

Prelim pages

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Pages i–xii of

**The Syntax of Serial Verbs: An investigation into
serialisation in Sranan and other languages**

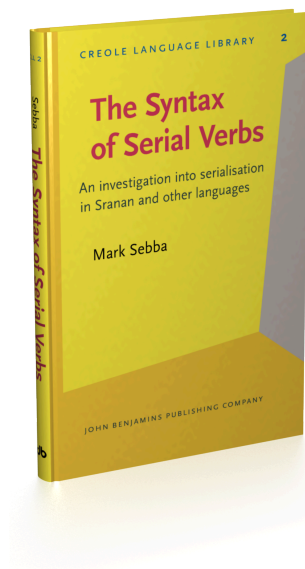
Mark Sebba

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THE SYNTAX OF SERIAL VERBS

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Volume 2

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The Syntax of Serial Verbs

THE SYNTAX OF SERIAL VERBS

AN INVESTIGATION INTO SERIALISATION
IN SRANAN AND OTHER LANGUAGES

by

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The "disposal marker" *bǎ*
by Han Yang

A NOTE ON THE TEXT

For the purposes of exposition, throughout the text except where noted, serial verb sequences or putative sequences are assumed to be linear strings of the form noun phrase - verb - noun phrase - verb etc. This is reflected in the notation NP1 - V1 - NP2 - V2 etc. which indicates the position of the V or NP in the putative linear string.

Where practicable, I have used the orthography of source for examples in languages other than Sranan. This has led to some discrepancies and inconsistencies in the spelling of words used in examples. Mandarin words are all given in Pinyin transcription. The Sranan examples are given in the orthography devised by Pieter Seuren (1981), with minor modifications, and not in the orthography of source.

NOTE ON THE SRANAN DATA

The data for the analysis of Sranan in this book (Chapter 2) was collected in two stages. In the first stage sentences containing putative serial structures were collected from a variety of written sources, including poetry, plays and traditional stories. This resulted in a corpus of approximately 600 sentences. In the second stage, sentences designed to elicit syntactic information about relevant aspects of Sranan syntax were given to native speaker informants for their judgments or comments.

Altogether approximately 30 Sranan speakers were involved as informants, some of whom supplied answers to lengthy questionnaires. Others contributed only a few remarks, though these were often very enlightening. As syntactic questions became more clearly formulated I began to rely on fewer informants for more detailed information. I would like to express my appreciation of the help I received from Lilliane Adamson of Nijmegen, whose linguistic insights have proved invaluable.

Sranan is a creole language which has relatively low status in comparison with Dutch, the language of government and education in Surinam, with which it has been in contact for three centuries. Under the circumstances it is inevitable that some Sranan speakers should have been influenced by Dutch, while others have uncertain intuitions about their own language. Not to make light of an important methodological problem in creole studies, I have tried nevertheless to make allowances for Dutch influence and to check doubtful sentences with informants who did seem to have clear intuitions about what was acceptable Sranan. Even with these allowances, problems remain. These have been pointed out from time to time in the text.

ABSTRACT

This book is about the chains of verbs commonly found in Creole languages, West African languages, (especially the Kwa sub-group of Niger-Congo), Chinese and certain other languages, and which have acquired the name "serial verbs" in the literature. As a case study, the serial constructions of Sranan, a creole language of Surinam with an English lexical base, are examined in detail.

CHAPTER 1 is a critical discussion of previous literature on serial verbs which demonstrates that no previous account of serialisation has been wholly adequate.

CHAPTER 2 is a detailed study of serialisation in Sranan. It provides a working definition of "serial verb", and lists and classifies the various types of serial constructions found in the language. The analysis in this chapter is based on extensive informant work conducted in the Netherlands among Sranan speakers. CHAPTER 3 discusses in detail possible analyses of the syntax of serialisation. Section 1 discusses the question of whether "serial verbs" are in fact verbs or members of some other category, such as Preposition or Complementiser: it concludes that in most cases, they are in fact verbs. Section 2 discusses various analyses which, while treating serial verbs as true verbs, would analyse them as phenomena already familiar in European languages, such as "control verbs". It concludes that none of these analyses is adequate. Section 3 provides a new analysis for serial verbs as a phrase structure phenomenon. In Section 4 an outline account of the semantics is given which complements this approach to the syntax.

CHAPTER 4 applies the analysis of Chapter 3 to serial verbs in other languages, and finds a remarkable similarity in serial constructions across a wide variety of languages. Akan, Anyi, Ijo, Yoruba, Saramaccan, Papiamentu and Mandarin. are considered separately, and compared to each other and to Sranan. The analysis in this chapter is based partly on informant work and partly on published sources.

The book ends with a short CONCLUSION and BIBLIOGRAPHY.

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Special thanks go to Han Yang for the beautiful representation of the Chinese character and putative serial verb ba.

Needless to say, none of these people is responsible for any mistakes contained herein. I gratefully acknowledge their contribution and hope that the completion of this work will repay their confidence in me and the efforts they have made on my behalf.

Grantangi f'unu alamala.