This talk explores the properties of a small group of adverbial-like elements, including Sw. väl, knappt, Eng. once, Fr. une fois, à peine, It. una volta, appena. The presentation will concentrate on Swedish väl which will generally be glossed as ‘once’ (but the reader should be aware that the two words do not have the same distribution). When added to a imperfective/progressive small clause such as (2), väl yields an inchoative reading of sorts, that by contrast is not available in (1):

(1) Springande mot nödutgången (ropade vi på hjälp/såg vi att elden hade spridit sig …)
running toward the emergency exit (we cried for help/we saw that the fire had spread …)
‘while we were running …’

(2) Väl springande mot nödutgången (ropade vi på hjälp/såg vi att elden hade spridit sig…)
once running toward the emergency exit (we cried for help/we saw etc.)
‘when/once we had started to run …’

When, on the other hand, the small clause is perfective, the contribution of väl is less obvious: in a sentence pair such as (3)-(4) there is no contrast comparable to that of (1)-(2):

(3) Framkommen till stationen (ringde han hem på mobilen)
arrived at the station (he called home on his mobile phone)

(4) Väl framkommen till stationen (ringde han hem på mobilen)
once arrived at the station (…)

I will assume a theory where grammatical aspects are considered operators taking scope over predications (de Swart 1998). In such a frame, Swedish väl and similar elements can be considered lexicalised aspectual operators, presumably of the kind de Swart labelled PERFECT. When väl takes scope over an imperfective action, as in (2), väl changes its aspectual reading. When väl takes scope over an action that is already perfective by itself, as in (4), väl leaves no crucial contribution to the aspectual reading but can rather be considered pleonastic.

The paper will discuss how the properties of small clauses introduced by väl can follow from the (sometimes complicated) interaction of aspects and event types, for instance the fact that väl licenses individual level secondary predication that is otherwise unacceptable:

(5) *Svensk fick hon rösta i riksdagsvalet.
swede could she vote in the parliamentary election

(6) Väl svensk fick hon rösta i riksdagsvalet.
once swede could she vote in the parliamentary election

Reference