

Working Papers in Linguistics

No. 39

WHEN VERBS COLLIDE:
PAPERS FROM THE 1990
OHIO STATE MINI-CONFERENCE
ON SERIAL VERBS

Edited by
Brian D. Joseph
and
Arnold M. Zwicky

December 1990

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OHIO
STATE
UNIVERSITY

The Ohio State University
DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS

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204 Cunz Hall
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Columbus, OH 43210-1229
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Introduction

Though linguists have long realized that particular languages exhibit problematic instances of verbal constituents in series, these phenomena were for the most part treated as matters for the specialists in the languages in question - as peripheral phenomena within these languages, indeed as peripheral phenomena across the languages of the world, and consequently of little interest to the theorist. In the past thirty years there has been a dramatic shift in attitude, set off by three largely independent events in the history of linguistics.

First, along with the growth of sociolinguistics came a renewed interest in the linguistic (as well as social) characteristics of pidgins and creoles, leading to the rediscovery of Schuchardt's observation that serial verbs (as we now speak of them) are striking, prominent features of (at least many of) these languages, and thus not in any sense peripheral. Thereupon, other linguists began to see that similar phenomena were to be found in various noncreole languages of West Africa, in some languages of East and Southeast Asia, in particular Chinese, and in a number of the languages of the Indian subcontinent.

Second, along with the development of formal syntax in the Chomskyan style came the realization that serial verbs did not have an obvious good analysis within the theoretical frameworks then available, so that the phenomena became a focus of interest to those who would test particular frameworks or argue for changes in them.

Third, along with the rise in systematic studies of language typology and linguistic universals came the need to fit serial verbs into typological schemes and to relate them to other elements of those schemes, in particular coordination and subordination.

The confluence of these different streams flows strongly today, as evidenced by the papers in this volume. The volume is a partial record of a 'mini-conference' on serial verbs held at Ohio State over the 1990 Memorial Day weekend; the program for that conference is reproduced at the end of this introduction.

The conference originated in discussions between the two editors, after we discovered, first, that the two of us were separately engaged in wondering whether phenomena we were investigating for other reasons (in Modern Greek and English, respectively, reported on in Joseph's and Pullum's papers, respectively, in this volume) were in fact instances of serial verbs, and, second, that a number of our colleagues and students at Ohio State had become interested in serial verbs, in a variety of languages, for a variety of reasons of their own. At the same time, the publication of Mark Sebba's dissertation and of Mark Baker's major article on serial verbs had made the topic of serialization one that linguists in general were excited about. Consequently, it seemed an ideal time to assemble the Ohio State linguistics community and explore this topic of mutual interest.

Our intent was to elicit exploratory papers rather than definitive statements, to engage in a joint discussion of possibly relevant data and their theoretical significance. We saw no reason, however, to limit the participants to Ohio State; invitations to submit brief abstracts were sent

out to linguistics programs and to a few scholars we knew to be working on relevant questions. The response was enthusiastic, as can be seen from the program below.

The mini-conference was achieved on a mini-budget, and we would like to acknowledge the support of the College of Humanities as the source of funds for this effort, including the travel money for James D. McCawley, who acted as a "designated discussant" for all the papers.

Participants were pressed to supply their manuscripts with dispatch, so that the lag time to dissemination in this volume could be reduced as much as possible; we intend to stimulate discussion on current research, not to archive the research of years gone by. To help achieve this end, we have not edited the papers; they appear here as submitted in camera-ready copy by their authors. The papers appear in their order of presentation at the conference. Not all papers actually read at the conference were written up for publication in this volume; those not appearing here are marked with an asterisk on the program below, and note that the titles of some have changed in the written versions.

These are preliminary working-papers versions. Their authors are free to publish them elsewhere as they stand, or to publish new versions of them. This means both that readers might want to provide comments and criticisms of the current versions to their authors, and that although the current versions are citable and quotable, those who wish to cite or quote a paper should check with its author to find out if a more definitive version has appeared or is in press.

Brian D. Joseph
Arnold M. Zwicky
Columbus, Ohio
December 1990

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY MINI-CONFERENCE ON SERIAL VERBS

The University Ramada Inn, 3110 Olentangy River Road, Columbus, Ohio

Saturday, May 26:

8:45 - 9:00: Welcome

9:00 - 10:00: "What are we talking about when we talk about serial verbs?",
Arnold M. Zwicky, The Ohio State University & Stanford University

10:00 - 10:30: "The Definition of Serial Verbs",
Pieter Seuren, Nijmegen University

BREAK

10:50 - 11:20: "On the Definition and Distribution of Serial Verb
Constructions",
Eric Schiller, Wayne State University & The University of Chicago

11:20 - 11:50: "Parataxis in White Hmong",
Elizabeth Riddle, Ball State University

11:50 - 12:15: "On Arguing for Serial Verbs (with Special Reference to Greek)",
Brian D. Joseph, The Ohio State University

LUNCH

2:00 - 2:30: "Serialization and Subordination in Gullah: Toward a Definition
of Serialization",
Salikoko Mufwene, University of Georgia

2:30 - 3:00: "Serial Verbs and Motion Events in New World Creoles",
Don Winford, The Ohio State University

3:00 - 3:30: "'Tense' Scope and Spreading in Serial Verb Constructions",
Frank Byrne, Shawnee State University

BREAK

*4:00 - 4:30: "Serializability and the Structure of Eventhood in Gengbe",
Marshall Lewis, Indiana University

4:30 - 5:00: "The Semantic and Pragmatic Properties of Serial Verb
Construction in Marathi",
Rajeshwari Pandharipande, The University of Illinois

*5:00 - 5:30: "Against 'Object Sharing' in Serial Verb Constructions",

Mithilesh K. Mishra, University of Illinois

5:30 - 6:00: "Serial Verbs in Tamil",

Sabita Nagarajan, University of Delaware

DINNER

PARTY (Details to be announced)

Sunday, May 27:

9:00 - 10:00: "Serial Verbs in Colloquial English",

Geoffrey K. Pullum, University of California at Santa Cruz

10:00 - 10:30: "Walapai Serial and Phrasal Verbs",

James E. Redden, Southern Illinois University

BREAK

11:00 - 11:30: "Verb Concatenation in Classical Japanese",

Charles Quinn, The Ohio State University

*11:30 - 12:00: "Light Verbs and Predicate Demotion in Japanese",

Stanley Dubinsky, The University of Wisconsin

12:00 - 12:30: "Serial Verbs in Korean",

In-Hee Jo, Ball State University

LUNCH

2:15 - 2:45: "On Serial Verbs in Mandarin Chinese: VV Compounds and
Co-Verbial Phrases",

Claire Chang, University of Hawaii at Manoa

2:45 - 3:15: "Reclassification of Serial Verb Expressions in Mandarin
Chinese",

John Xiang-ling Dai, The Ohio State University

3:15 - 3:45: "Serial Verbs in Arabic",

Lutfi Hussein, The Ohio State University

3:45 - 4:15: "A Categorical Grammar Analysis of Serial Verbs",

Kate Welker, The Ohio State University

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