Dealing with indeterminacy
The case of verb sequences in Papuan Malay

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Verb sequences in Papuan Malay

- Serial verb constructions (SVC)

  (1) saya **bawa pulang** sabit
      1SG bring go.home sickle
      ‘I **brought** the sickle (back) **home**’

- Clause chaining construction (CCC)

  (2) langsung **sa** pegang, **sa** putar, **sa** cari
      immediately 1SG hold 1SG turn.around 1SG search
      ‘immediately I held (the plate), I turned around, I looked around’
Verb sequences in Papuan Malay

- Indeterminate status of verb sequences

(3a) sa cepat~cepat lari berdiri liat padahal ...
    1SG RDP~be.fast run stand see whereas
    ‘I ran quickly (and) stood (and) looked but …’

(3b) sa cepat~cepat lari Ø berdiri Ø liat padahal ...
    1SG RDP~be.fast run stand see whereas
    ‘I ran quickly, (I) stood (and I) looked but …’
Introduction

Outline

- Introduction
- Serial verb constructions (SVC)
- Clause chaining constructions (CCC)
- SVCs versus CCCs
- Indeterminate status of constructions
- Summary
Introduction

  - Morphology
    - Near isolating end of the analytic-synthetic continuum
    - No inflectional morphology
    - Very little productive morphology
  - Syntax
    - SVO
    - Argument elision is pervasive
Serial verb constructions (SVCs)

- Compositional properties
  (Aikhenvald 2006:1,4-21; Comrie 2001:27; Foley 1986:178,180, 2000:385)

  - Papuan Malay (Kluge 2021)
    - Monoclusal constructions
    - Shared grammatical categories and arguments
    - Complex predicate describes single event

(4) … supaya bapa bisa datang ambil kamu, e?
    so.that father can come take 2PL eh

[A worried father on the phone:] (… so that you will remain healthy and strong) so that I (‘father’) can come and get you, eh?’
Serial verb constructions (SVCs)

- Functional properties
  - Organizing discourse in Papuan Malay (Kluge 2021)
  - Cause-effect relations
  - Comitative relations – in (5)
  - Directional relations
  - Sequential relations (temporal order or purpose)
  - Simultaneous relations
  - …

(5) majelis dong smua ikut, ikut cari Wili
church.elder 3PL all follow follow search Wili
‘the church elders, they all joined in, joined in looking for Wili’
Serial verb constructions (SVCs)

- Functional properties
  - Expressing grammatical categories in Papuan Malay (Kluge 2021)
    - Aspect (completion, continuation, habitual, inceptive)
    - Causativity
    - Grading (comparative)
    - Manner
    - Modality (deontic, optative, potentative)
    - Passive – in (6)

(6) sa dapat mara dari kaka dorang
   1SG get feel.angry(.about) from older.sibling 3PL
   ‘I got scolded by my older siblings and the others’
Clause chaining constructions (CCCs)


  - Papuan Malay (Kluge 2017, 2021)
    - Sequences of clauses that follow one after another
    - Each verb is associated with its own set of arguments
    - No distinction between independent and dependent clauses
    - No concomitant switch reference system

(7)  

jadi pagi saya bangung, sa kas makang anjing, so morning 1SG wake.up 1SG CAUS eat dog sa pegang sa pu parang 1SG hold 1SG POSS short.machete  

‘s in the morning, I got up, I fed the dogs, I took my short machete’
Clause chaining constructions (CCCs)

- **Functional properties** (Farr 1999:19; Foley 1986:180)
  - Papuan Malay (Klude 2021)
    - Temporal sequentiality
      
      (8) Nofi, nanti **ko** kejar saya, **ko** liat, **ko** tunggu,
      Fiki later 2SG chase 1SG 2SG see, 2SG wait
      **tong dua** bla
      1PL two split
      ‘Nofi, in a moment **you** chase me, **you** observe (me), **you**
      wait, **we two** crack (the coconut) open’

- Temporal simultaneity – less often
SVCS versus CCCs

- Serial verb constructions
  - Monoclausal constructions describing single event
    
    (9) saya **bawa pulang** sabit
        1SG bring go.home sickle
        ‘I **brought** the sickle (back) home’

- Clause chaining constructions
  - Multi-clausal constructions describing distinct but related events
    
    (10) langsung **sa pegang**, **sa putar**, **sa cari**
        immediately 1SG hold 1SG turn.around 1SG search
        ‘immediately I held (the plate), I turned around, I looked around’
SVCs versus CCCs

Monoclausal SVCs or multi-clausal CCCs?

(11a) sa cepat~cepat lari berdiri liat padahal …
1SG RDP~be.fast run stand see whereas
‘I ran quickly (and) stood (and) looked but …’

(11b) sa cepat~cepat lari Ø berdiri Ø liat padahal …
1SG RDP~be.fast run stand see whereas
‘I ran quickly, (I) stood (and I) looked but …’
SVCs versus CCCs

- Cross-linguistic properties of SVCs

  (11) sa cepat~cepat lari berdiri liat padahal …

  1SG RDP~be.fast run stand see whereas

  ‘I ran quickly stood looked but …’

  - Prosodic properties (Aikhenvald 2006:7)
  - Notion of eventhood (Aikhenvald 2006:1,10-12)
SVCs versus CCCs

Cross-linguistic properties of SVCs – Prosodic properties

(11) sa cepat~cepat lari berdiri liat padahal ...
1SG RDP~be.fast run stand see whereas
‘I ran quickly stood looked but …’

- Prosodic properties (Aikhenvald 2006:7)
  - SVC – No intonation breaks or pause markers between the verbal components
SVCs versus CCCs

- Cross-linguistic properties of SVCs – Prosodic properties

(12a) kaka dorang dong pergi | mina || bayar
older.sibling 3PL 3PL go request pay

[About bride-price customs:] the older siblings, they go (and) ask (to) pay (the bride-price)

(12b) kaka dorang dong pergi Ø mina Ø bayar
older.sibling 3PL 3PL go request pay

[About bride-price customs:] the older siblings, they go (and they) ask (how they should) pay (the bride-price)
SVCs versus CCCs

- Cross-linguistic properties of SVCs – Prosodic properties

(13) kitong dua kluar mo || pergi | cari | pinang

1PL two go.out want go search betel.nut

‘the two of us went out, wanting (to) go (and) look for betel nuts’

- Prosodic properties
  - Unexpected intonational break
  - Intonation is “a rather problematic criterion, because it can reflect a lot of different aspects of language structure”
    (Bisang 2009b:803)
SVCs versus CCCs

- Cross-linguistic properties (Aikhenvald and Dixon 2006)
  - Monoclausal SVCs versus multi-clausal CCCs
    - Compositional properties
    - Prosodic criteria
    - Notion of eventhood
SVcs versus CCCs

- Cross-linguistic properties of SVcs – Eventhood
  - SVC – Notion of single unitary event
    (Bruce 1988:28 in Aikhenvald 2006:10)
    - Events more commonly associated together in experience
    - Events form a culturally important concatenation of events
  - CCC – Sequence of distinct but related events
SVCs versus CCCs

Cross-linguistic properties of SVCs – Eventhood

(14a) saya bawa pulang sabit
1sg bring go.home sickle
‘I brought the sickle (back) home’

(14a) *saya bawa Ø pulang sabit
1sg bring go.home sickle
‘I brought (it, I) went home (from) the sickle’
SVCs versus CCCs

- Cross-linguistic properties of SVCs – Eventhood

(15) sa duduk makang dengang prempuang yang ...

\[ \text{3PL sit eat with woman REL} \]

‘I sat (and) ate with a woman who ….’

(16) Foni tu, de duduk de makang begitu

Foni d.DIST 3SG sit 3SG eat like.that

‘Foni (EMPH), she sat (and) she ate like that’
SVCs versus CCCs

- Cross-linguistic properties of SVCs – Eventhood

  (17) baru pace de **pergi tanya**, ado Adolof ...?
  and.then man 3PL go ask oh.no Adolof 2SG
  ‘and then the man **went** (and) **asked** ‘oh no, Adolof …?’

  (18) de **pergi** de **tanya** sama orang~orang yang ...
  3SG go 3SG ask to RDP~person REL
  ‘he **went** (and) **asked** people who …’
SVCs versus CCCs

- Cross-linguistic properties of SVCs – Eventhood
  - Definitions
    - SVC describes one single event
    - CCC describes sequence of distinct but related events
  - Practical application (Bisang 2009b:810)
    - Definition is anything but precise
    - Definition depending on cultural factors is notoriously vague
SVCS versus CCCs

- Cross-linguistic properties of SVCS – Eventhood
  - Definitions and practical application (Aikhenvald 2006:3,12,56)
    - Tight semantic distinction between monoclausal SVCS and clause sequences hard to draw
      ⇒ Scalar, or continuum-type, approach to SVCS
    - One indissoluble event versus package of subevents
SVCs versus CCCs

- Cross-linguistic properties of SVCs – Eventhood
  - Definitions and practical application to Papuan Malay
- SVCs and CCCs
  - Occupy different places along an eventhood continuum
  - Some verb sequences are more closely associated than others
SVCs versus CCCs

- Papuan Malay evenhood continuum
  - Typical SVC (19) and typical CCC (20)

19) saya **bawa pulang** sabit
    1SG bring go.home sickle
    ‘I **brought** the sickle (back) **home**’

20) langsung **sa** pegang, **sa** putar, **sa** cari
    immediately 1SG hold 1SG turn.around 1SG search
    ‘immediately I **held** (the plate), I turned around, I looked around’
SVCs versus CCCs

- Papuan Malay eventhood continuum
  - Multi-verb constructions along the continuum

(21a) ko kluar pergi bungkus nasi untuk saya
2sg go.out go pack cooked.rice for 1sg
‘you go out, go, buy rice for me’ (Lit. ‘pack rice’)

(21b) ko kluar Ø pergi bungkus nasi untuk saya
2sg go.out go pack cooked.rice for 1sg
‘you go out, (you) go (and) buy rice for me’ (Lit. ‘pack rice’)

SVC

CCC
Indeterminate status of constructions

- Papuan Malay – “Hidden complexity”  
  (term coined by Bisang, see e.g. Bisang 2009a)
  - No obligation to employ particular structures if understood from linguistic/extralinguistic context
  - Lack of formal marking  
    (Kluge 2017-183, 537-553)
    - Coordination relations versus subordination/dependency relations
    - Compounds versus phrasal expressions
Indeterminate status of constructions

- Papuan Malay – Hidden complexity
  - Lack of formal marking
    - Constructions of indeterminate status
      - More than one possible analysis/interpretation
      - Correct reading is based on semantics and pragmatic functions
    - Simple surface structures allow different inferences (Bisang 2009a:35)
      - “Hidden complexity”
      - Complexity is “hidden” in the pragmatic inferential system
  - Hidden complexity of indeterminate verbal sequences
    - Reading needs to be pragmatically inferred
Summary

- Papuan Malay verb sequences
  - SVCs and CCCs with elided subject arguments
    - No overt different formal properties
    - Prosodic properties are problematic
    - Notion of eventhood is problematic
  - SVCs and CCCs occupy different places along a continuum
    - Typical SVCs – more closely associated
    - Typical CCCs – less closely associated

SVC → CCC
Summary

- Papuan Malay verb sequences
  - SVCs and CCCs occupy different places along a continuum
    ⇒ Verb sequences between both extreme poles
      - Indeterminate status
      - Reading based on semantics and pragmatic functions

(24) sa cepat~cepat lari berdiri liat padahal …
    1SG RDP~be.fast run stand see whereas
    ‘I ran quickly stood looked but …’


References


References


