**Serial verbs**

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**Contents**

Preface and acknowledgements

Abbreviations and conventions

List of tables and figures

Chapter 1. Serial verbs: the framework

1.1 What serial verbs are like

1.2 Defining a serial verb

1.3 Serial verb constructions in the history of linguistics

1.4 What this book is about

1.5 The empirical basis, and conventions

Appendix. How serial verb constructions have been dealt with in the linguistic literature

Chapter 2. Recognizing a serial verb

2. Defining serial verb constructions.

2.1 Serial verb as one predicate

2.2 Serial verb as one clause

2.3 Prosodic properties of serial verbs

2.4 Shared tense, aspect, modality, reality status, evidentiality, mood, and polarity values

2.5 Serial verb as 'one event'

2.6 Sharing arguments in serial verbs

2.6.1 Sharing subjects and objects

2.6.2 Serial verb constructions with non-identical subjects

2.6.3 Serial verb constructions with no shared arguments

2.7 To summarise

Chapter 3. Serial verbs: their composition and meanings

3.1 Composition of serial verb constructions

3.2 Semantic types of asymmetrical serial verbs

3.2.1 Direction and orientation.

3.2.2 Aspect, extent, and change of state

3.2.3 Secondary concept serialisation

3.2.4 Serialisation of complement-clause-taking verbs

3.2.5 Increasing valency and specifying arguments

3.2.6 Reducing valency

3.2.7 Comparatives and superlatives

3.2.8 Event-argument serial verbs

3.2.9 Further meanings of asymmetrical serial verbs

3.2.10 Asymmetrical serial verbs: an interim summary

3.3 Semantics of symmetrical serial verbs

3.3.1 Sequence of actions. or concomitant actions related together

3.3.2 Cause-effect and resultative serial verbs

3.3.3 Manner serial verbs

3.3.4 Synonymous verb serialisation

3.3.5 Symmetrical serial verbs: an interim summary

3.4 Contrasting asymmetrical and symmetrical serial verbs

3.4.1 Grammaticalisation and lexicalisation in serial verb constructions

3.4.2 Iconicity of component order, and further features

3.5 To summarise

Chapter 4. Formal properties of serial verbs

4.1 Contiguity of components

4.2 Wordhood of components

4.3 Contiguity and wordhood: how the parameters interact

4.4 The expression of grammatical categories

4.4.1 Person marking in serial verbs

4.4.2 Marking further verbal categories in serial verbs

4.4.3 Grammatical processes which have scope over one component of a serial verb

4.5 Transitivity matching in serial verbs

4.6 To summarise

**Chapter 5 The limits of serial verbs**

5.1 Productive and limited serialisation, and double verb constructions

5.2 When verb sequences are not serial verbs

5.2.1 Serial verbs and sequences of clauses

5.2.2 Serial verbs and multi-verb constructions of other kinds

5.3 To summarise

**Chapter 6 The many facets of serial verbs**

6.1 Several kinds of serial verb constructions in one language: wordhood and contiguity

6.1.1 Multi-word non-contiguous and multi-word contiguous serial verbs in one language

6.1.2 Multi-word non-contiguous and one-word contiguous serial verbs in one language

6.1.3 Multi-word non-contiguous and one-word contiguous serial verbs in one language

6.1.4 Multi-word contiguous and one-word contiguous serial verbs in one language

6.1.5 One-word non-contiguous and one-word contiguous serial verbs in one language 6.1.6 Multi-word contiguous and one-word non-contiguous serial verbs in one language

6.1.7 Three kinds of serial verb constructions in one language

6.1.8 Languages with more than one kind of serial verb constructions: some generalisations

6.2 Types of verbs, and types of serial verb constructions

6.3 To summarise

**Chapter 7. What are serial verbs good for?**

7.1 Serial verb constructions and their grammatical meanings

7.2 Serial verb constructions, definiteness, and focus

7.3 Serial verb constructions and the representation of events

7.4 What are languages with serial verbs like?

7.4.1 The typological profile of languages with serial verb constructions

7.4.2 Further features of languages with serial verb constructions

7.4.3 Serial verb constructions and the features of verbal lexicon

7.5 To summarise

**Chapter 8 The rise and fall of serial verbs**

8.1 Where do serial verbs come from?

8.1.1 The origins of serial verb constructions

8.1.2 What further factors favour the development of serial verbs?

8.1.3 Serial verbs in language history

8.2 Serial verbs and language contact  
 8.2.1 Serial verbs as a feature of linguistic areas

8.2.2 Serial verbs in one-to-one language contact, and substratum phenomena

8.2.3 Serial verb constructions in Creole languages

8.3 What happens to serial verbs in language history: grammaticalisation and lexicalisation

8.3.1 How components of serial verbs become grammatical markers

8.3.2 From several verbs to one

8.4 Serial verb constructions in language acquisition and loss

8.4 To summarise

**Chapter 9 The essence of serial verbs: what can we conclude**

**Fieldworker's guide to serial verb constructions**

**References**

Index of authors

Index of languages, linguistic families, and areas

Index of subjects

**Preface and acknowledgements**

My first personal brush with dauntingly complex serial verb constructions was through fieldwork on Tariana, an Arawak language in the Vaupés River Basin in Brazil, and other related Arawak languages. To come to grips with the new facts, I decided to undertake a typological study of serial verbs.

In 2003 R. M. W. Dixon and I organized an International Workshop on 'Serial verb constructions'. The workshop and the ensuing edited volume featured an introduction by myself, setting out the cross-linguistic parameters of variation of serial verb constructions, their classification and general issues, with a summary by Dixon summarising the parameters of analysis. This was followed by fourteen contributions featuring in-depth analyses of serial verb constructions and similar structures in languages from Asia, Africa, North, Central and South America, Oceania and New Guinea. The analytic framework — in particular the division of serial verbs into symmetrical and asymmetrical, and the principles of grammaticalization and lexicalization within them — has come to be accepted as standard in the growing number of hands-on studies of serial verbs across the world. The past few years have seen new data, new languages, and new systems of serial verb constructions analyzed and recognized. Alongside these, there have been revisionist attempts at diluting the concept of 'serial verbs' within the sea of multi-verb combinations of all sorts. Coming from another angle, there has been distortion of the concept of verb serialisation through misinterpreting sources, misunderstanding arguments, and taking aim at the essence of typologically informed grammars.

The time is now ripe to systematically take stock of serial verb constructions world-wide, incorporating new data and new insights. Encouraged by colleagues and independent reviewers from Oxford University Press, I decided to undertake a cross-linguistic study of serial verbs, world-wide.

The book can be used both as a sourcebook for further typological investigations, and a textbook. The discussion is couched within basic linguistic theory (rather than any of the time-line formalisms), and all generalisations are based on reliable language facts. The readers and myself share a common purpose — to gain an understanding of a wide diversity of serial verbs. I have tried to analyse the facts and present the discussion in the clearest possible way — the complexity of the systems will speak for itself.

I am indebted to many people, of different continents and backgrounds.

My gratitude goes to all those native speakers who taught me their languages and their serial verb constructions: José, Jovino, Olívia, Rafael, Leo and the late Cândido, Graciliano and Ismael Brito (speakers of Tariana of Santa Rosa), Marino, Domingo, Ismael, Jorge and Batista Muniz (Tariana of Periquitos); Humberto Baltazar and Pedro Ângelo Tomas (Warekena); Afonso, Albino and João Fontes, Celestino da Silva, Cecília and Laureano da Silva and the late Marcília Rodrigues (Baniwa). I am forever indebted to Pauline Agnes Yuaneng Luma Laki, James Sesu Laki, Jacklyn Yuamali Benji Ala, Katie Teketay, Jenny Kudapa:kw and Gemaj, and to so many others who revealed the beauty of their native Manambu (Papua New Guinea). Tamara Margolina, together with my late mother, Valeria Guerlin, helped me get some linguistic understanding of double verb constructions in their native Russian.

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Abbreviations and conventions

**Abbreviations**

A transitive subject

abl ablative

abs absolutive

acc accusative

add additive 'and'

all allative

anaph anaphoric

ant anterior

appl applicative

art article

ass assertion

asymm asymmetrical

aug augmented

caus causative

cf clausal focus

cgf centrifugal

cl classifier

com comitative

comit comitative

compl completive

cond conditional

conn connective

consec consecutive

cont continuative, continuous

cont.coverb continuous derivational suffix on coverbs

contemp contemporary

content.inter content interrogative

conv converb

dat dative

decl declarative

deduct deductive evidential

def definite

def.fut definite future

dem demonstrative

dem.gen demonstrative general

dep dependent

des desiderative

dist distal

dl dual

ds different subject marking

du dual

du dual

elev elevational

emph emphatic

ep epenthetic

erg ergative

exc, exc exclusive

excl exclusive

exist existential

exp experiential aspect

f, F feminine

fem, fem feminine

ff full form

foc focus

foc.particle focus particle

freq frequentative

fut future

fut.irr future irrealis

g goal

genit genitive

hab habitual

immed immediate

impers impersonal

impf imperfective

impv imperative

incl inclusive

indef indefinite person

indep.pn independent pronoun

indf indefinite

indic indicative

infin infinitive

inj injunctive

inst instrumental

intent intentional

interj interjection

irr irrealis

KBo Keilschrifttexte aus Bodhazköi (Cuneiform texts from Boghazköi)

l l-conjugation in Dyirbal

lk linker

loc locative

log.addr addressee logophoric

log.sp speaker logophoric

m masculine

masc, masc masculine

mid middle

min minimal

modal.loc modal locational

ncl noun class

neg negative

neg.vb negative verb

nfut nonfuture

nom nominaliser

nomn nominative case

nonfut nonfuture

nsg, nsg nonsingular

num numeral

num.cl:anim numeral classifier for animates

O object

obj object

obl oblique

oblig obligative

p person

part participle

particle.q question particle

pass passive

past past (no abbreviation)

perf perfective

pers, pers person marker

perv perfective

pf perfective

pi past imperfective

pl, pl plural

poss, poss possessive

pot potential

precont precontemporary tense

prep preposition

pres present

pres.vis present visual

prob probability

prog progressive

proh prohibitive

prox.dem proximal demonstrative

prt partitive

ptc particle

purp purposive

question.part question particle

real realis

rec.p.vis recent past visual

recip reciprocal

redup reduplication

ref prior reference made

refl reflexive

refr referential

rel relative

rem.past remote past

rem.past.rep remote past reported

re.past.vis remote past visual

S intransitive subject

seq sequential

sg singular

sgf singular feminine

sgnf singular nonfeminine

siml simultaneous

sp sentence patient

spec specific

ss same subject marking

subj subject

subjn subjunctive

subord subordinator

SVC serial verb construction

symm symmetrical

TA tense aspect

tel telic

top.non.a/s topical non-subject

top.o topical object

tr transitive

trans transitive

usit usitative

V verb

V1 first verb in a serial verb construction

V2 second verb in a serial verb construction

verbal.part.comit comitative verbal particle

vert vertical

vn verbal noun

**Conventions**

Verbs within serial verb constructions are in bold. A translation of a serial verb into English is accompanied by a literary rendering of the verbs the construction consists of (for instance, take go). A full term is used instead of an abbreviation (e.g. tense, modal, past), for ease of understanding. Transcription and glossing of examples is that of the original sources. Language names are presented as the authors of relevant grammars spell them.

List of tables and figures

**Tables**

Table 2.1 Properties of serial verb constructions with non-identical subjects

Table 3.1 Asymmetrical and symmetrical serial verbs: a comparison

Table 5.1 Directional and positional markers in Cavineña, and their source verbs

Table 6.1 Several kinds of serial verbs in one language: contiguity and wordhood

Table 7.1 Causative constructions in Tetun Dili

Table 9.1 Asymmetrical and symmetrical serial verbs: a comparison (repeated from Table 3.1)

Table 9.2 Serial verbs, clause sequences, and multi-verb predicates with converbs

**Figures**

Figure 6.1 Verbs in serial verb constructions: from the more likely to the less likely

Figure 6.2 The order of development of asymmetrical serial verb constructions

Figure 8.1 The emergence of multi-word serial verbs in four Tupí-Guaraní languages

Figure 8.2 Concurrent grammalicalization scenario for the development of asymmetrical serial verb constructions

Figure 8.3 The order of historical development of asymmetrical serial verb constructions by semantic group

Figure 9.1 Verbs in serial verb constructions: from the more likely to the less likely (repeated from Figure 6.1)

Figure 9.2 The order of development of asymmetrical serial verb constructions (repeated from Figure 6.2)

Figure 9.3 The emergence of multi-word serial verbs in four Tupí-Guaraní languages (repeated from Figure 8.1)

Figure 9.4 Concurrent grammalicalization scenario for the development of asymmetrical serial verb constructions (repeated from Figure 8.2)