

Complex predicates in Bierebo

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Bierebo is an Oceanic language of Epi island, Central Vanuatu. A salient feature of the language is the prevalence of complex predicate constructions which are of two types. The first type, with the pattern SV(O)V(O), comprises two verb forms which are loosely bound and between which an NP argument may intervene, functioning as object of the first verb and subject of the second; subject-marking agreement is obligatory on both verb forms:

- (1) **a-pwar kin ne-pa navin Valestir**
3PL.S-R.carry 1sg 1SG.S-R.go.up up PLACE
'they brought me up to Valestir' (lit. They carried me I went up to Valestir)

The second type has the basic pattern SVXO and comprises either two verbs or, more often, one verb and one verb-like form. This type exhibits tighter binding: no intervening arguments are permitted and subject-marking occurs only on the first form:

- (2) **a-pwi-pini tos**
3PL.S-R.grip-R.kill torch
'they turned off the torch'

In this paper I will present examples of both types of construction, examining their semantics and transitivity. I will also discuss the various options for their analysis, including clause-chaining versus core-layer serial verb constructions for the first type and compounding, verb+adjunct/affix, or nuclear-layer serial verb constructions for the second.