



Journal of the Linguistic Society of Papua New Guinea

ISSN: 0023-1959

Vol. 36, 2018

Three-Participant Events in Mussau-Emira: Addenda/Corrections to Margetts (2007)

John Brownie

SIL-PNG

Abstract

Margetts (2007) is an informative article about the strategies used by Oceanic languages for three-participant events. Mussau-Emira is included in the survey, but the data on which it is based is flawed and incomplete, so that her description is faulty. This paper provides better data for Mussau-Emira on the different strategies identified by Margetts.

1 Introduction

Margetts (2007) gives an overview of strategies used in Oceanic languages to encode three-participant events, using published descriptions of 28 languages, including Mussau-Emira, which she refers to as Mussau. The Mussau data is based on Malcolm Ross's sketch (Ross 2002), which was based on limited data and analysis. On the basis of considerably more data, I would like to correct some errors that occur in Margetts's description of Mussau in her paper, based on my 22 years of fieldwork on Mussau. Her knowledge of the languages of the area is much broader than mine, but she has not the experience in this particular language.

2 The encoding strategies

Margetts lists the various strategies for encoding three-participant events in the list reproduced below:

Three-place predicate strategy: All three participants are expressed as direct (i.e., non-oblique) arguments of the verb.

Oblique and adjunct strategies: The verb takes two direct arguments and a third participant is expressed as an oblique argument or adjunct.

Serial verb strategy: Two or more verbs combine in a serial construction and share the three participants as arguments or adjuncts between them.

Verbal modifier strategy: The verb takes two arguments plus a marker indicating transactional orientation or type of instrument.

Incorporation strategy: The verb takes two arguments and one participant is expressed by an incorporated nominal.

Adnominal possessive strategy: The verb takes two arguments and a third participant is expressed as an adnominal dependent of one of the arguments.

Absorption strategy: The verb takes two arguments and the verbal lexeme itself includes information about a third participant.

In the remainder of this section, we will look at each of these strategies and see how Mussau-Emira uses them or not.

2.1 Three-place predicate strategy

Margetts (2007:74) defines three subtypes of this strategy: the direct argument strategy, the causative strategy, and the applicative strategy. The first consists of ditransitive roots with no valence-increasing morphology, the second derives a ditransitive verb from a transitive by adding a causative marker, and the third adds an applicative marker to a transitive root. Mussau-Emira has no ditransitive roots, no causative ditransitives, and no applicative morpheme.

The other category in this strategy is what Margetts (2007:74) calls ‘extended transitives’ (the term adopted from Dixon), which require two NPs and one PP argument. Mussau-Emira does have several verbs that fall into this category. These are all covered in other strategies, the oblique and adjunct, serial verb, verbal modifier and absorption strategies, as discussed below.

2.2 Oblique and adjunct strategies

As noted by Margetts (2007:88), these strategies are used by most, if not all, languages of the world. Mussau-Emira is no exception. However, few verbs fit the definition requiring an oblique argument or adjunct. The most common example would be the verb *tau* ‘give’. The recipient is usually encoded with a prepositional phrase, usually introduced by the general prepositions *tale* or *ta* (used with people) plus a noun phrase, or *eta* ‘dative’ with a possessive pronominal suffix. However, a directional verb in an SVC can also be used, as discussed in section 2.3 below.

It is rare to have three participants expressed as NPs, and usually only one is a full NP, the others expressed as pronouns or implicit with directional verbs. Some typical examples of the use of *tau* are given below. In (1), both the subject and the object are expressed as pronouns, while the recipient is expressed as a PP with a noun. In (2), the subject is null, the object is an NP, and the recipient is implicit, with the directional verb specifying a third person.

- (1) *U=tau-e=la ta aloa-ghi*
 2SG.SBJ=give-3SG.OBJ=PFV PREP uncle-1SG.POSS

me e=ropi-a.

and 3SG.SBJ=drink-3SG.OBJ

‘Give it to my uncle and he will drink it.’

- (2) *Me ghe tau lao sio ose atiulu me*
 and PST give go go.down paddle SG:IV and

lalu ghe ose sso=la elae.

2DU.SBJ PST paddle go.in=PFV shore

‘And he gave her a paddle and they paddled in to shore.’

2.3 Serial verb strategy

Ross (2002) did not note the presence of serial verb constructions in his sketch, though some of his examples are better analysed as serial verbs. Hence Margetts does not include Mussau-Emira as using the serial verb strategy. As noted in Brownie & Brownie (2007:127-140), Mussau-Emira makes extensive use of serial verbs, and this includes some uses that fit this strategy.

In Mussau-Emira, an svc can only have pronominal arguments within the svc itself, as NP arguments occur outside the verb phrase (Brownie & Brownie 2007:127). From our data, an svc only includes one object, so that there are only two participants encoded with NPs or pronouns. Thus the only ways to include a third participant is adding a PP, which is the oblique and adjunct strategy discussed above, and the use of directional verbs.

The directional verbs used are *mae* 'come' (a reflex of POC **mai*), *atu* 'go towards addressee' (a reflex of POC **watu*), and *lao* 'go' (a reflex of POC **lako*). The verb *mae* is used to indicate motion towards the speaker, *atu* to indicate motion towards the addressee, and *lao* to indicate motion towards a third party. In an svc, these verbs can add a third participant which may be implicit or expressed as a PP.

The most common verbs used with this strategy are *tau* 'give', *suu* 'send', *apasunga* 'show, teach' and *auliaa* 'tell'. Some examples using *tau* are given below:

- (3) *E=roo~roo* *va* *u=totu* *elue.talaua me*
 3SG.SBJ=IPFV~be.possible COMP 2SG.SBJ=rise morning and
 u=sapi *tau* *mae* *niu?*
 2SG.SBJ=scrape give come coconut
 'Is it possible that you get up in the morning and scrape a coconut for me
 (lit. scrape give come a coconut)?'
- (4) *la arau voto ateva a=ghe* *tau* *atu*.
 3SG EMP thing SG:I 1SG.SBJ=PST give go.towards.addressee
 'It's the same thing I gave you.'
- (5) *A=ghe* *tau* *lao* *sio* *limalima ateva,*
 1SG.SBJ=PST give go go.down spear SG:I
 me ghe lao ghoa a-mate elo malionge.
 and PST go go.out CAUS-die in sea
 'I gave him the spear, and he went out to kill (it) in the sea.'

In each case, the recipient is not overt, but implied by the directional verb. In (5), the recipient is understood from context, and is the subject of the following clause.

These three directional verbs can all be used independently, as well as in an svc, as discussed in section 2.4.

2.4 Verbal modifier strategy

Margetts (2007:97) distinguishes two sub-strategies of the verbal modifier strategy, the directional strategy, where a direction marker indicates transactional orientation, and the

classifier strategy, where a classificatory marker indicates a third participant, such as an instrument.

2.4.1 Directional strategy

Margetts follows Ross in stating that Mussau-Emira uses a directional strategy, but this is better analysed as serial verb usage. The example in the text (Margetts 2007:98), given below with the current practical orthography as (6a), I analyse as in (6b).

- (6) a. A *mae=a=sio* *ghalima niu.*
 1SG.SBJ bring=3SG.OBJ=to.SPKR five coconut
 ‘I’ve brought five coconuts.’
- b. *A=mae-aa* *sio* *ghalima niu.*
 1SG.SBJ=come-TRZ go.down five coconut
 ‘I’ve brought five coconuts.’

Note that the verb *mae* means ‘come’ rather than ‘bring’. Margetts (2007:98, footnote 9) is correct in noting that the transitivized form would be *mae-i* or *mae-aini*, but both of those require an object pronominal clitic. Mussau-Emira also uses the transitivizing suffix *-aa* when the object is a NP (Brownie 2017:28), which is what is used here. Thus the meaning ‘bring’ is the transitive form of ‘come’. The directional verb *sio* ‘go down’ is semantically bleached in this context, and does not signify direction down or towards the addressee. The conventional way of saying ‘come’ is *mae sio* rather than simply *mae*, and it contrasts with the marked *sio mae* ‘come down’.

Ross (2002:162) mentions another directional suffix, *=la* ‘go (away from speaker)’, but provides no examples. In our analysis, this is the verb *lao* ‘go’.

There is also the verb *atu* ‘go towards addressee’, as noted above in section 2.3. All three verbs can be used both as independent verbs and as part of an SVC, indicating that they are not verbal modifiers. The verb *mae* ‘come’ is rarely used on its own, usually appearing as *mae sio*, as described above. However, it does appear occasionally as an independent verb, as in (7). Similarly, *atu* can be used both as an independent verb, as in (8a), and as an SVC, as in (8b). And again, *lao* can also be used as an independent verb, as in (9) or as part of an SVC, as in (5).

- (7) *Kateva e=mae me e=kata tuku anna ateva.*
 one 3SG.SBJ=come and 3SG.SBJ=bite piece food.POSS.3SG SG:I
 ‘One came and bit off a piece to eat (lit. bit a piece its food).’
- (8) a. *A=piti~piti uru ng=ai etikirighi*
 1SG.SBJ=IPFV~write leaf CNST=tree SG:IV
- e=atu~etu* *eta-m,* *kapu-ghu* *eteva,*
 3SG.SBJ=IPFV~go.to.addressee DAT-2SG.POSS friend-1SG.POSS SG:I
- me natu-m atoa.*
 and child-2SG.POSS PL
 ‘I am writing this letter to you, my friend, and your children.’

- b. *Aghi a=ghe piti atu sio eta-imim*
 1SG 1SG.SBJ=PST write go.to.addressee go.down DAT-2PL.POSS
ia oia uru ng=ai erighi
 3SG this leaf CNST=tree CLF:small
tani a-korokorongana-i=em.
 INF CAUS-strong-TRZ=2PL.OBJ
 'I wrote this short letter to encourage you.'

- (9) *Amatolu sso=la me natu-italua alua,*
 2TRI.SBJ go.in=PFV and child-1DU.INCL.POSS DU
me aghi a=lao e=Katulusae.
 and 1SG 1SG.SBJ=go LOC=Katulusae
 'You and our (two) children go in, but I will go to Katulusae.'

In light of this analysis, the directional strategy is not used in Mussau-Emira, but the examples are really the serial verb strategy.

2.4.2 Classifier strategy

Margetts (2007:102) follows Ross in speaking of classificatory prefixes which indicate manner. However, I analyse these as serial verbs rather than prefixes.

Ross (2002:160) lists six verbs as causative prefixes, saying that, "These are all derived from verbs which were once the first verb in a serial construction." As he notes, though, they all have corresponding full verbs. I would contend that they are still full verbs, and are used in svcs as well as independently. The verbs are (in the current practical orthography) *velu* 'drop', *piri* 'bend', *kata* 'bite', *posoa* 'squeeze', *paru* 'hit' and *bbi* 'push'.

In the following examples, these verbs are shown in various uses, as independent verbs and in svcs. In my corpus, *posoa* only occurs as an independent verb. The verb *velu* in particular is frequently used in svcs with a variety of meanings, including *katuu velu sio* 'fall down (lit. fall drop go down)', *tau velu* 'allow, permit (lit. give drop)' and *ghaa velu* 'take away (lit. take drop)'. Note in (15a), the Western Mussau dialect variant of *bbi*, *vi*, is used with a reciprocal morpheme.

Examples (10a), (11a), (12a), (13), (14a) and (15a) show independent verbs, while examples (10b), (10c), (11b), (12b), (14b) and (15b) are svcs. Each of the svc examples is best analysed as reflecting the serial verb strategy.

- (10) a. *U=kile~kile va u=ghele velu aliki vause atoa?*
 2SG.SBJ=IPFV~KNOW COMP 2SG.SBJ=CF drop youth woman PL
 'Don't you know that you could have lost the girls?'
- b. *A=ghe velu ghoa=la*
 1SG.SBJ=PST drop go.out=PFV
une-ghi ai-rrekati ate
 POSS.CLF-1SG.POSS INS-fish.with.hook SG:II
tale soana atae.

PREP passage SG:II
 'I cast my hook into the passage.'

- c. *Ghaa tau mae sio ai-aku~eku eteva me*
 get give come go.down INS-IPFV~dip SG:I and

a=gh=aku velu manu eteva.
 1SG.SBJ=LIG=dip drop water SG:I
 'Give me the dipper and I will bail out the water.'

- (11) a. *Nau eteva a=ghe piri=la ghalima verete tale*
 time SG:I 1SG.SBJ=PST bend=PFV five bread PREP

ghalima airari taumattu, ghaisae laka
 five thousand person how.many:II basket

ta-piri verete am ghe kaai=la?
 STAT-bend bread 2PL PST put.inside=PFV

'When I broke five loaves of bread for five thousand people, how many baskets of broken bread did you fill?' (Mark 8:19)

- b. *Ghe piri polak-i=la oasa ateva.*

PST bend break-TRZ=PFV vine SG:I
 'He bent and broke the vine.'

- (12) a. *Kinatama paka sumui eteva ghe kata=la me*
 huge large yellowlip.emperor SG:I PST bite=PFV and

ngalu ghe ae=la me
 1DU.EXCL.SBJ PST pull=PFV and

ngalu ghe sso mae elae.
 1DU.EXCL.SBJ PST go.in come shore

'A huge yellowlip emperor bit and we pulled and we came ashore.'

- b. *Kina ghe kata a-toka=la natu pisike riki mosu,*
 Kina PST bite CAUS-sit=PFV child small SG:small pig

me e=kata a-mate=la.
 and 3SG.SBJ=bite CAUS-die=PFV

'Kina caught a small pig in its teeth, and bit it to death.'

- (13) *Ngalu ghe ruu=la me a=ghe posoaa=la niu*
 1DU.SBJ PST finish=PFV and 1SG.SBJ=PST squeeze=PFV coconut

tale inana.

PREP food

'We finished and I squeezed coconut into the food.'

- (14) a. *Me ghe tiu-aa=la tani paru-eghi.*

and PST begin-TRZ=PFV INF hit-1SG.OBJ
 'And he began to beat me.'

- b. *Ghe paru~paru velu poi paua atoa*
 PST IPFV~hit drop EMP dog PL

tani ghaa kie-na aroa ateva, me paua atoa
 INF take POSS.CLF-3SG.POSS CUSCUS SG:I and dog PL

la=ghe nama akapa-i-e=la.

3PL.SBJ=PST eat completely-TRZ-3SG.OBJ=PFV

'He beat away the dogs in vain to get his pet cuscus, but the dogs ate it completely.'

- (15) a. *Ami ghe tiu-aa=la tani anamisi,*
 1PL.EXCL PST begin-TRZ=PFV INF play

me ami ghe ai-vi.

and 1PL.EXCL PST RECP-push

'We began to play, and we were pushing each other.'

- b. *Pakupaku ghe bbi velu lao sio Boso.*
 Pakupaku PST push drop go go.down Boso
 'Pakupaku pushed Boso off him.'

In conclusion, the classifier sub-strategy of the verbal modifier strategy is not present in Mussau-Emira. Since neither of the two sub-strategies are present, we may say that the verbal modifier strategy is not present.

2.5 Incorporation strategy

As recognised by Margetts (2007:107), noun incorporation is not a strategy used in Mussau-Emira.

2.6 Adnominal possessive strategy

The adnominal possessive strategy is one which Margetts was unable to determine the presence of in several languages, including Mussau-Emira, though she considered it as possible (Margetts 2007:111). In fact, it is used productively in Mussau-Emira, though it is relatively infrequent. Most occurrences involve a possessive classifier which is associated with food or drink, which generally constrains the meaning to the benefactive rather than the attributive.

- (16) *Vaalua a=laa tauu me a=gh=ai*
 how 1SG.SBJ=go cook and 1SG.SBJ=LIG=cook.in.earth.oven

righi ane-m inana?

EXIST POSS.CLF-2SG.POSS food

'Shall I go cook and bake some food for you (lit. bake some of your food)?'

- (17) *Ghila atoa la=ghe loo~loo see*
 bird PL 3PL=PST IPFV~fly ATELIC
tani pae ane-ira inana.
 INF search POSS.CLF-3PL.POSS food
 ‘The birds were flying around to look for some food for themselves (lit. to look for their food).’
- (18) *La=ghe kaa~karasaa ghonna vatum*
 3PL.SBJ=PST IPFV~grate POSS.CLF.3SG tapioca
me la=ghe sae tau~tau nongina ghe aisulia.
 and 3PL.SBJ=PST go.up IPFV~give where PST hide
 ‘They would grate tapioca for him (lit. grate his tapioca) and take it to where he was hiding.’
- (19) *Ai-poli-ghi, vausenna ateva Kuiu ta Litia*
 INS-buy-1SG.POSS wife.3SG.POSS SG:I Kuiu APP Litia
ghe tau mae sio gholu-qhu viskete.
 PST give come go.down CLF.food-1SG.POSS biscuit
 ‘As my reward, Kuiu’s wife Litia gave me a biscuit to eat.’

In (16), the benefactive is the only meaning that would make sense. In (17), it could possibly be interpreted as the birds having lost the food that they already had, but the benefactive is the most natural meaning. In (18), the specific classifier used is *gholu* (*gholu + -na > ghonna*), which is used for certain types of food ready to eat, and *kaarasa* ‘grate’ is metonymy for the whole act of preparation of this particular form of tapioca, which makes the benefactive the most natural interpretation. In (19), the context makes it clear that the biscuit was Litia’s to give to the narrator of the story, rather than a biscuit that was already his.

2.7 Absorption strategy

Here, Mussau-Emira, in common with other Oceanic languages, uses various of the sub-strategies. As listed by Margetts (2007:117), these are direct lexicalization, zero derivation, denominal derivation and participant-based event classification.

2.7.1 Direct lexicalization

This is the common strategy that is likely used by all the world’s languages. There are many verbs which incorporate an implied participant in the definition of the term. Examples include various verbs of carrying, *sunuki* ‘carry something on shoulder’, *rruu* ‘carry something on head’, *sau* ‘carry something over the arm’, *sukuli* ‘carry something in the arms’, *taili* ‘carry something with a handle’, *vakole* ‘carry something under the arm’, *vao* ‘carry something on the back or around the neck’. Other examples would include *aisaraki* ‘shovel something’, *tauu* ‘cook something in an earth oven’, *kea* ‘fish with a net’, *osa* ‘throw a spear at something’, *pake* ‘thatch a house’, *rariaa* ‘rub something on with the hands’,

rramuti ‘chew something’, *saiki* ‘sew something’, *sapi* ‘scrape the flesh from something’, *tiongo* ‘pole (a boat)’, and *vukala* ‘anchor (a boat), hang something, drift’.

2.7.2 Zero derivation

In zero derivation, the form of the noun is identical to the form of the verb for the associated activity. With turning nouns into verbs being a productive process in Mussau-Emira, several examples could be given. A few are *susu* ‘breast’ as ‘suckle a child at the breast’, *ane* ‘termite’ as ‘eat away at something’, *patu* ‘knot’ as ‘tie a knot’, and *kou* ‘lid, cover’ as ‘cover something’.

2.7.3 Denominal derivation

The denominal derivation adds some morphology to a noun to make a verb. This is also used in Mussau-Emira. For example, *sinaka* ‘sun’ becomes *sinaki* ‘warm something in the sun’, presumably by the removal of an echo vowel (from the Proto-Malayo-Polynesian **sinaR* ‘ray of light, sunbeam’, (Blust & Trussel 2017)) and the addition of the transitive marker *-i*. Other examples include the noun *asu* ‘smoke’ becoming the verb *asui* ‘smoke something, dry something over a fire’, and *atu* ‘stone’ becoming *atui* ‘weight something down’. This is similar to zero derivation, in that the noun becomes a verb, but that verb is intransitive, so a transitivizer is added to create a transitive verb.

2.7.4 Participant-based event classification

This type of sub-strategy is mostly seen in the motion verbs which are used in svcs. Like Hoava, Mussau-Emira has the verbs *mae* ‘come’, *atu* ‘go towards addressee’ and *lao* ‘go’, which are used to indicate direction of the main verb of the svc. This is discussed above in section 2.3.

3 Conclusion

From this survey, it can be seen that Mussau-Emira uses most of the strategies identified by Margetts. The only strategies not used at all are Incorporation and Verbal Modifier, though the Three-Place strategy is only marginal in Mussau-Emira. Table 1 lists the strategies and whether they are used in Mussau-Emira, as reported by Margetts and in this paper.

Strategy	Sub-strategy	Present according to Margetts	Present according to this paper
Three-place predicate	Direct argument	No	No
	Causative	No	No
	Applicative	No	No
	Extended transitive	No	Yes
Oblique and adjunct		Not specified	Yes

Strategy	Sub-strategy	Present according to Margetts	Present according to this paper
Serial verb		No	Yes
Verbal modifier	Directional	Yes	No
	Classifier	Possibly	No
Incorporation		No	No
Adnominal possessive		Unknown	Yes
Lexical absorption	Direct lexicalization	Yes	Yes
	Zero derivation	Yes	Yes
	Denominal derivation	Yes	Yes
	Participant-based event classification	Yes	Only as serial verb

Table 1 Summary of the strategies in Mussau-Emira

It is possible that closer examination may reveal this to be true in other languages as well, with most of the strategies used. The difference would then be in what is most normal or productive in each language, with each language preferring some strategies over others that are possible within its grammatical system.

In some ways, this serves as a caveat to generalisations based on limited grammatical studies. In particular, as Margetts (2007:111) acknowledges, the absence of a particular feature in a description of a particular language's grammar does not necessarily mean the absence of that feature in the language, but only that the feature was not being commented on in the description. Further, limitations in grammatical sketches include errors in data or missing data, which leads to erroneous conclusions in generalisations.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations generally follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules. The following abbreviations are used in this paper:

- 1 = first person
- 2 = second person
- 3 = third person

APP	= appositive
ATELIC	= atelic
CAUS	= causative
CF	= counterfactual
CLF	= classifier
CNST	= construct
COMP	= complementizer
DAT	= dative
DU	= dual
EMP	= emphasis
EXCL	= exclusive
EXIST	= existential
I	= class I
II	= class II
INCL	= inclusive
INF	= infinitive
INS	= instrumental
IPFV	= imperfective
IV	= class IV
LIG	= ligature
LOC	= locative
OBJ	= object
PFV	= perfective
PL	= plural
POC	= Proto-Oceanic
POSS	= possessive
PREP	= preposition
PST	= past
RECP	= reciprocal
SBJ	= subject
SG	= singular
SPKR	= speaker
STAT	= stative
SVC	= serial verb construction
TRI	= trial number
TRZ	= transitivizer

References

- Blust, Robert and Stephen Trussel. 2017. Austronesian Comparative Dictionary. <http://www.trussel2.com/acd/>, accessed 14 November 2017.
- Brownie, John. 2017. Valence Change in Mussau-Emira. *Language & Linguistics in Melanesia* 35:25-54. http://www.langlxmelanesia.com/LLM%20Vol.%2035%202017%20Brownie_Valence%20FV.pdf, accessed 9 April 2018.
- Brownie, John and Marjo. 2007. *Mussau grammar essentials*. Ukarumpa, EHP, Papua New Guinea: SIL. <http://www.pnglanguages.sil.org/resources/archives/23621>, accessed 14 November 2017.
- Margetts, Anna. 2007. Three-Participant Events in Oceanic Languages. *Oceanic Linguistics* 46:71-127.
- Ross, Malcolm D. 2002. Mussau. In John Lynch, Malcolm Ross and Terry Crowley (eds.) *The Oceanic languages*, 148–166. London: Curzon Press.