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Serial verbs in Saramaccan: Predication and creole genesis

By Tonjes Veenstra (review)

John M Lipski

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pronouns are generated in clitic position adjoined to the verb rather than as agreement markers. Incorporation theory accounts for the different superficial manifestations of the direct object (intraverbal or extraverbal).

The diachronic development of alternative direct object forms in Athabaskan languages is studied by CHAD THOMPSON in 'The history and function of the *yi-/bi-* alternation in Athabaskan' (81–100). In Navajo, for example, the alternation between these pronouns has been related to subject-object inversion or other syntactic phenomena. Thompson provides data from a number of Athabaskan languages and suggests instead a functionally-motivated explanation. LINDA UYECHI takes a different approach to the Navajo third person forms in 'The Navajo third person alternation and the pronoun incorporation analysis' (123–35). Building on work by Speas, Uyechi analyzes *bi-* as an incorporated pronoun, while *yi-* is seen as a subject marker.

MURIEL SAVILLE-TROIKE focuses on the developmental stages of the Navajo verb complex in 'Development of the inflected verb in Navajo child language' (137–92). After discussing data from several children with varying degrees of fluency in Navajo and English, Saville-Troike sketches out a multilayered acquisitional process, including the omission of arguments within the verbal complex when relevant information is provided by extraverbal lexical elements.

Northern Athabaskan historical reconstruction is the basis for two articles. JAMES KARI undertakes a geolinguistic analysis of Athabaskan languages in 'Names as signs. The distribution of "stream" and "mountain" in Alaskan Athabaskan languages' (443–75). A comparison of numerous toponyms provides a glimpse into the often controversial realm of Athabaskan prehistory. JEFF LEER's 'The historical evolution of the stem syllable in Gwich'in (Kutchin/Loucheux) Athabaskan (193–234) includes discussions of tonogenesis, rhyme simplification, and palatalization. Phonology is also the object of 'Epenthesis in Navajo' by JOYCE McDONOUGH (235–57). Making the case that [i] is the default vowel in Navajo, McDonough analyzes prefixes as having the underlying shape C, at the same time proposing a simpler structure for the Navajo verb, which relies solely on synchronic information.

Navajo verbs are often grouped according to 'classifiers', morphological markers, which ANDREJ KIBRIK analyzes as functional elements in 'Transitivity decrease in Navajo and Athabaskan. Actor-affecting propositional derivations' (259–303). Examining passive, indefinite, anticausative, and actor depersonalization constructions, the author claims that morphological markers traditionally analyzed as classifiers are reflexes of transitivity decrease. The semantics of the Navajo verb are the object of two

articles. SALLY MIDGETTE studies 'Lexical aspect in Navajo: The telic property' (305–30). Midgette refines the categories of verbal aspect acknowledged for the Navajo verb, with special emphasis on the telic aspect, the notion that a verbal situation leads up to a well-defined point past which the process or action cannot continue. MARYANN WILLIE devotes her study 'On the expression of modality in Navajo' (331–47) to an overview of different Navajo modal expressions. Navajo does not have a single system for marking modality (e.g. there are no modal auxiliaries), hence the task of establishing modality differences is quite challenging.

The remaining three articles deal with Navajo language planning and language politics. In 'Diné bizaad yisohígíí: The past, present, and future of Navajo literacy' (349–89), MARTHA AUSTIN-GARRISON, BERNICE CASAUS, DANIEL McLAUGHLIN, and CLAY SLATE engage in a roundtable discussion, set in *en face* translation. The many contributions of Robert Young and his long-time collaborator Willie Morgan are acknowledged in WAYNE HOLM's 'On the role of "Younganmorgan" in the development of Navajo literacy' (391–405). Finally, OSWALD WERNER, MARTHA AUSTIN-GARRISON, and KENNETH BEGISHE examine Navajo philosophy and its cognitive implications in 'On the importance of "thought" in Navajo philosophy' (407–42).

Fittingly weighted in favor of the language to which Robert Young has devoted his career, *Athabaskan language studies* contains solid scholarship on the Navajo language and valuable contributions to other members of the Athabaskan family. The quality of the studies is consonant with Young's unsurpassed contributions to the Navajo language. [JOHN M. LIPSKI, *University of New Mexico.*]

Serial verbs in Saramaccan: Predication and creole genesis. By TONJES VEENSTRA. (HIL dissertations, 17.) The Hague: Holland Academic Graphics, 1996. Pp. x, 217.

This book, the author's dissertation at the University of Amsterdam, has a dual function. First, it seeks to offer a syntactic analysis of the various serial verb constructions in Saramaccan, a creole language with English and Portuguese lexical base, spoken by Maroon communities in Surinam. Second, the author claims that verb serialization in Saramaccan is not due to a West African substratal transfer but rather instantiates options available in universal grammar which arose during the process of creolization itself.

The book, which consists of seven chapters, is the result of data obtained from expatriate Saramaccan speakers in the Netherlands, and in Paramaribo, Surinam. The introductory chapter (1–10) in which the basics of the principles and parameters approach to

syntax are combined with a general overview of the Saramaccan language, is followed by a chapter on Saramaccan syntax (11–48). Veenstra examines the Saramaccan pronominal system, concluding that atonic subject ‘pronouns’ are in fact clitics residing in AGRs which license null subjects. Also studied are tense/mood/aspect particles (analyzed as auxiliaries base-generated as the heads of their respective functional categories) and anaphors. V introduces the claim that in Saramaccan and other creole languages, the lack of verbal inflection results in the lack of V-to-INFL movement. Ch. 3, ‘Small clause complements’ (49–72), analyzes secondary predicates as small clauses and affirms that Saramaccan exhibits both finite and nonfinite complementation. Saramaccan serial verbs are described in Ch. 4 (73–104), and are subjected to syntactic analysis in Ch. 5 (105–151). While detecting at least three different types of serial constructions in Saramaccan, V postulates that all serial verbs result from right-adjunction, made possible by the lack of V-to-INFL movement. He adduces evidence that the verbs are base-generated in adjacent positions, while movement may result in an intervening nominal argument.

Ch. 6 (153–174) describes the probable mechanisms which yielded the grammaticalization of several serial constructions, including the use of *táa* ‘say’ and *mbét* ‘make’ as complementizers, and *dá* ‘give’ with several different functions. V argues that semantic expansion preceded syntactic reanalysis in the first two cases while syntactic category reanalysis took place before semantic extension in the last-mentioned case.

Ch. 7 (175–200) deals with the creolization process, attributing the rise of serial verbs to universal aspects of first language acquisition. In essence, V asserts that children hearing a pidgin which lacked verb morphology, hence V-to-INFL movement, would adopt verb adjunction as a universally unmarked option. He suggests that in the early stages of child language, semantic relations between structures are domain-insensitive. Thus, for example, children hearing a combination such as NP₁ V NP₂ V NP₃ would interpret it as two conjoined clauses, regardless of the presence of a complementizer; the conjoined clauses would then reduce to a serial verb construction.

Since verb serialization in Atlantic creoles has usually been linked to a West African (particularly Kwa) substrate, V must rule out such transfer in order to bolster his universalist approach. This he does first by claiming that serial verbs occur in creoles outside of the Atlantic/West African domain, and second by noting that the specifics of verb serialization in Saramaccan do not coincide with any particular African language and in some instances go beyond what is found among Kwa languages. The claim that serial verbs are found in Seselwa, the creole language spo-

ken in the Seychelles, is controversial, as the author admits, and at best covers only a handful of cases. The fact remains that verb serialization is completely absent, e.g. from Portuguese-based creoles in Africa and Asia and from Philippine Creole Spanish, in none of whose substrata (known or surmised) verb serialization occurs. Creolized varieties of Swahili, Kikongo, and Arabic spoken in Africa similarly lack serial verbs. The almost complete correlation between verb serialization and a demonstrated Kwa substrate cannot be easily dismissed. V takes to task those who find mere similarity of structures between Kwa languages and Atlantic creoles sufficient evidence to posit direct grammatical transfer. His own methodology, however, is subject to the same criticism: ‘some creole languages without a Kwa substrate can have serial verb constructions. Since this is the case, there is no a priori reason to assume that serial verb constructions should be the result of transfer from West African substrate languages in creole languages with a West African substrate’ (179). Equally suspect is the logic behind the interpretation of the fact that Berbice Dutch creole (spoken in Guyana) has more types of serial verb constructions than Eastern Ijo, its primary substratum ‘you would expect the substrate language to contain the superset and the creole the subset, but in this specific case it is reversed. If a creole language can develop one type of serial verb construction independently of its substrate, why should it not be possible to develop all types independently and in spite of substrate influence?’ (179). Cases abound in which contact-induced language change produces innovations not found in the source language; this line of argumentation is essentially irrelevant to the substrate/universalist debate. V does admit that subsequent sustained bilingualism between the newly emergent creole and West African languages could reinforce verb serialization, thus making later stages of the creole more ‘African’ than the original form.

V’s analysis of Saramaccan syntax adds valuable new perspectives on this language, and his suggested patterns of serial verb formation as the result of the morphological impoverishment of a pidgin combined with child language acquisition strategies make a worthy contribution to the theory of creole genesis. The poorly argued rejection of substratal influences detracts from the work, as does the unretouched dissertation style, replete with redundant prologues and summaries of each section. This is, however, a study to be reckoned with in serious creole language scholarship. [JOHN M. LIPSKI, *University of New Mexico.*]

The syntax and semantics of the verb in Ancient Greek: An introduction. 2nd edn. By ALBERT RIJCKSBARON. Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1994. Pp. 185.

First published in 1984, this textbook aims to provide a linguistically informed description of the