JAMINJUNG SIMPLE AND COMPLEX PREDICATES IN A CROSS-LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

CHAPTER 7

In this thesis, I have investigated the properties of simple and complex verbs in Jaminjung and Ngaliwurru, two varieties of a typologically unusual Australian language. Its unusual characteristic is that two distinct lexical categories take over the functions that verbs have in most other languages. One of these is a closed class consisting of only 30 members or so. Since these roots take verbal inflections, they were identified as verbs proper or ‘generic verbs’ (§2.4). These verbs may constitute predicates on their own in a finite clause (§3.1). The other class consists of uninflecting predicative elements, termed ‘coverbs’ (§2.3). Coverbs may function as the sole predicate only in non-finite clauses, which are either subordinated by means of a case marker (§2.6.5), or semi-independent, but stylistically marked and highly dependent on contextual information in their interpretation (§3.4). The main function of coverbs is the formation of complex verbs, together with a generic verb. In canonical complex verbs (§3.2), one or sometimes two unmarked coverb(s) combine with a verb in a single intonation unit. Some additional constructions consist of a verb and a marked coverb, among them a highly productive progressive construction (§3.3). The most interesting consequence of this ‘division of labour’ between coverbs and generic verbs is that the verbs can be shown to categorise events: Since a verb from a closed class is obligatory in every finite clause (either as a simple verb or as part of a complex verb), all event expressions are sorted into a small number of categories by the choice of verb (§5.1).

A number of questions, posed in the introduction in §1.1, were addressed in this study. The first main question concerns the conceptual basis for event categorisation by generic verbs. Throughout Chs. 5 and 6, I have shown that Jaminjung verbs are far from being ‘meaningless’ carriers of verbal inflections (as has sometimes been claimed to be the case in descriptions of other languages of this type). Rather, the use of verbs is motivated in various ways. First, the verbs are semantically general (this general meaning may not correspond to the nearest – or even the most frequently applicable – translation equivalent in English). Second, verbs may have secondary senses which are motivated by (some cross-linguistically observable, some language- or perhaps culture-specific) semantic links to the basic sense. The types of semantic links encountered include metaphorical and metonymic extension, and semantic bleaching. Third, the use of the verbs has to be seen as motivated through the paradigmatic oppositions that hold with respect to other verbs. Of course this is
true for the lexicon in any language, but it becomes particularly obvious in the case of a closed class like that of the Jaminjung verbs. Fourth, the combination of verbs with coverbs is motivated in that a given verb combines with coverbs from the semantically circumscribed classes.

The features of events that are relevant for event categorisation by generic verbs correspond to the semantic components of the verbs. The relevant components that could be identified include, among others, the number of salient participants in an event (reflected in the valency of the verb that is used), locomotion vs. change of location, contact and affectedness, transfer of an entity to or away from a third participant, internal cause, some more specific features like ingestion, visual perception, and creation, and finally, to some extent telicity. For events categorised as locomotion, further distinctions that are made pertain to the direction of motion (oriented towards the deictic centre or with respect to another participant), and the involvement of a concomitant participant. For events of contact and affectedness, mere contact is distinguished from impact, and from induced motion. Both physical contact and some types of non-physical contact are categorised by the same verb, while impact events are further subdivided according to the shape and trajectory of the agent/instrument making the impact. Some types of affectedness by non-physical means, change of state, perception and memory are covered by secondary senses of a number of verbs. The senses of these polysemous verbs form radial categories of the type that has also been described for nominal classifiers (see §5.10 for a more detailed summary).

The second main question posed at the beginning of Ch. 1 concerns the division of labour between coverbs and verbs. As shown in Ch. 3, verbs are used on their own, as simple verbs, in roughly 40% of all finite clauses. This is of course related to their rather non-specific meaning, which on the one hand allows them to function as classifiers of events, and on the other hand allows for pragmatic enrichment in specific contexts. As for the remaining class of coverbs, I have shown in Ch. 6 that these indeed cover the range of meanings covered by verbs e.g. in Indo-European languages, and in addition include items that are best translated into these languages as adverbs. Moreover, coverbs can be subdivided into predicate classes based on the sets of verbs they combine with, and these classes largely correspond to predicate classes found in other languages. Coverbs are highly versatile in their combination with verbs (with differences depending on the subclass they belong to); in other words, the semantic relationships encountered in complex verbs can be of different types. The verb may be semantically included in the coverb, it may show partial semantic overlap with the coverb, or coverb and verb may not overlap at all semantically. In the latter case, the coverb is interpreted as expressing a phase of the event described by the verb, a manner in which it is performed, or a resulting event (where the causing event is expressed by the verb). With motion verbs, the reading can also simply be one of ‘associated motion’, i.e. motion simultaneous with, or followed by, another
event. However, these differences should be seen as differences in semantic interpretation only; formally, all complex verbs instantiate a single type of complex verb construction. I have argued in §3.2 that its constructional meaning amounts to the encoding of a unitary macro-event (usually consisting of subevents). The restrictions on complex verb formation thus correspond both to restrictions on the semantic compatibility of verbs and coverbs, and to restrictions on what can be construed as a unitary macro-event.

Naturally, as shown in Ch. 4, the differences in semantic interpretation may also result in different possibilities for argument sharing between verbs and coverbs. This was accounted for by employing a constructional model of argument structure, where argument expressions are not directly predicted from the lexical representation of the predicate, but where semantic participants of predicates are linked to independently existing argument structure constructions on the basis of compatibility of the predicate’s meaning with the constructional meaning. Argument sharing can then be described as the linking of participants of more than one predicate to a single morpho-syntactic argument expression. In this way, for example, the single participant of a monovalent coverb can receive very different expressions depending on whether it aligns with the single participant of a monovalent verb, the first participant of a bivalent verb (represented as Actor), or the second participant of a bivalent or trivalent verb (represented as Undergoer). In the account developed here, it is not necessary to postulate polysemy for the coverb in this case; the differences in argument structure can be described as the contributions of the verb and the argument structure constructions themselves to the complex expression. The valency of coverbs, thus, cannot be inferred directly from a single type of expression they occur with, but only by taking into account the range of expressions they occur in. These can also be described in terms of restrictions on argument sharing: coverbs and verbs have to share at least one argument, and usually the argument structure of the coverb is included in that of the verb. Thus, while monovalent coverbs may combine with both monovalent and bivalent verbs, bivalent coverbs only combine with bivalent verbs (except in the progressive construction).

In the remainder of this chapter, these findings will be placed in an areal and typological context. In §7.1, Jaminjung and Ngaliwurru will be compared to other Northern Australian languages with similar types of complex predicates. In §7.2, the nature of Jaminjung coverbs, generic verbs, and complex verbs is examined from a cross-linguistic perspective, in order to clarify what is really distinctive about this language, and what reflects cross-linguistic tendencies.
7.1 Complex verbs in Northern Australia

7.1.1 Complex verbs as an areal feature

Complex verbs of the type described in the previous chapters – with constituents belonging to distinct lexical categories, one of which is a closed class – are not unique to the Jaminjungan languages. Rather, they constitute an areal feature in Northern Australia, spread across almost all non-Pama-Nyungan language families, and shared with some languages of the Pama-Nyungan family. Complex verbs appear to have been a feature of these languages for a considerable time. The location of origin of this construction, and the direction of its spread, cannot be traced with any confidence; Capell (1976: 615) suggests that it spread from west to east. The area characterised by languages with complex verbs of this type is indicated by shading in Map 1 at the beginning of Ch. 1; see also Table 7-1 below.

Thus, languages that are at most distantly related genetically exhibit considerable similarities in complex verb formation. The degree of structural convergence under the influence of multilingualism can be illustrated with the pairs of translation equivalents in (7-1) and (7-2). These were offered by a speaker who is bilingual in Jaminjung and Ngarinyman, a neighbouring Pama-Nyungan language of the Ngumbin group. The Ngarinyman verb roots and inflections in (7-1b) and (7-2b) are distinctly Pama-Nyungan (note the lack of pronominal prefixes on the verbs), but the system of complex verbs is very similar to that of Jaminjung. The two languages also share many cognate coverbs, like lurr ‘pierce’ in (7-1), and yirr ‘move out’, and wawu/wub ‘warm up/cook’ in (7-2).

(7-1a) lurr gan-arra-ny=nu malajagu nawij-gi,
JAM pierce 3sg:3sg-PUT-PST=3sg.OBL goanna neck-LOC

bul ya-wurum gurij
emerge IRR:3sg-COME fat

b) lurr yuwa-rni wirriny-ga, ngaja bad yan-a-min
NGAR pierce PUT-PST neck-LOC maybe emerge GO-PRS-HITHER

‘he pierced it/the goanna in the neck, since it/the fat might come out’
(ER, MIX006)

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190 Complex verbs of various types, including serial verb constructions, have also been described for languages outside the Northern Australian linguistic area, for example Diyari (Austin 1981a), Ngiyambaa/Wanggaybuwan (Donaldson 1980), Wambaya (Nordlinger 1998c), and Western Desert languages such as Yankunytjatjara (Goddard 1985; see also Blake 1987: 118). These will be left out of consideration here.
(7-2a) **wawu gan-irriga-m, biri yirr gani-bili**

JAM warm.up 3sg:3sg-COOK-PRS guts move.out 3sg:3sg-FUT:GET/HANDLE

b) **wub gamba-rlan, garnyirri yirr man-ku=rna**

NGAR warm COOK-PRS guts move.out GET/HANDLE-FUT=NOW?

‘he is warming it up, (and) he is going to take out the guts’ (goanna) (ER, MIX010)

It is quite possible that the greater susceptibility of coverbs to borrowing, illustrated in (7-1) and (7-2), may in itself have been a motivating factor for the rise and spread of complex verb constructions. Retaining only a closed class of verbs would reduce the need to learn a large number of paradigms of the (often irregular) verbal inflections. Most likely, the Northern Australian languages have gone through several cycles of complex verb formation, with different stages in this cycle reflected by the synchronically observable types (cf. Capell 1979a, McGregor to appear). The types of complex predicates attested in Northern Australia constitute a continuum, ranging from the clearly phrasal complex verbs of Jaminjung and some of the neighbouring languages, to languages where the two components are so tightly fused that they have lost any structural and semantic independence, and may be treated, synchronically, as unanalysable verb roots (§7.1.2).

A second, interrelated, feature in which the languages differ is the size of the two word classes involved. In most languages, the uninflecting elements form an open class. The inflecting elements may form an open class as well, but most commonly form a closed class which, nevertheless, can be of various sizes. At the extreme, inflecting elements are reduced to a small class of grammatical formatives (§7.1.3 and §7.1.4).

The real similarities and differences between the languages are often obscured by differences in terminology and analysis in the available descriptions (see the beginnings of §2.3 and §2.4 for an overview of the terms corresponding to the terms ‘coverb’ and ‘verb’ used here). Overviews – mostly rather cursory – of complex verb systems attested in Australia can be found in Capell (1976, 1979a), Dixon (1980: 426ff.), Blake (1987: 118ff.), Reid (to appear), and for the Daly River subgroup of languages, in Tryon (1974). An in-depth overview is presented in McGregor (2000).
In the following sections, only a brief overview is attempted, sufficient to place Jaminjung and Ngaliwurru within the context of other languages in the same linguistic area. The range of attested types is summarised in Table 7-1 (which is by no means an exhaustive overview of all languages in the area). The table provides some information both about the size of the system of inflecting elements (see §7.1.3), and the tightness of nexus (see §7.1.2). The numbers in the column ‘Nr of verbs’ indicate (i) the absolute number of inflecting elements, and, in brackets (if the information was available), (ii) the number of inflecting elements which are attested in complex verbs (as opposed to simple verbs), and (iii) the number of inflecting elements which are restricted to occurrence in a complex verb, i.e. cannot function as simple verbs.

The abbreviations for the types of complex verbs should be read as follows. ‘Phrasal’ corresponds to complex verbs of the Jaminjung type. ‘Bound disc(ontinuous)’ refers to complex verbs of the Gooniyandi type illustrated in (7-3) below, where uninflecting and inflecting stems form a single phonological and distributional word, but are separated by inflectional morphology. Finally, ‘bound cont(inuous)’ corresponds to one of the types of complex verbs attested in Warlpiri (see (7-4a) below) and Mangarrayi (see (7-5b) below), where the two stems are contiguous.

Table 7-1. Complex verbs in Northern Australia: Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language family</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Nr of verbs or inflecting elements</th>
<th>Type of complex verb</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Warndarang</td>
<td>35 (28/12)</td>
<td>bound disc.</td>
<td>Heath 1980a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alawa</td>
<td>30+ (20/? )</td>
<td>bound disc.</td>
<td>Sharpe 1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunwinyguan</td>
<td>Binjin Gun-wok</td>
<td>~200 (16/? )</td>
<td>bound cont.</td>
<td>Evans to appear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ngalakan</td>
<td></td>
<td>bound cont.</td>
<td>Merlan 1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>??</td>
<td>Mangarrayi</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>bound cont. and phrasal</td>
<td>Merlan 1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>??</td>
<td>Wardaman</td>
<td>130+</td>
<td>phrasal</td>
<td>Merlan 1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>??</td>
<td>Wagiman</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>phrasal</td>
<td>Cook 1987, 1988; Wilson 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Daly River”</td>
<td>Malak-Malak</td>
<td>6 (6/1)</td>
<td>phrasal?</td>
<td>Birk 1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maranunggu</td>
<td>18 (18/? )</td>
<td>phrasal</td>
<td>Tryon 1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marrithiel</td>
<td>22 (22/10)</td>
<td>bound disc.</td>
<td>Green 1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ngankigurungkurr</td>
<td>29 (29/18)</td>
<td>bound disc.</td>
<td>Hoddinott &amp; Kofod 1988, Reid 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/ Ngan’kityemerri</td>
<td>31 (31/21)</td>
<td>bound disc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Murrinh-Patha</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>bound disc.</td>
<td>Walsh 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Variety</td>
<td>Tokens (Tokens/Total</td>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaminjungan</td>
<td>Ngaliwurru</td>
<td>28 (26/3)</td>
<td>phrasal</td>
<td>this study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaminjungan</td>
<td>Nungali</td>
<td>36 (27/3)</td>
<td>phrasal</td>
<td>this study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jarragan</td>
<td>Miriwoong</td>
<td>22+</td>
<td>phrasal</td>
<td>Bolt et al 1971b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jarragan</td>
<td>Gajirrabeng</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>phrasal</td>
<td>Kofod 1996a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jarragan</td>
<td>Gija</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>phrasal</td>
<td>Kofod 1996a, b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunuban</td>
<td>Bunuba</td>
<td>10 (10/?/6)</td>
<td>bound disc.</td>
<td>Rumsey 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunuban</td>
<td>Gooniyandi</td>
<td>12 (12/12)</td>
<td>bound disc.</td>
<td>Mcgregor 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worroran</td>
<td>Ungarinyin</td>
<td>500+ (14/1)</td>
<td>phrasal</td>
<td>Rumsey 1982a, Saunders 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worroran</td>
<td>Wunambal</td>
<td>14 (10/?1)</td>
<td>phrasal</td>
<td>Vászolyi 1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worroran</td>
<td>Worrora</td>
<td>~10</td>
<td>phrasal</td>
<td>Silverstein 1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worroran</td>
<td>Gunin</td>
<td>18+ (14/1)</td>
<td>phrasal</td>
<td>Mcgregor 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyulnymulu</td>
<td>Nyulnyul</td>
<td>200+ (<del>12/</del>)</td>
<td>phrasal</td>
<td>Mcgregor 1996a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyulnymulu</td>
<td>Nyikina</td>
<td>150+ (~12/?)</td>
<td>phrasal</td>
<td>Stokes 1996, Mcgregor 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyulnymulu</td>
<td>Warrwa</td>
<td>50+÷ (<del>12/</del>)</td>
<td>phrasal</td>
<td>Mcgregor 1994b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyulnymulu</td>
<td>Yawuru</td>
<td>82+ (~12/?)</td>
<td>phrasal</td>
<td>Stokes 1996, Mcgregor 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyulnymulu</td>
<td>Bardi</td>
<td>200+ (29/~)</td>
<td>phrasal</td>
<td>Metcalfe 1975, Nicolas 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN: Ngumbin</td>
<td>Gurindji</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>phrasal</td>
<td>McConvell n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN: Ngumbin</td>
<td>Ngarinyman</td>
<td>30+</td>
<td>phrasal</td>
<td>Jones 1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN: W. Desert</td>
<td>Bilinarra</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>phrasal</td>
<td>Nordlinger 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN: ??</td>
<td>Jaru</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>phrasal</td>
<td>Tsunoda 1981a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN: ??</td>
<td>Walmajarri</td>
<td>40+ (~40/?3)</td>
<td>phrasal</td>
<td>Wilkins 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN: Ngarrka</td>
<td>Warlmanpa</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>phrasal</td>
<td>Nash 1998a, c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN: Ngarrka</td>
<td>Warlpiri</td>
<td>~120</td>
<td>phrasal</td>
<td>Nash 1986, 1998b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN: W. Desert</td>
<td>Wangkajunga</td>
<td>200++ (25/~)</td>
<td>phrasal</td>
<td>Mcgregor 2000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

192 Based on Richards & Hudson (1990).
7.1.2 Tightness of nexus

As the overview in Table 7-1 shows, Jaminjung occupies an intermediate position in virtually every respect between the types of complex verbs attested in Northern Australia: it has a verb class of intermediate size, of around 30 simple verbs. Naturally, complex verbs constitute the majority of verbal expressions. Nevertheless, the uninflecting coverbs maintain a relatively high degree of independence, in that they constitute separate phonological words. Evidence comes from the flexible ordering of verbs and coverbs within the complex verb, which even allows for intervening constituents, and from the possibility of more than one coverb to occur with the same inflecting verb (§3.2). Furthermore, both verbs (§3.1) and coverbs (§3.4, §2.6.5) can be used on their own, and are recognised and translated independently by native speakers. Both verbs and coverbs may also be independently replaced by a Kriol loan (§3.5).

These properties are shared by most of the closer neighbours of Jaminjung: the Jarragan languages Gija, Miriwoong and Gajrrrabeng in the west, Wardaman and Wagiman in the east and north-east, and the Pama-Nyungan languages of the Ngumbin group immediately to the south and west, comprising, in addition to Ngarinyman (illustrated in (7-1b) and (7-2b) above) also Mudbura, Gurindji, Bilinara, Jaru, and Walmatjarri. Most Eastern Kimberley languages – those belonging to the Worrorran and Nyulnyulan family – also have phrasal complex verbs (for references see Table 7-1).

In a number of other languages, the phrasal origin of the complex verbs is quite recognisable; however, they behave like single units distributionally. Their constituents are usually not used, or recognised, in isolation, and their order is fixed. On the other hand, verbal inflections intervene between the uninflecting and the inflecting component of the complex verb; in other words, the uninflecting element is joined onto the inflecting element. The phrasal origin is also reflected in the stress pattern of these complex verbs, in that word stress is assigned to both components (see e.g. Reid to appear, McGregor 1990: 126, 134). An example of a complex verb of this type from Gooniyandi, a language of the Bunuban family, is given in (7-3); the boundary between uninflecting element and inflecting element is represented as ‘+’.

(7-3) gárd+binggúruni\textsuperscript{193}

GOON HIT+FUT:2pl:3pl:HIT

‘you (pl) will hit them’ (McGregor 1990: 200f.)

This type of complex verb, intermediate in tightness of nexus between phrasal complex verbs and complex stems, is labelled ‘bound discontinuous’ in Table

\textsuperscript{193} Throughout this section, orthography and glosses for the languages cited are adapted, for ease of comparison.
7-1 (the two stems are discontinuous in that they are separated by verbal
inflections, but bound in that they are part of a single distributional unit). As well
as in the Bunuban languages, this type is also found in the Marran languages of
South-East Arnhem land, and in the languages of the Daly River area. For one of
these languages, Ngan’gityemerri, a restructuring, within less than 60 years, of
complex verbs of the ‘phrasal’ type into bound forms has been documented
(Reid to appear).

A stress pattern similar to that found in Gooniyandi is described for Warlpiri in
complex verbs by Nash (1986: 111f.). In Warlpiri, at least for a subtype of
complex verbs, the constituent order is variable. However, when the uninfl ecting
element – the preverb – precedes the infl ecting verb, it may have reduced word
status in terms of phonological shape, and in this sense becomes a bound stem
(see also Tsunoda 1981a: 177 for Jaru). For example, wuruly in (7-4a) is not a
well-formed phonological word; it has to be augmented with the final syllable
-pa, as in (7-4b) and (7-4c), in order to be able to follow the infl ecting verb. In
Warlpiri, verbs are infl ected only by suffi xes, and person and number are marked
on second position clitics. If the preverb immediately precedes the infl ecting
verb, as in (7-4a), the two stems are therefore contiguous (again, the boundary is
indicated with a plus sign).

(7-4a) wuruly+ya-ni=rli
WARL hide+go-NPST=1du.incl
b) wurulypa=rli ya-ni
hide=1du.incl go-NPST
c) ya-ni=rli wurulypa
go-NPST=1du.incl hide
‘let’s go and hide’ (Nash 1986: 52)

Mangarrayi, a Non-Pama-Nyungan language, is unusual in that it has both
phrasal complex verbs which are similar to those in Jaminjung, as in (7-5a), and
compound verbs where the stems of both constituents are continuous and flanked
by infl ections, as in (7-5b). Compound verbs are formed with a subset of those
elements that are used as infl ecting verbs (Merlan 1982: 123ff.).

(7-5a) barnbayi ja-wurla-wu-yi-n
MANG tease 3-3pl-HIT-REFL-PRS
‘they are joking with each other’ (Merlan 1982: 135)

b) ngiyan-gali-ja-ny
MANG 3sg:1pl.excl-report-V-PST
‘he reported to us’ (Merlan 1982: 68)
The structural difference between compound verbs as in (7-5b), and complex verbs forming single distributional words but with intervening verbal inflections, as in (7-3), can be explained diachronically in terms of the relative ordering of the fusion of phrasal complex verbs into one-word complex verbs, and the grammaticalisation of pronominal prefixes and other verbal affixes (Heath 1976: 739): If distributional units are formed from phrasal complex predicates before the grammaticalisation of the pronominal prefixes, compounds with adjoining stems result. Otherwise, verb complexes with intervening inflections result.

A number of other non-Pama-Nyungan languages, all located in the east of the non-Pama-Nyungan area, and including languages from the Gunwinyguan family, and Nunggubuyu (Heath 1984: 423ff.), have verb stems which seem to have their origin in compounds of the type illustrated in (7-5b). However, these are clearly single phonological words, and in many cases, the closed-class components of the former compound have lost their independent status altogether.¹⁹⁴ Synchronically, the original ‘inflecting verbs’ only have the status of a recurrent submorphemic element, and are often treated as conjugation markers or ‘thematic’ markers in grammatical descriptions. Sometimes a semantic basis is reported for the conjugation classes, and sometimes the ‘markers’ still exist as simple roots and are semi-productive in compound formation. All these features reflect their origin as independent verbs. For example, the monosyllabic root -wo in Bininj Gun-wok may function as a simple verb root meaning ‘give’, but it is also found as the second element in synchronically unanalysable stems like bawo ‘leave’ (Evans to appear: §8.2).

Reflexes of such a development can even be found in the Jaminjungan languages. For example, the – now synchronically simplex – verb root -ina+ma ‘KICK/STEP’ is transparently related to -ina ‘CHOP’, and the submorphemic element +ma is also found in other verb roots (see §2.4.2.1 for a full list of diachronically complex verb roots). Similar reflexes of complex stems in the inflecting verb class are also found in other Non-Pama-Nyungan languages, e.g. Wardaman (Merlan 1994: 173ff.), Wagiman (Wilson 1999), and the Jarragan languages (Kofod 1996a). These languages, thus, reflect two stages in the cycle of complex verb formation postulated here. Being diachronically complex, these verbs now function as simple verbs but may enter again into complex verb formation with independent, uninflecting elements.

¹⁹⁴ Interestingly, these languages, where complex verbs form tightly-knit unit, also exhibit nominal incorporation and other manifestations of polysynthetic structure, which are completely absent from Jaminjung.
7.1.3 Size of word classes

The size of the classes of uninflecting and inflecting elements is obviously not unrelated to the tightness of nexus within the complex verb. In complex verbs with a tight nexus, that is compound verbs or stems which are complex only diachronically, the elements corresponding to inflecting verbs typically form a small class with around a dozen members. In languages with a looser nexus between the constituents of the complex verb, the size of the class of inflecting elements may vary greatly. It ranges from 6 in Malak-Malak, to more than a hundred in Warlpiri, and several hundreds in some of the Worrarrran and Nyulnyulan languages (see Table 7-1 for references). In a great number of the Northern Australian languages, though, inflecting verbs form a very small closed class; in the linguistic area made up of Jaminjung and its closest neighbours – including the neighbouring Pama-Nyungan languages – the verb class typically has between 20 and 40 members (see Table 7-1 for details). Interestingly, even in languages with much larger classes of verbs, usually only between 10 and 20 members participate in complex verb formation; the others only occur as simple predicates.

In all languages with closed-class verbs, uninflecting elements form an open class. However, the reverse pattern is also described for some Arnhem Land languages which have an open class of verbs, such as Ritharngu, Nunggubuyu and Ngarndi (not included in Table 7-1). For these languages, Heath (1976, 1984) identifies small classes of uninflecting elements, which he calls root forms. These forms may be used in a separate intonation unit or as an imperative, but are also ‘often used redundantly in juxtaposition to the corresponding verb’ (Heath 1984: 425). Heath repeatedly notes that all of these uninflecting forms are “pronounced emphatically, like an interjection” (1976: 736), “serve mainly to add an expressive flavour” (1976: 737), and “have a dramatic quality which makes them popular in narratives” (1984: 425). In short, these uninflecting elements resemble ideophones as described for many other languages. An example from Nunggubuyu is given in (7-6). Heath does not provide a gloss for the root form jarlg in the source, but points out that it is cognate with the verb root -yarlth- ‘go past’.

(7-6) jarlg ni-yarlth-iny
NUNG ?? 3sg-go.past-PST
‘he went past (all of a sudden)’ (Heath 1976: 737)

Heath (1976) also proposes a diachronic scenario according to which constructions like these could have been precursors of the complex verbs formed with inflecting verbs from a closed class in neighbouring languages. Similar observations and suggestions have been made by Alpher (1994) and McGregor (1996b: 359, to appear). Indeed, as mentioned briefly in §3.2.1 and §3.4.2, Jaminjung coverbs have uses in which they show striking similarities to the
ideophones of other languages, both in terms of expressive prosody, and in syntactic behaviour (see Schultze-Berndt, to appear, for details).

7.1.4 Grammaticalisation of closed-class verbs

In §7.1.2, a brief outline was given of a diachronic scenario of complex verb formation proceeding in cycles. This was based on the observation that in the synchronically attested types of complex verbs in Northern Australia, the combinations of inflecting and uninflecting elements are lexicalised to different degrees, and even to the extent that they lose their structural and semantic independence. In other words, the two components may become part of a synchronically unanalysable verb root, which may again enter into complex verb formation, as can be shown for Jaminjung. The historical processes described so far are therefore processes of lexicalisation of a complex expression, i.e. univerbation, not of grammaticalisation (cf. Hock 1986: 336ff., Lehmann 1995: 97ff. on preverbs). However, it is implicit in the very concept of grammaticalisation that the boundary between lexical and grammatical forms is not clearcut. Since one of the classes of elements involved in the type of complex verb formation described here, i.e. the class of inflecting verbs, is closed, its members could be expected to also lend themselves to grammaticalisation, in accordance with the principle that “one element of a compound may become a derivational affix if it occurs in a large number of combinations” (Bybee 1985: 106).

Indeed, derivational morphology, including productive verbalisers for nominals and valency changing affixes such as causativisers, can be traced back to former independent verbs in some Australian languages. For example, the form -wo in Bininj Gun-wok, already mentioned in §7.1.2 above as a verb root with the meaning ‘give’ and as part of synchronically unanalysable stems, in addition functions as a factitive verbaliser, as in (7-7), from the Gun-djeihmi dialect of Bininj Gun-wok.

(7-7) ga-wok-gimuk-wo-n  
GDJ 3sg-noise-big-FACTITIVE-NPST  
‘it makes a loud noise’ (Evans to appear: §8.2.2)

Derivational affixes which still betray their origin as free verbs are found even outside the ‘complex verb’ area in Northern Australia, e.g. in the Pama-Nyungan languages Arrernte (Wilkins 1989: 261ff.), Warlpiri, and Nyangumarta (Geytenbeek 1992). These affixes function as general inchoative or causative verbalisers. For example, we have seen in §5.4.1 that the Jaminjung verb -mili/-angu, by virtue of its component of ‘manipulation’ (i.e. ‘affectedness plus extended contact’), which can be extended to non-physical interaction, is often used in complex verbs with a cause-result reading. It is therefore not surprising that semantically corresponding verbs have grammaticalised to general causative
verbalisers in Warlpiri (Nash 1986: 42f.) and Nyangumarta (Geytenbeek 1992). Typically Kriol loans are also integrated in these languages by affixation of one of these verbalisers; in other words, there is no choice of verbs with loans as in Jaminjung.

Notably, both verbalising and valency changing derivational morphology are absent from Jaminjung (see §2.2 to §2.4). At least the latter function is fulfilled by the closed-class verbs, in that coverbs may usually combine with a set of verbs to form complex verbs of different valency, as illustrated throughout Chs. 4 to 6. One could imagine that some of the high-frequency verbs in Jaminjung, which have several polysemous senses and also form complex verbs which have to be regarded as idiomatic, would be good candidates for a further grammaticalisation along these lines. These include -arra ‘PUT’ (§5.2.4), -mili ‘GET/HANDLE’ (§5.4.1), -ma ‘HIT’ (§5.4.2) and -yu(nggu) ‘SAY/DO’.

Two other, related, grammaticalisation paths involving formerly independent verbs can be identified. First, motion verbs may develop into inflectional affixes of associated motion, as described for the Arandic languages (Koch 1984, Wilkins 1989: 270ff., 1991, 1997b). Second, a small number of verbs, typically stance and motion verbs, may grammaticalise to auxiliaries which encode distinctions of tense, aspect, modality, and possibly voice, polarity and direction, but do not add to the lexical semantics of predicates. In Jaminjung, two of the inflecting verbs, the general stance verb -yu ‘BE’ and the general motion verb -ijga ‘GO’, also function as auxiliaries in a progressive construction (see §3.3, §5.2.1.2, §5.3.2.3), although they do not show any formal signs of grammaticalisation. The use of stance and motion verbs as imperfective auxiliaries is also reported for some of the neighbouring languages, e.g. Ngan’kityemerri (Reid to appear, Hoddinott & Kofod 1988).

The ‘catalytic’ clitics found in the Ngumbin and Ngarrka languages and also the Barkly Tableland languages presumably also constitute further grammaticalised auxiliaries (see e.g. Capell 1956: 56, Green 1995). The Barkly languages are of particular interest here since they are distantly related to the Jaminjungan languages (Chadwick 1984, 1997; see also §1.2.1), and at least one of the three catalytic auxiliaries in Wambaya, -amany (Nonpast: -ulama) in (7-8), is a plausible cognate of a Jaminjung/Ngaliwurru verb, -ruma ‘COME’ (past tense form -ruma-ny). In Wambaya, in addition to tense, aspect and modality, this auxiliary carries directional information, i.e. it is functionally related to associated motion inflections (Nordlinger 1998b: 151ff.).

(7-8)  dirdibulyini-nmanji  g-amany  magi-nmanji  yarru
      WAM peewee-ALL  3sg-PST.TOWARDS  camp-ALL  go

‘she came to Peewee(’s) camp’ (Nordlinger 1998b: 246)
The view that closed-class verbs are grammatical elements has been implicitly adopted in those descriptions of Northern Australian languages where they are treated as auxiliaries, at least when they occur as part of complex verbs (see §2.4 for references). The synchronic evidence presented in Ch. 5, as well as the diachronic evidence presented in the preceding sections, supports the claim that the term ‘auxiliary’ is not appropriate for the class of verbs as a whole (see also e.g. Blake 1987: 123, Cook 1988: 81ff.). Although closed-class verbs carry tense, aspect, and modality information, they are not reduced to this function, in other words, they are not desemanticised to the extent that they could combine with all uninflecting, open-class elements, disregarding their meaning. Rather, complex verb formation is severely restricted by the meanings of both closed-class verbs and open-class coverbs. Correspondingly, as we have seen in the historical/comparative overview presented so far, closed-class verbs do not generally grammaticalise to inflectional morphology, but, on the contrary, tend to be lexicalised and end up as part of synchronically unanalysable stems. Only a few high-frequency forms are, potentially, subject to grammaticalisation.

However, the possibility that the closed class of verbs as a whole could grammaticalise should not be ruled out completely. Indeed, McGregor (1990) argues that the inflecting elements in Gooniyandi should be regarded as a grammaticalised system of (verbal) classifiers. Here the former verbs are reduced in number (to a class of 12 elements), and are bound forms which cannot occur independently of the lexical, uninflecting element.

The complex verb construction in Jaminjung is less strongly grammaticalised than the Gooniyandi one. It was therefore argued in §5.1 that the closed-class verbs in Jaminjung are more appropriately compared to generic nouns than to nominalised classifiers. Jaminjung generic verbs, like generic nouns, participate in a system of categorisation semantically (as was shown throughout Ch. 5), but are not reduced to a grammatical function in a classifier construction since they may also occur independently.

The two possible fates of a system of event categorisation of the Jaminjung type can be linked to the antithetic forces associated with Zipf’s Law of the Least Effort, and the two antinomic pragmatic principles of ‘Quantity’ (“be as informative as is required”) and ‘Informativeness’ (“be no more informative than is required”) (see §1.4.2.3 for references). A productive system of event classification is maintained only as long as speakers comply with the principle of Quantity (corresponding to the Hearer’s Economy), that is, if they exploit, in categorising events, the full range of categories that they have at their disposal. The Jaminjung system, as it were, supports the hearer’s needs, because it forces
the speaker to give the hearer relatively specific information about the event type of the event in question.\textsuperscript{195}

On the other hand, a system where only a few of the closed-class verbs grammaticalise to derivational morphology and/or auxiliaries would suit the Speaker’s Economy, because the speaker would have to make fewer distinctions, and could rely more on the interpretations made by the hearer, following the principle of ‘Informativeness’. In this case, the former system of event categorisation collapses. Most former complex verbs are lexicalised to the extent that they become synchronically simple verb stems. Only a few verbs take on grammatical functions, and are used productively.

Interestingly, the systems of event decomposition developed in mainstream semantic theory all seem to be modelled on the second type of system, built around a few semantic atoms like CAUSE, BECOME, DO or BE, which correspond to grammaticalised derivational morphology as it is indeed found in many languages. Perhaps for this reason, this type of metalanguage turns out to be not terribly well suited for the description of generic verbs of the Jaminjung type, which encode more specific event types than those captured by the ‘semantic atoms’ just mentioned, but are semantically general enough to resist translation by specific predicates, or decomposition along the lines suggested for these predicates in other languages.

\section*{7.2 Coverbs, generic verbs and complex verbs in a cross-linguistic perspective}

In the preceding section, the particular subdivision of the lexicon in Jaminjung was placed in the areal linguistic context. In this section, the properties of coverbs (the uninflecting predicates, §7.2.1), verbs (the inflecting predicates forming a closed class, §7.2.2), and complex verbs (forming the majority of types of verbal predicates in Jaminjung, §7.2.3) will be examined again from a cross-linguistic perspective.

\textsuperscript{195} An interesting phenomenon, in this respect, is the reduction of the size of the closed-class verbs to only one verb reported for the avoidance languages of Jaru (Tsunoda 1981a: 215ff.), Gurindji (McConvell 1982: 95ff.), and Bunuba (Rumsey 1982b: 166f.), although in the actual use of the systems, the more specific everyday verbs continue to be employed as well. That the hearer's needs here are not met to the same extent is obviously consistent with the effect of distancing and vagueness aimed at by the use of avoidance languages in general.
7.2.1 Coverbs

Both formally and functionally, Jaminjung coverbs have properties which fall in between those cross-linguistically associated with verbs, adverbs, and nominals. This has interesting ramifications for a typology of word classes.

Crucially, coverbs do not inflect. In this respect, they are first and foremost reminiscent of adverbs found in many languages. Indeed, as shown in §6.1 and §6.20, they cover meanings that are expressed by locational and manner adverbs in other languages. However, in complex verb formation, coverbs contribute to the argument structure of the resulting predicate, and therefore cannot be reduced to a modifying function. Semantically, too, they may have a variety of relationships with respect to the inflecting verb they combine with, and in this respect, too, are not interpreted as modifiers in an endocentric construction.

In order to function as part of the main predicate in a finite clause, coverbs depend on an inflecting verb (§3.2). In terms of Hopper & Thompson (1985: 172), they obligatorily “share a spotlight with another verb” and are therefore “functionally less like a verb in reporting an event than one which reports the event by itself”. In other words, coverbs are less verbal in nature than the inflecting verbs.

Being inherently non-finite, coverbs can also be used in a function which is equivalent to that of nonfinite or nominalised verb forms in many other languages. Since coverbs cannot be specified for illocutionary force, person, or tense/aspect/mood to start with, they can express a typified proposition, in the terminology of Lehmann (1982b, 1988b). Thus, as shown in §4.2.3.3 and §5.6, coverbs may represent the propositional participant of a performance verb. Moreover, coverbs can function as the main predicate in subordinate clauses (see §2.6.5). Although coverbs are clearly distinct from nominals in that they cannot form part of referential noun phrases, their partly nominal nature is also in the fact that in this use, the relationship between the subordinate clause and the main clause is indicated by a subset of the nominal case markers. Functionally, these subordinate clauses correspond to the nominalised clauses or converb clauses of other languages (for converbs, see van der Auwera 1998 and the contributions in Haspelmath & König 1995). There is no need to overtly nominalise coverbs, since they already have reduced verbal properties. It is also not surprising that verbs in Jaminjung do not have nominalised or other non-finite forms; this function is already fulfilled by coverbs.

Finally, still due to their uninflecting nature, a subclass of sound-symbolic coverbs is also ideally suited to a function fulfilled by special classes of ideophonic elements in many languages. As shown in §3.2.1 and §3.4, coverbs may be used with expressive prosody in combination with a verb, and/or as semi-independent predicates in highly contextualised discourse, where they depend on the linguistic and extra-linguistic context in their interpretation with respect to
illocutionary force and temporal reference. These are exactly the types of uses that are reported for ideophones in the literature (cf. e.g. Nuckolls 1996 and the contributions in Hinton et al. 1994 and Kilian-Hatz & Voeltz, to appear). As already mentioned in §7.1.3, it has even been suggested that ideophone-verb combinations are the source of complex verbs in Northern Australian languages.

7.2.2 Generic verbs

As we have seen, the majority of notions encoded by verbs in many other languages are, in Jaminjung, encoded by members of a class of coverbs with reduced ‘verbal’ properties. In addition, there exists a closed class of inflecting verbs, with around 30 members. The meanings encoded by members of this ‘privileged’ class of predicates correspond, roughly, to those expected for so-called ‘basic’ verbs on a cross-linguistic basis. In Jaminjung, moreover, these basic verbs can be said to categorise events.

‘Basic’ or ‘nuclear’ verbs have been approached from a number of angles. They have been taken to correspond to high-frequency verbs in languages with, in principle, large sets of verbs (Viberg 1993, Hopper 1991, 1996), to the subset of verbs used as ‘light verbs’ in certain syntactic constructions (see also §7.2.3), to those verbs in language systems with a reduced vocabulary, such as avoidance or ritual languages (e.g. Dixon 1971, Pawley 1992), and to those verbs that are acquired first (Clark 1978a).

The verbs identified in this way are reported, cross-linguistically, to cover very similar notions including location and motion, contact and impact, perception, creation, and transfer of possession, in short, types of events corresponding to basic, concrete bodily experiences.

This general tendency is also reflected in the verb class in Jaminjung. All verbs, in their basic senses (i.e. as simple verbs), encode concrete bodily experiences in the domains of existence, change of location, locomotion, contact and impact, affectedness by heat, performance, visual perception, ingestion, creation and transfer of possession. However, the semantic analyses presented in this study also showed that utmost care has to be taken in equating translation equivalents across languages, that is, in making claims of the sort that every language has nuclear verbs ‘meaning’ GO, FALL, MAKE, HIT, DO, GIVE, EAT, or SEE. Even where verbs have the same prototypical denotata, they may differ considerably in meaning.

For example, while in some languages ‘downward motion’ is the central semantic component of a verb that can be used to describe scenes of ‘falling’, in Jaminjung the crucial component is ‘change of locative relation with respect to a location’. Downward motion does not have to be involved at all for this verb
(-irdba ‘FALL’; see §5.2.3) to be applicable. Similarly, Jaminjung motion verbs always describe motion along a path, not just change of location.

In one language, a general performance verb (‘DO’) may only apply to volitional or controlled performance, while in Jaminjung, the notion of ‘internal cause’ is central to the meaning of the verb -yu(nggu), which may not only be used as a performance verb, but also as an inchoative verb (see §5.6). Even a supposedly basic verb such as ‘EAT’ can have somewhat different extensions, depending on whether the crucial semantic component is ‘take into mouth’ or ‘cause to be in stomach’ (see §5.8.2). And a cursory glance at the list of Kalam verbs – which undoubtedly count as generic verbs – in Pawley (1992, 1993) reveals some interesting similarities to Jaminjung verbs, but also many differences. For example, Kalam has a general verb of perception, while Jaminjung maintains a strict distinction between visual perception, auditory perception, and perception by the lower senses. This list of language-specific differences in the extension of presumably ‘nuclear’ verbs could be continued.

This is not even addressing the issue of the differences in the secondary senses that verbs may give rise to. For example, a verb of creation (‘MAKE’) is used as a verb of general performance and/or as a regular causative verb in many languages. In Jaminjung, the corresponding verb is not used as a performance verb at all, and has only a marginal causative use (see §5.8.3). The verb of visual perception, in Jaminjung, extends to events of aggression, but not of cognition (see §5.8.1). The verb of ‘giving’ has a secondary sense of ‘schematic interaction’, just as in English, but does not have a benefactive use, as it has in many other languages (see §5.7.1). Even in languages of Northern Australia that are in contact, such differences can be found. For example, the general motion verb root translating as ‘GO’ in Wagiman, just like its Jaminjung equivalent (see §5.3.2), has a secondary sense of habitual/prolonged state or activity, but, unlike its Jaminjung equivalent, is not used to express change of state (Cook 1987: 229ff.). And Wagiman, just like Jaminjung, maintains a difference between locomotion and change of location, but the latter, often expressed in Jaminjung by means of the verb -irdba ‘FALL’ (§5.2.3), is often expressed in Wagiman by a verb with a basic sense of ‘cut’ (Wilson 1999: 101).

It seems fair to say that a comparative investigation of the semantics of closed-class verbs in Northern Australian languages has only just begun. Such a comparison of verb systems could reveal which distinctions (‘categories’) are regularly lost and which ones are maintained in systems with fewer verbs, and which distinctions are added in systems with a larger verb class. Some of the verbs included in the closed class of Jaminjung verbs might have come as a surprise to the reader. For example, Jaminjung (unlike Ngaliwurru) does not have a specific verb meaning ‘hear’, but makes quite specific distinctions with respect to the type of impact and contact, i.e. there are specific verbs for impact by contact made with the edge of a body part or instrument, with a pointed end, with
the foot, and with the mouth (see §5.4). The neighbouring language Miriwoong, with a slightly smaller verb system, does not even have a specific verb for visual perception, but still has several verbs (though also fewer than Jaminjung) conveying distinctions of contact and impact (Kofod 1996a and p.c.). Furthermore, Jaminjung and Ngaliwurru have verbs encoding specific speech acts such as ‘swearing’, ‘lying’ and even ‘affecting by magic’ (even though these are very marginal and on the verge of dropping out of the system; see §5.9), but do not distinguish, e.g., bodily postures such as ‘sitting’ or ‘hanging’ by means of verbs, but only by means of coverbs. This is not universal tendency, since in some of the neighbouring Daly River languages, such positional verbs not only exist, but are even very frequent (see e.g. Hoddinott & Kofod 1988, Reid 1990), to the extent that in Malak-Malak, which only has 6 inflecting verbs, three of them are positional verbs (Birk 1976).

It is also quite remarkable that, in Jaminjung, seven of the 26 non-marginal verbs are verbs of locomotion, devoted to rather specific distinctions (see §5.3). Other Northern Australian languages encode similar distinctions, and their sets of locomotion verbs usually do not include verbs of manner of motion. However, the languages vary a great deal as to the number of locomotion verbs. Languages like Wardaman (Merlan 1994) and Wagiman (Wilson 1999) parallel the Jaminjung system. Languages with smaller verb sets often do not have translation equivalents for the transitive verbs encoding orientation with respect to a second participant (‘leave’, ‘approach’, and ‘follow’), or they exclude deictic verbs from their class of locomotion verbs. This is the case, for example, in Miriwoong (Kofod 1976, 1996a) and Ngan’gityemerri (Reid 1990), which only have a general intransitive verb of locomotion and a general transitive verb of accompaniment. Yet other languages, including the Pama-Nyungan languages of the Ngumbin and Ngarrka families (e.g. McConvell n.d. and Nash 1998), but also Ungarinyin (Rumsey 1982: 110ff.), incorporate the deictic distinction into their verb system by derivation with directional affixes.

Ideally, a comparison of languages with closed-class or classificatory verb systems would be extended outside Australia. Productive classificatory verbs of a type similar to the Jaminjung ones have been reported for Tsafiki, a language spoken in Ecuador (Connie Dickinson p.c.), and may turn out to be more common cross-linguistically than it appears at present. Classificatory prefixes that have grammaticalised from generic verbs are also found in some Austronesian languages (Ezard 1992, Margetts 1999: 114ff.). The distinctions made by the so-called instrumental prefixes of some North American languages, for example Atsugewi, Lakhota, or Klamath (see e.g. Talmy 1975, 1985, Mithun 1996: 153, Rood & Taylor 1996, Palancar 1999) could be said to reflect categorisation of at least a subdomain of events, similar to the categorisation of events of contact and impact by the set of seven contact/force verbs in Jaminjung. Such a comparison would allow one to distinguish between categories that reflect
universal tendencies of event categorisation, and those which are shared among languages of a single linguistic and cultural area, but do not necessarily appear outside this area.

### 7.2.3 Complex verbs

Most verbal predicates in Jaminjung are complex, consisting of an inflecting verb and one or two coverbs. The discussion in §3.2 established these complex verbs in Jaminjung as exocentric complex predicates, acting syntactically like a single predicate, and expressing a single event. These form just one of the types of complex verbs found in Northern Australia, but are historically and structurally related to the other types, as shown in §7.1. The main differences between these types are in the degree of nexus and the degree of semantic transparency of the complex predicates, and the size of the class of inflecting verbs.

In arguing for the complex predicate status of the complex verbs of Jaminjung and other Northern Australian languages, I have also made reference to other types of complex predicates, and pointed out functional and structural similarities to these constructions. However, it should have become clear by now that the phrasal complex verbs in Northern Australian languages are best regarded as a distinct type of complex predicate. The similarities and differences to a number of other types of complex predicates (serial verb constructions, particle verb constructions, auxiliary constructions, light verb constructions, and the so-called ‘adjunct’-verb constructions described for Papuan languages) will be summarised briefly below.

The main difference between Northern Australian complex verbs and **serial verbs** is that in typical serial verb constructions, all constituents of a complex predicate are recruited from the same, open, lexical class. All verbs may, in principle, occur as independent predicates and take verbal inflections (if the language has verbal inflection at all), as well as forming part of a serial verb construction. For example, while only the last verb in a nuclear serial verb construction in the Papuan language Kalam is inflected for person and tense, and the other verbs occur as bare stems in (7-9), these verbs may take inflections in principle (Lane & Pawley 1992: 2).

\[
\begin{align*}
(7-9) & \quad \text{b ak am mon p-wk d ap ay-a-k} \\
& \quad \text{KAL man that go wood hit-smash get come put-3sg-PST} \\
& \quad \text{‘the man fetched some firewood’ (Lane & Pawley 1992: 3)}
\end{align*}
\]

In Jaminjung, on the other hand, the members of the open class of predicative lexemes (the coverbs) do not inflect and may not form independent predicates in the same way as the inflecting verbs, which form a closed class. (As shown in
§3.4, the use of coverbs as semi-independent predicates is restricted to highly contextualised text genres.)

However, this difference may not be so clear-cut. First, there are serial verb languages like Kalam, illustrated above, which only have a closed class of semantically general verbs. These are combined with one another in serial verb constructions, as well as with words from other word classes, as complex predicates (Pawley 1987, 1993, 1994, Lane & Pawley 1992). Furthermore, it has been suggested by some authors (Sebba 1987, Foley & Olson 1985: 40, Durie 1997) that at least one position in serial verb constructions is restricted to a finite set of verbs in most or all serial verb languages. This would make serial verb languages much more similar to the Northern Australian languages, where one position is restricted to a closed class of inflecting verbs, except that these verbs, in addition, form a distinct lexical category.

Distinguishing clearly between serial verb constructions and complex predicates of the Northern Australian type is made more difficult by another fact: verbs frequently used in a serial verb construction may lose their finiteness potential and become restricted to a function as part of such a construction (see e.g. Crowley 1987, Bisang 1992, Lord 1993). However, these non-finite elements are likely to form a closed class of grammaticalised forms, while in Jaminjung, the ‘dependent’, uninflecting forms constitute the open class.196

Formally, Jaminjung complex verbs also show some similarities to the separable particle verbs of, e.g., Germanic languages. Like verbal particles (also called preverbs, or ‘satellites’, in the terminology used by Talmy 1985, 1991), Jaminjung coverbs constitute a word class distinct from verbs, occur as part of separable but lexicalised complex predicates together with verbs, and do not inflect.197 They may form the main predicate in a strongly contextualised utterance (corresponding to English up!), but cannot function as the main predicate of a decontextualised, stylistically unmarked clause (*the goanna up the tree) (see §3.4). There is also a considerable functional overlap (in terms of lexicalisation patterns) between particle verbs and complex verbs in Jaminjung.

196 Unfortunately, the term 'coverb' adopted for the uninflected open-class elements of Jaminjung may give rise to confusion here, since one particular type of closed-class elements originating from serial verbs is also known as ‘coverb’ in the literature on South-East Asian and African languages (see e.g. Bisang 1992, Lord 1993, Lehmann 1995: 104ff.). These coverbs are defined as serial verbs in ‘case-marking’ or ‘prepositional’ function, e.g. locative or directional verbs introducing locational participants, or verbs with meanings like ‘take’ or ‘give’ introducing instrumental or recipient arguments. See also the beginning of §2.3.

197 This similarity is also reflected in the use, in a number of descriptions of Northern Australian languages, of the terms ‘preverb’ and ‘verbal particle’ for the uninflected, open-class elements (see §2.3 for references).
In many cases, a complex verb may be quite literally translated as a particle verb in English or German, since coverbs, like verbal particles, encode notions of position, path (as in 7-10), or completion (as in 7-11).

(7-10) **buru** **burduj** **ga-ram**
NGALI return go.up 3sg-COME.PRS

‘she comes back up’ (JM, E16298)

(7-11) **burrb** **nga-minda-ny** **mangarra**
NGALI finish 3sg:3sg-EAT-PST plant.food

‘I ate up the food’ (DM, D18047)

The main difference between particle verbs and the phrasal complex verbs in Northern Australia is, of course, that the class size is reversed for the lexical categories involved: coverbs in Australian languages form an open class, and verbs a closed class, while the term ‘preverb’ is usually restricted to members of a closed class. In correlation with the size of the class, coverbs cover a much wider range of meanings and may be more specific semantically than the preverbs known from European languages, which usually derive from locational adverbs (Lehmann 1983, 1995: 97ff.).

In §7.1.4 above I already adduced arguments for distinguishing complex verbs in Northern Australia from **auxiliary-verb constructions**. Auxiliaries are generally applicable and form part of an inflectional system. The verbs in Northern Australian languages, on the other hand, even though they form a closed class and function as ‘carriers’ of the person and tense/aspect/mood inflections, are restricted by their semantics in the types of complex verbs they may enter into. (As we have also seen in §3.3.1, §5.2.1.2 and §5.3.2.3, though, a small subset of the generic verbs may be used in auxiliary function).

Jaminjung complex verbs are more profitably compared to **light verb constructions**. These differ from auxiliary-verb constructions in that light verbs, like generic verbs in Jaminjung, are restricted in their occurrence to certain semantic classes of non-finite elements (see e.g. Masica 1991: 327f., Butt 1997: 120f.). Light verbs also typically enter into complex predicate constructions where both members jointly determine argument structure (see e.g. Butt 1997, Mohanan 1994, 1997, Matsumoto 1996). By these criteria, Jaminjung verbs bear more resemblance to light verbs than to auxiliaries.

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198 These are known under various terms; light verbs in Indo-Aryan languages, for example, have been called ‘vector verbs’, ‘explicators’, ‘intensifiers’ as well as ‘auxiliaries’ (Masica 1991: 326); light verbs in German are known as Funktionsverben ('function verbs'; see e.g. Persson 1992).
Several types of light verb constructions can be distinguished. One type consists of a light verb and a nominal (sometimes called ‘host nominal’), which is an argument of the verb; this may be an underived nominal or a nominal derived from a verb. An example from Hindi is given in (7-12).

(7-12)  Ilaa-ne Mohan-par kripaa kii
       HIN Ila-ERG Mohan-LOC favour.NOM.F do.PF.F
       ‘Ila showed kindness to Mohan’ (Mohanan 1997: 454)

Another type of light verb construction consists of a light verb and a non-finite verb form, which may be a bare stem, as in (7-13) from Urdu, or a converbal form.

(7-13)  Anjum uth par-ii
       URDU Anjum.F.NOM rise fall-PF.F.SG
       ‘Anjum suddenly got up’ (Butt 1997: 127)

Both types are comparable to the complex verbs in Jaminjung in that a non-finite form from an open class is combined with an inflecting verb from a small set of verbs. The non-finite component is itself relational, and contributes to the argument structure of the complex verb, just as a coverb in Jaminjung does. However, the non-finite components in light verb constructions of the types illustrated above do not belong to a distinct lexical category, but are either nominals or (nominalised) verbs. Moreover, light verbs appear to constitute only a subset of all verbs in languages with light verb constructions. In contrast, verbs in Northern Australian languages like Jaminjung form a closed class to begin with, and are obligatory in all finite verbal predicates, either as simple verbs or as part of a complex verb. The term ‘generic verb’ rather than ‘light verb’ was adopted here for these reasons.

Constructions which seem to be very similar to the Northern Australian complex verbs are described for a number of Papuan languages, among them Fore (Scott 1978: 50f.), Hua (Haiman 1980a: 130), Enga (Lang 1975), and Kalam (Lane & Pawley 1992: 3); see Foley (1986: 117f.) for an overview. They are usually called ‘adjunct-verb’ or ‘root-verb’ constructions, and consist of a non-inflecting element in combination with a verb from a small set of semantically generic verbs. The word class status of the ‘adjuncts’ is not always clear in the descriptions cited, so the degree of similarity to Northern Australian complex verbs remains a matter of further investigation.

These differences in the formal characteristics of the systems – the lexical category and size of the classes of elements involved in a complex predicate construction, and the degree to which these elements are restricted to occurrence in such a construction – are likely to also have ramifications for the semantic patterns to be observed. However, a cross-linguistic comparison of the semantic
relationships holding between the constituents of complex predicates is clearly beyond the scope of this study. The most remarkable characteristics in which the verb systems of many Northern Australian languages differ from the other systems just reviewed is that they possess a closed class of verbs which categorise event types (see Ch. 5).

To conclude: the type of complex predicate found in Jaminjung and other Northern Australian languages is formally distinct from most types of complex predicates identified in the literature. Languages like Jaminjung certainly seem ‘extreme’ in that they only have a very reduced set of verbs capable of functioning as simple predicates in finite clauses, and because of the resulting need to express most ‘verbal’ notions by complex predicates. However, cross-linguistic research has shown that complex predicates are by no means ‘exotic’, but a rather unmarked means of expression in many languages of the world, even though they come in different guises. Moreover, in many languages, verbs from a small, restricted set function prominently in such expressions.

Interestingly, it has been demonstrated even for spoken and ‘vernacular written’ discourse in English (Hopper 1991, 1996) that complex verbal expressions are preferred over simple verbs in most contexts (except for decontextualised style, from which the examples which feature most prominently in most linguistic theorising come), and that the simple verbs employed in these genres form a more or less closed class of semantically ‘basic’ verbs. If this would turn out to be a cross-linguistically valid principle of structuring spoken, contextualised discourse, then the most remarkable fact about Northern Australian languages like Jaminjung is, first, how deeply this principle is entrenched both in their grammatical structure and in the organisation of their lexicon, and second, that the semantically generic verbs participate in an overt system of event categorisation.