

Book reviews

Terry Crowley: *Serial Verbs in Oceanic: A Descriptive Typology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. xvii þ 281 pp. Hardback ISBN 0198241356 £. 55.00.

The phenomenon of so-called serial verbs was first described for African languages. In his grammar of Ewe (published in German in 1907), for example, Westermann (1930) pointed out:

(...) a peculiarity of Ewe is that we often find a row of verbs one after the other. The chief features of this are that all the verbs stand next to each other without being connected ... In English these consecutive verbs are partly rendered by composite sentences. But very often several Ewe verbs may be expressed by a single verb in English. The explanation for this is that the Ewe people describe every detail of action or happening from beginning to end, and each detail has to be expressed by a special verb: they dissect every happening and present it in its several parts, whereas in English we seize on the leading event and express it by a verb, while subordinate events are either not considered or are rendered by means of a preposition, adverb, conjunction, or a prefix on the verb (Westermann 1930: 126).

In 1914, Hugo Schuchardt noted similarities with respect to these verb constructions between Ewe on the one hand, and Suriname Creole on the other. So far, most research on serial verbs and serial verb constructions (henceforth abbreviated as SVC) has been done on African languages and on pidgins and creoles; however, SVCs are also to be found in Hmong-Mien, Mon-Khmer, Sino-Tibetan, Tai-Kadai, Papuan, Austronesian, Semitic, and Central-American languages as well as in Japanese. The honor of being the first to describe the presence of more than one verb within a sentence for an Austronesian language — namely Jabe'm — is due to Otto Dempwolff (1939). However, so far there are only a few studies on SVCs in Austronesian languages, although the information available on this phenomenon is slowly but gradually growing. Thus, all the grammar

sketches presented in the volume *The Oceanic Languages* (Lynch et al. 2002) have a section on verb serialization. And Terry Crowley's long awaited monograph on serial verbs in Oceanic now constitutes an important landmark for all future research on this topic not only within Oceanic, but also within Austronesian languages in general. In his book, Crowley documents the range of SVCs in Oceanic languages and examines the structural feature of serial verbs not only from a synchronic perspective, but also diachronically.

After the table of contents, a list of tables, the preface, a list of abbreviations, and the conventions in citing vernacular forms, the first chapter of the book deals with "Linguistic Typology and Serial Verbs" (pp. 1–23). This chapter presents a brief but critical discussion of typology as a linguistic subdiscipline and then introduces the topic of the book: serial verbs. Crowley emphasizes that "it may in fact be wishful thinking to assume that we can come up with a universally applicable definition of verb serialization" (p. 18). Nevertheless, he follows Bradshaw (1982: 28) in explicitly recognizing as serial verbs, in Oceanic languages, those constructions involving two (or more) verbs which share the following basic features:

- there are tight restrictions on the nominal arguments associated with each verb;
- there is no contrast in the basic inflectional categories of serialized verbs;
- there is no grammatical or intonational marking of clause boundaries between the verbs (p. 19).

After this definition, the author shows how difficult it is to quantify serialization in various languages. Compared to Papuan (i.e. non-Austronesian) languages of Papua New Guinea with pervasive serialization and Australian Aboriginal languages with no or minimal serialization, Oceanic languages "seem to fall somewhere between these extremes" (p. 21). This introductory chapter ends with a brief overview of observations that have been made about the grammaticalization of serial verbs in various languages.

Chapter 2 deals with "Oceanic Languages, Serial Verbs, and Linguistic Descriptions" (pp. 24–53). After pointing out the immense geographical spread of Oceanic languages and the huge amount of typological diversity within this subgroup of the Austronesian language family, the chapter presents a typological overview of Oceanic languages and an excellent typology of serial verbs in these languages. However, so far we lack adequate descriptions of many languages that belong to this subgroup. Therefore, Crowley emphasizes that "much of what is said in this volume

should be regarded as tentative” (p. 47). Nevertheless, he also points out that the “primary purpose . . . of my contribution in this volume is . . . to offer data which can be chewed over by different people from a variety of theoretical perspectives” (p. 48). The chapter ends with a brief history of research on SVCs in Oceanic languages and a concise summary of some of the problems encountered in recognizing and adequately describing serial verbs in these languages.

The third chapter provides a detailed discussion of “Paamese Serial Verbs” (pp. 54–124). After differentiating serialization from both coordination and subordination, Crowley first presents the various patterns of core-layer serialization to be found in this language spoken on the island of Paama in the Republic of Vanuatu. He then differentiates not only core-layer serialization from nuclear-layer serialization, but also serialization from compounding and describes the patterns of nuclear serialization in Paamese and their productivity. The chapter ends with a description of multiple serialization and a highly interesting and stimulating discussion of the fuzzy edges of serial verbs in Paamese. Crowley emphasizes that the chapter “should be taken as a basis for comparison with synchronic patterns described for other Oceanic languages” (p. 54) — this is done in Chapter 4. Moreover, he states that Chapter 3 “can also be taken as a basis for an examination of the diachronic aspects of the phenomenon in the Oceanic subgroup in general” (p. 54) — this is done in Chapter 5 — “as well as in the development of serial verb constructions in Melanesian Pidgin” (p. 54) — this is done in Chapter 6.

Chapter 4 deals with “The Distribution and Evolution of Oceanic Serial Verbs” (pp. 125–168). The chapter provides “additional data from a number of languages belonging to the major higher-level subgroups within Oceanic with a view to providing the kind of data that are needed for syntactic comparison and any resulting grammatical reconstruction to be made in the area of verb serialization” (p. 125). The following subgroups and languages are represented:

- Loniu as a representative of the Admiralties languages;
- Nalik, Tigak, Nakanai, Saliba, Tawala, Mangap-Mbula, Manam, and Numbami as representatives of Western Oceanic languages;
- Kwaio and Lewo as representatives of Central and Eastern Oceanic languages; and
- Mussau as a representative of the St. Mathias languages.

The chapter ends with discussing the question of how the constructions presented in Chapters 3 and 4 “may have acquired their current distribution and what sorts of patterns may have been present in Proto Oceanic” (p. 169).

The fifth chapter deals with “The Dissolution of Oceanic Serial Verbs” (pp. 169–214). Terry Crowley examines in detail

the range of structural outcomes that we find for particular kinds of serial verb constructions in Oceanic languages, describing the various structural homologues of serial verb constructions which appear to represent the results of various kinds of structural reanalysis of earlier serial verbs (p. 169).

After presenting evidence for typological dissonance in Oceanic languages with respect to serial verbs, the chapter discusses grammaticalization processes of serial verbs and echo verb constructions (i.e. a kind of “anti-switch reference” system). This chapter convincingly demonstrates that serial verbs have been open to all kinds of reanalysis in Oceanic languages.

Chapter 6, “Oceanic Serial Verbs and Melanesian Pidgin” (pp. 215–254), examines “the possible influence of substrate patterns in the development of serial verb constructions in Melanesian Pidgin” (p. 218). This examination is based on an excellent description of the various structural patterns to be found in the three national varieties of Melanesian Pidgin, namely Bislama (spoken in Vanuatu), Solomons Pijin (spoken on the Solomon Islands), and Tok Pisin (spoken in Papua New Guinea). This interesting chapter ends with a description of grammaticalization processes involving serial verbs in Melanesian Pidgin and with a brief discussion of the question whether we can observe universal factors in the formation of patterns of serialization in pidgins and creoles.

The seventh and last chapter of this monograph, “Oceanic Serial Verbs and the Broader Context” (pp. 255–267), raises a number of more general issues with respect to serial verbs and linguistic typology, especially whether SVCs represent some kind of substantive linguistic universal and whether there is a correlation between adpositional poverty and serial verb richness, between inflectional morphology and serialization, and between complex sentence constructions and serialization. Moreover, it also discusses cognitive implications of SVCs and the relevance of serial verbs for linguistic theory in general.

The monograph ends with the list of references (pp. 268–275) and a very helpful index (although one wonders why the author did not include an entry for the “head-tail linkage” pattern (cf. p. 69) here).

The book is clearly structured and relatively easy to read. The linguistic phenomena presented are extremely well illustrated with excellent examples — indeed, Terry Crowley provides the reader with a bonanza of interesting data. There are only a few typos (e.g. p. 65, second line, read: “heilela keke houm” for “he-ilela keke ho-um;” p. 138, gloss of first example, read: “We stayed until the afternoon” for “I stayed until the af-

ternoon;” p. 193, Table 5.9, read: “habitual” for “abitual;” p. 194, read: “5” for “(5)”; not all the sources quoted are in the list of references (e.g. Crowley [1998] referred to on p. 179), and the author does not explain that the sign “*” is not only used to mark a sentence as ungrammatical, but also to indicate that a certain form marked in such a way — like, for example, “*pulu” (p. 102) — has to be understood as a reconstructed Proto language form. However, all this criticism is carping. What is somewhat annoying, however, is the fact that words, expressions and sentences that are quoted from Oceanic languages are not differentiated by font type. It would have been more reader-friendly to print a clause like, for example, “when faced with forms such as ras ‘unable’” (p. 49) as “when faced with forms such as ras ‘unable.’ ”

In general, this excellent book is a must for every Oceanist, for every Austronesianist, and for every typologist and comparativist interested in SVCs. Terry Crowley has written a monograph that will be central and basic for all future research on SVCs especially in Oceanic but also in other languages in which this phenomenon can be observed. It certainly will “encourage descriptive linguists, as far as possible, to provide detailed accounts of the surface facts of serial verb constructions” (p. 267).

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Elisabeth Leiss: Artikel und Aspekt. Die grammatischen Muster von Definitheit. *Studia Linguistica Germanica* 55. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2000. 309 pp. ISBN 3110167182.

In her study on the development of the definite article in Germanic, Elisabeth Leiss argues that definiteness and aspect are two instantiations