

## In defense of events as a defining property of serial verb constructions

Serial verb constructions are typically described as monoclausal structures with more than one predicate. The following example is from Sranan (Baker, 1989):

- (1) Kofi naki Amba kiri  
Kofi hit Amba kill  
'Kofi struck Amba dead.'

Many authors agree that a crucial defining property of serial verb constructions is the encoding of one single event (e. g. Comrie, 1995; Aikhenvald & Dixon, 2006). Some others, however, are suspicious of this concept and doubt its explanatory potential. This sentiment is summarized by (Foley, 2010: 79):

“...in our view not much progress can be made in understanding SVCs while one proceeds in any analysis with unexamined, vague, and undefined concepts like event, simple and multiple, and monoclausality.”

In my talk, I will review the main theoretical and empirical arguments of the skeptics and argue that the notion of event is more useful and basic for the cross-linguistic identification and comparison than purely formal criteria such as cross-verbal agreement in TAM values, shared subject arguments and similar. At the same time, serial verb constructions may constitute a unique testing ground to probe our understanding of events.

### References

- Aikhenvald, Alexandra Y., & Dixon, R. M. W. (eds). 2006. *Serial verb constructions: A cross-linguistic typology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baker, Mark C. 1989. Object sharing and projection in serial verb constructions. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 20(4), 513–553.
- Comrie, Bernard. 1995. Serial verbs in Haruai (Papua New Guinea) and their theoretical implications. *Pages 25–37 of: Bouscaren, Janine, Franckel, Jean-Jacques, & Robert, Stéphane (eds), Langues et langage: Problèmes et raisonnement en linguistique, mélanges offerts à Antoine Culioli*. Paris: University Presses of France.
- Foley, William A. 2010. Events and serial verb constructions. *In: Amberber, Mengistu, Baker, Brett, & Harvey, Mark (eds), Complex predicates: cross-linguistic perspectives on event structure*. Cambridge University Press.