

THE DEFINITION OF SERIAL VERBS

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For quite some time linguists have intuitively recognized as a special grammatical phenomenon what is now called verb serialisation, or serial verbs. The term *serial* is anyway relatively recent. According to Sebba (1987:2), Voorhoeve, in a 1975 unpublished paper, credits Stewart (1963) with the coinage *serial verbs*. Earlier, Voorhoeve himself (1957) speaks of *verbal chains*. The linguistic phenomena that gave rise to this new concept are found mostly in West-African languages, in all Caribbean Creoles, and in Chinese. So far, however, verb serialisation has not been given anything like a proper grammatical definition. The concept has remained largely impressionistic. Certain types of phraseology in these languages struck the European or American linguists who occupied themselves with them as somehow peculiar and worthy of a special term. It is my purpose here to see if this analytical *impression* can be founded on more solid theoretical ground. I shall try, in other words, to capture as precisely as possible, in terms that allow for empirical checking, just those phenomena that caught the attention of our descriptive colleagues and made them see a separate syntactic category.

The lack of proper defining characteristics for serial verbs has lately begun to make itself felt, especially since Bickerton launched his much debated *Bioprogram hypothesis* (1981), according to which Creole languages are the closest approximation we have to a direct linguistic reflex of the general innate human language faculty. It is Bickerton's aim to consider those linguistic features that are common to all (real) Creole languages, and then to conclude that these features are constitutive of the innate language faculty, his linguistic bioprogram. One of the features he claims are a common Creole property is, precisely, verb serialisation. Therefore, in order to test this claim one needs some set of general necessary and sufficient conditions for serial verbs: without that, the claim remains stuck in impressionism. Moreover, for this claim to be interesting,

informative, and challenging, the definition of serial verbs had better be narrow than wide. For as the definition gets wider, the number of languages that will have to be taken to display the feature in question will increase, and the claim may run the risk of triviality. We owe it, anyway, to Derek Bickerton that verb serialisation has now become one of the focal issues in creole linguistics.

What struck those linguists who hit upon serial verbs as peculiar was the occurrence of VPs, usually best interpreted grammatically as infinitivals, somehow stuck on to sentences and indicating purpose, result, or simply concomitant circumstance. If English were a serialising language, it would have sentences like:

- 1a) Jake took the gun *kill* the tiger.
- b) Diana threw the stone *go* other side.
- c) Ben sold the car *give* Charlie.
- d) Joan is clever *surpass* Quentin.
- e) She took the dog *pull* it *come out*.

We must add that the term *serial verbs* has also been applied to cases where the "lower" VP carries a copy of the tense, and sometimes even the person agreement, of the "higher" S. Sentence (1e) would be: 'She took the dog *pulled* it *came out*', and, e.g., (1d) might then be something like: 'Joan is clever *surpasses* Quentin'. Although it is difficult to speak of infinitivals in such cases, it seems clear that the added tense, aspect or person morphemes are copies taken from the main verb or its higher controllers.

The presumed serial verbs in (1) are in italics. They all have a tacit subject, which is retrievable from ("controlled by") either the higher subject or the higher object. In (1e) there are two serials, first *pull*, whose subject is controlled by the higher subject *she*, and then *come out*, which is controlled by its higher object *it*.

Clearly, the sentences (1a-e) are ungrammatical in English. In proper, or anyway better, English they would run more or less as follows:

- 2a) Jake took the gun *and* killed the tiger.
- b) Diana threw the stone *to* the other side.
- c) Ben sold the car *to* Charlie.
- d) Joan is *cleverer than* Quentin.
- e) She *pulled* the dog *out*.

If one compares (1a-e) with their respective "translations" (2a-e), one notices that what is expressed in the former through an added VP corresponds to a variety of constructions in the latter: *and* coordination in (2a), a prepositional phrase in (2b) and (2c), a comparative construction in (2d), and a verb-plus-particle combination in (2e). This is clearly one of the things that struck the observing linguists: serial verbs do jobs that are normally done by other grammatical categories in English

or other European languages. Yet, even though this is no doubt remarkable, it hardly suffices as a criterion for verb serialisation. We may still suffer from subconscious Eurocentrism in our analyses, who knows, but we would most certainly refrain from parading our weakness so blatantly.¹

Let us summarize what we can say, so far, about serial verbs: they must be verbs; they must be the head of a VP added to a sentence; the tacit subject is controlled either by the subject or object of the preceding higher sentence; the added VP must be tenseless (or at most copy the tense of the main clause). But is this sufficient? Far from it, of course. For if it were, we should have to say that English, for one, is a serialising language, and no linguist would be tempted to say such a thing. That English, under these lax criteria, would be a serialising language appears from cases like:

- 3a) Jake promised the man to *kill* the tiger.
- b) Diana made the stone *fly* the other way.
- c) Ben bought the car to *give* it to Charlie.
- d) Ben wants to buy the car, *give* it to Charlie, and let him use it.
- e) I saw Andrew tame the horse.

Why are these not cases of verb serialisation? For some of these sentences, the answers are easy enough. First, as is commonly agreed, serial verbs must not be preceded by any kind of semantically or functionally loaded complementizer. This rules out (3c), with the purposive complementizer *to*, but it does not, or not clearly, rule out (3a), with the semantically empty complementizer *to*. Then, serial verbs are grammatically *subordinated* to the higher clause, and not *coordinated*. This rules out (3d), where the main verb *want* takes a ternary coordinated structure as its object-S.² Furthermore, as has been noted by Sebba (1987:87), serial verbs never stand directly under negation: serials are threadbare verbs and arguments; no (independent) tense or aspect, no negation, nor, we may tentatively add, any other sentential operator are allowed. This rules out (3a), since one can promise *not* to do something, and also (3b), because *Diana made the stone not fly the other way* is a good sentence.

But why can we not consider (3e) to be a case of verb serialisation? Our descriptive friends, who came up with the idea of serial verbs, would certainly exclaim:

"But the construction of (3e) is perfectly clear and obvious! What we have in (3e) is a main verb *see* with three arguments: a subject (*I*), an object (*Andrew*), and a sentential object with the deletion of the subject controlled by the main object: *x tame the horse*. How could *tame* be a serial verb?"

And they would clearly be *grosso modo* right in proposing this analysis: the precise details of how the embedded object-S must be processed in the grammar of

English need not detain us here. But if they are right, we must accept a further distinctive criterion for serial verbs, less obvious than the ones given earlier, and so far not stated in the literature. This is the condition that what is expressed in the serial VP *must not be a proper semantic argument to the higher verb*. From a lexical semantic point of view, that is, from the point of view of lexical argument structure, the VP of a serial verb must not be an obligatory part of the sentence in question, but an independent addition, as though it were either a new sentence or a modifying clause expressing purpose or result. Yet, the serial VP *is treated as though it were a regular sentential complement of the higher verb*. This criterion, which is no doubt to the point, needs some further comment.

What we have here is a phenomenon not so far, to my knowledge, treated in the literature on grammatical theory. In a recent publication (Seuren, to appear), I have introduced the term *pseudocomplementation* to refer to the phenomenon at hand. A pseudocomplement is a suppositious sentential complement, foisted on a verb whose meaning requires no such complementation, and expressing concomitant circumstance, purpose, or result. Pseudocomplements are opposed to *proper complements*, which are semantically required by the governing verb. For example, a sentential complement with the verb *help*, as in *I helped John (to) wash the dishes*, is not a pseudocomplement, since it is impossible to help someone if it does not relate to some activity or state of being. Likewise with *let* in *I let John wash the dishes*, the complement *x wash the dishes* is proper, and not a pseudocomplement, since one cannot let someone do something unless it is in relation to some state or activity. But one can come, go, sit, stand, swim, sleep, walk, etc., without any necessary reference to some state or activity. Yet one often finds sentential complements with such verbs. These we call pseudocomplements. They are treated grammatically as though they were proper complements.

Pseudocomplementation is rife in many if not all languages. It can take at least two different forms. In one form, which we may call *governed pseudocomplementation*, the possibility of taking a pseudocomplement is lexically defined, in the language in question, for each verb that can take a pseudocomplement. The pseudocomplement then represents a possible extra argument term for the verb in question. Examples are found in the following English sentences:

- 4a) Jonathan went *fishing*.
- b) Poor Muriel never stopped *to think about her actions*.
- c) Go *see a doctor*.

Clearly, constructions such as these are heavily conditioned by the lexical properties of the higher governing verb. *Go*, for example, can take an *-ing* pseudocom-

plement, as in (4a), or a bare infinitive, as in (4c) (but then only in the imperative), and *stop* can take a purposive pseudocomplement in the shape of *to* + VP, as in (4b). *Stop* can also take a proper complement-S, either in subject position, as in (5a), analysable as "at seven _S[the watch go] stopped]," or in object position, as in (5b), which can be analysed as "at seven _S[she stopped _S[she write]]":

- 5a) The watch stopped going at seven.
- b) She stopped writing at seven.

But the proper complement-S under *stop* must be expressed by means of a gerundive *-ing* complement, and cannot be expressed through *to* + VP, as in (4b). These are, to be sure, lexical idiosyncrasies. For there is no conceivable reason why *stop* in English should behave in this way, whereas *continue*, for example, takes gerundive and *to* + VP complements without any detectable semantic difference, while *go on* again behaves like *stop*.

We notice that although *go* and *stop* can take pseudocomplements in English in roughly the ways indicated above, this is not so for most other verbs. Verbs like *walk* or *run*, for example, do not allow for pseudocomplements; witness the impossibility of sentences like (6a,b) with the meanings intended. However, although *continue* refuses pseudocomplements, *go on* behaves again like *stop*, as is shown in (6c):

- 6a) *Jonathan walked *fishing*.
- b) *Jonathan ran *fishing*.
- c) Muriel went on *to think about her actions*.

The fact that pseudocomplementation in English is restricted to certain governing verbs³ allows us speak of governed pseudocomplementation, as opposed to *ungoverned pseudocomplementation*, where the language leaves one free to attach pseudocomplements wherever it is semantically appropriate. Yet, it appears, there are restrictions in these languages on the kind of verb that can function as a pseudocomplement (cf. Sebba 1987:162-209). We shall see below, in complete agreement with Sebba, that verb serialisation is typically ungoverned pseudocomplementation.

Other languages have pseudocomplements as well. In Dutch, for example, we again find governed pseudocomplements as in English, only more so. Besides *gaan* 'go', the otherwise ordinary intransitive verbs *komen* 'come', *wezen* 'be (gone to)', *staan* 'stand', *zitten* 'sit', *lopen* 'walk', *liggen* 'lie down', (but no equivalent of *stop*) can take a pseudocomplement-S (whereby the literal meaning of the complement-taking verbs is practically lost), as in:

- 7a) Hij _V[is] bonen _V[plukken].
 he is beans pick
 'He is out picking beans.'

- b) Hij $\sqrt{\text{zit}}$ de zaak $\sqrt{\text{te verknoeien}}$.
 he sits the deal to foul up
 'He is fouling up the deal.'
- c) Hij is vaak bonen $\sqrt{\text{wezen plukken}}$.
 he perf.aux. often beans be pick
 'He has often been out picking beans.'
- d) Hij heeft de zaak $\sqrt{\text{zitten verknoeien}}$.
 he perf.aux. the deal sit foul up
 'He has been fouling up the deal.'

The syntax of the Dutch construction is fairly transparent (cf. Seuren 1985:172-188). It involves the transformational rule of Predicate Raising (PR) by which the lower V (e.g. *verknoeien* in (7b) or (7d)) is attracted by the higher V (i.e. *zitten* in the same cases) so that the two form one complex V-constituent. In main clauses a complex V-constituent is split up, by a later rule, into a finite part, which typically occupies the second position in the sentence, and a nonfinite part, which is moved to the far right. Thus one sees that in (7a) and (7b) the originally united V-islands $\sqrt{\text{is plukken}}$ and $\sqrt{\text{zit te verknoeien}}$ have been split up, but in (7c) and (7d) the finite part of the V-cluster is formed by the perfect tense auxiliary, and the V-constituent formed through PR remains united: $\sqrt{\text{wezen plukken}}$ and $\sqrt{\text{zitten verknoeien}}$, respectively.⁴ In subordinate clauses, as in the *that*-clauses of (8), the entire V-cluster ends up at the far right:

- 8a) ...dat hij bonen $\sqrt{\text{is plukken}}$.
 b) ...dat hij de zaak $\sqrt{\text{zit te verknoeien}}$.
 c) ...dat hij vaak bonen $\sqrt{\text{is wezen plukken}}$.
 d) ...dat hij de zaak $\sqrt{\text{heeft zitten verknoeien}}$.

By the criteria given so far, the Dutch cases, though examples of pseudo-complementation, should not be analysed as serial verbs since there is no separate (serial) VP added on to the main clause. Instead, what we see in Dutch is a very different treatment: the lower V (i.e. the V of the pseudocomplement) is raised to form one single complex V-cluster with the higher V. In order to get the construction which is typical of serial verbs, all that is needed, once the pseudocomplement has been added to the other regular arguments of the higher V, is a controlled deletion (or non-expression) of the subject of the pseudocomplement (let's call it *Secondary Subject Deletion* or SSD). No other process is required except, in some languages, tense and/or agreement copying from the higher verb. The result will be that the VP containing the serial verb simply follows the higher clause, which would be a well-formed and well-finished sentence also without the serial VP.

It is, therefore, important to establish, in case one suspects the presence of a serial verb, that the suspected serial verb and the main verb do not form one

syntactically united v-cluster, but sits in its own exclusive VP. Often, as in the Dutch cases, word order and/or morphological criteria can settle the issue. Word order is indicative of a V-island in the English sentence:

9) She $\sqrt{\text{let go}}$ the line.

which is an isolated, lexically idiosyncratic case of Predicate Raising in English. But this sentence does not contain a serial verb anyway, since the embedded complement (whose V has been raised by PR) is a semantically proper object argument of the main verb *let*: she let $\sqrt{\text{the line go}}$.

In Mauritian Creole we also find pseudocomplementation, but a specific morphological criterion makes it clear that these pseudocomplements are sometimes processed by means of PR combined with SSD, and not through simple application of just SSD (which alone makes it difficult to speak of serial verbs in these cases). Consider the following sentences, all with a pseudocomplement:

- 10a) Li ti degaze mâze.
 he past hurry eat
 'He ate in a hurry.'
- b) Li ti pe dibute gete.
 he past cont. stand look
 'He was standing up while looking.'
- c) Li ti vin mâze.
 he past come eat
 'He came to eat./He came for dinner.'
- d) Li ti al mâze.
 he past go eat
 'He went eating.'

Superficially, it looks as though these sentences have identical grammatical structures. Yet this cannot be so. (10a,b) are indeed structurally identical, and so are (10c,d), but the two pairs are different. The difference lies in the presence of the final syllabic *-e* of the verbs *degaze* 'hurry' and *dibute* 'stand' in (10a,b), and the absence of the final syllabic *-i* of *vini* 'come' and *-e* of *ale* 'go' in (10c,d). The latter two verbs appear, as is shown in (10c,d), in their shortened forms, *vin* and *al*, respectively. The verbs *degaze* and *dibute* also have the shortened forms *degaz* and *dibut*,⁵ but, as we see, these forms are not used in (10a,b), nor can they be used there.

Mauritian Creole has a rule of *Verb Syncopation*, whereby the full lexical verb form is shortened under certain conditions, usually by the dropping of the last syllabic vowel, which is, again usually, *-e*. Given a proper syntactic analysis, the conditions for Verb Syncopation can be stated in a fairly straightforward manner. First, the verb in question must belong to the class of verbs that allow for this rule

to apply. (As we have seen, all four main verbs of (10a-d) fulfill this condition.) Then, and this is the crucial general condition, Verb Syncopation applies whenever a verb does not stand at the end of a VP or just before an embedded S or VP, - let us say, *whenever a verb is not VP-final*. Verb Syncopation thus signals a VP-internal position of the verb.

There are some minor additional clauses for Verb Syncopation. Thus, the rule does not apply within lexicalized compound verbs of the type *mâze bwar* 'eat and drink', *mâze dormi* 'eat and go to bed', *marse ale* 'go on foot', *galupe vini* 'come running', *bate râde* 'beat up mutually' (lit. 'beat and give back'), *ale vini* 'go and come'. These are lexical idiosyncrasies, coined after the (antiquated) French pattern found in, e.g., *saisir revendiquer*, or *saisir gager* 'impound', *virer tourner* 'turn (a ship)'.⁶ (The compound verbs themselves do belong to the class of syncopators, provided the phonology is right.) Such compound verbs do, in any case, not present cases of verb serialisation, since they cannot be broken up by say, an object, as in the ungrammatical:

- 11) *Li ti mâz so dipe dormi.
 he past eat is bread sleep

If *dormi* had been a serial verb, (11) should have been grammatical in the language.

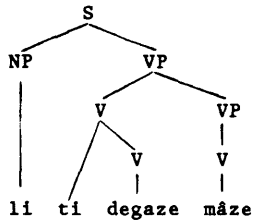
In general, however, Verb Syncopation is directly correlated with the VP-final or VP-internal position of the verb. This being so, the well-known wavering of certain constituents between VP-status and non-VP-status is clearly reflected. Adverbials, for example, can occur both within the VP, as in (12a), or outside the VP, as in (12b) (witness the full form *sâte*):

- 12a) Li fin mâz boner zordi.
 he PERF eat early today
 'He has eaten early today.'
 b) Zwazo sâte boner.
 birds sing early
 'Birds sing early.'

There is some semantic difference in that *eat early*, as in (12a), is regarded as a semantic unit expressing something one does occasionally, whereas what is said in (12b) is simply that the singing of birds tends to take place early in the morning.

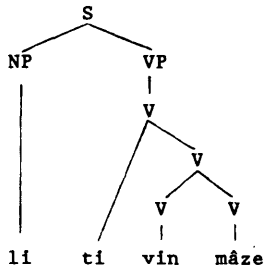
But to revert to the sentences of (10), we now see that if our formulation of the rule of Verb Syncopation is correct, (10a) must be analyzed as (13) (whereby the status of the preverbal tense particle *ti* is not at issue), with an analogous analysis for (10b):

13)



But (10c) is properly analyzed as (14), with an analogous analysis for (10d):

14)



The structure (13) is simply the result of SSD: the (tacit) subject of *mâze* is identical with the overt subject of the main verb (i.e. *li* 'he') and is not expressed in the surface structure. Since no further rules apply, the embedded pseudocomplement-S ends up as a VP following the main clause. But in (14) we have not only SSD, but also the subsequent application of PR which results in the complex V-cluster shown. Now the higher or main verb *vini* is not VP-final and thus syncopeated.

It will thereby be clear that we have, in any case, no serial verb in (10c,d). But how about (10a,b)? The verbs *mâze* and *gete* in (10a,b) represent pseudocomplements whose subject has been deleted by SSD, with no further rules disturbing the picture. This corresponds to the criteria of verb serialisation given so far, and we might thus be tempted to declare these to be cases of verb serialisation. Yet this would be too quick a conclusion.

Sebba (1987:162-209) points out that it is typical of verb serialisation that the class of verbs that can be used as serials is heavily restricted lexically, whereas there are no restrictions, other than those imposed by semantic and pragmatic factors, on the higher clause that takes the pseudocomplement. Serialisation thus seems to be an expressive category, afforded by the grammar of the language in question, that allows the addition of a serial construction to any sentence whose semantic and/or pragmatic properties leave room for it. In other words, it is

typical for serial verbs that they occur in *ungoverned* pseudocomplements, as pointed out above. There can hardly be doubt that this property, too, has contributed to the impressionistic notion formed by the descriptive linguists who noted serialisation in the languages they were studying. In any case, Sebba's observation is clearly to the point for those languages that show verb serialisation prototypically, or most recognizably, such as the Caribbean Creoles or the serialising languages of West Africa. The verbs that are found typically in ungoverned serial pseudocomplements are verbs of movement (*come, go, fly, fall, etc.*), of giving and taking, of killing and hitting, and of surpassing (in serial comparative constructions).

In contrast to this, we notice that in nonserialising languages such as Dutch or English, the possibility of adding a pseudocomplement is also heavily restricted lexically, but here the restrictions apply to the higher complement-taking verb, and not to the verb of the pseudocomplement. These languages show *governed* pseudocomplementation. Thus, languages where serialisation has been identified allow for the restricted selection of serial verbs as more or less loose adjuncts (i.e. pseudocomplements) to more or less any given higher sentence, whereas languages where serialisation has not been identified may allow for the lexically unrestricted selection of pseudocomplements to very specifically selected higher governing verbs.

We clearly must incorporate this property of prototypical serial constructions into the definition of serial verbs. If we do not, serial verbs may have to be identified for all kinds of languages (such as English or Dutch), where they have never been spotted before, even though these languages have been the subject of sophisticated grammatical analysis and description for many centuries. This in itself would do no harm: why should we not allow ourselves to reinterpret the categories of well-known languages in the light of newly discovered and interpreted data? But if we do that, we will fail to capture the precise phenomena that made the descriptive linguists see serial verbs as a specific syntactic category, and we will thus fail to give precise content to Bickerton's claim that serial constructions are typical or even constitutive of Creole languages and a diagnostic for the innate language faculty (for that claim was based on the original intuitive notion). Moreover, as was said at the outset, it is sensible to put as narrow a definition on serialisation as is possible since the wider the definition, the less interesting and the less informative will be the claim. Under this criterion, then, the Mauritian sentences (10a,b) must not be considered cases of verb serialisation, since the presence of these sentences is directly related to the argument structure (subcategorization frame) properties of their higher verbs *degaze* and *dibute*. Other verbs do not allow this form of pseudocomplementation at all, or allow it only with additional Predicate Raising, such as *vini* and *ale* in

(10c,d). In the terminology introduced above, we say that Mauritian Creole has governed, but not ungoverned pseudocomplementation. Notice that, if the notion of serial verbs is left sufficiently lax to cover cases like (10a,b), there is no reason why, for example, the Dutch sentence with the intrinsically reflexive verb *zich haasten* 'hurry':

- 15) Hij haastte zich te vertrekken.
 he hurried himself to leave
 'He left in a hurry.'

should not also be considered to contain the serial verb *te vertrekken* since there is no Predicate Raising in (15), only SSD on *vertrekken*. But then we are no longer speaking of serial verbs in the spirit of our colleagues who introduced the term in the first place, and it was in this spirit that Bickerton's claim about serial verbs as a typically Creole diagnostic for the innate language faculty was made. Pseudocomplementation in Dutch, in other words, is likewise governed, and not ungoverned, and for that reason we say that Dutch has no serial verbs.⁷

It follows from this that one cannot identify serial verbs on the basis of isolated examples. Isolated sentences may be heuristically important in that they may give rise to the suspicion that the language in question has serial verbs. But in order to establish with any degree of reliability that it does indeed have serial verbs, it is necessary to look at the language from a wider perspective and check, for one thing, the selectional restrictions on the occurrence of the presumed serials. If the restrictions reside in the serials, and the other conditions are fulfilled as well, it is probably correct to claim that the language has serial verbs. But if the restrictions reside in the superordinate governing verb, and the content of the pseudocomplement is lexically unrestricted, within the general bounds of proper category and semantic and pragmatic coherence, then, apparently, we are not facing the kind of phenomenon that was recognized as verb serialisation by our descriptive colleagues.

I would have liked to go even a bit further and claim that it is a necessary condition for verb serialisation in a language L that all pseudocomplements that occur in L are processed uniformly with just SSD and no further syntactic complementation rules. Although I made this claim in Seuren (to appear), I am ready to admit that it was, perhaps, made rashly. Further research may prove it right, but may likewise prove it wrong.

Summarizing, we can say that verb serialisation is the result of *ungoverned pseudocomplementation* with the following other conditions:

- a.) The pseudocomplement is *lexically bare* in the sense that it cannot be the exclusive scope of a tense or negation operator.
- b.) The complement-predicate is a *surface verb*.

- c.) No syntactic processing takes place other than *simple SSD*, with the result that a serial verb construction manifests itself as a VP with (subject- or object-) governed deletion of the subject, added to a sentence which would be well-formed also without the serial verb construction.

The purpose of the above criteria, among others, is that they might be of use in cases where there is a suspicion, but no certainty, of serial verbs.

NOTES

1. This first person plural does not include Jansen et al. (1978), who come dangerously close to adopting precisely this Eurocentric criterion.

2. One might be tempted to consider the role of pause in order to distinguish subordinated serial verbs from coordinated verbs. But this does not work well, since absence of pause is as normal in coordinations as it is supposed to be in serials.

3. A very similar phenomenon appears with prepositional objects. The English verbs *come* and *go*, for example, allow for *for*-objects, expressing the subject's purpose of getting what is mentioned after *for*, as in: *She came for information*. Yet other verbs of motion do not allow that sort of prepositional object: **She swam/walked... for information*. Likewise in French, where the verb *aller* 'go' allows for directional *to*-objects: *Il allait à la gare* 'He went to the station', but not, e.g., **Il se promenait à la gare* 'He walked to the station'. In order to express the latter meaning, one will have to say something like *Il allait à la gare en se promenant* 'He went to the station walking'.

4. One notes that the verb *zitten* (like *lopen*, *liggen*, and *staan*) induces the (semantically empty) complementizer *te* (comparable with English *to*) when used in a non-perfect tense, but dispenses no *te* when used in a perfect tense. This *te* has puzzled many grammarians of Dutch, especially those who feel the need to give it some semantic or functional content. Since, however, it is clearly conditioned by lexical and other idiosyncrasies, and since, moreover, it varies greatly from dialect to dialect, it seems wisest to give it the lowest possible profile in the description and analysis of the language. The only viable generalization I have been able to detect is that absence of *te* is a sure sign of a V-cluster produced by Predicate Raising. The presence of *te* only signifies some form of complementation.

5. See Baker & Hoookoomsing ((1987:75,81) s.v. *degaz/e* and *dibut/e*), for authoritative evidence that these verbs belong to the class of syncopators.

6. The same process can be seen in the historical development of certain French verbs, such as *bousculer* 'knock over', from *bouter culer*, or *galvauder* 'botch, compromise', from *galer vauder*. (I am indebted to Guy Hazael-Massieux for this interesting information.)

7. English also has governed pseudocomplement constructions with only SSD. They occur, in fact, in very large numbers, but only with adjectives and prepositional particles as predicates, as in:

- i) She cut the parcel open.
- ii) He took the box out.

Since these pseudocomplements do not have a verbal head, one will not be tempted to speak of serial verbs here. In any case, the possibility of such pseudocomplements in English is conditioned by the higher predicate, not, as in serials, by the pseudocomplement. See Seuren (to appear) for many more details.

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