On the Serialising Nature of Northernmost Vanuatu

A Comparison of Serial Verbs Constructions in the Torres and Banks Languages

Daniel Kraußе
University of Newcastle, Australia

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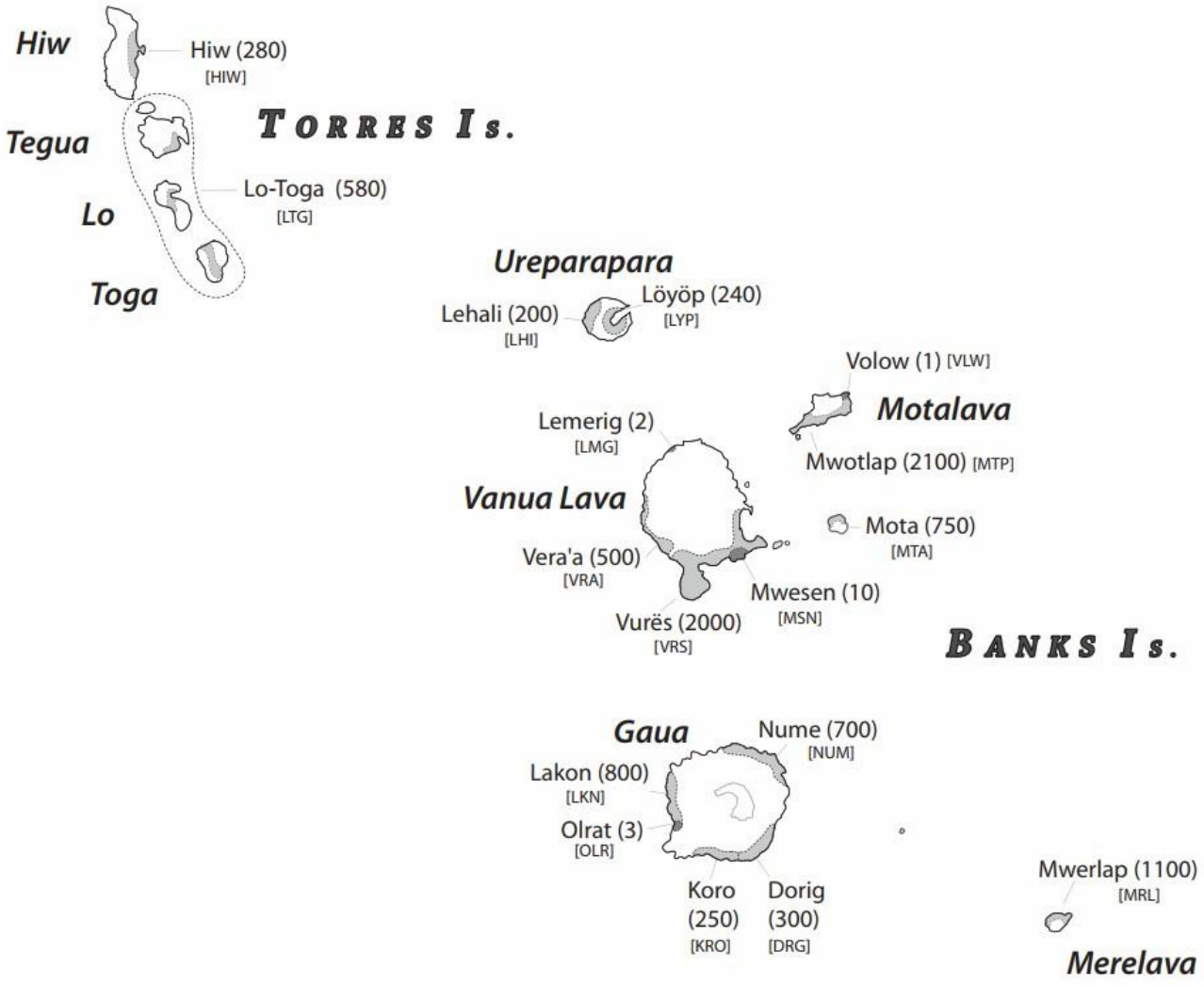
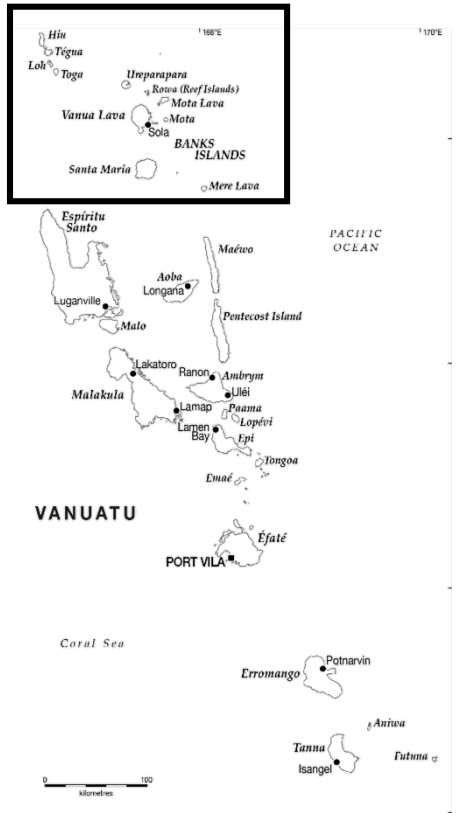
The TorBa languages





(François 2015:143)

The TorBa languages

- 2 languages spoken on the Torres islands Hiw, Tegua, Lo, and Toga
- 15 languages spoken on the Banks islands Ureparapara, Vanua Lava, Motalava, Gaua, Merelava, and Mota
- number of speakers:
  - **Lo-Toga**: 580, **Hiw**: 260
  - **Mwotlap**: 2100, **Vurës**: 2000, **Mwerlap**: 1100, **Lakon**: 800, **Mota**: 750, Nume: 700, **Vera'a**: 500, **Dorig**: 300, Koro: 250, Löyöp: 240, Lehali: 200, Mwesen: 10, Olrat: 3, Lemerig: 2, Volow: 1

The TorBa languages

PROTO-AUSTRONESIAN (based on Lynch et al. 2011:885)

└ Malayo-Polynesian

└ Central/Eastern Malayo-Polynesian linkage

└ Eastern Malayo-Polynesian family

└ **Oceanic family**

└ Central-Eastern Oceanic Grouping

└ **Southern Oceanic**

└ northern Vanuatu linkage

└ *Torres-Banks linkage (originally called Banks-Torres family)*

- about 200 possible Proto-Torres-Banks words have been reconstructed (François 2005)

Serial verb constructions

- various definitions exist (Aikhenvald 2006; Durie 1997; Foley & Olson 1985; Haspelmath 2016; Senft 2008)
- multiverbal construction acting as a single predicate with shared TAM/polarity marker
- may describe a single activity, consecutive activities, or a complex activity
- monoclausal, no sign of subordination or coordination
- one prosodic unit, equivalent to mono-verbal utterance

Serial verb constructions, no!

- English: *go jump in the lake*
  - also possible: *go **and** jump in the lake* → coordination
  - not possible: **I went jumped in the lake* → no shared TAM/polarity marker
- English: *sleepwalk (*sleepgo)*, *drink-drive (*eat-drive)*, *stir-fry (*stir-cook)*
  - non-productive, verb compounds
- Latin: *veni, vidi, vici* 'he came, he saw, he conquered'
  - also possible: *veni **et** vidi **et** vici* → coordination
  - juxtaposition of verbs, asyndetic coordination

Serial verb constructions, yes!

(1) Mota (Codrington 1885:284):

Ni	*me*	*vivir*	*o*	*toa,*	*gate*	***vivir***	***qalo.***
3SG	PFV	throw	INDEF	fowl	NEG	**throw**	**hit**

'He threw at a fowl, did not hit it.'

- *vivir* 'throw' and *qalo* 'hit' form a single predicate
- polarity marker *gate* has scope over the overall construction, not just one verb
- V2 is the result of V1

Serial verb constructions, yes!

(2) Dorig (François n.d.):

Kmur	*me-**vus***	***mam**-mat*	***bas***	*nok*	*o*	*vre*	*s-rō!*
2DU	PFT-**hit**	RED~**die**	**finish**	CPLT	ART	village	NUM-two

'You two have already massacred two villages!'

- *vus* 'hit', *mam* 'die', and *bas* 'finish' form a single predicate
- share the same TAM markers: *me-…nok*
- V2 is the result of V1, V3 modifies V1+V2 (double SVC)

Serial verb constructions – Categories

- asymmetrical and symmetrical SVCs (Aikhenvald 1999:472; Sebba 1987:40 as ‘fixed’ and ‘free’ elements)

- asymmetrical:
  - one verb in an open, unrestricted position / major verb
  - one verb in a closed, restricted position / minor verb

- symmetrical:
  - both verbs in an open, unrestricted position / verbs have equal status
  - order of verbs is iconic and follows temporal sequence of events (Aikhenvald 2006:22)

Serial verb constructions – Categories

(3) Vera'a (Schnell 2011:91):

Di	*ne*	*'a-**'ag***	***qēl***	*ēn*	*qoro-bē*	*vavavavan …*
3SG	PRF	RED~**follow**	**descend**	ART	hole-water	on.and.on

'Then she <u>followed</u> the river downhill, on and on.'

→ asymmetrical

(4) Lo-Toga (François 2010:511):

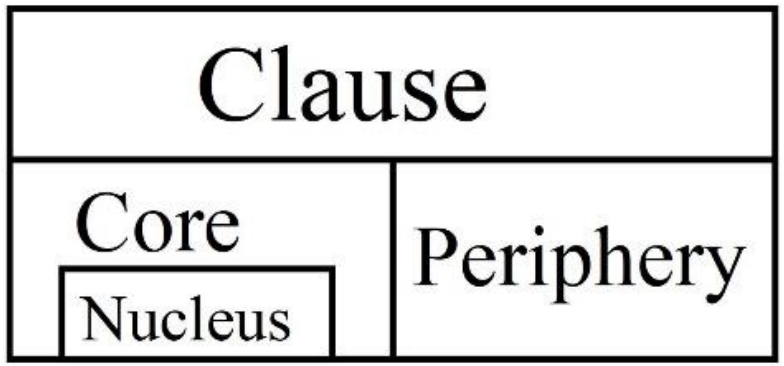
noke	*na*	***vēn***	*na*	***vivdë***	*si*	*l'*	*ēñwe*	*rōor.*
1SG	PRF_1	**go**	PRF_1	**pray**	PRF_2	LOC	house	holy

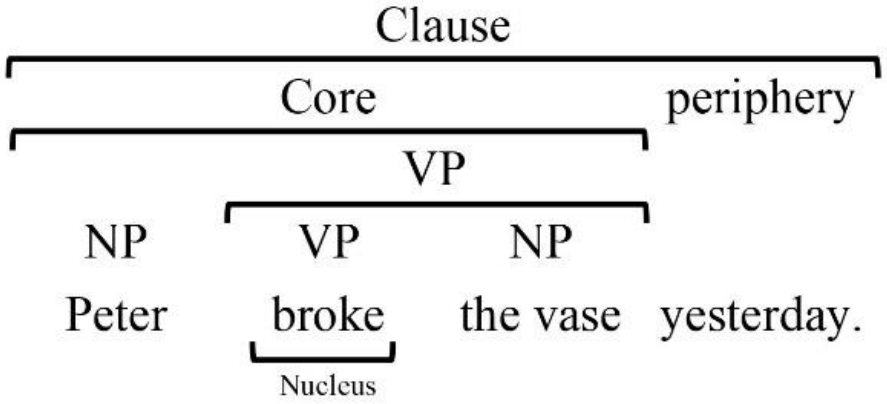
'I <u>went to pray</u> in the church.'

→ symmetrical

Serial verb constructions – Categories

- nuclear layer and core layer (Foley & Olson 1985)
- some languages allow both constructions, some languages only one





Serial verb constructions – Categories

(5) Vurës (Malau 2016:563):

Na	***tēv***	***mōt***	*o*	*string*	*ine…*
1SG.AOR	**cut**	**break (tr.)**	ART	string	ANA.DEM

‘I <u>cut apart</u> the string.’

→ nuclear layer

(6) Hiw (François 2010:523):

lk’	*on*	***sēr-ie***	*on*	***yoqse,***	*n’*	*ēptgō*	*nëne!*
2SG	SBJV	**spear-**3SG	SBJV	**miss**	ART	shame	DEM.DIST

‘If you try to <u>spear him and you miss</u>, then shame on you!’

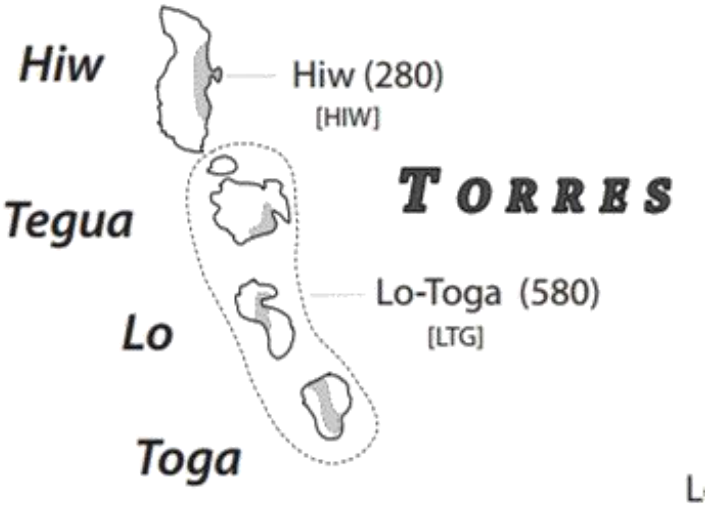
→ core layer

Serial verb constructions in Vanuatu

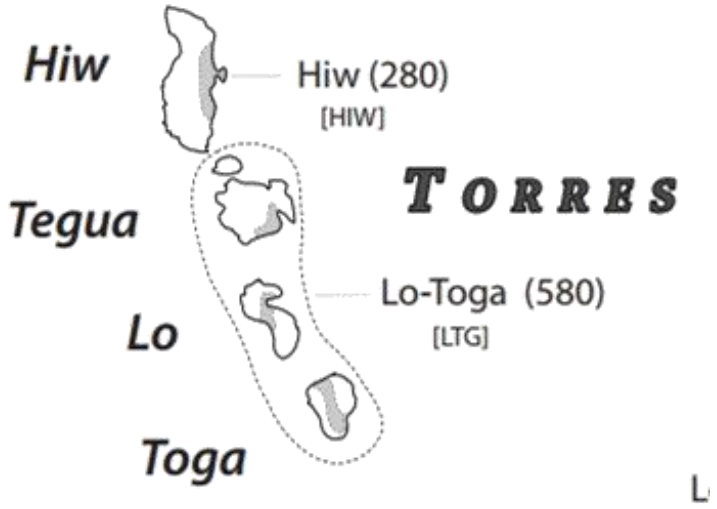
- well represented in the literature: Paamese (Crowley 1987, 2002), Lewo (Early 1993), Namakir (Sperlich 1993), Mwotlap (François 2004, 2006), Anejom̃ (Lynch 2004), Bislama (Meyerhoff 2001), Abma (Schneider 2007)
- central and northern Vanuatu languages are more likely to be productively serialising than southern Vanuatu languages (Crowley 2002:207; Thieberger 2007)
- hypothesis: northernmost Vanuatu languages productively serialising
- if hypothesis is true: why? inherited, borrowed, or independent phenomenon?

SVCs by area: Torres

- both Hiw and Lo-Toga have productive SVCs
- cause-effect and modifying SVCs as nuclear layer
- sequential as core layer



SVCs by area: Torres



- both Hiw and Lo-Toga have productive SVCs
- **<u>cause-effect</u>** and modifying SVCs as **<u>nuclear layer</u>**
- sequential as core layer

(7) Hiw (François 2009a:5):

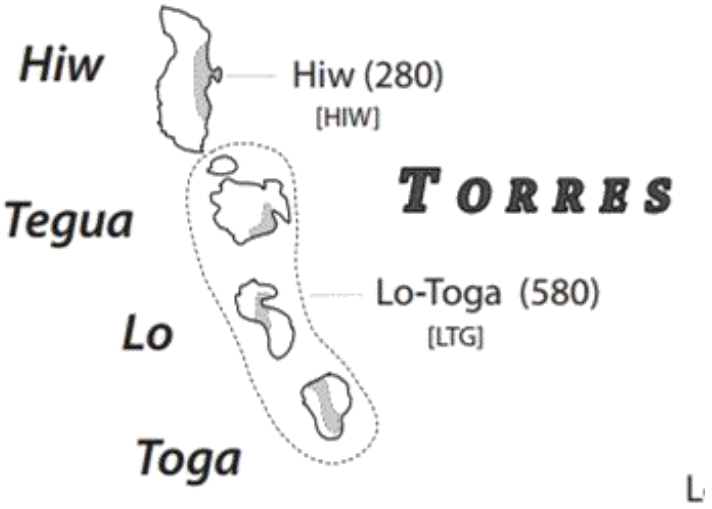
Ne temët ***not*** ***mat*** *i-se…*

ART ghost **hit**.NPL **be.dead**.NPL OBJ-3NSG

'The ghost <u>killed</u> them two.'

- asymmetrical
- V_1 transitive (open), V_2 intransitive (closed)
- switch-function: O of V_1 = S of V_2

SVCs by area: Torres



- both Hiw and Lo-Toga have productive SVCs
- cause-effect and **<u>modifying</u>** SVCs as **<u>nuclear layer</u>**
- sequential as core layer

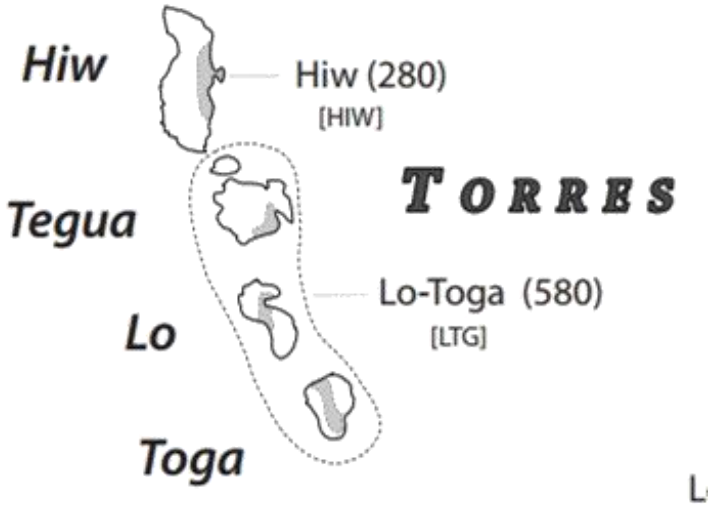
(8) Lo-Toga (François 2010:511):

Të	*w'*	*ake*	***vese***	***vahē***	*noke*	*ē*	*ne*	*iē*	*ige.*
PROSP	2SG	FUT	**say**	**show**	1SG	OBL	ART	name	fish

'You will <u>teach</u> [lit. say show] the names of fish.'

- asymmetrical
- V_1 transitive (open), V_2 transitive (closed)
- same-subject: S/A of V_1 = S/A of V_2

SVCs by area: Torres



- both Hiw and Lo-Toga have productive SVCs
- cause-effect and modifying SVCs as nuclear layer
- **sequential** as **core-layer** SVC

(9) Lo-Toga (François 2010:508):

noke *të* *ke=**vē*** *k'=**itë*** *ne* *gehuh* *[…]*

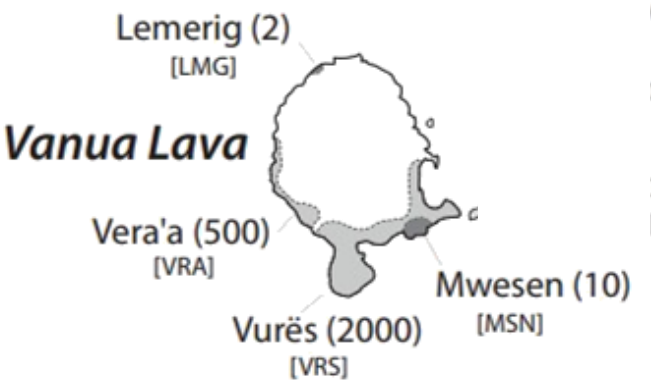
1SG PROSP 1SG=**go** 1SG=**see** ART coconut.crab

'I'll go and have a look at the coconut crab.'

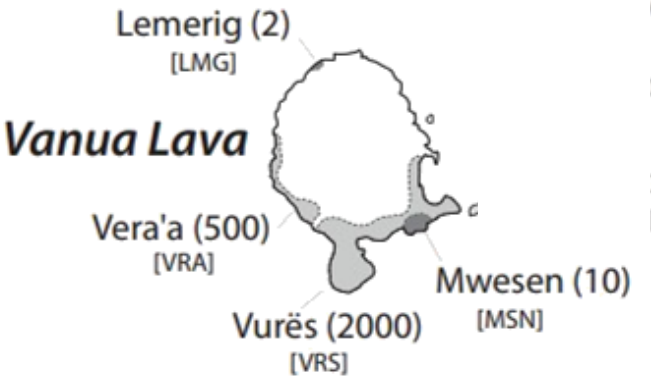
- symmetrical
- V_1 intransitive (open), V_2 (in)transitive (open)
- same-subject: S/A of V_1 = S/A of V_2

SVCs by area: Vanua Lava

- Vera’a, Vurës, Lemerig & Mwesen all have productive SVCs
- all SVCs are on the nuclear layer (Alex François, p.c.)
- cause-effect, positional, directional, aspectual



SVCs by area: Vanua Lava



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- **cause-effect**, positional, directional, aspectual

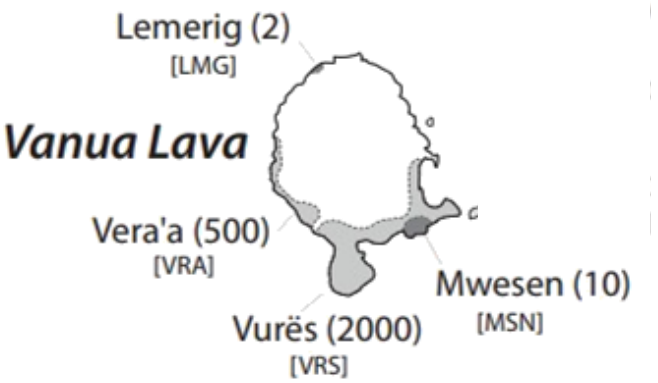
(10) Vera'a (Stefan Schnell, p.c.):

'Ei,	*no=s*	***laṉ***	*ma~**ma'***	*nikē*	*'i*
INTJ	1SG=SIM	**hit**	RED-**be.dead**	2SG	DEL

'Hey, I kill you!'

- asymmetrical
- V_1 transitive (open), V_2 intransitive (closed)
- switch-function: O of V_1 = S of V_2

SVCs by area: Vanua Lava



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- cause-effect, **positional**, directional, aspectual

(11) Vurës (Malau 2016:570):

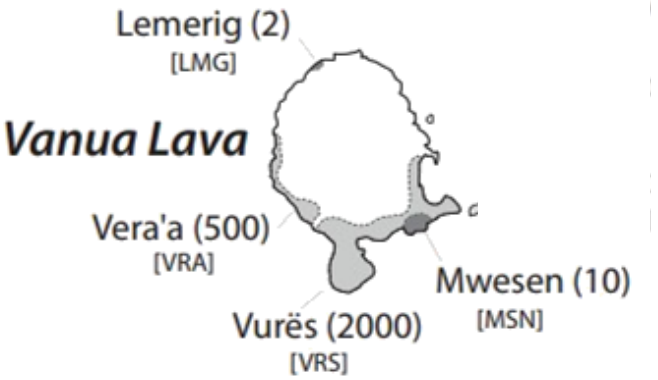
Rōrō *a* *ōn-**ōn*** *gen-**gen**.*

3DU NSG.AOR DIST~**lie** DIST-**eat**

'The two of them lay eating.'

- asymmetrical
- V_1 intransitive (closed), V_2 (in)transitive (open)
- same-subject: S/A of V_1 = S/A of V_2

SVCs by area: Vanua Lava



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- cause-effect, positional, **directional**, aspectual

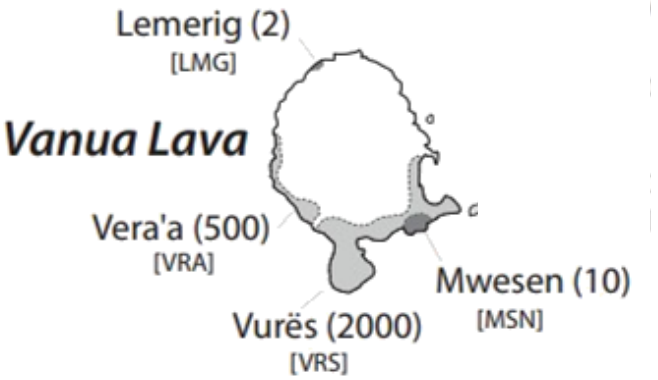
(12) Vera'a (Schnell 2011:176):

Di	*ne*	*mul~mul*	*kēl*	*ma*	*ō=n*	*gengen.*
3SG	PFT	RED~**go**	**return**	CIS	with=ART	food

'Then he came back with food.'

- asymmetrical
- V_1 intransitive (open), V_2 intransitive (closed)
- same-subject: S/A of V_1 = S/A of V_2

SVCs by area: Vanua Lava



- Vera'a, Vurës, Lemerig & Mwesen all have productive SVCs
- all SVCs are on the **nuclear layer** (Alex François, p.c.)
- cause-effect, positional, directional, **aspectual**

(13) Vurës (Malau 2016:583):

Nēr a ***van qēt*** *lo=rot.*

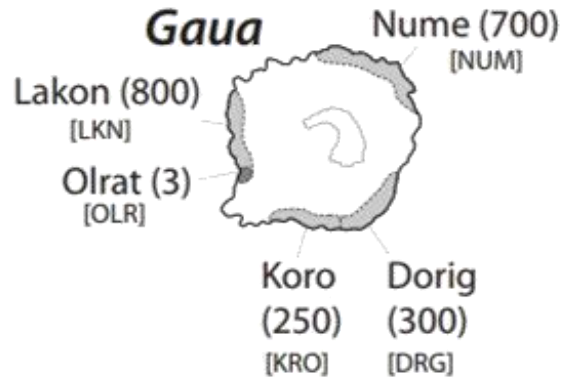
3PL NSG.AOR **go** **finish** LOC=taro.paddy

'They have all gone to the taro garden.'

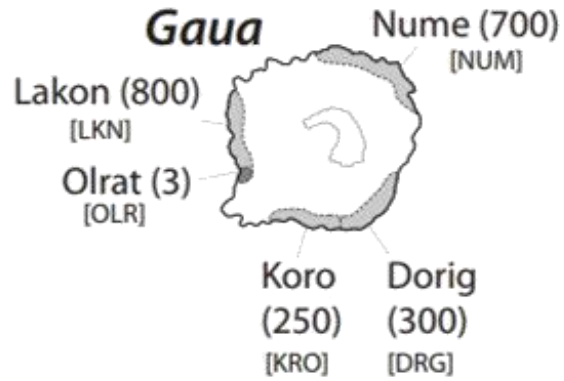
- asymmetrical
- V_1 (in)transitive (open), V_2 transitive (closed)
- same-subject: S/A of V_1 = S/A of V_2

SVCs by area: Gaua

- Dorig, Lakon, Nume, Olrat, and Koro all have productive SVCs
- all SVCs are on the nuclear layer (Alex François, p.c.)
- cause-effect, positional, manner, aspectual



SVCs by area: Gaua



- Dorig, Lakon, Nume, Olrat, and Koro all have productive SVCs
- all SVCs are on the **nuclear layer** (Alex François, p.c.)
- **cause-effect**, positional, manner, aspectual

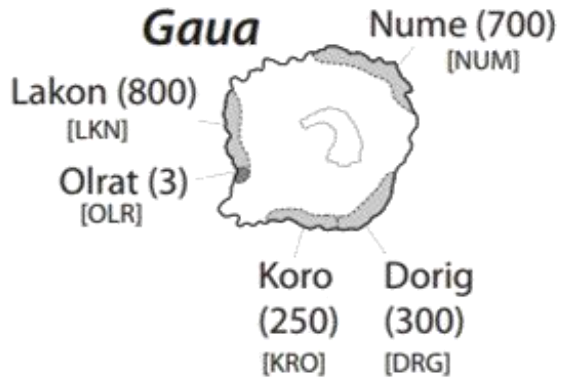
(14) Dorig (François n.d.):

Tare	*mērmēr bul*	*rō*	*neñ*	*m-**vus***	*mam-**mat***	*bas*	*nēr.*
NSG	child	NUM	two	DEM	PFT-**hit**	RED~**be.dead**	finish	3PL

'Those two kids killed them all.'

- asymmetrical
- V_1 transitive (open), V_2 intransitive (closed)
- switch-function: O of V_1 = S/A of V_2

SVCs by area: Gaua



- Dorig, Lakon, Nume, Olrat, and Koro all have productive SVCs
- all SVCs are on the **nuclear layer** (Alex François, p.c.)
- cause-effect, **positional**, manner, aspectual

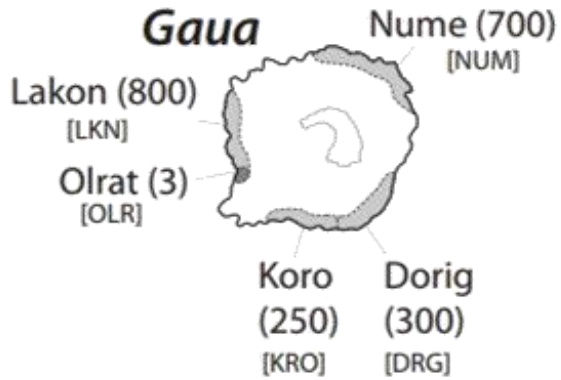
(15) Lakon (Schmidt, n.d.):

Ni=n	*nō,*	*la*	*na*	*tē*	*nō*	*awōh,*	*na=n*	***hag***	***mamat***.
3SG=PST	sleep	but	1SG	AOR	sleep	NEG	1SG=PST	**sit**	**be.awake**

'He slept, but I did not sleep, I stayed awake.'

- asymmetrical
- V_1 intransitive (closed), V_2 (in)transitive (open)
- same-subject: S/A of V_1 = S/A of V_2

SVCs by area: Gaua



- Dorig, Lakon, Nume, Olrat, and Koro all have productive SVCs
- all SVCs are on the **nuclear layer** (Alex François, p.c.)
- cause-effect, positional, **manner**, aspectual

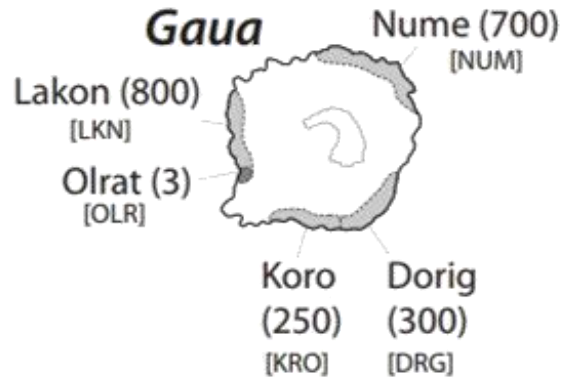
(16) Dorig (François n.d.):

Kmur	*me=**briñ***	***sār***	*nok*	*na.*
2DU	PFT-**help**	**suffice**	CPLT	1SG

'You two have helped me enough already.'

- symmetrical
- V_1 (in)transitive (open), V_2 intransitive (open)
- no shared arguments

SVCs by area: Gaua



- Dorig, Lakon, Nume, Olrat, and Koro all have productive SVCs
- all SVCs are on the **nuclear layer** (Alex François, p.c.)
- cause-effect, positional, manner, **aspectual**

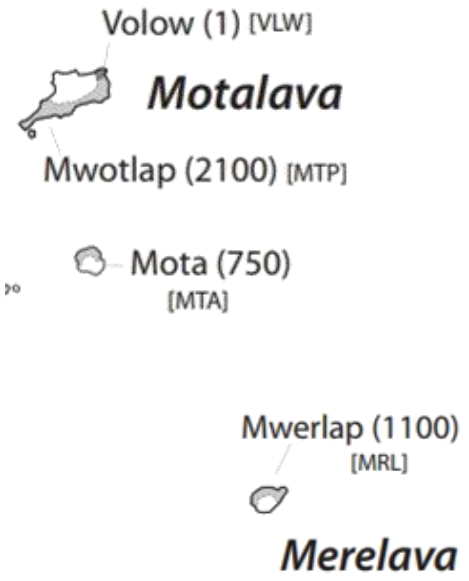
(17) Lakon (Schmidt, n.d.):

M̄o	***qētēg***	***tiñ***	*maram, hihi*	*caacun*	*ni-rō*	*woo*	*ēhē.*
first	**start**	**create**	world	family	human	NUM-two	only	EXIST

'At first, starting creating the world, there were just two tribes of man.'

- asymmetrical
- V_1 transitive (closed), V_2 intransitive (open)
- same-subject: S/A of V_1 = S/A of V_2

SVCs by area: Eastern Banks



- Mwotlap has productive SVCs; Mota & Mwerlap only a few
- all SVCs are on the **nuclear layer**
- **cause-effect**, positional, aspectual

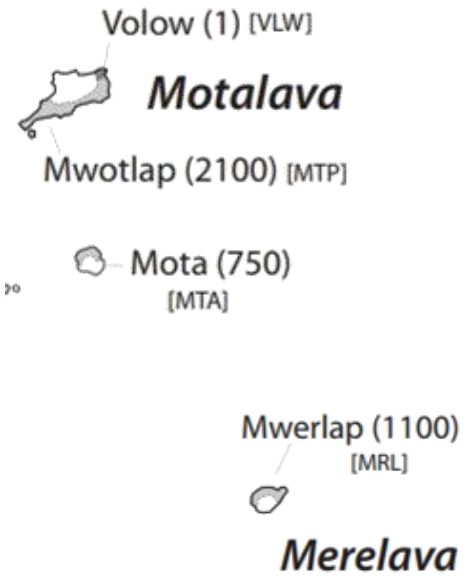
(18) Mwotlap (François 2006:231):

Tali	*mi=**tit***	*ten~**ten***	*Kevin.*
PN	PFT=**punch**	RED~**cry**	PN

'Tali made Kevin cry by punching him.'

- asymmetrical
- V_1 transitive (closed), V_2 intransitive (open)
- same-subject: S/A of V_1 = S/A of V_2

SVCs by area: Eastern Banks



- Mwotlap has productive SVCs; Mota & Mwerlap only a few
- all SVCs are on the **nuclear layer**
- cause-effect, **positional**, aspectual

(19) Mota (Codrington 1885:291):

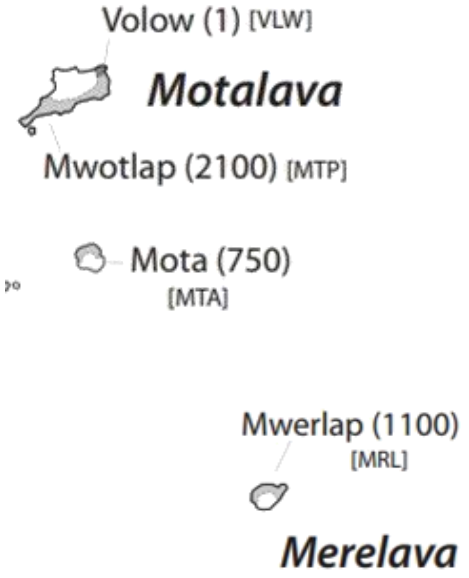
*Ni me **sale** **suar** o aka..*

3SG PFT **float** **find** ART canoe

'He floated till he met the canoe.'

- asymmetrical
- V_1 intransitive (closed), V_2 (in)transitive (open)
- same-subject: S/A of V_1 = S/A of V_2

SVCs by area: Eastern Banks



- Mwotlap has productive SVCs; Mota & Mwerlap only a few
- all SVCs are on the **nuclear layer**
- cause-effect, positional, **aspectual**

(20) Mwerlap (Agnès Henri, p.c.):

Kɛmɛm	***kwɪtɪu***	*kal~**kal***	*rɔʊ*	*lɛ*	*ŋus*	*rɪp*	*ŋɪa.*
1PL.EX	**start**	RED~**enter**	down	LOC	beak	reef	DEM

'We have started to enter this reef pass.'

- asymmetrical
- V_1 transitive (closed), V_2 intransitive (open)
- same-subject: S/A of V_1 = S/A of V_2

Overview

	cause-effect	manner	V_2 specifies V_1	sequential	positional	directional	aspectual	comparative
Hiw	yes	?	yes	yes	?	no	?	?
Lo-Toga	yes	?	yes	yes	yes	no	?	?
Vurës	yes	yes	?	?	yes	yes	yes	yes
Vera'a	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
Dorig	yes	yes	?	?	yes	no	yes	?
Lakon	?	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	?
Mwotlap	yes	yes	yes	?	yes	no	yes	yes
Mota	yes	?	?	yes	yes	no	yes	no
Mwerlap	?	yes	?	yes	no	few	yes	no

Conclusion

- all attested Torres-Banks languages have:
  - (more or less) productive SVCs
  - nuclear-layer SVCs
  - more asymmetrical than symmetrical SVCs
  - at least one kind of cause-effect SVC

Conclusion

- all attested Torres-Banks languages have:
  - (more or less) productive SVCs
  - nuclear-layer SVCs
  - more asymmetrical than symmetrical SVCs
  - at least one kind of cause-effect SVC

- not all attested Torres-Banks languages have:
  - directional SVCs (instead expressed by directional particles, grammaticalised from Proto-Oceanic verbs *mai ‘come to speaker’, *watu ‘go to addressee’, etc.)
  - comparative SVCs (instead expressed by preposition ‘from’)
  - core-layer SVCs

Conclusion

- in the bigger picture:
  - all Vanikoro languages have only core-layer SVCs (François 2009b:115)
  - Reefs-Santa Cruz languages show grammaticalisation of nuclear-layer SVCs in the verb complex (Næss & Boerger 2008)
  - most well-attested languages of the Solomon Islands are productively serialising
  - productive SVCs as possible Papuan substrate have been suggested (Blust 2005:552f.)
  - however: SVCs have been suggested for Proto-Oceanic (Crowley 2002:165), core-layer SVCs have been reconstructed for Proto-North-Vanuatu (François 2009c:191)
  - probably Torres-Banks languages syntactically more conservative, while southern Vanuatu languages have grammaticalised Proto-Oceanic SVCs into compound verbs, particles, prepositions, or auxiliaries

Literature

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