

Multiverb constructions at the syntax-semantics interface

Kilu von Prince

December 10, 2019

Preview

- Multiverb constructions shed a light on the relation between **clauses**, **predicates** and **events**.

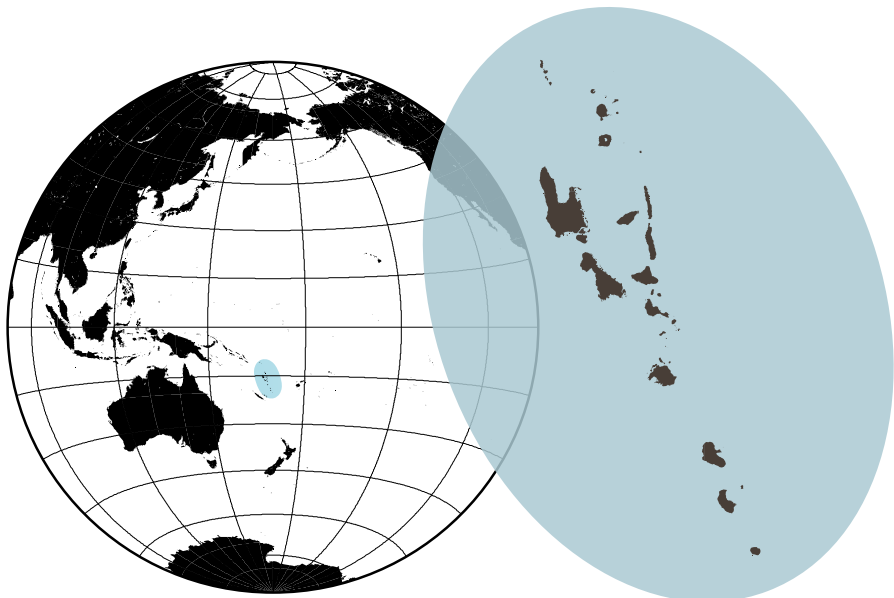
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- In particular, serial verb constructions (SVCs) show that mono-clausal, single-event expressions may contain more than one predicate.
- In this talk, I will argue that there must be **more than one way** to derive single-eventhood, based on data from Daakaka.

About Daakaka



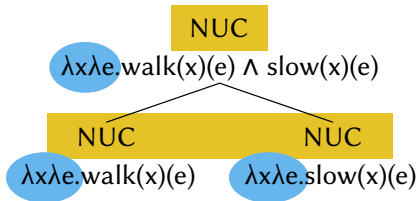
The puzzle

(1) *ma oko medó*
(3SG.)REAL walk slow
“she walks slowly”

(2) *ma oko ma*
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fast
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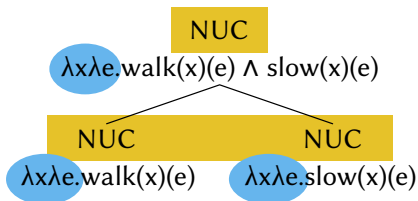
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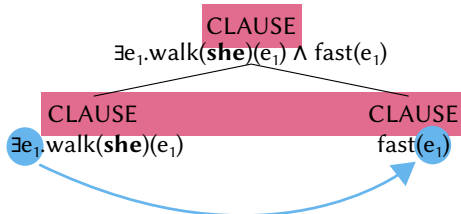
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Clauses, predicates and events

In English, clauses contain only one full verb, and each verb expresses a separate event.

- (3) Susan was **whistling** loudly.
- (4) [**Whistling** loudly], [Susan **opened** the drawer (quietly)].
- (5) [Susan **told** Derek loudly] [to **open** the drawer quietly].

Clauses and events

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(6) The **incident** at his house this morning now started to **confuse** Derek.

- One event in two clauses:

(7) There was a **knock_i** on the door. **It_i** was very soft.

Diagnosing events

Macro-Event-Property: Bohnemeyer et al. (2007); Bohnemeyer & Van Valin (2017)

A construction has the MEP if it packages event representations such that temporal operators necessarily have scope over all subevents.

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Adverbial modification: Eckardt (1998: 19)

Two events e_1 and e_2 are distinct if a modifier α is true for one but not the other, and if this difference with respect to α is due to different parameters being specified by α for event e_1 and e_2 .

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- In English, predicates (full verbs) are typically coextensive with clauses.
- Moreover, each full verb in English denotes its own event.

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(8) *tomo mwe towane wotop vyan*
rat (3SG.)REAL throw breadfruit go
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Examples from Daakaka

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(9) *tomo mwe towane wotop te vyan*
rat (3SG.)REAL throw breadfruit DISC go
“the rat threw the breadfruit and left”

Examples from Daakaka

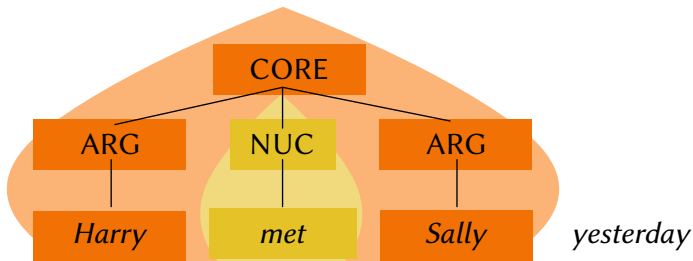
Role and Reference Grammar: The layered structure of the clause

Harry met Sally yesterday

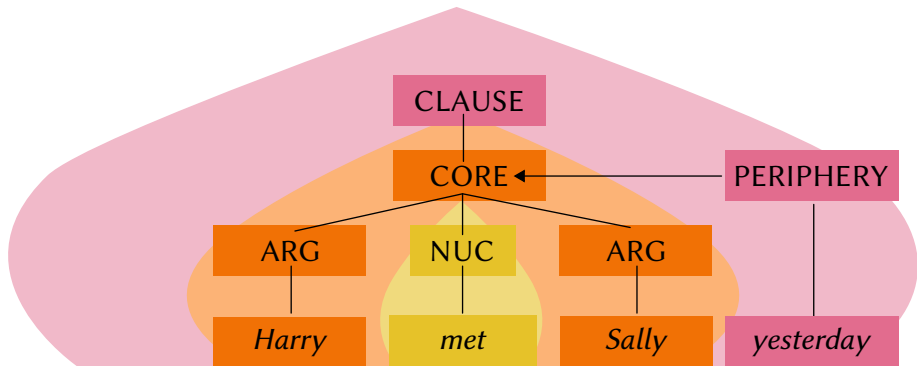
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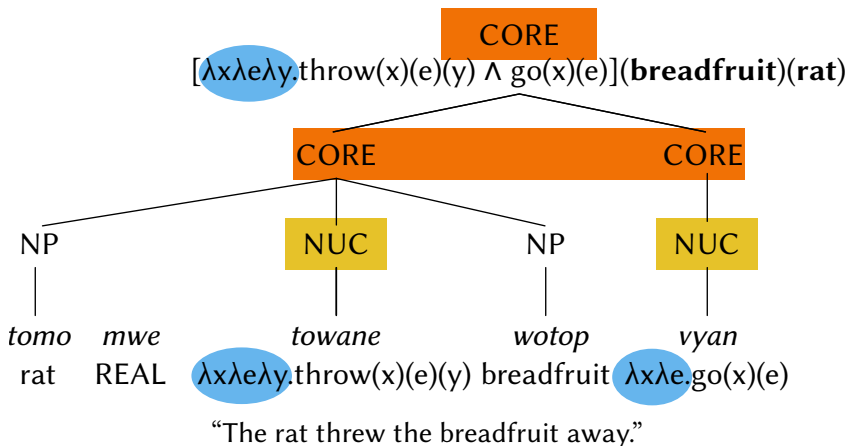
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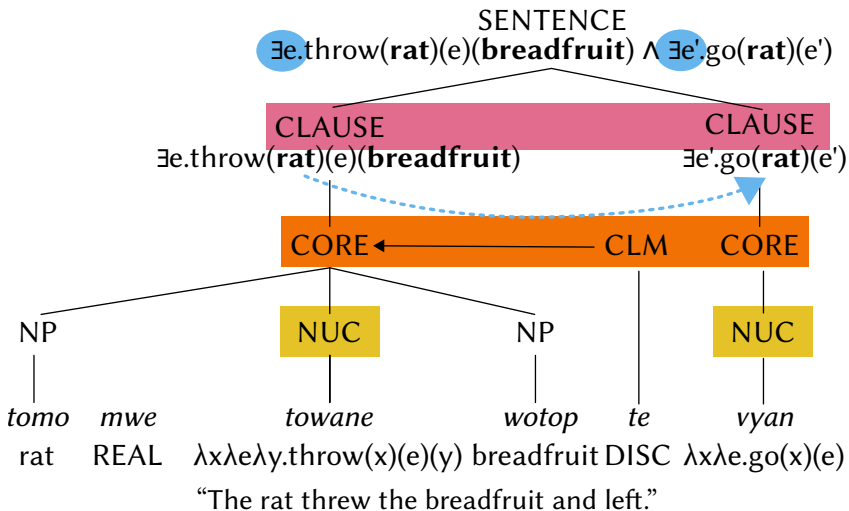
Role and Reference Grammar: The layered structure of the clause



Core argument sharing



Subject coreference in clause coordination



Interim

- Core-layer serial verb constructions involve fusion of argument structure.

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- Core-layer serial verb constructions involve fusion of argument structure.
- Single-eventhood is a result of this process.

Adverbial SVCs

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1S=REAL try side.of-3S.POSS (3SG.)REAL last.long
“I have been working on it for a long time”

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- (11) *tan mu kuu-kuu mwe yas*
earth (3SG.)REAL REDUP-MOVE (3SG.)REAL strong
“the ground shook strongly”

Adverbial SVCs in Oceanic

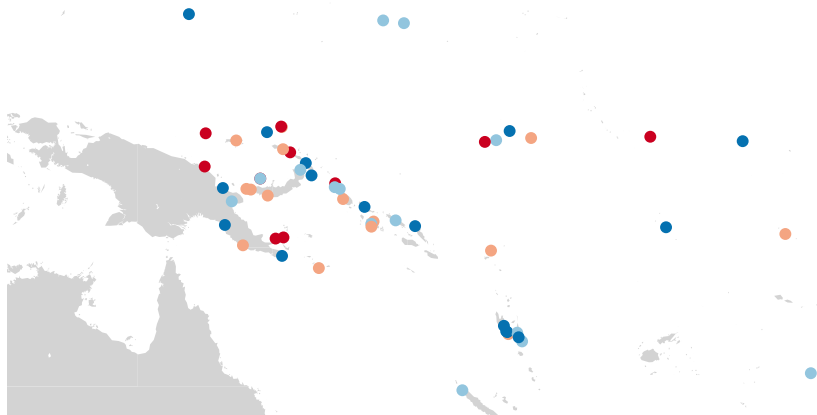


Figure: SVCs in Oceanic (data from Verkerk & Frostad 2013). Dark red: neither adverbial nor resultative (11); light red: only resultative (19); light blue: only adverbial (17); dark blue: both (19).

Serial predicates, fast and slow

- (12) a. *ma* *oko medó*
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- b. *ma* *oko ma* *maga*
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- Objectives:
 - understand how *maga* “fast” differs from *medó* “slow”;
 - understand how adverbial SVCs establish single-eventhood.

Personal and event arguments I

- (13) a. *vyanten en=te s-an oko=an ma medó*
person DEF=MED CL3-3S.POSS walk=NM (3SG.)REAL slow
“this person walks slowly” (lit. “this person, their walk is slow”)

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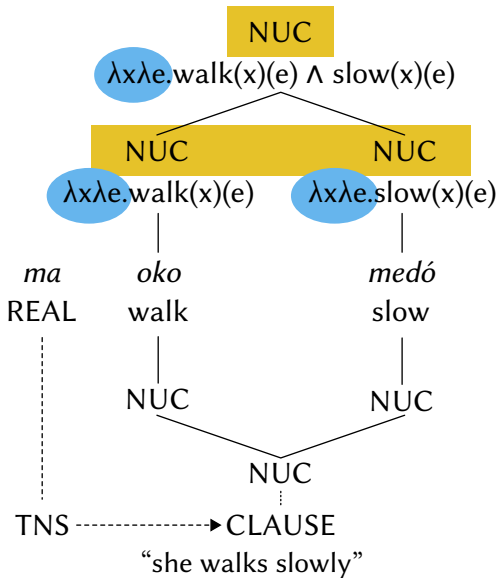
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person fast one
intended: “a fast person”

Modelling the contrast

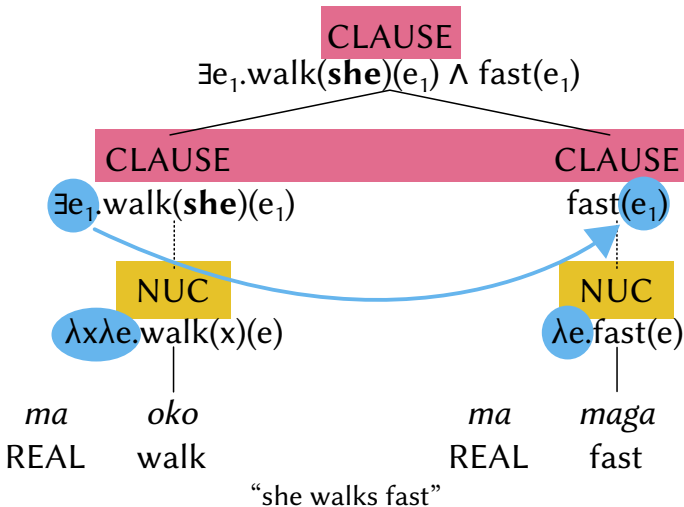
(17) $\llbracket \text{medó} \rrbracket = \lambda x \lambda e. \text{slow}(x)(e)$

(18) $\llbracket \text{maga} \rrbracket = \lambda e. \text{fast}(e)$

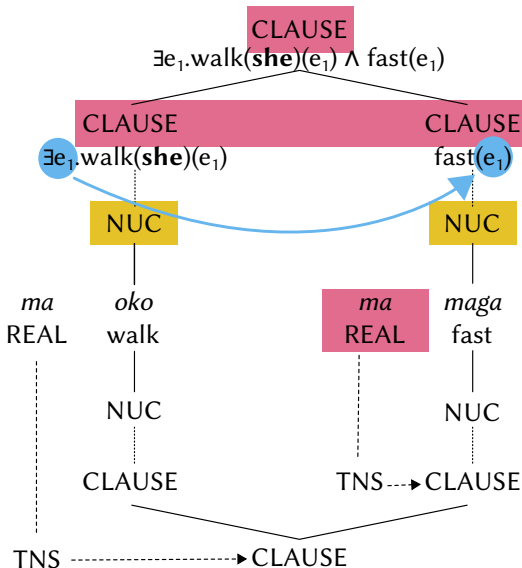
Nuclear juncture with *medó*



Clausal juncture with *maga*



Full structure of adverbial SVCs



Conclusions

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- The single-eventhood that characterizes adverbial SVCs derives from a different mechanism compared to nuclear/core-layer SVCs:
 - In nuclear/core-layer SVCs, single-eventhood results from argument fusion.
 - In adverbial SVCs, the adverbial predicate pronominally refers back to the event established by the first predicate.
- Adverbial SVCs need their own TMA marker because they constitute their own clause.

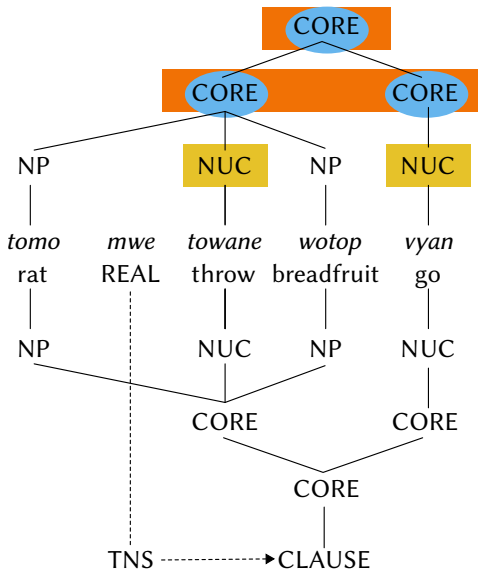
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TAM with *maga* ‘fast’

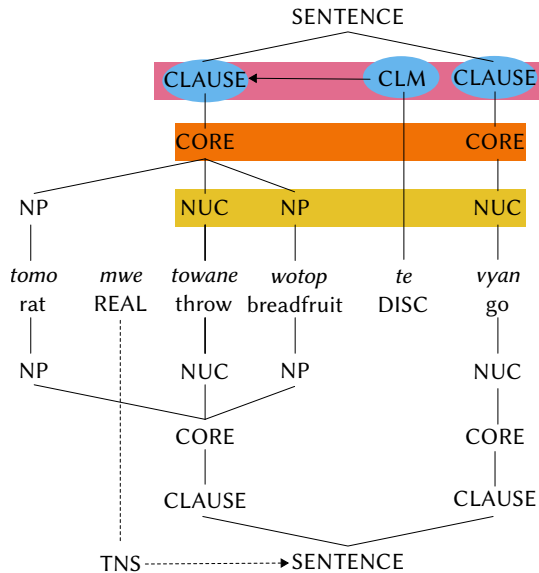
- (19) *Yan wuoswa, ya=m kuowilye ka ya=p bivili yan apyang*
 on some 3P=REAL know COMP 3P=POT smoke on fire
tevy-an [ka we gaó wa maga].
 side.of-3S.POSS COMP POT dry POT be.fast
 “Sometimes they place it over a fire to make it dry fast.”
- (20) *ka si=p sesivi mesyu en=te wa maga*
 MOD 1PC.IN=POT skin fish DEF=MED POT fast
 ‘we will scale these fish quickly’

Core layer SVCs



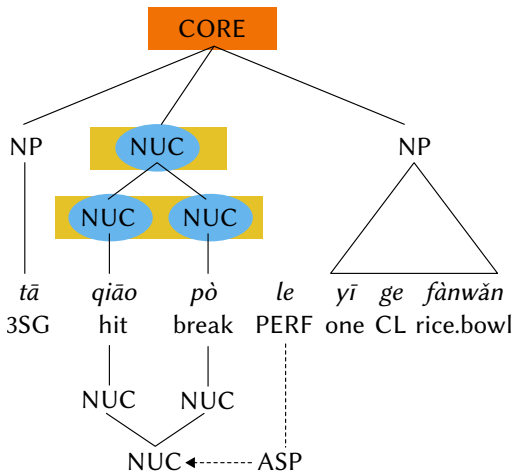
“The rat threw the breadfruit away.”

Clause coordination



“The rat threw the breadfruit and left.”

Nuclear layer SVCs



“he/she broke a rice bowl by hitting it.” (Van Valin Jr, 2005)

Single-eventhood through argument fusion

