

Event conceptualisation and event report in serial verb constructions in Kilivila: towards a new approach to research an old phenomenon

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The tandem verbs are like paired muscles braced against each other to turn the meaning of the phrase this way or that by the slightest change in tension as it were. (Baldwin n.d.:73)

1 Introduction

One of my greatest worries with respect to my skills in speaking Kilivila, the language of the Trobriand Islanders in Papua New Guinea, has always been that I will never make it to produce serial verb constructions properly. A few years ago I was somewhat relieved when I read the following in Andy Pawley's paper on 'A language which defies description by ordinary means':

I noticed that bystanders, who were fond of repeating to others nearby what I said (even if the others could hear perfectly well), often added details to my utterances. For instance, if someone asked, 'Where's Kiyas?' (the young man who was my chief informant) and I answered, 'He's in the garden', a bystander might say, 'He said 'Kiyas has gone to Matpay to work in the garden. He'll be back later', he said'. ... People were editing my utterances, supplying information that I should have given in the first place in order to make my utterance complete or well formed (Pawley 1993:109ff.)

I have been having exactly the same experience. After more than 20 years the Trobriand Islanders keep their promise to edit my speech, if necessary (and I am grateful for this, of course). However, I could observe (not without some pride) that they do this mostly when I try to produce what I assume to be idiomatic serial verb constructions — my avowed weak point in speaking Kilivila. Usually I produce a verb or two less than native speakers would do, and the order in which I produce the verbs sometimes also departs from the order in which a Trobriand Islander would situation-adequately serialise the respective verbal expressions. Why is this so?

This paper attempts among other things to answer this question. However, before I do this I will first present various types of serial verb constructions (60m here onwards abbreviated as SVCs) in Kilivila. Some of these constructions are documented in my overall corpus of Kilivila speech data; however, most constructions presented in the second part of the paper were especially elicited during my field trip in 2001. After the presentation of a new approach towards a typology of SVCs proposed by Miriam van Staden in cooperation with Ger Reesink and after a brief discussion of the methodology used to elicit such constructions and to get an idea of what Trobriand Islanders conceptualise as an 'event', I will first try to re-define the concept of 'SVCs' for Kilivila. I will distinguish between SVCs and 'contiguous serial verb constructions' (CSVCs), because it seems that Trobriand Islanders differentiate SVCs in which verbs are contiguous from other SVCs. This classification is not only based on morphosyntactic criteria but also on semantic and pragmatic considerations that are important for both the conceptualisation and the report of 'events' in and for this speech community. The paper ends with a critical evaluation of the approach to research such complex constructions presented and illustrated with data from Kilivila.

2 Types of serial verb constructions in Kilivila — the traditional approach

Before I present the types of serial verb constructions I want to define very briefly the notion of 'verb' in Kilivila. The Kilivila verbal expression consists of a subject prefix with a marker for tense/aspect/mood (TAM marker), the verb stem proper, and a suffix marking number. The verb stem is invariable.

There are five different subject prefixes: a-, ku-, i-/e-, ta- and ka-. Besides the first, second and third person, Kilivila distinguishes between a dual inclusive and a dual exclusive; moreover, with the first person plural it also distinguishes between inclusive and exclusive. These affixes are prefixed to the verb stem, thus forming one unit.

There is no morpheme indicating singular; plural is marked by the plural morpheme -si suffixed to the verb stem with the prefixed subject affix, thus forming one unit.

Tense/Aspect/Mood is either unmarked (subject prefix series 1) or indicated by a threefold series of affixes, namely: b-/bu-/ba- (subject prefix series 2), l-/lu-/la- (subject prefix series 3), and m-/mu-/ma- (subject prefix series 4) that are prefixed to the subject prefixes. The vowels u and a follow the consonants b, l, and m to avoid consonant clusters that would not agree with the Kilivila syllable patterns.

The first series of subject prefixes is unmarked with respect to TAM.

The second series expresses the concept of an incomplete action that may happen in the future or may have happened in the past, it may have been expected to happen in the past — though it did not happen, or it may be part of a hypothetical event. Thus, a part of the semantics of this series also covers the concept of expressing a statement as irrealis.

The third series expresses the concept of a completed action. It has quite clear references to past time, it is affirmative or emphatic.

1 Abbreviations used are: A - subject of transitive verb; COM - comitative; CONT - continuative; CP - Classificatory Particle (see Senft 1996); CSVC - Contiguous serial verb construction; Dir - Directional; excl. - exclusive; f - feminine; Fut - Future/Irrealis; Hab - habitual; MVC - Multi-verb constructions; NP - Nominal phrase; 0 - Object of transitive verb; OBJ - Object; PC - Paucal; Perf - Perfective; Pl/PL - Plural; R/real - Realis; RM - Remote; RED - Reduplication; S - Subject; SS - Same subject; SVC - Serial verb construction; Seq - Sequential; SG - Singular; SUBJ - Subject; TAM - Tense/Aspect/Mood; V - Verb.

The fourth series expresses the concept of a habitual action; however, it can also indicate optative or irrealis. This series is hardly ever used in ordinary everyday language production; if used it can be interpreted as an indicator of either poetic or humourous style.

The verb stem without these affixes is never used as a verb; however, some nouns can fit into the slot for the verb stem and together with the respective affixes then become verbs, for example:

| NOUN | VERB |
|----------------|---------------------|
| <i>paisewa</i> | <i>e-paisewa-si</i> |
| | 3.-work-PI |
| <i>work</i> | <i>they work</i> |

Thus, contrary to many other Austronesian languages (see for example Cablitz 2001:54ff., Mosel 2000, 2001 and the literature quoted there), the distinction of word classes in Kilivila is not a problem at all (for detailed descriptions see Senft 1986:29ff., 1993:88ff.).

In Kilivila verb serialisation takes place at the core layer only (see Foley and van Valin 1984:198ff., Foley and Olson 1985:33ff., Crowley 1987:40, Senft 2001).² We find the following three types of what are usually referred to in the literature as SVCs:

2.1 Same subject serialisation — type (NP) V (NP) V (NP) V... same TAM marking'

The following examples illustrate this type of SVCs:

- (1) *I-masisi-si-go i-vai-si i-simwe-si.*
 3.-sleep-PI-Emph 3.-marry-PI 3.-stay-PI
 'They sleep (together) indeed they marry they stay (together).'
- (2) *Ma-na-na vivila e-kāu hama*
 Dem-CP.female-Dem girl 3.-take hammer
e-katuvi paledi o tebeli e-kanukwenū.
 3.-smash plate Loc table 3.-lie
 'This girl takes a hammer she smashes a plate which lies on a table.'
 (elicited example).

My corpus of Kilivila data documents an utterance consisting of two SVCs with 11 independent verbs in series (however, note the clause boundary after the verb 'bivinakusi' indicated with a semicolon): The following utterance was produced by Tosulala when he described how a sail for a big 'mwasawa'-canoe is made out of pandanus leaves:

- (3) *Bi-meye-si bi-dededa-si bi-tata'isi*
 3.Fut-bring-PI 3.Fut-take.off.thorns-PI 3.Fut-cut-PI
- bi-meye-si bi-seli-si bi-tola-si bi-deda-si*
 3.Fut-bring-PI 3.Fut-put-PI 3.Fut-stand-PI 3.Fut-take.off.thoms-PI
- bi-deda-si bi-vinaku-si bi-le'i-si bi-la*
 3.Fut-take.off.thorns-PI 3.Fut-finish-PI 3.Fut-throw-PI 3.Fut-go

2 In Kilivila we find verbal expressions like '-biyagila-' (to draw, to move) which consists of the verbs '-bia-' (to pull out) and '-gila-' (to pluck). However, verbs like '-biyagila-' are compound verbs (see Senft 1986:29ff.)!

bi-kali ilu.

3.Fut-dry sun

'They will bring (it—the pandanus material) they will take off the thorns they will cut (it) they will bring (it) they will put (it) they will stand they will take off the thorns they will take off the thorns they will finish (it) —; they will throw (it) it will go it will dry (in) the sun.'

Finally, the following example illustrates the frequency in which SVCs are produced even in relatively simple genres of Kilivila. Kadawaya describes how grass-skirts are made:

- (4) *Baka-lo-sa baka-guli-sa doba. Ba-la*
 1.Fut excl-go-PI 1.Fut.excl-cut-PI doba-banana.leaves 1.Fut-go
- ba-guli doba baka-tupisi-si bi-vokwa Ba-meya*
 1.Fut-cut doba-banana.leaves 1.Fut.excl-tear-PI 3.Fut-finish 1.Fut-bring
- ba-duduni ba-gini bi-vokwa. Ba-tateya ba-vakali*
 LFut-defoliate LFut-mark 3.Fut-finish 1.Fut-scrape 1.Fut-dry
- bi-mnabu e ba-kudu ba-semwa va*
 3.Fut-be.dry and 1.Fut.tie.together 1.Fut-putaway Dir
- pweya bi-kanukwenu.*
 big.basket 3.Fut-lie.down

'We will go we will cut grass-skirt material. I will go I will cut grass-skirt material, we will tear (it) it will be finished. I will bring (it) I will defoliate (it) I will mark (it) it will be finished. I will scrape (it) I will dry (it) it will be dry and I will tie (it) together I will put (it) away to the big basket it will lie down (there).'³

2.2 Same subject serialisation — type (NP) V (NP) V (NP) V... different TAM marking

The following sentence produced by Tokunupei illustrates this type of SVCs. He is referring to the spirit woman Namsasela who is believed to live in the bush close to the village of Tauwema. In order to keep this spirit woman peaceful the villagers offer her food — which she may take at night:

- (5) *Ebogi e-meki bi-lupwali e-kapwagega bi-koma.*
 at.night 3.-come.to 3.Fut-swallow 3.-open.mouth 3.Fut-eat
 'At night she came to (this place) she would swallow (it) she opened her mouth she would eat (it).'

This example presents counter-evidence to one of the key-characteristics postulated for SVCs, namely 'the serial complex has shared tense, aspect, modality, and polarity' (Durie 1997:291). This key characteristic feature only holds for Kilivila with respect to polarity. In Kilivila speakers may use different TAM markers for serialised verbs to express their intentions more specifically. Thus, if speakers want to emphasise one component of intention by a SVC they produce one verb with subject prefixes that are neutral, i.e.

3 I will discuss the role of the verbs '-vinaku-' (see example (3)) and '-okwa-' (see example (4)) with respect to how events are reported in SVCs below.

unmarked with respect to tense, aspect and mood (subject prefix series 1) and the other verb with subject prefixes that express the concept of incomplete action that may happen in the future or may have happened in the past or may have been expected to happen in the past or that may be part of a hypothetical event (subject series 2).

If speakers want to express a past intention — that may remain unfulfilled — they produce the first verb in a SVC with a subject prefix of series 1 and the second verb with a subject prefix of series 2. Thus, in example (5) Tokunupei emphasises that Namsasela had the intention to swallow and eat the food, but that she did not necessarily do that every time she came to the village Tauwema.

The following sentence

- (6) *Ba-la a-bani yena.*
 1.Fut-go 1.-fish(with a hook) fish .
 'I will go angling.'

is a statement of intention with the emphasis on 'angling' as the action that is in the speaker's focus of attention. Here the first verb in the SVC is produced with a subject prefix of series 2 and the second verb is produced with a subject prefix of series 1.

We also find SVCs in which the first verb is produced with a subject prefix that expresses the concept of a completed action (subject prefix series 3) and the second verb is produced with a subject prefix of series 2 as in the following example:

- (7) *Laka-me-si baka-nukwali-si mokwita.*
 1.Past.excl-come-Pl 3.Fut-know-Pl right
 'We came to know (it) correctly.'

Here the emphasis is on the intention and on the processes necessary to know something correctly (see also Senft 1986:36ff.).

2.3 Switch subject serialisation — serial causative verbs

In this type 'there is identity not between the two subjects, but between the object of the first verb and the subject of the following verb' (Crowley 1987). The last two verbs in the following example produced by Bwema'utila illustrate this type (see Senft 1991:90):

- (8) *E bogwa igau-ga bi-guguya tomwaya*
 and already later-Emph. 3.Fut-educate old.man
avaka bi-lukwe-mi buku-lagisi.
 what 3.Fut-tell-you 2.Fut-hear.
 'And already soon the chief will educate you, he will tell you you will hear.'

This type of SVCs was also produced in the sentences (3) and (4) above:

- (3') ... *bi-le'i-si bi-la bi-kali lilu.*
 3.Fut-throw-Pl 3.Fut-go 3.Fut-dry sun
 '... they will throw (it) it will go it will dry (in) the sun.'
- (4') ... *Ba-tateya ba-vakali bi-mnabu ...*
 1.Fut-scrape 1.Fut-dry 3.Fut-be.dry
 '... I will scrape (it) I will dry (it) it will be dry...'

If we follow the terminology presented in the literature on SVCs in Austronesian languages so far, then we can classify the Kilivila SVCs as encompassing these three types mentioned above. However, ever since I have started researching SVCs in Kilivila and informing myself on these constructions in other — mainly in Austronesian and Papuan — languages, I have difficulties in looking at a number of at least to me different phenomena under one and the same heading: 'SVCs'. I have come to the conclusion — like many other researchers interested in the phenomenon — that Carol Lord is right with her summary of the state of the art with respect to SVCs: 'Defining serial verb constructions is a sticky business' (Lord 1993:1). But what can we do to overcome this situation? Together with Miriam van Staden and Alex Dukers I started in January 2000 a research project on 'Serial Verb Constructions, Event conceptualisation and Event Report in Austronesian and Papuan Languages'.⁴ In the framework of this project we first collected data on the topic with a general questionnaire distributed via the internet⁵ and with a specific questionnaire on East Nusantara languages developed by Miriam van Staden (for the third East Nusantara Conference, Leiden, 18-20 June 2001; see also van Staden and Reesink this volume). Together with our colleagues at the MPI and in cooperation with the Dutch Spinoza Programme 'Lexicon and Syntax' directed by Pieter Muysken we also developed a specific elicitation tool (called 'Staged Events'), and finally we have been doing two corpus studies on Tidore (a Papuan language spoken on Tidore Island in the North Moluccas) and on Kilivila. In the following two subsections I will first briefly describe what consequences the two questionnaires had, for our classification of various types of SVCs in Papuan and Austronesian languages. Then I will briefly present how and for what means and ends we developed the elicitation tool 'staged events'.

3 Types of serial verb constructions in Papuan and Austronesian languages: towards a new typology

In her paper 'Serial verb constructions in the languages of East Nusantara' presented at the Third East Nusantara Conference (van Staden 2001) and in our poster on 'Event report and serial verb constructions in Austronesian and Papuan languages' (van Staden and Senft 2001) presented at the evaluation of the MPI by its scientific council in the same year, Miriam van Staden summarised her analyses of the above mentioned questionnaires and her first results on what types of SVCs we find in the languages in focus. In what follows I heavily draw on these two presentations (see also van Staden and Resink this volume).

However, before I briefly summarise van Staden's arguments, I have to make a few remarks on the concept of 'eventhood'. As I have pointed out elsewhere (Senft 2004), one of the few characteristics of SVCs that seem to be accepted by all linguists researching the phenomenon is that 'a single serial verb complex describes what is conceptualised as a single event' (Durie 1997:291 — but see below!). The notion 'event' was in the focus of a project on 'event representation' at our MPI for Psycholinguistics. Jürgen Bohnemeyer (1999; see also Senft and Smits 2000:102ff.) has been working intensively on the clarification of this topic. He differentiates linguistic representations of events, mental representations of events, and events in the 'real world'. He writes (Bohnemeyer 1999:5):

4 This project — i.e., Miriam van Staden's post-doc research position and Alex Duker's student assistant position — was supported by the German Research Society (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft SE 473/3-1) and by the Max-Planck-Institute for Psycholinguistics.

5 See: <http://www.mpi.nl/world/serial-verb/quest/1st-quest.html>

Real world events only matter [in this approach — G.S.] as an *intensional correlate* of linguistic and cognitive representations of events. That is to say, it is assumed here that linguistic event representations and cognitive event representations are both *representations* of events in the 'real world'. This assumption does not entail a commitment to the *existence* of events in the physical world, nor does it entail a commitment to a particular understanding of what the properties of such events are, and neither does it entail a commitment to a particular view of what the relationship between properties of real-world events and properties of their mental or linguistic representations are like. It merely means to suppose that linguistic and cognitive representations of events behave *as if* such events existed in the 'real world', and *as if* they *had* certain properties, and it is this *behaviour* of cognitive and linguistic event representations that the project sets out to study.

In this view an event or the construal of an event 'is seen as the treatment of a portion out of the continuum of experience and perception as if it were an entity' — as van Staden and Reesink (this volume) point out, too. Bohnemeyer now summarises his point of departure to research the linguistic encoding of event complexity as follows (Bohнемeyer and Caelen 2001:168):

The guiding assumptions are that an event expression is complex to the extent that it entails multiple *subevents* (provided these can be coded in the language in question), and that the subevents entailed by an event expression constitute a *macro-event* to the extent that they together behave like one primitive event representation in the language at stake. The degree to which the subevents of a semantically complex event expression are *integrated as parts* of an overall macro-event is hypothesised to depend on the semantic relations entailed or implicated by the complex event expression to obtain among the subevents.

Thus, Bohнемeyer's concept of a macro-event is a purely semantic concept that cannot be linked to a specific linguistic predicate. It is a portion out of the continuum of experience and perception that can be encoded by a language-particular event expression which semantically behaves like a simple event expression in certain respects: for example, it combines with time adverbials that locate all parts of the event in time together. The macro-event is uniquely bounded in time. The parts of a macro-event are called 'subevents'. Macro-event expressions may entail multiple subevents of particular kinds. For instance, 'X killed Y' entails that 'Y died' and that 'X did something that caused Y's death' (Bohнемeyer pers. comm., see also Bohнемeyer and Caelen 2001).

Van Staden's research towards a typology of SVCs takes up these notions of 'subevent' and 'macro-event'. She distinguishes two basic functions of SVCs and four basic morphosyntactic types. The two basic functions are based on cognitive semantic concepts. On the poster on 'Event Report and Serial Verb Constructions in Austronesian and Papuan Languages' (van Staden and Senft 2001), van Staden defines the functions and the morphosyntactic types as follows (for a more detailed description see van Staden 2001, van Staden and Reesink this volume):

- The *narrative Junction* of SVCs consists in the linkage of *macro-events* to compose larger event complexes. Narrative serialisation presents a series of events in a fixed or semi-fixed script. Time and place are not necessarily the same for all verbs, and it may be found that verbs can be modified independently.
- The *component Junction* of SVCs consists in the linkage of subevents to compose macro-events. That is to say, all verbs express a component of

- a single macro-event. Typically verbs expressing 'path', 'manner', and 'direction' are found in this type of serialisation.

Van Staden distinguishes the following four basic morphosyntactic types:

- *Complex verb serialisation*. This type is closest to compounding. Two or more verbs behave like a single word: typically, all prefixes attach to the first verb, suffixes to the second.
- *Independent serialisation*. This type is closest to co-ordination; all verbs are fully inflected.
- *Co-dependent (shared argument) serialisation*. In this type two verbs share one or more arguments.
- *Dependent serialisation*. In this type only one of the verbs carries all the inflections, the others are given in their 'bare' form or in a stripped-down form. This type is close to subordination or adverbial constructions.

Van Staden combines the two basic functions of SVCs with these four morphosyntactic types. This combination results in the following eight logical possibilities:

1. *Narrative complex verb serialisation*, as in the Papuan language Yimas (Foley 1991: 337). For example:

(9) *pu-kay-yakal caŋ-tantaw-malakmalak-kia-ntuk-ŋkt*
 3PL O-IPL A-CONT-COM-sit(RED: taw-)-talk(RED: malak-)
 -NIGHT-RM PAST-PC
 'We few were sitting down conversing with them.'
2. *Component complex verb serialisation*, as in the Austronesian language Kokota (Palmer, MPI questionnaire). For example:

(10) *Manei n-e fufunu ioka kave-i ia gazu.*
 he RL-3SUBJ begin chop descend-3SGOBJ theSG wood
 'He started chopping down the tree.'
3. *Narrative independent serialisation*, as in the Austronesian language Kilivila (Senft 2004:50). For example:

(11) *Bala bakakaya baka 'ita basisu bapaisewa batai waga kevalu.*
ba-la ba-kakaya ba-ka'ita ba-sisu ba-paisewa
 1.Fut-go 1.Fut-bath 1.Fut-return 1.Fut-be 1.Fut-work
 'I will go I will have a bath I will come back I will stay (in the village) I will work.'
4. *Component independent serialisation*, as in the Papuan language Tidore (van Staden, MPI questionnaire). For example:

(12) *mina mo-sari mo-reke*
 3f 3f.a-look.for 3f.a-cry
 'She is about to start crying.'

6 As Jürgen Bohnemeyer (pers. comm.) pointed out, this type requires a partially merged argument structure, i.e., at least one argument to which participants of multiple verbs are linked can be overtly realised only once.

5. *Narrative co-dependent serialisation*: so far we have not found SVCs of this logically possible type!

6. *Component co-dependent serialisation*, as in the Austronesian language Pileni (Naess, MPI questionnaire). For example:

- (13) *Ko ko teia nohine-aku ko mate.*
 2du TA kill wife-1sposs TA die
 'You killed my wife and she died.'

7. *Narrative dependent serialisation*, as in the Papuan language Kalam (Pawley 1993: 114). For example:

- (14) ... *sblam mgan kn-l kmn pak d*
 cordyline enclosure sleep-SS PRIOR game kill carry
ap ad ñb-l ap-elgp-al.
 come bake eat-SS PRIOR come-PAST HABITUAL-3PL
 'Having slept in the cordyline enclosures, they used to bring the game they killed to cook and eat there.'

8. *Component dependent serialisation*, as in the Papuan language Amele (Roberts, MPI questionnaire). For example:

- (15) *Ija dona eu l-i guluc-ad-ig-en.*
 1SG man that go-PRED meet-3PL.U-1SG.A-FUT
 'I will go and meet those men.'

Van Staden (see also van Staden and Reesink this volume) summarises the gist of this differentiation as follows:

Component serialisation may be described as 'a number of subevents expressing a single macro-event', while narrative serialisation is 'a fixed scenario in which all subparts which are in themselves macro-events, receive expression.

We will use these types of serialisation as the basis for our language specific analyses. However, our project on SVCs is comparatively oriented as well; thus we will use these types for this research, too. As far as I know there are no data available so far on how different languages with (or without) SVCs report one and the same event. Therefore it was impossible to describe the differences between these event reports from a comparative linguistic point of view. To overcome this situation, we designed an elicitation tool 'to collect descriptions of complex events in order to examine how these are segmented into macro-events, what kind of information is expressed, and how the information is ordered in the descriptions' (van Staden et al. 2001:115). In the next section I will briefly describe this elicitation tool.

4 Staged events — a tool for the elicitation of event reports

To collect these just mentioned 'descriptions of complex events' we devised a method for data elicitation that combines interests in SVCs, in event typicality, and in event complexity. The tool consists of two tasks (see van Staden et al. 2001):

1. a description and recollection task, designed to elicit elaborate descriptions of complex events for the description task and concise equivalents for the recollection task;
2. a re-enactment task of some of the scenes on the basis of descriptions given in task 1.

Task 1 consists of two sets of video-clips and stills (on DV tape and digitised on a CD). Set 1, a subset of Set 2, consists of 53 clips and 53 stills. Set 2 consists of 86 clips and 86 stills. The video clips depict various scenes with human actors and recognisable objects (for example, an actor fetches an axe and chops wood, an actor bumps into another actor who drops a plate which breaks, an actor plays guitar over his head, scenes from a football (soccer) game, etc.). The clips are arranged in a specific order. Every seven or eight video-clips for the description task are followed by seven or eight corresponding stills for the recollection task. These stills were carefully selected by Alex Dukers from the video-clips. Every still depicts a crucial moment in the event staged in the clip from which it was chosen.

The researcher elicits these data with two consultants, one acts as the addressee who has not seen the clips and stills before, and one acts as the describer who first describes the clips and then the stills. The researcher makes the addressee ask 'what happened?' (using a language/culture appropriate phrasing that focuses on the action) and the describer knows that her or his description must be such that the addressee knows what happened. After seven or eight video-clips the researcher presents the stills to the describer and asks him or her to describe from memory which scene the picture belongs to, using the appropriate equivalent of the question 'which clip was this?'

The task is run on a laptop or on a DV-camera. A minimum of 6 pairs of consultants is recommended. It takes about 40 minutes per consultant to run set 1 and at least 60 minutes per consultant to run set 2. The elicitation session should be video-recorded.

The re-enactment task aims to test whether the information contained in the descriptions yielded by the first task is sufficient for a hearer to re-enact the scene correctly, but it is also designed to check which parts of a complex scenario are left to inferences based on 'stereotypicality' of events (for instance, if a scene is described as 'a man throws an apple to a woman' does this imply that the apple is caught by the woman?). This second task requires that the researcher selects one representative description from the data collected during the first task for 14 scenes depicted in the video-clips there. Moreover, the researcher needs some objects (a shawl or cloth, a fruit, a guitar, a chair, a table, a ball) that are necessary to act out the described scenes. The researcher either plays the tape recorded description or reads it out himself to a pair of consultants that are asked to re-enact what they have just heard in this description. Not all scenes require two actors. Then the actors themselves may decide who is the actor. When two actors are required, they may decide for themselves who acts which part.

For this task a minimum of 6 pairs of consultants is recommended, and it takes about 30 minutes plus optional discussion time. Again, the elicitation session should be video-recorded.

This elicitation tool should provide data for answering the following research questions on SVCs:

- How are events encoded in the respective languages of our language sample?

- How are the formal structures of SVCs related to the types of events and situations they encode?
- Which kinds of verbs constitute the SVCs, how freely are these components combinable and how productive are the SVCs?
- Can one and the same event be described by SVCs that show different ordering of the verbal components? And if so, what are the pragmatic and semantic consequences?
- How does the semantics of the SVCs as a whole influence the order of the construction components and can lexicalisation processes be observed here?
- Are there any language- and/or culture-specific rules for the combination of the verbs in such constructions?

However, in our project we also look at natural data from text corpora which encompass a broad variety of text genres in addition to the data elicited through the staged events tasks. As a basis for exploring the role of fixed scenarios for the description of complex events in these natural data we have selected two longer scenes (the 'waking up scene' and the 'rice cooking scene') from the staged events clips for closer analysis. Moreover, some of the shorter scenes that were acted out in a controlled setting (like the event typicality clips) in which there may or may not be a change in agency, should enable us to take a closer look at this variable that is often relevant the analysis of SVCs.

Finally, assuming that most people will be familiar with football (soccer) in reality, we want to use the clips depicting scenes selected from a football match (that are hopefully 'natural' events for our consultants to describe) to research the role of different cause-effect (ball being caught vs. not being caught by goal keeper), increasing path complexity, different manners of motion, and different kinds of transfer for SVCs.

For detailed information on this elicitation tool I refer the interested reader to van Staden et al. (2001). We hope that our approach will be of interest for other researchers as well. We will try to build up a data base on SVCs and event reports at the MPI with data collected with the elicitation tool described above. We hope that many colleagues will contribute to this data base to enable further comparative research on the phenomena.⁷ I am convinced that only such kind of research will enable us to show that researching SVCs need not be the 'sticky business' as Lord (1993:1) has referred to it. In what follows I will present first analyses of my Kilivila data collected with this elicitation tool and their consequences for my classification of SVCs in this language.

5 Serial verb constructions in Kilivila

On the basis of first analyses of data on SVCs in my text corpora, on the basis of the data collected with the 'staged events' elicitation tool, and on the basis of the types of SVCs defined by van Staden (2001; see also van Staden and Reesink this volume) I can classify these constructions for Kilivila as follows:

We find the following three types of verb serialisation in Kilivila:

⁷ Interested colleagues should contact me to get copies of the research tool and its description (van Staden et al. 2001) in our 2001 field manual.

- Narrative independent serialisation.

In this type of serialisation a series of macro-events are linked and presented in a (semi-) fixed script, time and place are not necessarily the same for all verbs, verbs can be modified independently, and all verbs are fully inflected.

In the data elicited with the 'staged events' Namnabai describes still No.28 with the following two verbal expressions (Baldwin's 'tandem verbs') in narrative independent serialisation:

- (16) *E m-to-si-na tauwau e-tota-si e-bigatona-si.*
 and Dem-CP.man-PI-Dem men 3.-stand-PI 3.-talk-PI
 'And these men they stand they talk.'

- Component independent serialisation.

In this type of serialisation subevents are linked, all verbs express components of a single macro-event, and all verbs are fully inflected.

In the data elicited with the 'staged events' Moyadi describes still No.8 with the following *Jive verbs in component independent serialisation*:

- (17) *Ma-ke-na turaki e-sakaula e-la e-katukwevivila*
 Dem-CP.wood-Dem truck 3.-run 3.-go 3.-turn.round
e-ma i-kota beya.
 3.-come 3.-arrive here
 'This truck it runs it goes it turns it comes it arrives here.'

- Component co-dependent serialisation.

In this type sub-events are linked, the verbs express a component of a single macro-event and the object of the first verb is the subject of the second.

This type represents that kind of serialisation (that is also called 'serial causative verbs' or 'switch subject serialisation') is rather rare. I could not elicit it with the 'staged events'; however, in my overall corpus of Kilivila speech data I have a few examples like the one presented in example (8) above (the essential part of which I repeat here as (8')):

- (8') ... *avaka bi-lukwe-mi buku-lagisi.*
 what 3.Fut-tell-you 2.Fut-hear.
 '... what he will tell you you will hear.'

To describe the 'staged events' Kilivila speakers usually produce descriptions that contain both narrative and component independent serialisation — as illustrated by the following example produced by Pulia in his description of video-clip 130 (please note that commata indicate clause boundaries):

- (18) *M-to-na tomwota e-masisi e-okwa, e-mamata*
 Dem-CP.male-Dem person 3.-sleep 3.-finish 3.-wake.up .
e-mtumtu mata-la e-okwa, e-weyola e-okwa,
 3.-rub eye-3.Poss.Pro.IV 3.-finish 3.-stretch 3.-finish
e-tokeva e-lola e-la e-loki ma-kwela-na
 3.-stand.up 3.-walk 3.-go 3.-go.and arrive Dem-CP.potlike-Dem

baketi, e-kau e-kemali e-meya e-ta'ili e-la
 bucket 3.-take 3.-take.along 3.-bring 3.-fill.in 3.-go

va disu, e-kivisi e-okwa, e-tokeva e-tauwela e-okwa,
 Dir dish 3.-wash.face 3.-finish 3.-stand up 3.-towel 3.-finish

e-kau-vau ma-ke-na disu, e-la e-katusau sopi.
 3.-take-again Dem-CP.wooden-Dem dish 3.-go 3.-pour.out water

'This person sleeps it is over, he wakes up and he rubs his eyes it is over, he stretches it is over, he stands up he walks he goes he arrives at this bucket, he takes it he takes it along he brings it he fills it in he goes to the dish, he washes his face it is over, he stands up and he towels (himself) it is over, he takes again this dish, he goes and he pours out the water.'

In this description of the 'staged events' episode we find the following types of serialisation (verbs that occur once in a series of narrative and component independent serialisation or in the combination of SVCs are underlined):

| | |
|--|---|
| emasisi eokwa he sleeps it is over | component independent serialisation |
| emamata <u>emtu</u> he wakes up he rubs | narrative independent serialisation (combined with) |
| <u>emtu</u> matala eokwa he rubs his eyes it is over | component independent serialisation |
| eweyola eokwa he stretches it is over | component independent serialisation |
| etokeva <u>elola</u> he stands up he walks | narrative independent serialisation (combined with) |
| <u>elola</u> ela eloki he walks he goes he goes and arrives | component independent serialisation |
| ekau <u>ekemali</u> he takes he takes along he brings | component independent serialisation (combined with) |
| <u>ekemali</u> emeya (he takes along) he brings he fills in | narrative independent serialisation (combined with) |
| <u>emeya</u> eta'ili (he brings) he fills in | narrative independent serialisation (combined with) |
| <u>eta'ili</u> ela (he fills in) he goes | component independent serialisation |
| ekivisi eokwa he washes his face it is over | component independent serialisation |
| etokeva <u>etauwela</u> he stands up he towels himself | narrative independent serialisation (combined with) |
| <u>etauwela</u> eokwa he towels himself it is over | component independent serialisation |
| ela ekatusau he goes he pours out | narrative independent serialisation |

This example nicely illustrates how speakers of Kilivila mark and segment complex episodes and events: they either produce the verb **'-okwa-**' (to be finished, to be over) — like Pulia does here — or the verb **'-vinaku-**' (to finish) — as illustrated in example (3) in §2 above.⁸ These verbs function as indicators which show that the events before such a respective verb are conceptualised as being separate from the event or the events following them. They make explicit that the speaker does not want to link these events directly.

After the production of such verbs speakers emphasise their segmenting function with a very short pause. This explains why the following verbs in series **'eokwa eweyola eokwa'** and **'ekivisi eokwa etokeva etauwela eokwa ekauvau'** cannot be analysed as SVCs consisting of three and six verbs. The first utterance consists of the verb **'eokwa'** and an SVC consisting of the verbs **'eweyola eokwa'**. The second utterance consists of two SVCs and the additional verb **'ekauvau'**; the first of the two SVCs consists of the verbs **'ekivisi eokwa'** and the second one consists of the verbs **'etokeva etauwela eokwa'**

The verb series that include the verb **'-okwa-**' in the 'staged event' description above also reveals another interesting fact that can be observed with respect to verb serialisation in Kilivila. The attentive reader will have noticed that despite the same person (and —• in this case — also the same TAM) marker the subject of the verb **'eokwa'** is neutral — as indicated by translating the third person marker with **'it'** — and thus differs from the subject of the preceding verb (or from the subjects of the preceding serialised verbs respectively). Nevertheless, I take this verb as being part of, and being incorporated in, an SVC, because it marks the end of the event or the events reported in the verb or in the SVC preceding it.

However, this is not the only case in Kilivila where we observe SVCs consisting of verbs with different subjects in series, as the following examples illustrate:

- (19) *Vivila e-yosi paledi e tau e-sunapula e-va e-bumpi,*
 girl 3.-hold plate and man 3.-appear 3.-go.to 3.-bump.into
e-kapusi e-la, gala e-katuvu.
 3.-fall 3.-go not 3.-break
 'A girl holds a plate and a man appears goes (to and) bumps (into her),
 it falls it goes (down), it does not break.'

In this example (produced by Pulia to describe still No.42) the third person markers of the verbs **'esunapula e-va ebumpi'** refer to **'tau'** (the man) but the third person markers of the verbs **'ekapusi ela'** refer to **'paledi'** (the plate). However, this utterance consists of three clauses. The first clause consists of the SVC **'esunapula e-va ebumpi'**, the second clause consists of the SVC **'ekapusi ela'** and the third clause consists of **'gala ekatuvu'**. Thus, here the different person markers in the two SVCs are differentiated by a clause boundary. The same holds for the following example (produced by Namnabai in her description of video-clip 47):

- (20) *M-to-na tau e-kau ma-ke-na regisa,*
 Dem-CP.male-Dem man 3.-take Dem-CP.wooden-Dem axe
e-kau bwa-ta kai e-sela e-tatai,
 3.-take CP.wooden-one wood 3.put.down 3.-cut

8 See also example (4) and footnote 3 above.

e-debwali-si e-mwemwe-si o tinava.

3.-fall-Pl 3.-go.to-Pl Loc ground

'This man he takes this axe, he takes one piece of wood he puts it down he cuts it, they fall down they go to the ground.'

Here the third person markers of the verbs 'esela etatai' refer to 'tau' (the man) and the third person markers of the verbs 'edebwalisi emwemwesi' refer to 'kai' (the (cut off pieces of) wood). Again, there is a clause boundary (indicated by a very brief pause) that differentiates the first SVC from the second SVC (the verbs of which also differ with respect to number from the verbs in the first SVC).

Another interesting result of my elicitation of SVCs with the 'staged events' emerged in my discussions of these constructions with my consultants on the Trobriands. It turned out that they explicitly differentiate verb serialisations with facultative NPs realised between verbs from SVCs in which the verbs are produced in contiguous succession. They had no difficulties to accept that constructions like the utterance presented as example (2) in §2 above (repeated here as (2')) consist of more than one verb:

(2') *Ma-na-na vivila e-kau hama*
Dem-CP.female-Dem girl 3.-take hammer

e-katuvi paledi o tebeli e-kanukwenu.

3.-smash plate Loc table 3.-lie

'This girl takes a hammer she smashes a plate which lies on a table.'

However, they emphasised that such a construction is absolutely different ('**sena ituali mokwita**' — 'very different really') from constructions like the one presented as example (1) in §2 above (repeated here as (1')):

(1') *I-masisi-si-go i-vai-si i-simwe-si.*
3.-sleep-Pl-Emph 3.-marry-Pl 3.-stay-Pl

'They sleep (together) indeed they marry they stay (together).'

This is also true for the following two constructions which we find in example (18) above (repeated here as (18') and (18'')):

(18') ... *e-masisi e-okwa* ...
3-sleep 3.-finish

(18'') ... *e-mtumtu mata-la e-okwa*
3.-rub eye-3.Poss.Pro.rV 3.-finish

(18') is a SVC consisting of two contiguous verbs. (18'') consists of the verb '**emtumtu**', the noun-phrase '**matala**' as the object of this verb, and the verb '**eokwa**'. Therefore, I will only refer to constructions like those illustrated with example (2') and (18'') as SVCs and differentiate them from constructions like those illustrated with example (1') and (18'). I refer to these constructions as 'contiguous serial verb constructions' (CSVCs).

These analyses and observations have their consequences for my understanding of SVCs in Kilivila. On the way towards a comprehensive definition of SVCs in Kilivila I would like to propose the following preliminary definition of this interesting linguistic phenomenon:

Kilivila is a language with multi-verb constructions (MVCs). These MVCs are differentiated into SVCs and CSVCs. Verbs constituting CSVCs have to be contiguous.

We find three types of verb serialisation: narrative independent serialisation, component independent serialisation and, though rather rarely, component co-dependent (on switch subject) serialisation. Verbs constituting MVCs have shared polarity, but they need not have shared tense, aspect and modality, and they need not all refer to the same subject, either. MVCs are produced under a single intonation contour without internal pauses.⁹ MVCs are used not only to describe what is conceptualised as a single event but also what, is conceptualised as a complex event which may consist of both macro- and subevents.

I am aware of the fact that this preliminary definition deviates from other attempts towards a definition of these fascinating constructions. However, further research is needed to falsify or verify this approach to MVCs in Kilivila.¹⁰

The final point of the (preliminary) definition presented above refers to the conceptualisation of events. This is probably one of the most fascinating aspects in researching these constructions from a cognitive linguistic point of view; however, it is also probably the most problematic feature of this research. In what follows I will briefly sketch how I would like to deal with this extremely interesting and difficult issue.

6 Event report and event conceptualisation in Kilivila — towards a new approach to research an old phenomenon

Research on MVCs started when German and English speaking linguists realised that contrary to their own language which (generally) encodes a single (action or) event with just one verb, other languages encode such events with two or more verbs (see Senft 2001:4ff.). I assume that linguists today still agree with the observation that 'events are segmented with finer granularity in serialising languages than they are in non-serialising languages' (Ameka and Essegbey in press:11). The 'staged events' provide us with an elicitation tool that makes it possible to really compare the descriptions of the very same

9 This important aspect for this definition is so far only impressionistic. It asks for sound and thorough phonetic analyses. I have not done any such analyses — though I am aware that this is an important shortcoming in the linguistic research of MVCs in general.

10 An anonymous referee made the following very interesting comment here:

[G]iven the difficulty to analyse narrative (so-called) 'serialisation' along the lines of other more canonical types of serialisation and given that they have properties that often contradict the criteria usually accepted for serialisation ..., wouldn't it be better to find another name than serialisation for this narrative type? All the more so as, (as Pawley points out) it is not so much verbs as complex verb phrases which are 'serialised'. This also goes for some of the other papers in the volume ...

...[I]nstead of remaining at the level of the form (serialised, contiguous or not), several types of linkages (coordination or possibly something else) might be compared in narrative sequences: at the nuclear level (possibly right asyndetic coordinate nuclei - CSVCs) or at VP level (looser asyndetic coordinate VPs - SVCs) for instance.

And then some of the properties of these narrative sequence of VPs (different times and places, independent modification and so on ...) would not contradict some of the traditional criteria of 'serial verbs', because they do not seem to be 'serial verbs', but something else.

This of course has to be debated, but the danger of putting so many different types of constructions (such as what is described here as 'component' or 'narrative' serialisation) under the same catch-word 'serialisation' creates a situation where none of the criteria which normally help define the 'standard' construction hold any longer, but possibly because they are something else and should be given a different label. Why not analyse these data by the relevant type and level of syntactic linkage for instance?

I will definitely take up this very constructive proposal in my further research.

scenarios produced by speakers of various languages with and without MVCs. Thus we can empirically test this observation and see whether languages with MVCs really segment events with finer granularity than languages without these constructions, and if so, how and where they do this.

In September 2001 René Schiering, a student from the University of Cologne stayed with us at the MPI for a month as a trainee. He collected for us data with the 'staged events' tool that were produced by three German and three English native speakers (see Schiering 2001). In what follows I will use these data to compare Kilivila event descriptions with English event descriptions.

Let us first have a look at how an English native speaker describes the complex video clip No.130 and compare it with the Kilivila description given in example (18) above. One of the three English speakers produced the following event report for this 1 minute and 43 seconds long clip:¹¹

- (21) You had a young man lying on a mat, in the woods, eh ehm sleeping on a mat, he eh wakes up, stretches, stands up, carries a plastic basin over to a bucket that is filled with hot water, as we see later, he pours the water into the basin, ehm carries it back to a block, he puts the basin on top of the block, eh washes his face, dries his face with a towel and then empties the basin onto the lawn.

Table 1 lists the events that are reported in the English (21) description, and Table 2 lists the events reported in the Kilivila (18) description presented in §5 above.

Table 1: Events reported in English with respect to 'staged events' clip 130

| MACRO-EVENT | . Subevent(s) | V / C S V C / S V C (+) |
|--------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| (1) S.O. LYING ON S.TH. | | V (present participle) |
| (2) SLEEPING | | V (present participle) |
| (3) WAKE UP | | V + satellite |
| (4) STRETCHES | | V |
| (5) STAND UP | | V + satellite |
| (6) CARRY S.TH. OVER | | V + satellite |
| (7) STH. IS FILLED WITH S.TH. | | V |
| (8) POUR WATER IN S.TH. | | V + satellite |
| (9) CARRY S.TH. BACK TO S.TH. | | V + satellite + Loc. |
| (10) PUT S.TH. ON TOP OF S.TH. | | V + satellite + Loc |
| (11) WASHES S.TH. | | V |
| (12) DRIES S.TH. WITH S.TH. | | V + Instr. |
| (13) EMPTIES S.TH. | | V |

11 This is not the most elaborate description. Compare the following one (video clip No.130): 'Well,... there is a fellow eh lying down outside on a mat of some kind, looks like he was sleeping at the start, there are also in the frame, there is a concrete block with a plastic wash basin on top of it, and then hanging in the tree nearby is also a towel, eh he wakes up, it looks like, and sits up, stretches, scratches his head, and then eh walks over, gets up and walks over and picks up the wash basin, walks offscreen to ehm a bucket, hm we follow him to the bucket, and pours the bucket of water into the wash basin, that looks like it is warm or hot, because there is steam rising from it, walks back to the concrete block, puts the wash basin down, then eh washes his hands and his face, eh takes the towel from the tree behind him, dries his face, then he picks up the wash basin and... throws the water away and then walks offscreen'.

Table 2: Events reported in Kilivila with respect to 'staged events' clip 130

| MACRO-EVENT | Subevent(s) | V/CSVC/SVC(+) |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| (1) S.O. SLEEPING | sleeping sleeping finish | CSVC |
| (2) WAKE UP | | V (linked with) |
| (3) RUB S.TH. | rub s.th. rub s.th. finish | SVC |
| (4) STRETCH . | Stretch stretch finish | CSVC |
| (5) STAND UP | | V (linked with) |
| (6) MOTION FROM A TO B | walk go go and arrive | CSVC |
| (7) TAKE | take take along | CSVC (linked with) |
| (8) BRING | | V (linked with) |
| (9) FILL IN | | V.....(linked with) |
| (10) MOTION TO A | go | V |
| (11) WASHING S.TH. | wash wash finish | CSVC |
| (12) STAND UP | | V (linked with) |
| (13) TOWEL | towel towel finish | CSVC |
| (14) TAKE S.TH. | | V |
| (15) MOTION | | V (linked with) |
| (16) POUR S.TH. OUT | | V |

Please note that these tables represent a very first approach to the problem of classifying events — therefore I am absolutely aware of the fact that they may grossly oversimplify the phenomena.¹² Further research may (and certainly will) lead to finer analyses — however, at the moment I just want to sketch the directions it should take.

Tables 1 and 2 show the following: The English description, on the one hand, reports 13 macro-events that are not further differentiated into subevents. The Kilivila description, on the other hand, reports 16 macro-events, six of which are differentiated as consisting of two subevents (Nos.1, 3, 4, 7, 11, 13) and one of which is differentiated as consisting of three subevents (No.6). This last mentioned macro-event reports a 'motion event'. Of the six macro-events that are differentiated as consisting of two subevents, one reports a 'take event' (No.7), and five report the actual action and its respective end of various other macro events (Nos.1, 3, 4, 11, 13). Thus, we can observe that with respect to the reported macro-events it is not the case that Kilivila — a language with CSVCs and SVCs — segments all the reported events 'with finer granularity' than English" does it. It is only some macro-events that get further differentiated in Kilivila and that are reported with this 'somewhat finer granularity'. However, it is absolutely stunning to see that in this description the verbs, CSVCs and SVCs link macro-events in six cases (2. and 3. V and

¹² This further research has to answer questions like the following: Do satellites express subevents? .

SVC; 5. and 6. V and CSV; 7. and 8. and 9. and 10. CSV and V and V and V; 12. and 13. V and CSV; 15. and 16. V and V). Here SVCs are constituted that link more than just one event: SVCs in Kilivila do more than only describing what is conceptualised as a single event — they can also describe and link a series of single macro-events (that are probably conceptualised as a more complex part of an episode).

Let us have a look at another example of a description of a 'staged event' episode in Kilivila and in English. The following transcription (22) presents Moyadi's description in Kilivila of the scenario presented in the 1 minute and 15 seconds long video-clip No.62 of the 'staged events':

- (22) *M-to-na tau e-kau la nepa,*
 Dem-CP.male-Dem man 3.-take 3.Poss.Pro.III bush-knife
e-la e-viviya kai e-okwa, e-ke'imali e-meyaki
 3.-go 3.-chop wood 3.-finish 3.-take.along 3.-bring
ma-na-na vivila, e-visilaki ma-kova-na kova,
 Dem-CP.female-Dem girl 3.-push.into Dem-CP.fire-Dem fire
e-sulu ma-kwela-na kwena, bogwa e-menu,
 3.-cook Dem-potlike-Dem pot already 3.-be.cooked
e-vanapula-ga Gunter. E-vanapula-ga Gunter, e-lola
 3.-appear-Emph Gunter 3.-appear-Emph Gunter 3.-walk
e-va i-siwa, e-yeya ke-yu paledi,
 3.-go.to 3.-stay 3.-serve CP.wooden-two plates
ke-tala e-seki m-to-na tau, ke-tala
 CP.wooden-one 3.-give Dem-CPmale-Dem man CP.wooden-one
e-seki Gunter, e-kamkwam-si.
 3.-give Gunter 3.-eat-Pl.

'This man he takes his bush-knife, he goes he chops wood it is over, he takes along he brings it to this girl, he pushes it into this fire, she cooks (something in) this pot — already it is cooked, Gunter appears. Gunter appears, he walks he goes he stays, she serves two plates (of food), she gives one to this man, and one she gives to Gunter, they eat'

The following transcription (23) presents an English native speaker's description of this same scenario:

- (23) The scene starts with a young man eh chopping wood with an axe, he changes his mind, takes a machete and cuts then a couple of pieces of wood, collects the little pieces, carries them over to the woman who is stirring the soup over the fire, ehm puts it next to the, not that he adds it to the fire, but he puts the the wood next to her, she is in the process of tasting the soup, Gunter arrives and sits down, the young man goes and sits next to him, the woman serves them two bowls of soup, puts the lid back on the ...the pot of soup and waits for their ehm appreciation, but doesn't have a bowl of soup herself.

Table 3 and Table 4 list again the events reported in Kilivila and in English

Table 3: Events reported in Kilivila with respect to 'staged events' clip 62

| MACRO-EVENT | Subevent(s) | V/CSVC/SVC(+) |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| (1) S.O. TAKES S.TH. | | V (linked with) |
| (2) GOES | | V (linked with) |
| (3) CHOPS S.TH. | chop chop finish | SVC |
| (4) TAKES ALONG | | V (linked with) |
| (5) BRING | | V |
| (6) PUSHES S.TH. INTO S.TH. | | V + Loc |
| (7) S.O. COOKS | | V |
| (8) S.TH. IS COOKED | | V |
| (9) S.O. APPEARS | | V |
| (10) S.O. APPEARS | | V (linked with) |
| (11) MOTION | walk go to stay | CSVC |
| (12) S.O. SERVES S.TH. | | V |
| (13) S.O. GIVES S.TH. TO S.O.. | | V |
| (14) S.O. GIVES S.TH. TO S.O. | | V |
| (15) S.O. EATS | | V |

Table 4: Events reported in English with respect to 'staged events' clip 62

| MACRO-EVENT | Subevent(s) | V/CSVC/SVC (+) |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| (1) STH. STARTS | | V |
| (2) S.O. CHOPPING S.TH. | | V |
| (3) S.O. CHANGES S.TH. | | V |
| (4) S.O. TAKES S.TH. | | V |
| (5) S.O. CUTS S.TH. | | V |
| (6) S.O. COLLECTS S.TH. | | V |
| (7) S.O. CARRIES S.TH. OVER TO S.O. | | V+ satellite + Loc |
| (8) S.O. STIRS S.TH. OVER S.TH. | | V + Loc |
| (9) S.O. PUTS S.TH. TO | | V + Loc. |
| (10) S.O. DOES NOT ADD S.TH. | | V |
| (11) S.O. PUTS S.TH. TO | | V + Loc. |
| (12) S.O. TASTES S.TH. | be in the process of taste | V (present participle) |
| (13) S.O. ARRIVES | | V |
| (14) S.O. SITS | | V |
| (15) S.O. GOES | | V |
| (16) S.O. SITS | | V |
| (17) S.O. SERVES S.TH. | | V |
| (18) S.O. PUTS S.TH. | | V |
| (19) S.O. WAITS FOR S.TH | | V |
| (20) S.O. DOES NOT HAVE S.TH. | | V |

These two tables show the following: The English description reports 20 macro-events one of which is differentiated into two subevents. The Kilivila description reports 15 macro-events, two of which are differentiated as consisting of two and three subevents. One of them reports an action and its end (No.3), the other one reports a 'motion event' (No.11). In the Kilivila event report verbs, CSVs and SVCs link macro events in three cases (1. and 2. and 3., V and V and SVC; 4. and 5., V and V; 10. and 11., V and CSV; note also the tail-head linkage between macro-event 9. and 10.). Here the English event report is even 'finer' with respect to its granularity than the Kilivila report. And again we see that only some macro-events in Kilivila are differentiated into subevents.

Finally, I would like to look at very simple event reports in English and Kilivila that were elicited with the 13 seconds long video-clip No.15 of the 'staged events': one of the English native speakers reports this event as follows:

(24) • They are just having a conversation,... standing there and having a conversation.

The shortest Kilivila event report of this 'staged event' refers to the still photograph that goes with this film clip. It was produced by Moyadi:

(25) *E-tota-si e-bigatona-si-*
3.-stand-Pl 3.-talk-Pl
'They stand, they talk.'

However, a few minutes before this reaction to the still photograph of this staged event he produced the following report as his reaction to the film clip:

(26) *M-to-na tau e-lola e-meki so-la*
Dem-CP.male-Dem man 3.-walk 3.-come.to friend-3.Poss.Pro.IV
e-tota-si e-bigatona-si.
3.-stand-Pl 3.-talk-Pl
'This man he walks he comes to his friend, they stand, they talk.'¹³

I would like to use the two event reports presented in (24) and (25) to highlight the following general observation: Speakers of Kilivila hardly ever start an event report in such a way as illustrated with example (24) produced by a speaker of English. The extension of the event report produced by the English speaker — after a short pause, like a kind of afterthought — comes much closer to an event report that would be more acceptable for a Trobriand Islander. It is true that I find in the 'staged events' data which I collected with five Kilivila speakers one speaker who produced three event reports each consisting of a single verb only (for the video-clips No.7 and 20: 'eputuborasi' — 'they play soccer' and for the video-clip 32 'esulusulusi' — 'they cook') — but this seems to be the exception in my data. These reports were produced by a woman who did not show much enthusiasm for the film clips that showed scenes from a soccer play; however, why she did not produce a more complex report on this one (of two) cooking scene(s) is something I cannot explain. Nevertheless, if I look at my overall corpus of elicited event reports it seems that one of the minimal requirements for a well-formed, acceptable and adequate event report in Kilivila is that there is at least some kind of contextualisation of

¹³ Note that the video-clip only shows two men that are standing together and talk with one another. Thus, the first part of this sentence serves the Kilivila speaker as a kind of contextualisation device. For another event report elicited with the still photograph No.28 see sentence (16) in §5 above.

the gist of the reported event. And this contextualizing function can be fulfilled by just one other verb like '-tota-' (to stand) — or, even simpler, by the verb '-sisu-' (to be) — that is used to somehow introduce the most important part of the event to be reported (in the case in example (25) above: 'ebigatonasi' — 'they talk').

The observations made with the few examples presented above can be summarised as follows: If we compare English and Kilivila event reports we notice that it is an overgeneralisation to state that 'events are segmented with finer granularity in serialising languages than in non-serialising languages'. With respect to Kilivila this observation holds only for some of the reported events. And these events seem to include motion events, take events, and events that are marked with respect to an action and its end. *Here we have to find out which events are 'segmented with finer granularity', why this is so, and how the serialised verbs establish this 'finer granularity'.*

We also observed that Kilivila uses verbs, CSVCs and SVCs to link certain, but not all, macro-events in reports of scenarios. *Here we have to find out which of these events are linked, why they are linked, and why other events are not linked in this way.*

Finally, it seems that *event reports in Kilivila need a minimum of 'framing' or 'contextualisation' of the most important part of the report* — and the CSVCs and SVCs meet this requirement for producing well-formed, acceptable and minimally situation adequate event reports.

In the next step of my research I will analyse all the event reports I elicited with the 172 video-clips and photographs of the 'staged events' elicitation tool with five speakers of Kilivila (= 860 event reports). These analyses will result in tables that follow the principle of the Tables 1-4 presented above; however, I am convinced that the final event classification will be more refined than the one presented in this first approximation towards a sound analysis of the reported events. Then the event reports Rene Schiering collected with three speakers of English will be analysed accordingly. The results of this analysis will be compared with the results for Kilivila. These analyses will then serve the basis for answering questions like the ones presented above and in §4 (see also Senft 2004).

But let us come back to the observations made with the first and preliminary data analyses presented above. We saw that English and Kilivila event reports did not differ at all with respect to their overall 'granularity'. However, we observed differences with respect to what macro-events were reported and we also observed differences with respect to how some of these macro-events were reported with finer granularity in Kilivila. We also noticed that some (and not all) macro events are linked with verbs, CSVCs and SVCs in Kilivila, and we realised that Kilivila event reports need some contextualisation. At first sight these findings seem to be simply 'stylistic' devices of Kilivila. This may well be — however, as Volker Heeschen has pointed out several times, 'studies of style are of ... importance to linguistics' (Heeschen 1998:43). I would like to quote him here in some more detail. He writes (Heeschen 2001:156):

The composition of the vocabulary, the actual use of subsets of the lexicon and the ways these subsets lend themselves to being handled in grammar cannot be studied without the help of social anthropology: basic needs, social life, material culture, the importance of some objects or living beings as well as ways of speaking and communicative genres are like systems of 'navigation' for the growth and composition of the lexicon and its use in speech and discourse. Following Spitzer one could propose that grammatical rules are stylistic choices that have hardened into rules:

'... denn bekanntlich ist die Allgemeinsprache nichts als ein Durchschnitt von Individualsprachen, die Grammatikalisierung verschiedener Sprechakte ... nihil est in syntaxi quod non fuerit in stylo' (Spitzer 1961, vol.II:516-517)

Depending on the original composition of the lexicon and on the mere size of its subsets, noun classification could be a good means of integrating reference to new objects, verb serialisation could be a good means for describing sequences of events, and nominalisations may be required in reasoning which links the references to different times and events.

Thus, there is more in these 'stylistic devices' than we usually assume. However, I would like to go even further. Like many other linguists researching the phenomenon of MVCs, I think they also allow for inferences with respect to how speakers of languages using these devices to conceptualise events that they report in, and with, these constructions. The linking of macro-events by verbs, CSVs and SVCs, the way in which certain macro-events are differentiated into subevents and reported in CSVs and SVCs and the way of how events are contextualised represent how speakers of Kilivila categorise and talk about situations and events in everyday life (see Pawley 1991:366). They represent what Pawley has called 'stereotyped schemata' or 'speech formulas', which he defines as

... a construction type whose lexical content is partly fixed and partly variable. It is a much more complex bundle of elements than a lexical unit. Besides being a conventional pairing of form and meaning associated with a particular grammatical category, a speech formula is indexed for occurrence in particular discourse contexts and discourse functions, can be varied according to formula-specific and general grammatical and idiomaticity constraints, and is spoken with a particular intonation and rhythm (Pawley 1997:24, see also Pawley 1985:95).

This definition shows that the 'events' that are expressed and reported in and with CSVs and SVCs cannot be discussed detached from the individual language and its speakers. And — given our interest in the conceptualisation of events — this insight leads us straight to Dan Slobin's observation that members of different speech communities organise their thinking for speaking in their respective language specific ways. Slobin (1991:23) notes that:

... we can only talk and understand one another in terms of a particular language. The language or languages that we learn in childhood are not neutral coding systems of objective reality. Rather, each one is a subjective orientation to the world of human experience, and this orientation affects the ways in which we think while we are speaking.

Thus, in order to find out how speakers of Kilivila form and use their CSVs and SVCs we first have to research what this speech community conventionalises verbally within the frame of an CSV or SVC as an 'event'. Only then it is possible to decide (and to describe

14 '... for, as is well-known, common language is nothing else but an average of individual languages, the grammaticalisation of different speech acts... nihil est in syntaxi quod non fuerit in stylo'.

15 Note that Slobin (1991:23) points out in this paper that 'Wilhelm von Humboldt anticipated these questions as well. He wrote (1836/1988:60):

To learn a foreign language should therefore be to acquire a new standpoint in the world-view hitherto possessed, and in fact to a certain extent this is so, since every language contains the whole conceptual fabric and mode of presentation of a portion of mankind. But because we always carry over, more or less, our own world-view, and even our own language-view, this outcome is not purely and completely experienced'.

and to learn) whether a certain verb sequence within an MVC can be realised and will be accepted by the speech community, because it verbalises an event type which is plausible and reasonable for the speakers of the respective language (see also Enfield 1998, 2000). This explains why learners of languages with these constructions (like me) have these severe difficulties in learning and producing them properly and situation adequately. If we really want to speak these languages in an — almost — native speaker like way, we have to learn their 'thinking for speaking'. This is possible to a certain extent, however, it seems that MVCs are extremely sophisticated and extremely culture- and language-specific means in which language-specific 'thinking for speaking' manifests itself. To learn this 'thinking for speaking' that leads to the proper and situation adequate production of CSVCs and SVCs obviously asks for much deeper insights into the underlying cognitive and linguistic processes than other linguistic features of these languages.¹⁶

In the preceding sections and paragraphs I outlined a possible approach to get these insights by systematically gathering data of event reports in languages with (and without) MVCs. Minute analyses of these event reports and systematic comparison of reports of one and the same events in different languages should then provide the basis for answering the research questions that are relevant for a clear understanding

- of both form and meaning of MVCs on the one hand, and
- of the conceptualisation of events on which speakers of these languages base these reports on the other hand.

I am convinced that this is a promising way for further research in the field, although I am aware of the fact that there are problems that remain to be solved.

7 Problems and concluding remarks

Probably the most important problem I myself have with our approach to research serial- and multi-verb constructions, event conceptualisation and event report is the fact that it is based on elicited data. The elicitation tool developed by us, the 'staged events', present a number of scenarios that were first set up and described by a group of linguists, anthropologists, and psychologists at the MPI in Nijmegen. Then some scenarios (those that present scenes from a European soccer match) were video-copied from television and cut according to our purposes. All other scenarios were staged by Miriam van Staden, Norah Carp, Alex Dukers, Marieke Haak, Ulrich Schroeders, Claudia Wegener, Sanne de Wit and me. Thus, our 'staged-events' are actually 'Dutch-German staged-events' and thus this elicitation tool is absolutely ethnocentric. Therefore, there is the danger that it may elicit artefacts, i.e., event reports speakers of non-Indo-European languages would never produce in real face-to-face interaction within the cultural environments of their indigenous speech communities. How can we overcome this bias and how can we control that the elicited event reports are or are not artefacts?

At the moment I see two ways in which we can solve this problem. First of all, fieldworkers can produce similar 'staged event video-clips' of events that are typical for the everyday life of the community they research within the field — and then use these additional clips (and stills) for further data elicitation. Moreover, I take it as being absolutely necessary to compare the elicited event reports with event reports that researchers have already documented in their corpus of natural speech data from the

¹⁶ This is certainly not true for all other such linguistic features (see Senft 1993)!

speech community they research. As I have shown elsewhere (Senft 1996), the comparison between elicited and naturally and spontaneously produced speech data provides excellent means to evaluate the ecological validity of elicited data.

The necessary analyses of event reports that we find in our corpora of spontaneously produced speech data will also help us to come up with a more refined analyses of what we categorise as macro- and subevents and what patterns we find in SVCs and MVCs that constitute 'event formulae'. In a recent paper Heeschén reports such an analysis and shows that he could find four patterns that are constitutive for these formulae in Yale and Eipo.¹⁷ He describes these patterns as follows (Heeschén 2001:161ff):

'... a human agent (or human-like agent) moves and acts upon something or creates something',

'... the sequence moving, taking (carrying) and acting upon something',

'... The ... sequence..of moving to or being somewhere + acting upon something or creating something',

'... movement, taking, acting upon something or creating something, and transfer...'

He emphasises that the events condensed into these event formulae consist of 'movement/position, taking, carrying, transferring, acting upon something, or creating something' (Heeschén 2001:162). As my brief and cursory analyses of the Kilivila data in Tables 2 and 3 above have shown, some of the CSVCs and SVCs found there also fit into these patterns. I assume that we can only overcome Lord's (1993:1) summary of the state of the art in research on SVCs as being 'a sticky business' by approaching these absolutely fascinating phenomena from two sides:

- from the (semi-) experimental field linguistics side - in which event reports with CSVCs and SVCs are elicited in a controlled way, and
- from the side of careful (philological-) linguistic analyses of spontaneously produced event reports in which speakers produce CSVCs and SVCs.

This bilateral approach in researching CSVCs and SVCs, event reports and event conceptualisations is certainly time consuming and extremely labour-intensive, however, I think it is inevitable if we really want to find answers to the questions that have been posed in the literature and asked above.

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17 Yale and Eipo are two Papuan languages of the Mek language family that are spoken in the eastern central mountains of Papua (Irian Jaya, West New Guinea), Indonesia. See Heeschén (1992, 1998).

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