Directed Manner of Motion in Verb Serialization: A Comparative Study of Indonesian/Malay and Tetun Dili

I. Introduction: This paper discusses verb serialization expressing directed manner of motion in Indonesian/Malay in comparison with Tetun Dili, both from the Malayo-Polynesian branch of the Austronesian language family. Although the two languages are similar in making use of verb serialization for the expression of directed manner of motion (e.g., 'walk across'), they show different patterns in terms of the placement of deictic verbs ('go/come') in a verbal sequence for directed motion interpretations. The goal of this paper is to provide a formal account of the serial verb constructions expressing motion in the two languages which explains the different orders. In particular, we show that the morpheme translating as 'go' (or 'come') can lexicalize a P node in Tetun Dili, but not in Indonesian/Malay.

II. Serial Verbs and Directed Motion: Cross-linguistically, one of the most common patterns of verb serialization involves directed manner of motion expressions, where manner verbs (e.g., 'run') occur in conjunction with verbs describing other semantic components of the directed motion event, such as orientation of direction (e.g.,'ascend'), path (e.g., 'enter') and deixis ('go' and 'come'). When these verbs occur in series, many languages (e.g., Chinese, Thai, Yorùbá) exhibit the sequence of manner + direction/path + deixis in this fixed order in order to allow a single directed-motion-event reading (see Muansuwan 2000 for Thai).

(1)　　a.　Mama duan shang　　yi wan tang lai.
　　　　　　Mom　carry ascend/up a　bowl soup come
　　　　　　'Mom carried up a bowl of soup (here).'　　(Chinese)
　　　　b.　Piti dən khŭn paj.
　　　　　　Piti walk ascend go
　　　　　　'Piti walked up, away from the speaker.'　(Thai)

III. Indonesian/Malay and Tetun Dili: Serial verb constructions involving manner and path verbs in Indonesian/Malay and Tetun Dili show patterns similar to other languages; manner verbs always precede verbs describing direction and path, as illustrated below.

(2)　　a.　John berjalan menyeberang jalan.　b. ami　　lao esik　(ponti)
　　　　　　John ber.walk meN.cross　　street　　*1PL.EXC walk cross　bridge*
　　　　　　'John walked across the street.'　　'We walked across the bridge.'
　　　　　　(Indonesian/Malay)　　　　　　　(Tetun Dili, Hajek 2006)

However, the two languages diverge when the deictic verbs, 'go' and 'come', are involved. In Indonesian/Malay, deictic verbs must come at the initial position of the verbal sequence for directed manner of motion interpretations, as illustrated in (3).

(3)　　John pergi berlari (*pegi) menyeberang sawah　　padi　(*pergi).
　　　　John go　　ber.run　go　meN.cross　rice.field paddy　go
　　　　'John went running across the rice paddy.'

In Tetun Dili, however, deictic verbs must come after verbs describing manner and path/direction for directed motion interpretations, similar to Chinese and Thai, as shown in (4).

(4)　　a.　lori hahaan bá.　　b. tuda bola mai.
　　　　　　take food　go　　　　*throw ball come*
　　　　　　'Take food over there!'　'Throw the ball over here.'

When a deictic verb appears in the initial position of a verbal sequence, the serial verb construction has an interpretation of a sequential event, rather than a single directed motion event.

(5)　　nia bá (fali) sa'e　iha foho　　nia leten.
　　　　3SG go　again ascend LOC mountain POSS top
　　　　'He went and ascended to the top of the mountain (again).' (Hajek 2006)

(6) is a (near) minimal pair that shows a different position of the deictic verbs with respect to directional/path verbs in verb serialization of the two languages.

(6) a. John pergi {naik/mendaki} (*pergi) puncak gunung   itu.
      John go   ascend/climb   go   top   mountain the
      'John went up to the top of the mountain.'
   b. ami sa'e   bá to'o foho   leten.
      we ascend go until mountain top
      'We climbed up to the summit (away from here).' (Klinken et al. 2002: ex. 9)

IV. Analysis: In this paper, we demonstrate that the difference between Indonesian/Malay and Tetun Dili in the position of the deictic verbs is due to the fact that in Tetun Dili, the morphemes which translate as 'go' and 'come' can also serve a prepositional function, meaning 'to' and 'from', respectively. The prepositional use of *bá* 'go', for example, is illustrated in (7).

(7) Ami fó-aluga ami-nia uma ba malae   Tailándia.
    we   give-rent we-POSS house to foreigner Thailand
    'We rent out our house to Thai foreigners.' (Klinken et al. 2002)

In Indonesian/Malay, on the other hand, there exist independent prepositions expressing goal and source, *ke* 'to' and *dari* 'from', respectively. As far as we know, the prepositional use of the deictic verbs *pergi* 'go' and *datang* 'come' is not attested, unlike in other serializing languages.

   Based on the observations made thus far, we argue that the deictic verbs in Tetun Dili (and presumably languages with the same verbal sequence) are analyzed as prepositional elements lacking complements (i.e., particles, similar to English) (cf. Hajek 2006). Austronesian languages are known to lack particles of the English type. However, the following pair of examples in Tetun Dili, which looks reminiscent of English particle shift, is suggestive of a potential existence of particles in this language.

(8) a. sira duni sai nia hosi rai   ne'e.   b. Ami duni sira sai.
      they chase exit him from country this   *we   chase them exit*
      'They chased him out of the area.'   'We chased them out.'

   For Indonesian/Malay, we argue that *pergi* 'go' and *datang* 'come' are the main verbs in serial verb constructions and retain their literal motion meaning. Another possibility for the syntactic analysis of the deictic verbs in verb serialization is to analyze them as light/auxiliary verbs, as the grammaticalization path from deictic to light/auxiliary verbs is also common in serializing languages (e.g., Essegbey 2004). However, we show evidence in favor of the lexical-verb analysis based on a few syntactic facts that distinguish lexical categories from functional ones (e.g., the -*kah* question formation). For instance, both deictic verbs can be under the scope of -*kah*, similar to lexical (manner) verbs in verb serialization, while aspectual auxiliaries (e.g., *lagi* and *sedang* 'progressive') cannot, as seen below.

(9) a. Pergi-kah Tika berjalan memasuki   rumah?
      go-kah   Tika ber.walk meN.enter.LOC house
      'Did Tika go walking into the house?'
   b. *{Sedang/lagi}-kah Tika berlari menyeberangi   jalan?
      PROG-*kah*   *TIka ber.run meN.cross-LOC street*
      'Is Tika running across the street?'

References

Durie, Mark. 1988. Verb serialization and verbal prepositions in Oceanic languages. *Oceanic Linguistics* 27:1: 1–23.

Essegbey, James. 2004. Auxiliaries in serialising language: On COME and GO verbs in Sranan and Ewe. *Lingua* 114: 473–494.

Klinken, Catharina Williams-van, John Hajek, and Rachel Nordlinger. 2002. Serial verbs in Tetun-Dili: A preliminary account. Based on chapter 9 of the book entitled *Tetun Dili: A Grammar of East Timorese Language* published by Pacific Linguistics, Canberra.