Exploring the Limits of Complex Predicates

Workshop to be proposed for the 57th Annual Meeting of the Societas Linguistica Europaea, University of Helsinki, 21–24 August 2024

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Call for abstracts: We invite abstracts for our workshop titled *Exploring the Limits of Complex Predicates*, to be held as part of the 57th Annual Meeting of the Societas Linguistica Europaea, hosted by the University of Helsinki, 21–24 August 2024. Preliminary abstracts of 300 words must be received by 10 November 2023 to be included in the workshop proposal. See submission instructions below.

Workshop description: The term 'complex predicates' has received increasing attention in recent years (Amberber et al. 2010, Bowern 2014, Nash & Samvelian 2015, Nolan & Diedrichsen 2017, Csató et al. 2020, Krauße 2021), yet it still poses a challenge for theoretical linguistics, typology and language description. Complex predicates are generally defined as sequences of phonologically independent words, which together behave like a single predicate with one set of arguments; yet this definition covers a broad range of constructions whose boundaries are not always well defined. 'Complex predicate' is thus used as a cover term to include various syntactic phenomena such as serial verbs, converbs, light verbs, auxiliaries, verb compounds, and even noun incorporation (Anderson 2011, Bisang 1995, Baranova 2013, Butt 2010, Foley 2010, Müller 2002, Bril & Ozanne-Rivierre 2004, Evans 1997, Massam 2013, Van Valin 2005). We also wish to investigate where there are natural and typologically supported boundaries of verbal complex predicates within a still broader domain of multi-verb expression since for both domains the boundaries are not always clear (Ameka 2005, Aikhenvald 2011, Unterladstetter 2020).

Our workshop, proposed in relation to the international project *ComPLETE* (Vanhove et al. 2021), aims to bring together a range of topics that can be subsumed under the term 'complex predicate', from different perspectives, such as synchrony, diachrony and geographical distribution.

Definitions of complex predicates proposed so far always leave some leeway for including or excluding specific linguistic constructions. For example, the term 'complex predicate' could, in theory, apply to constructions given in (1-4).

(1)   *A-**riu**   **pu**.*   [Arop-Lokep, Oceanic, Papua New Guinea]
        1DU-bathe   walk
        'I am going to bathe' (D'Jernes 2002: 262-263)

(2)   *ɟíh ̰cò?~bâh   ~ăh   ̰bàjéjép   ̰cóbᵐ   ɟâp.*   [Yuhup, Nadahup, Brazil]
        afterwards   1SG   go.and.return   bathe   INDIV
        'Afterwards, I went to take a bath.' (Ospina Bozzi 2002:264)

(3) **Bornh**-*na-ga*   *ng-a-**ya**-nggi.*   [Wagiman, isolate, Australia]
bathe-NMLZ-ALL   PST-1SG-go-PST
'I went to bathe.' (Krauße 2021:169)

(4) *Je*   ***prend**-s*   *un*   ***bain**.*   [French, Romance]
1SG.SUBJ   take-1SG.PRS   INDEF.ART.MASC bath
'I am taking a bath.'

These sentences differ in their grammatical make-up: (1-2) juxtapose two verbs and may be termed serial verb constructions, (3-4) involve nominalization strategies and may be termed light verb constructions. To refer to constructions as different as those illustrated in (1-4), grammars have rightfully proposed different terms, yet these constructions do share some similarities, which we propose to capture using the cover term "complex predicate". We deliberately assign a broad definition to that notion: these should correspond to cases when a combination of two lexemes (two verbs as in "go bathe", or a verb and a noun as in "take bath") constitute a single predicate.

We invite our participants to inspect their own data for non-canonical, unexpected or otherwise interesting verb constructions in terms of argument structure, TAM sharing, prosody as well as grammaticalization and lexicalization patterns. Presentations from different theoretical frameworks are also welcome as long as they make clear cross-linguistic predictions.

Proposed topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Methodological approaches to complex predicates (e.g. databases, annotation schemas, questionnaires and other elicitation tools)
2. Empirical and theoretical challenges to categorizing complex predicates into noun-based vs. verb-based complex predicates including rarely discussed cases such as ideophone-based complex predicates
3. Theoretical motivations to distinguish between subtypes of complex predicates (e.g. auxiliaries vs. light verbs)
4. Potential correlation between canonical or unexpected paths of grammaticalization / lexicalization and subtypes of complex predicates (e.g. serial verbs, converbs, light verbs, auxiliaries)
5. Conceptual and terminological issues in the domain of complex predicates (e.g. the notion of finiteness, mechanisms of argument-sharing and argument-pooling in different types of complex predicates, etc.)
6. Complex predicates in sign languages
7. Complex predicates and corpus linguistics
8. Delimiting the domain of verbal complex predicates within the broader domain of 'multi-verb constructions'

Bringing together various approaches to complex predicates across languages will shed light not only on the individual languages in which they are found, but also on theoretical and empirical issues of argument structure and clausehood. Our workshop will be an opportunity to share diverse data from the languages of your expertise and explore potential cross-linguistic approaches to complex predicate phenomena.

Submission instructions: We invite submissions for 20-minute talks that contribute to the description, discussion, and analysis of complex predicates in any language or in a comparative perspective. Preliminary abstracts (300 words, as DOCX file) should be sent to the workshop organizers (daniel.krausse@ens.psl.eu, ekaterina.aplonova@cnrs.fr, czerwinski@uni-mainz.de) by 10 November 2023. If the workshop proposal is successful, prospective presenters will be asked to submit a 500 word abstract directly to SLE by 15 January 2024.

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