For example, present-perfect form sentences like *She has completed her statement* welcome the adverb *now*, which is otherwise compatible only with clauses denoting stative situations. Only stative situations are capable of full instantiation at the moment of speech, owing to the property of distributivity (cf. Herweg 1991, Smith 1991).

[stative] propositions, *Perf* E being the state that consists of an event of type E having occurred”.

The early-eventuation analysis proposed by van der Auwera and others accounts for a large number of instances of *already*. As I will argue, however, it is too restrictive to provide an adequate semantic representation of *already*. I will argue that neither of the two presuppositions cited by van der Auwera – that of prior noninstantiation of the state and that of expected noninstantiation of the state at the reference time – need be present. The early-eventuation schema, rather than constituting the semantic structure of *already*, is instead one of several meanings that sentences containing *already* can be used to express.

An examination of a wide range of contexts – both linguistic and extralinguistic – in which *already* occurs suggests that the semantic contribution of *already* is highly schematic and involves a temporal orientation distinct from what Löbner, van der Auwera and others have assumed: it is not an anterior contiguous interval but a subsequent interval which is crucial to the definition of *already*. As I have argued previously (Michaelis 1992), *already* invokes a particular type of TEMPORAL PRIORITY, involving a reference interval that can assume different identities in different contexts. I see *already* as an instance of PRAGMATIC AMBIGUITY, as defined by Horn (1985, 1989): the various meanings attributable to *already*, e.g., the scalar and nonscalar meanings recognized by Löbner (1989),<sup>4</sup> are not distinct senses of the word, but are instead derived from the interpretive instructions provided by the linguistic and extralinguistic context. As in Kay’s (1990) analysis of *even*, *already* is a case in which “linguistic content significantly underdetermines first level, ‘literal’ interpretation” (Kay 1989).

The semantic analysis I will offer here, while it is straightforward, is subtle, since its appropriateness is obvious only once an examination of various attested instances enables one to distinguish the semantic content of *already* from its communicative functions. By employing constructed examples of *already*, analysts have typically confined their inquiries to those examples which are prototypical and transparent. This practice has intrinsic and obvious limitations. In discussing his methodology, van der Auwera (p. 615) defends the use of “semantic judgment and intuition” – a practice which requires no defense. The problem is that one’s semantic

<sup>4</sup> I do not wish to imply here that van der Auwera (1993) advocates an analysis in which scalar and nonscalar functions of *already* constitute separate senses. Van der Auwera appears to regard *already* as vague with respect to the scalar and nonscalar readings. However, van der Auwera also assumes that the scalar readings conform to the scenario depicted in Figure 1 – an assumption that is questioned in the present study.

intuitions and one's data set are two different things – the intuitions concern the data set; they do not constitute it. And while I cannot legitimately criticize a semantic analysis because it is founded on constructed examples, I reserve the right to test that analysis on naturally occurring data. The data set used for this study consists of about fifty instances of *already* which I have encountered in written and spoken discourse (some of which appeared in Michaelis 1992), as well as about fifty examples culled from the official transcript of six days in the proceedings of *California v. Simpson*. Unattested examples will be noted as such.

The analysis will be structured as follows. In the next section, I will discuss examples of *already* which cannot be reconciled with the van der Auwera account. In the third section, I will discuss the semantics of temporal priority coded by *already*. In the fourth section, I will examine the various functions which are linked to this semantic structure in context. In the fifth section, I will discuss the extent to which *already* conforms to the characterization of scalar contextual operators given in Kay (1990). In a concluding section, I will discuss function coalescence – a phenomenon distinguishing uses from senses – as well as the distinction between use and argumentative intent.

## 2. TWO PROBLEMATIC PRESUPPOSITIONS

Van der Auwera defines the relevant meaning components as follows:

*Already's* newly obtaining positive state is different from two negative ones, one that is anterior and one that is counterfactually simultaneous. In the first case, the change is neither early nor late, in the second it is early. (p. 623)

While van der Auwera does not invoke the notion of presupposition in describing these aspects of the *already* schema, it seems clear that they are outside the scope of assertion. In the case of the 'lie test' for example, one could not, in denying the truth of an assertion like *Mom is already home*, be understood as denying that Mom was not home at some time prior to now or that Mom reached home at a relatively early point. Given facts like this, I will regard the relevant meaning components as presuppositions. I propose the following labels for the two presuppositions at issue: the presupposition of PRIOR NONINSTANTIATION and the presupposition of PREMATURE INCEPTION.

In discussing the former presupposition, van der Auwera recognizes a potential counterexample, given as (4):

- (4) A: I've applied for American citizenship.  
 B: Is your husband also applying?  
 A: He is already American, for he was born there.  
 (= van der Auwera's (20))

Van der Auwera points out that the expected-noninstantiation presupposition is fulfilled, insofar as speaker B's expectations are violated: B is taken to have presupposed that A's husband would be American only at some point following the time of speaking. The problematic presupposition here is prior noninstantiation: it does not appear that A's response presupposes a prior phase in which her husband was NOT American. In fact, van der Auwera maintains that the prior noninstantiation presupposition is present here, although "communicatively fully irrelevant": before the husband's birth "he didn't exist yet, hence he wasn't American either" (p. 622). This line of argumentation is suspect. First, as Larry Horn notes (p.c.), van der Auwera's irrelevance ploy does not extend to *already* clauses containing a negatively characterized state of affairs where there is no prior phase of "noninstantiation" no matter how far back into the past we travel: *You can't kill a rock – it's already not alive*. Further, a violation of relevance is an unlikely source for the anomaly found in (5):

- (5) I have been American for 31 years. Before that, I wasn't American.

Sentence (5) instead invokes the problem of satisfaction of the existential presupposition invoked by the pronominal subject *I*. If the speaker did not exist prior to 1964, then the existential presupposition is not satisfied, and, if one subscribes to a theory in which there are truth gaps, an assertion like *In 1963, I wasn't an American* cannot be evaluated as true or false. Beyond this, we find attested uses of *already* for which one could not invoke a prior noninstantiation presupposition, however irrelevant:

- (6) You don't want to put a humidifier in there. It's already humid where you are [i.e., Texas]. You'll be drenched.  
 (7) Experts estimate that the full gear will add 10 degrees to the already searing daytime desert temperatures. (*Newsweek* 8/20/90 = Michaelis 1992 (18c))  
 (8) The strawberry one [i.e., frappé] has fewer calories. They don't have to put sugar into it because the strawberries are already sweet. (= Michaelis 1992 (4a))

The assertions in (6) were uttered in the context of a conversation

concerning the question of whether the addressee should purchase an evaporative cooler for his home in Texas. In asserting *It's already humid where you are*, the speaker cannot be taken to presuppose that humidity was not present at some time prior to speech time, since humidity is mutually understood to be a climatic condition that is perpetually present in Texas. The communicative import of *already* here appears to involve the salient presence of a scaleable property (humidity) prior to an action (use of a 'swamp cooler') that may increase the degree of that property. A similar argument can be made in the case of (7). The author of (7) cannot be said to presuppose that the desert became hot at some time prior to the reference time. Instead, *already* appears to indicate salient presence of a state (extreme heat, as perceived by potential combatants) prior to an action (donning combat gear) which might increase the degree of perceived heat. Sentence (8) is also problematic from the point of view of van der Auwera's analysis. These assertions were uttered by a speaker attempting to decide between a lemon frappé and a strawberry one. The strawberry frappé is held to be preferable because the strawberries used as ingredients are sweet prior to the addition of sugar (and therefore obviate the need for sugar). The speaker cannot be said to presuppose that the strawberries were not sweet at some time prior to speech time. Obviously, the strawberries in question became sweet as they ripened, but the *already*-bearing assertion in (8) is most plausibly analyzed as a gnomic statement, referring to strawberries as a type in contrast to other types of fruit; it is not a statement concerning the course of development followed by a given set of strawberries. Sentence (9) is a somewhat less natural, unattested example, which perhaps provides a clearer picture of the problem of gnomic statements:

- (9)      A: They're developing a very light oil that can float on water.  
           B: But oil **ALREADY** floats on water!

In the case of (9), it is clear that there is no anterior phase in which oil did not float on water. The scenario encoded by *already* is one in which a state exists prior to the application of procedure designed to effect that state. To prefigure somewhat the analysis to be offered in the following sections, we can say that *already* in (6)–(9) is not used to encode a resultant state (i.e., a state defined relative to a contiguous prior interval characterized by a lack of that state), but rather a state that obtains **PRIOR** TO a (hypothetical) subsequent phase in which that state would also exist.

It is apparent that the examples in (6)–(9) are problematic not only for the prior noninstantiation analysis but also for the expected noninstantiation model: if a state is not a resultant state, then it has no point of

inception which can be seen to represent a premature eventuation. It would, however, be misleading to give the impression that all problematic cases are examples of the sort shown in (6)–(9). In fact, it is not difficult to find examples which satisfy the prior noninstantiation scenario but do not apparently invoke the presupposition of early eventuation. These are examples like the following:

- (10) There's no point in sending your letter. They've already given the job to [someone else].
- (11) . . . as it's been already brought out to the Court, . . . there are many things that could test positive under the circumstances. (P. Neufeld, *CA v. Simpson* 4/3/95)
- (12) The Court: Well, we have just created another quagmire for ourselves here.  
Ms. Clark: I thought the quagmire was already there, your honor. I thought the testimony came out about Michele. (*CA v. Simpson* 3/23/95)
- (13) Mr. Goldberg: And in 1987 through '89 you were assigned to trace?  
Mr. Fung: Yes.  
Goldberg: And you've already described what trace evidence is?  
Fung: Yes. (*CA v. Simpson* 4/3/95)
- (14) First, you wet your hair, then you lather it with this stuff, then you rinse it off, then you lather again – your hair is already wet now, after all – and then you rinse the stuff off again. (G. Nunberg, translating the instructions 'lather, rinse, repeat', 'The Decline of Grammar', *Atlantic Monthly* 12/83)

In the case of (10), we cannot entertain the premature-eventuation analysis, simply because it is clear that neither the speaker nor the addressee viewed the outcome in question (the job's being given to someone other than the candidate that the addressee supported) as part of the natural course of events. The early-eventuation scenario depicted in Figure 1 would require that this outcome represent something that the speaker or hearer anticipated. Instead, the state at issue in (10) is one which hearer (and perhaps also the speaker) had endeavored to PREVENT. If the inception of the state is not something that the addressee or speaker expect, then the state cannot be viewed as one which the addressee or speaker expects to be instantiated at a point following reference time (which in this case is the present). Therefore, the semantic representation depicted in Figure 1 is not applicable to (10).



In (11)–(14), the premature-eventuation analysis appears untenable because in each of these examples the *already*-bearing clause represents presupposed information. In each case the existence of the state denoted by the *already*-clause is treated as background knowledge by the speaker. Therefore, it cannot be said that the state denoted is one which was ‘scheduled’ to begin at a later time in the world of speaker/hearer expectations, or that the presence at the particular reference time of the state in some way contravenes expectation, as required by the scenario depicted in Figure 1. In (11), the *already*-bearing clause is a clause introduced by the cataphoric subordinator *as*; the *as*-clause denotes presupposed information (that something to be mentioned has been brought out to the Court). The speaker cannot be said to presuppose that the judge’s knowledge of the relevant information is a premature development, either from his point of view or from the point of view of the judge. The subordinate clause is simply used to remind the addressee that he should have the relevant knowledge by now. Neufeld’s assertion encodes the strong implication that there is no need to repeat the relevant information, since it is known at present.

In looking at (12), it is important to keep in mind that Clark’s utterance is not designed to contradict the judge’s expressed presumption about the time at which the quagmire developed. Clark’s assertion concerns the state of *her beliefs at a past time* – the time at which she elicited the problematic testimony concerning Michele. At this time, the existence of the quagmire did not, from her perspective, represent a premature development, but simply a state of affairs that existed prior to her seeking any further testimony on the matter. In the case of (13), neither the speaker (Goldberg) nor the hearer (Fung) can be taken to presuppose that the state of Fung’s having described trace evidence came about at an earlier than expected point; Goldberg here is simply requesting confirmation of a fact. As in (11), the speaker employing *already* in (13) implies that there is no need to engage in conduct that would create a given knowledge state (here, understanding of trace evidence), since that knowledge state exists at present. In (14), *already* occurs in a parenthetical clause which functions to remind the reader of known information (that one’s hair is wet prior to the second lathering); the *already*-bearing clause cannot be taken to assert that the wetness came about at an earlier than expected point, since the presence of wet hair at the reference time is presupposed.

By rejecting an analysis in which the prior noninstantiation presupposition is an essential ingredient of the semantic scenario associated with *already*, we gain a straightforward account of a fact that van der Auwera

(1993) finds puzzling: *already* can co-occur with *finally*. Van der Auwera (p. 623) notes that '*Already* . . . excludes a . . . scenano . . . in which the change is late, this being the province of *finally*'. However, he also observes (fn. 3, p. 623) that sentences like the following are possible: *I have already bought all of my presents – finally*. While van der Auwera uses the sentence-final position of *finally* to argue that this sentence has the force of an 'ironic afterthought', it does not appear that sentence-final position is crucial. If A asks B whether B needs to be fixed up with a date for this year's New Year's party, B can give the following natural-sounding response: *I finally already have one*. The sentential adverb *finally* has scope over *already*. What B is asserting (or rather presupposing) here is that the onset of the state denoted by the *already* clause (*I already have a date*) has been long delayed. The force of the *already* in B's assertion is not to invoke early eventuation of the state *I have a date* but to invoke the anteriority of this state to the fix-up procedure.

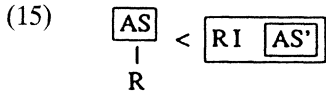
In sum, the foregoing examples have shown that neither the presupposition of prior noninstantiation nor the presupposition of early eventuation are valid components of *already*'s semantics.<sup>5</sup> All of the problematic cases, however, were amenable to an analysis in which the state denoted by the *already*-clause begins prior to another point. In the following section, I will suggest that *already* instantiates a schema involving anteriority.

### 3. SEMANTICS

The semantic structure to be described here is essentially that discussed in Michaelis (1992). Under this analysis, *already* not only encodes the existence of a given state of affairs at the reference time, but also presupposes that the inception of this state is anterior to an interval of a specific type. I will refer to this interval as the Reference Interval (RI). I will refer to the state whose existence is asserted as the *already*-state

<sup>5</sup> In response to some of the examples offered in Section 2, van der Auwera (p.c.) has suggested that sentences with *already* might invoke only one or the other of the two scenarios described in van der Auwera (1993), rather than requiring both to be satisfied. One problem with this suggestion is the following: if we permit the cancellation of the expected noninstantiation presupposition, we would expect *already* to overlap semantically with *finally*, which, as van der Auwera points out (1993: 622–623), it does not. Even by allowing for defeasibility of one of the two presuppositions, we do not salvage the van der Auwera analysis, since examples like (7), involving a state which is both an intrinsic property and presupposed, invoke NEITHER of the two presuppositions.

(AS).<sup>6</sup> The RI includes a state of the same situation type as the AS. Let us refer to the interval included in the RI as the AS'. A schematic representation of the scenario at issue is found in (15):



In (15), the letter R underneath the box for the AS represents the linking of the AS to a reference time. The RI may or may not be linked to a reference time, but it is necessarily subsequent to the AS. While it is straightforward, the diagram in (15) fails to capture the manner in which state predications are related to the times at which they obtain. State predications include the time or times at which they obtain (Partee 1984). Therefore, if a state is asserted to obtain for a particular interval, as in the sentence *Harry was at home at noon*, only context will prevent the interpreter from concluding that Harry was not at home at times before and after noon. As a state, the AS includes R, and may include all times following R. Therefore, it is not the AS in (15) but the inception of the AS (an event) which precedes the RI. By the same token, it is only the inception of the AS' (an event), and not the AS' itself, which is included in the RI.

The contrast pair in (16) illustrates the manner in which *already*-bearing sentences conform (or fail to conform) to (15):

- (16)a. The already unstable bridge was rendered dangerously weak by the hurricane.  
 b. ??The already stable bridge was rendered dangerously weak by the hurricane.

Sentence (16a) conforms to the scenario in (15). The AS is the state of weakness which existed prior to the hurricane. The RI interval is the period of the hurricane. The AS' is the state that exists following the hurricane. This is a state of even greater weakness. The AS and AS' represent the same situation type, in that both situations are ranked on a scale of structural instability. Sentence (16b) fails to conform to the scenario in (15). The RI does not subsume a state that is effectively identical to the AS. The AS is a state of stability; the AS' is a state of instability.

Note that the adverb *previously*, which does not invoke the scenario in

<sup>6</sup> The type of assertion invoked in this discussion is semantic assertion, which is present whether the *already*-bearing clause is asserted in discourse or part of a pragmatically pre-supposed proposition, as when *already* is found in a subordinate clause (cf., e.g., (7)).

(15), would be an appropriate substitute for *already* in (16b). The adverb *previously*, while a marker of anteriority like *already*, differs from *already* in two crucial respects. First, as mentioned, the semantic structure of *previously* does not involve identity between two states, as does *already*. Second, *previously* is compatible only with preterite or perfect predications, i.e., those in which the event time precedes the reference time or the speech time. *Previously* is likewise compatible with modifiers which implicitly express preterite or perfect relations, as in *The previously stable bridge collapsed*. Here, the stability of the bridge is a state which held prior to the past time of collapse. *Already*, unlike *previously*, is compatible not only with past-time predications but also with present-tense predications like (8): *The strawberries are already sweet* (as against *\*The strawberries are previously sweet*). *Already* differs from *previously* in that the point from which anteriority is computed (the reference point)<sup>7</sup> may be a hypothetical interval. The hypothetical interval at issue is distinct from the future reference point found in examples like: *She will arrive on Tuesday, having previously resigned from her position*. In this example, the reference point is identified with a future reference time. In (8), the reference point is a hypothetical interval during which the strawberries undergo a sweetening procedure. In the case of *previously*, the reference point is a reference time or, in the case of preterite-form predications, the present. Only in the case of *already* is the reference point (the RI) potentially unanchored to any contextually given time.

Let us now turn to uses of the anteriority schema in (15). I will show that these uses hinge on distinct contextual constuals of the RI.

#### 4. USES

The uses to be discussed in this section were also described in Michaelis 1992. While these uses will be treated as distinct for the purposes of exposition, we will see that there are examples in which *already* appears to be serving more than one of these communicative functions at a given time. Such coalescence of function is to be expected, since pragmatic rather than semantic ambiguity is what is at issue here. In what follows, I will look at each priority-coding function in turn. The functions to be considered are: (4.1) priority to process, (4.2) comparative priority, (4.3)

<sup>7</sup> I am using the term *reference point* in contradistinction to the term *reference time*. A reference point is simply a subsequent time (actual or hypothetical) with respect to which anteriority is computed; it need not be textually given.

priority to expected eventuation point and (4.4) priority to further accretion on a scale.

#### 4.1. *Priority to Process*

This usage is exemplified by sentence (8). The RI represents a processual situation; the endpoint of this process is the AS'. This process often represents a procedure designed to bring about the AS, as in the case of (8): the RI represents a sweetening procedure culminating in the state of affairs in which the strawberries are sweet (the AS'). The AS is the state of the strawberries' being sweet, prior to any sweetening procedure. Sentences (17)–(19) provide further attested examples of the priority-to-process usage:

- (17) Why would you need a permanent? You already have curly hair. (= Michaelis 1992 (4b))
- (18) Tired of all the bustle? Take a break and head for Long Island Sound, where you won't even need fishing poles in some areas because the fish are already dead. (*Newsweek* 7/16/90 = Michaelis 1992 (9b))
- (19) Mr. Shapiro: Been asked and answered, your Honor.  
The Court: Sustained. You have already asked him to describe the size [of the bag]. (*California v. Simpson* 3/23/95)

In (17), the AS is the state of curly hair; the RI is the interval during which the addressee receives a permanent wave. What is asserted is that the property of having curly hair can be attributed to the addressee at a time prior to the implementation of a procedure designed to bring about curly hair. In (18), the RI is identified with the fishing procedure, which culminates in the death of one or more fish. This hypothetical effected endstate is the AS'; this state follows that which is asserted to obtain at present – deceased fish (the AS). In (18), the AS is the present knowledge state of the jurors concerning the size of the bag. The RI is the period during which testimony on this topic is elicited from the witness. The endstate of the RI is the AS' – the jurors' knowledge of the size of the bag. As required by (14), the AS and the AS' are identical. The *already*-bearing assertions in (17)–(19), by virtue of the common communicative function which they instantiate, share an argumentative point: all are used to assert that a given procedure (whose time of occurrence is the RI) is unnecessary.

It should be noted, however, that not all instances of the priority-to-

process usage exemplify the aforementioned argumentative intent. Notice (20):

- (20) A: I don't want to be late because I don't want it to be cold, what you're making.  
B: Don't worry about it. What I'm making is already cold.

In (20), speaker B is referring to an inherently cold dish – *salade niçoise*. The *already*-bearing assertion here is used to communicate that the state of coldness vis-à-vis the dish obtains prior to an interval in which speaker A envisions the dish cooling down. The RI here does not subsume a measure designed to bring about coldness, but simply a process whose endstate is a state of coldness.

There are certain instances of the priority-to-process usage which on cursory inspection appear to be counterexamples to the semantic analysis offered in Section 3. These are examples in which the RI represents a means by which the AS might be PREVENTED. The AS' represents the desirable outcome of that preventative measure – the lack of that state identified with the AS. An example of this usage is found in (10) above. Further examples are given in (21)–(22):

- (21) Since you've already bad-mouthed me on the air, I'll take the blame for it. But I think most of your listeners with any intelligence know that it wasn't me. (Mark Ibañez, KGO-AM San Francisco 11/12/90 = Michaelis 1992 (11b))
- (22) Diaz: And if they pull a gun on you –  
Fuhrman: I'd kill 'em.  
Diaz: If they've already pulled a gun on you, how are you going to kill 'em? (Excerpt from the 'Fuhrman tapes', *Time* 8/28/95)

In the case of (21), the AS is a situation that Mark Ibañez, a well known local sportscaster, would have sought to prevent: his character has been slandered in public. The preventative measure (whatever it may be) is identified with the RI. The AS' appears to be the contradictory of the AS proposition: the lack of a publicly slandered character. Therefore, there does not appear to be the identity between AS and AS' required by the schema (15). The same kinds of comments can be made about (22): the RI subsumes the procedure by which a police officer subdues a dangerous suspect, i.e., the procedure by which the police officer prevents the suspect from taking his life. The AS' is the situation in which the suspect is no longer a threat; the AS is the situation in which the suspect has the upper

hand (i.e., has succeeded in pulling a gun on the police officer). Again, there is no identity between AS and AS'.

The examples in (21)–(22) are not problematic if one recognizes a sufficiently abstract conception of the AS' and of the procedure subsumed by the RI. The constructed examples in (23) demonstrate that this procedure can be conceived of flexibly as a preventative measure or as an effecting measure; the AS' in the former case is analogous to the AS in the latter. In the first continuation (23a), the RI subsumes an effecting measure; in the second continuation (23b), the RI subsumes a preventative measure:

- (23) The district attorney didn't put much effort into her closing statement because she knew that
- a. the jury was already planning to convict.
  - b. the jury was already planning to acquit.

For both continuations in (23), the procedure that is subsumed by the RI is the same: the delivery of a closing statement. The two continuations show that this procedure can be viewed in two ways. In (23a), the RI is viewed as a method of *GAINING A CONVICTION*. This example is an unproblematic instance of the priority-to-process usage: a state of affairs – the jury's intent to convict (the AS) – obtains prior to a procedure designed to bring about that intent. In (23b), by contrast, the RI is construed as a method of *PREVENTING AN ACQUITTAL*. A preventative measure is intended to resolve a crisis, and therefore always has at least two possible outcomes: a desired outcome and an undesired outcome. The desired outcome comes about if the preventative measure is successful. The undesired outcome comes about if the preventative measure is not successful, or if it is not taken at all. This state of affairs is shown for (23b) in Figure 2.

Figure 2 shows that the AS' in (23b) is a disjunction. It ranges over the two possible outcomes of a preventative measure. The undesired outcome, that of the jury's planning to acquit, is identical to the AS in (23b); there is therefore the required identity between AS and AS': (23b) conforms to the semantic schema in (15). In addition to sharing aspects of their semantic representation, the two continuations (23a) and (23b) share an argumentative point. Both of them are used to assert that the existence of the AS obviates the need for some course of action, whether that course of action is *UNNECESSARY* (as in (23a)) or *FUTILE* (as in (23b)).

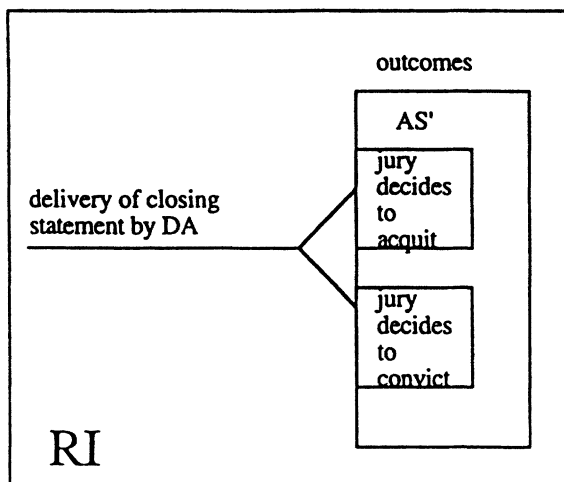


Fig. 2.

#### 4.2. Comparative Priority

The priority-to-process usage discussed in 4.1 is frequently invoked in comparative contexts: the entity of whom the AS is predicated has completed the process in question at a time prior to another entity that has yet to undergo the process. Examples of this usage are given in (24)–(26):

- (24) York. Because the home you've always dreamed of could be the one you already have. (Advertisement, *Good Housekeeping* 7/95)
- (25) Remember: this is different from the jury visit that's already taken place. (K. J. Myers on a planned visit by the Simpson jury to the murder scene, Court TV 8/14/95)
- (26) Why is Third Bass jealous [of MC Hammer]? All I can say is that MC Hammer has already made it, while Third Bass is just trying to. (Letter to the editor of *Fresh Magazine* 9/22/90 = Michaelis 1992 (10a))

In these cases, the RI is the time of a process which the comparative standard has not yet undergone. The AS' is the hypothetical state of the comparative standard following this process. The AS is the state of the comparative target – a state which obtains prior to the RI-process. In the case of (24), for example, the comparative standard is the home yet to be acquired; the current home is possessed by the addressee prior to the



purchase of any 'dream home'. The comparative usage of *already* is analogous to that use of *still* found in the constructed example (27):

- (27) The guests who were still present gossiped about the ones who had already left.

The semantic structure of *still*, as discussed in Hoepelman and Rohrer (1981) and Michaelis (1993b), involves the continuation of a state up to a reference time, and thus the presupposition of prior instantiation of that state. In addition, there is a presupposition of expected noninstantiation of that state at reference time: the state obtaining at the reference time contrasts with the lack of that state at that time in a parallel world of speaker/hearer expectations. In (27), however, the *still*-bearing clause (a relative clause) conveys mutually known information (that some guests were present at the past reference-time), and therefore the continuation of the state up to reference time could not be said at this point to defy hearer or speaker expectations. The contrasting phase of noninstantiation at the reference time is not provided by speaker/hearer expectations but by comparison with the other group of guests, who are no longer present at the reference time invoked by (27). The *already*-bearing subordinate clause in (27) again conveys presupposed information – that some guests left before the others. The contrasting phase (the AS') is a subsequent one – the phase at which the balance of the guests (i.e., the gossipers) have left. *Already* here indicates comparative priority: the AS (the absence of the nongossiping guests) precedes the AS' (the absence of the gossiping guests).

#### 4.3. *Priority to Expected Eventuation Point*

This usage, exemplified in sentences (2)–(3) in the introduction, is that targeted by the analyses of van der Auwera (1993) and Hoepelman and Rohrer (1981). This usage can easily be reconciled with the anteriority schema given in (15): a state of affairs (the AS) exists prior to the time at which it is expected to exist (the RI). The RI is the time at which the state in question obtains in the world of speaker/hearer expectations. The state in this parallel world is the AS'. As I mentioned in the introduction, the expected time of eventuation can represent either (a) a time assigned by stipulation (a given state is scheduled to begin at a given calendar or clock time) or (b) a canonical time of inception, as per an idealized evolutionary path. Examples of both usages are given in (28) and (29), respectively:

- (28) The Court: Well, we have already gone 15 minutes past the time when I said we were going to stop today. (*CA v. Simpson* 3/25/93)
- (29) At seven he already drove the plow with the oxen. (Oriana Fallaci, *Inshallah*, p. 90)

In (28) the expected point of eventuation of the AS (the state of having gone 15 minutes beyond stopping time) is assigned via an 'internal clock': this state has been reached prior to the time assigned to it by the speaker's internal clock. Sentence (29) presupposes a model in which one has the strength to handle a plow at some point later than age seven. This model associates physical abilities with stages of development. However, a canonical course of development need not associate developmental states with times; such a model may only order component states with respect to one another. Example (30) shows that an *already*-bearing assertion can code the inversion of component states in a script:

- (30) You know what happens in a fancy restaurant? When you sit down, there's already a plate in front of you. But they take that plate away as soon as you sit down. (Charlie Brown, *Peanuts* 5/6/90 = Michaelis 1992 (16b))

In (30), the *already*-bearing assertion presupposes a model in which the presence of the plate in front of the diner obtains only after he has ordered. The AS (presence of the plate at the table) obtains prior to the 'slot' assigned to it by the script. The RI is not a particular time here, but is instead identified with the slot that FOLLOWS the time of ordering the meal in the restaurant script.

The anteriority-encoding function discussed in this subsection is the basis for a semantic extension: *already* has a nontemporal scalar function, in which it encodes or rather presupposes marginal membership in a graded category (König 1977, Michaelis 1993b). This sense is exemplified in (31a), which contrasts with a nontemporal usage of *still*, seen in (31b):

- (31)a. Death Valley is already in California.  
 b. Death Valley is still in California.

Both (31a) and (31b) presuppose a geographic scale, in which Death Valley, because of its closeness to the western border of Nevada, is a marginal instance of California territory. The farther west within California, the less marginal an instance of California territory that region is. The geographic scale has no inherent directionality, since its point of origin can be equated either with a western point or an eastern point.

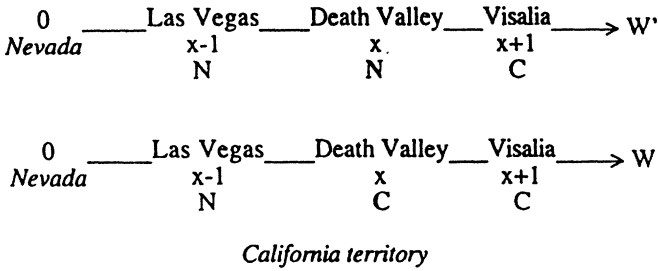


Fig. 3.

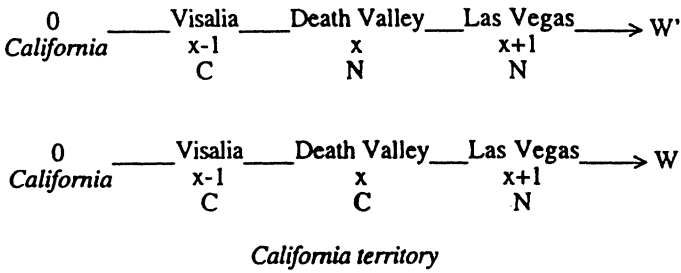


Fig. 4.

Sentence (31a) is an appropriate response only to a westbound motorist – one who assumes that Death Valley is in Nevada. A schema for (31a) is given as Figure 3.

In Figure 3, the origin of the scale is equated with some point in Nevada. The actual world (W) invoked by the assertion is paralleled by a world of hearer’s expectations (W’), in which Visalia, a city in central California, is an instance of California territory but Death Valley and Las Vegas (a city farther east than Death Valley) are in a contiguous region, Nevada. *Already* here marks premature eventuation: there is an instance of California territory at a point prior to the point at which California territory is thought to begin. A schema for the *still*-bearing sentence in (31b) is given in Figure 4.

In the scale shown in Figure 4, the origin is equated with the west coast of California. Therefore, (31b) is an appropriate response only to an eastbound motorist. There is an expected cessation of California territory (or, equivalently, transition to Nevada territory) at or before Death Valley. In the actual world (W), as asserted in (31b), regions can be categorized as instances of California territory up to and including Death Valley.

4.4. *Priority to Further Accretion*

*Already* can be used to indicate that a state exists to a pronounced degree prior to any advancement along a property scale for that state. Examples of this usage is given in (6)–(7) and (16a). Further examples are given in (32)–(33):

- (32) After a week in which an already bizarre trial teetered toward collapse, Judge Lance Ito was expected to allow the defense to present edited portions of the Fuhrman tapes. (*Newsweek* 8/28/95)
- (33) He was already pretty chubby as a teenager, and now I'm afraid he's tending toward obesity.

In this usage, the AS is the value for the scalar property present at a reference time. The RI is an interval in which there is further advancement along this scale, resulting in a more pronounced degree of the property at issue (the AS'). Since the AS and AS' are degrees of the same property, they can be identified, as required by the schema in (15). In the case of (32), the property scale is one of degrees of disorganization vis-à-vis a trial: a high degree of this property – a state of affairs describable as bizarre – obtained at some point prior to further descent into chaos (the AS'). In (33), the property scale involves degrees of corpulence. The sentence is used to assert that a fairly high degree of this property obtained prior to further advancement along this scale, toward obesity (the AS').

Although the communicative function discussed here involves scalar meaning, this usage cannot be equated with the scalar use discussed by Löbner (1989) and van der Auwera (1993). Although van der Auwera, like the present author, maintains that scalar and nonscalar uses of *already* do not differ semantically (p. 641), he limits his analysis to examples like the following:

- (34) Peter has already got five books.

In discussing this example (or, rather, its German analog), van der Auwera says (p. 638): “With [*already*] the possession of five books is compared with the possession of less than five books”. For van der Auwera, (34) is an instance of the early-eventuation usage, in which the state of possessing five books did not obtain for some times prior to now and in which this state came about at an earlier than expected point. While I would agree that the possession of five books represents a resultant state, I would not necessarily classify an example like (34) as an instance of the early-eventuation usage. Sentence (34) could easily be used in a

context in which Peter's possession of five books is compared with his future possession of MORE than five books:

- (35) Peter has already got five books at home. He's going to have a whole LIBRARY by the time this sale is over.

Sentence (35) invokes priority to further accretion along a scale (here, a numerical scale). In this sentence, the possession of five books is not construed as a resultant state (although it is obviously the result of some purchasing activity); it is instead construed as a state which represents a fairly advanced point on a numerical scale for books owned.<sup>8</sup>

##### 5. ALREADY AS A SCALAR OPERATOR

Kay (1990) analyzes *even* as a scopal operator which indicates that the proposition in which it occurs (the text proposition or TP) unilaterally entails a contextually given proposition (the context proposition or CP) within a scalar model. The semantic material shared by the CP and TP is represented by means of a propositional function. The focused constituents of CP and TP distinguish these propositions from one another. Thus, for example, (36b), the TP, can be taken as entailing (36a), the CP, where the propositional function (36c) expresses the semantic content that the two propositions have in common:

- (36)a. The Ginsu knife cuts mushy tomatoes. (CP)  
 b. The Ginsu knife *even* cuts aluminum cans. (TP)  
 c. The Ginsu knife cuts *x*.

The scale in question in (36) is one of degrees of sharpness for knives. Cutting aluminum cans requires a greater degree of sharpness than does cutting mushy tomatoes. Therefore, (36b) unilaterally entails (36a) within the scalar model at issue. In Michaelis (1993), I argued in favor of treating temporal and concessive *still* as scalar operators. I proposed that the relevant scales were a time scale and an adversity scale, respectively. The TP (the sentence containing *still*) expresses the presence of a situation in

<sup>8</sup> J. van der Auwera (p.c.) has argued that (35) does not present a problem for an early-eventuation analysis, since the resultant state of his having more than five books can be construed as one which came about prior to the time at which it was scheduled to begin. (I.e., the speaker may have expected him to have fewer than five books at the present reference time.) In my view, however, the reading of the *already*-clause (35) in which it encodes priority to expected eventuation point is preempted by the presence of the expression *at home*: if he is shopping in a bookstore, then his having five books at his home cannot reasonably be construed as a stage to be reached in the course of his shopping activity.

a more extreme world, and thereby entails the presence of that situation in a less extreme world (the world of the CP). The propositional function representing material shared by CP and TP contains a variable in the position of a circumstantial adjunct. An example in which *still* invokes an adversity scale is given in (37):

- (37)a. He'll wax the floor for twenty dollars. (CP)  
 b. If you give him only TEN dollars, he'll STILL wax the floor. (TP)  
 c. Under  $x$  circumstances, he'll wax the floor.

The CP (37a) asserts that an individual is willing to wax the floor if given twenty dollars. The TP maintains the apodosis of the CP (*He'll wax the floor*), but relativizes this assertion to a world that is more adverse to the outcome at issue (his waxing the floor): a world in which you give him only ten dollars. If he is willing to wax the floor for ten dollars, he is willing to wax it for twenty, and therefore the TP unilaterally entails the CP on an adversity scale. An example in which *still* invokes a temporal scale is given in (38):

- (38)a. Harry was here. (CP)  
 b. Harry is still here. (TP)  
 c. Harry be-here at time  $x$ .

In (38), the CP (38a) entails the TP (38b): If Harry's presence obtains at a time as late as now, it also obtains at a less advanced stage. The propositional function (38c) represents material shared by the two propositions. Following a suggestion by Michael Israel (p.c.), I propose an analysis of temporal *already* that is similar to this analysis of temporal *still*. In this analysis, *already* invokes an earliness scale: If a state obtains as early as time  $t$ , it will also obtain as early as time  $t + 1$ . Let us take sentences (17), (29) and (33), repeated here as (39)–(41), as our test cases:

- (39) Why would you need a permanent? You already have curly hair.  
 (40) At seven, he already drove the plow with the oxen.  
 (41) He was already pretty chubby as a teenager, and now I'm afraid he's tending toward obesity.

The scalar inference involved in sentence (39), which involves the priority-to-process usage, can be represented as in (42):

- (42)a. You will have curly hair at time  $t_0 + 1$ . (CP)  
 b. You have curly hair now. (TP)

- c. You have curly hair at time  $x$ .

In (42), the CP entails the TP, since the presence of curly hair prior to the application of chemicals entails the presence following any future application of chemicals. The CP represents a proposition to which the addressee of (39) has implicitly committed herself, by expressing her interest in receiving a permanent. A representation for (40), an instance of the usage which I've referred to as *priority to expected eventuation point*, is given as (43):

- (43)a. He drives the plow with the oxen at some point following age seven. (CP)  
 b. He drives the plow with the oxen at age seven. (TP)  
 c. He drives the plow with the oxen at time  $x$ .

In (40), the CP represents the point at which plow-driving ability begins according to an idealized evolutionary path. In (44), we find a representation of the (41), the usage which I've labeled *priority to further accretion*:

- (44)a. He is tending toward obesity now (as an adult). (CP)  
 b. He was fairly fat as a young person. (TP)  
 c. He is fat at time  $x$ .

In (44), the entailment relationship between CP and TP requires a model in which one who is fairly heavy as a young person is a fortiori heavy as an adult.

## 6. CONCLUSION

### 6.1. *Function Coalescence and Construal*

There are numerous examples in which two or more of the aforementioned usages are mutually compatible, with the result that the interpreter is not required to resolve that instance of use ambiguity in favor of one or the other function. Function coalescence was invoked in the discussion of the comparative usage discussed in 4.2, which was regarded as a subtype of the priority-to-process usage discussed in 4.1. A further example of function coalescence is given in (33) above: *already* here invokes both priority to further accretion and priority to an expected point of eventuation. Another example of the mutual compatibility of uses is given in (45):

- (45) [Patty:] If we win today, Marcie, I'm going to let you keep the game ball!

[Marcie:] It's already my ball, sir. My dad gave it to me for my birthday.

(*Peanuts* 11/9/90 = Michaelis 1992 (19a))

In (45), *already* encodes both priority to process and priority to an expected point of eventuation. Marcie asserts both (a) that the ball is hers prior to the process of meriting it through a win and (b) that her possession of the ball is premature relative to the point at which her addressee would expect her to own it. The RI has a dual construal: it both subsumes a procedure by which to effect ownership and represents an expected time at which ownership might begin.

While function coalescence of this kind would be problematic for an account in which the four uses were held to represent distinct semantic senses, function coalescence is in fact a hallmark of use ambiguity. Li, Thompson and Thompson (1982), for example, point to several instances of function coalescence involving the Mandarin perfect marker *le*, a pragmatically ambiguous aspectual particle coding the current relevance of a prior event.

However, while several uses of *already* are often simultaneously available, context can select a preferred priority scheme. The operation of contextual selection can be seen in (46), in which the four continuations can be viewed as distinct types of interpretive instructions provided by the context:

- (46) The soup's already hot.
- a. You don't have to put it in the MICROWAVE. (priority to process)
  - b. The BREAD is still FROZEN. (comparative priority)
  - c. And I only had it in the microwave for a MINUTE. (priority to expected eventuation point)
  - d. It'll be SCALDING if you leave it in much longer. (priority to further accretion)

In (46a–d), prosodic peaks are marked with large caps. I have not indicated a prosodic peak for the *already* sentence (46), since the prosody of that sentence will vary according to the context. In (46a), a predicate-focus assertion (Lambrecht 1994), the accent falls on the last accentable constituent in the VP focus-domain, as indicated. When (46a) is the context for (46), the sentence accent of the *already*-sentence in (46) may fall on *already*. The adjective *hot* accordingly receives the low, flat prosodic contour characteristic of an ANTITOPIC, a rightward topic element (op. cit.). The antitopic intonation is appropriate when hotness is under discussion (as when the addressee has just suggested heating the soup). In (46b),



the accent on the subject counts as a contrastive-topic or activation accent, while the accent on the predicate counts as a focus accent (op. cit.). The contrastive topic accent found in (46b) will also be found on the subject in the *already* sentence (46), where an additional accent on *hot* indicates predicate focus. In (46c), the accent on *minute* marks a narrow focus selected by *only*. The propositional function *I have had the soup in the microwave for x minutes* is background information. Since the soup is a topic and the property of hotness is new information relative to that topic, the *already*-sentence whose context is (46c) will receive the default topic-comment or predicate-focus accentuation, in which the accent falls on the last accentable constituent of the focus domain (*hot*). In (46d), the prosodic peak again represents a focus accent on the predicate. If the *already*-sentence (46) were to precede (46d), and if it were to represent a response to an assertion like *I need to heat up the soup*, it could feature a rise-fall accent on the predicate. This rise-fall accent is a metalinguistic device used to signal insufficiency of the descriptor. This insufficiency arises from the fact that, according to the speaker, hotness (on its upward-bounded reading) is not sufficiently advanced on the temperature scale to be an accurate representation of the soup's properties.

## 6.2. Argumentative Force

It is useful to distinguish between (a) uses of the semantic schema shown in (15) and (b) uses of ASSERTIONS invoking a given variety of *already*-style anteriority. Uses of the first type include the four functions of *already* discussed in section 4. These functions arise from distinct contextual construals of the RI. In identifying uses of the second type, we make the presumption that certain functions of *already* can be used in the service of particular argumentative goals. An *already*-bearing assertion has an argumentative point insofar as it exploits the capacity of the interpreter to derive a particular conclusion from the particular variety of temporal precedence invoked. As I mentioned in Section 4.1, assertions involving priority of a state of affairs with respect to an effecting or preventative procedure can be seen as encouraging the inference that the relevant course of action is thereby either unnecessary or futile.

Assertions involving priority with respect to further accretion appear designed to trigger the *a fortiori* inference that the relevant property is present, will be present or was present to an extraordinary degree. In the case of (7), for example, the clause containing *already* encodes the present existence of a high degree of heat; what is implied is that further advancement along the temperature scale (as associated with the wearing of the

combat gear) will produce a very high degree of the property at issue.

Examples like (7) demonstrate that the argumentative force of a particular usage of *already* does not arise from the fact that the *already*-bearing clause functions to INFORM the addressee of the existence of the AS. In (7), the fact that the AS obtains is presupposed: the clause coding the AS is a participial relative. The addressee is presumed to know that the daytime desert temperature is high. However, the *already*-bearing clause does invoke a premise necessary for computation of the argumentative intent of the speaker.

In sum, therefore, contextual specification of the RI provides the link between an underspecified semantic structure involving temporal priority and the various argumentative purposes for which that structure might be invoked in discourse. In highlighting the interplay of general semantic constraints and contextual specifications, the present analysis avoids difficulties inherent in previous analyses, in particular that of van der Auwera (1993), who mistakenly equates a salient USE of *already* with its semantic structure. I have suggested that the failure to distinguish communicative function from meaning results in this case from a failure to examine an array of contextualized instances.<sup>9</sup> While intuition is indispensable in any

<sup>9</sup> There are a number of instances of *already* found in the data set which do not obviously fit the analysis offered here. Some of these are given in (a–e) below:

- (a) (At 9:51 AM a videotape was replayed.) Mr. Darden: Well, it appears that the bodies are already gone in that scenario, your Honor. I don't see the relevancy of it. (*CA v. Simpson* 3/21/95)
- (b) Ms. Clark: Now, at that time, sir, was Nicole Brown already divorced? (*CA v. Simpson* 3/21/95)
- (c) He's already gone for the day. Can I take a message?
- (d) Those muppets will live on in shows already taped by Henson. (*Entertainment Tonight* 5/21/90)
- (e) The Lao pilots brought the empty canisters back to sell the aluminum, having already snipped off the umbilical cords to sell the wire. (Stan Sesser, "The Forgotten Country", *The New Yorker* 8/20/90)

In (a)–(c) *already* seems to function as a completive marker: it scopes a state predication representing the completion of one stage in a sequence of development. In (a), this sequence involves the removal of bodies from the murder scene. In (b), the sequence involves an individual's life history, as understood by the speaker and hearer; this life history includes a point at which the individual in question was divorced. In (c), the sequence involves an individual's work day, which contains a 'slot' for departure from the office. Notice that the meaning invoked by *already* in (c) need not involve a premature departure; this utterance occurred at around the conventional quitting time. In (d)–(e), *already* has a function like that of *previously*: marking completion of an event prior to the reference time. I remain agnostic as to whether the examples in (a)–(e) can be reconciled with those discussed in the body of the paper. These examples may in fact represent one or more distinct (semantic) senses of *already*, in much the same way that the nontemporal function discussed in Section 4.3 represents a distinct sense.

study of lexical meaning, those analysts who rely exclusively on readily imaginable instances may fail to recognize that the relevant semantic content is schematic in comparison to the interpretations available in context.

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