

Abstract: Walman *and*-verbs and the nature of Walman serialization

Lewis C. Lawyer
University of California, Davis

Walman is a language in the Torricelli family spoken on the northern coast of Papua New Guinea. In a recent article, Brown and Dryer (2008) discuss the phenomenon of Walman *and*-verbs, words which are morphologically transitive verbs but syntactically serve as coordinators coordinating noun phrases.

- (1) *Kum m-etere-y [John n-aro-Ø Mary].*
1sg 1sg.S-see-3pl.O 3sg.m.S-and-3sg.f.O
"I saw [John and Mary]."
Brown and Dryer (2008, 539)

In the present paper I wish to demonstrate that the functional nature of these *and*-verbs is partially parasitic on the functional nature of a particular type of serial verb construction (SVC) found in Walman. This type of SVC is called inclusory serialization (following Crowley 2002, 41), and is characterized by the subject of one verb being the aggregate of the subject and object of the previous verb (see 2, below). I will argue that the functional structure required for the maximal projections of transitive verbs in this kind of serialization is a structure shared by *and*-verbs, and thus conducive to the innovation of *and*-verbs in a language.

The grammatical framework I will use in this paper is lexical-functional grammar (LFG). I hope this paper will also demonstrate the utility of an LFG-like model to descriptive linguistics. The relationship between inclusory serialization and *and*-verbs is difficult to discern in a traditional Chomskyan theoretical framework in which constituent structure is the sole determinant of functional roles and functional structure. In an LFG framework, where constituency and functional structure are modeled separately, the functional similarity between *and*-verbs and inclusive serial constructions is readily apparent.

- (2) *Kum m-rachere-Ø pelen k-esi nakol.*
1sg 1sg.S-chase-3sg.f.O dog 1pl.S-go.out house
"I chased the dog out of the house."
Brown and Dryer (2008, 551)

The agreement morphology on the second verb in (2) indicates agreement with the subject and object of the preceding verb, taken together. We may thus ask, where is the entity with which the subject agreement morphology on the second verb agrees? The simplest answer is that the first verb has created an indexable entity in f-structure which is the conjunction of its subject and object

arguments. It is this entity with which the subject agreement morphology on the second verb agrees, and it is this entity which functions as the subject of *kesi* at unification. Since any transitive verb in Walman may occur in an inclusive SVC, we must assume that every transitive verb in Walman has the capacity to construct an indexable conjunction of its subject and object. Turning again to *and*-verbs, their functional peculiarity is that they are apparently verbs yet they are used as NP coordinators. Yet from the preceding discussion it seems that all transitive verbs in Walman must have the capability to construct indexable conjunctions of their subject and object arguments. Thus in f-structure, *and*-verbs do not look very different from ordinary transitive verbs.

This similarity is obscured in a traditional constituency-based grammatical description. The simple coordinative function of *and*-verbs becomes buried underneath their perplexing distribution. This distribution is indeed unusual. The constituent formed by the *and*-verb together with its subject and object arguments is distributed as if it were an NP. It can occur as a possessor NP, an argument of a verb, the object of an adposition, or even a coordinand in a coordinated NP. (Brown & Dryer 2008, 538-545) However, the *and*-verb itself is in some ways like a verb. It takes the same set of subject and object pronominals as a normal transitive verb, so that its first and second coordinand appear to be its subject and object, respectively. Furthermore clause-level particles such as the negative particle and the perfective particle, which occur immediately before the first verb in a clause, may occur immediately before the *and*-verb if it is the first "verb" in the clause. (Brown & Dryer 2008, 546-7) The categorial nature of the *and*-verb is thus very unusual -- it appears to be a verb whose maximal projection is a noun phrase! This improbable mixed categorial affiliation, together with the unlikelihood of a language developing a verb with no semantic content but only a coordinative function, would account for the rarity of *and*-verbs cross-linguistically. Walman is the first language in which *and*-verbs have been observed.

In spite of the perplexing nature of the distribution and categorial affiliation of the Walman *and*-verb, in an LFG analysis the functional nature of the *and*-verb is clear, and not unusual. Like other NP coordinators crosslinguistically, the *and*-verb constructs an indexable conjunction of its subject and object arguments. In addition to allowing us this simple observation, the LFG analysis of Walman SVCs further reveals that all transitive verbs in Walman must have the capacity to perform this coordinative function. Thus we see that the linguistic ecology of Walman is well suited for the development of the unusual phenomenon of the *and*-verb.

Brown, Lea, and Matthew S. Dryer (2008) "The verbs for 'and' in Walman, a Torricelli language of Papua New Guinea." *Language* 84 (3), 528-565.
Crowley, Terry (2002) *Serial Verbs in Oceanic: A descriptive typology*. Oxford University Press.