Pseudocoordination as a cross-linguistic strategy for verb serialization

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Outline

• What is pseudocoordination?

• Serial verb constructions

• Pseudocoordination as Multi-Verb Predicates
What is pseudocoordination?

• *Pseudocoordination* refers to the use of the coordinator ‘and’ in constructions that behave unlike typical coordination, possibly best defined diachronically as a transitional state between coordination and subordination.

• Generally display properties of both coordination and subordination, not easily classified as either (Ross 2014, forthcoming).

• Violations of the Coordinate Structure Constraint:
  - What did you go and do this time?
  - *What did you eat and drink coffee? (Ross 1967, among others)*

• Note: I am only including verbal pseudocoordination, not other unusual uses of ‘and’ such as nominal+adjectival *hendiadys*: *PATERIS LIBAMVS ET AVRO* ‘we drink from cups and gold’
English pseudocoordination types

• I will go and buy a pizza. (Motion verbs)
  What did you go and do this time!?

• He sat and read all night. (Posture verbs)
  What did you sit and read?

• Do me a favor and wash the dishes. 
  (Polite expressions)

• I will try and win the race, but I don’t think I will. 
  (Control verbs)
Research on pseudocoordination

• Focused on Scandinavian German languages (Lødrup 2002; Wiklund 2007; Kvist Darnell 2008)
• Also described for English and several other Indo-European languages (Ross 2014, *inter alia*)
• Called “verbal hendiadys” for Semitic
• Inconsistent terminology used elsewhere, e.g. “serial verbs” for Sandawe (‘Khoisan’, Eaton 2003) or “conjunctive reduction” for Formosan (Tsai 2007)
Serial Verb Constructions (SVCs)

• Examples from Sranan (Sebba, 1987: 43, 46):

  (1) A waka go na wowoyo.
  He walk go LOC market
  ‘He walks to the market.’

  (2) Mi fringi a batra broko.
  I throw the bottle break
  ‘I threw the bottle and broke it.’
History of Research on SVCs

• Earliest observations emphasize SVCs as exotic:

  • “The natives [of Fiji] frequently, by compounding verbs, express themselves with astonishing clearness, and force; which cannot be imitated in English.” (Hazlewood 1850: p.v-vi)

  • “Particularly common are two, three four or more verbal roots joined together in Nubian in order to express shades of meaning which would be rendered in German by connecting a particle to describe the verb …” (Reinisch 1879:52)

  • “If the Surinam Negroes, like the Ashanti for fetch say: go-take-come (go teki kom = kɔ-fa-ba), we marvel at this as an African oddity, but is in fact three different acts; the strange thing is on our side. …” (Schuchardt 1914: iv-v)
History of Research on SVCs

- Term “compound or serial verbs” originally used by Balmer & Grant (1929) for Akan (West Africa).
- Term popularized by Stewart (1963) for West African languages, emphasizing the transitive type with a single nominal argument apparently acting as both object of one verb and subject of another.
- Later adopted by others in the 1970s and 1980s for use in other regions and for unrelated languages, often applying the definition loosely.

“a pretheoretical umbrella term... or as a historically faithful term... [not theoretical]” (Zwicky 1990)

Even called a “myth” (Deplanque 1998)
History of Research on SVCs

- Substantial variation in the definition today.
- Few broad cross-linguistic comparisons.
- Those that do exist use inconsistent definitions.
- Often cited now is Aikhenvald (2006), which presents a prototype definition due to variation.
Defining Serial Verbs

• Our definition is compiled from over 20 main sources from the history of research on SVCs, identifying trends and finding the core properties.

Technical Definition (1)

- Constructions involving a series of two (or more) different juxtaposed verbs
  - Not joined in a one-word compound verb
  - Each of which could be used independently
  - In a series that may be finite
  - Including not only idiomatic or syntactically frozen collocations,
  - But one verb
    - may be of a limited class
    - and may have "light" (less than lexically full) semantics

- within a single clause
  - With no pause between the verbs,
    - [no orthographic indication otherwise, such as a comma]
  - Prosodic realization of a single predicate, and
  - No clause boundary markers
  - Expressing a single, possibly complex, event

- with no overt operator linking the verbs
  - No coordinator
  - No subordinator
  - No morphological dependency
  - No "serial" linker or general ligature
Technical Definition (2)

• with shared values
  – represented either only once on the first or last verb, or
  – on each verb, for:
    – Tense, aspect and mood/modality
    – Polarity (negation), such that the verbs cannot be negated independently
    – In a shared scope of auxiliaries

• with obligatorily shared arguments:
  – The subject of following verb is the subject or object of preceding verb
  – And each argument is expressed overtly only once in the series

• and potential and expected adjacency for these verbs
  – except for interposed shared arguments

• which may render several different relationships between the verbs including
  – Subordination; and
  – Coordination
Simplified Working Definition

• Serial verb constructions (SVCs) are:
  – two or more juxtaposed verbs
  – with no marker of dependency or linking element
  – expressing a single event in a single clause
  – with shared values for Tense-Aspect-Modality and negation
  – and shared arguments (subject and/or object)
  – potentially encoding various semantic relationships.
Not serial verb constructions:

*Pseudocoordination*

Let’s go **and** see a movie! (English)

- Overt conjunction linking the verbs.
- Similar to SVCs, but does not match definition.
Not serial verb constructions:

*Converbs*

Hi-ga sizun-de it-ta (Japanese: Shibatani 2003:271)
sun-NOM sink-CONJ go-PAST
‘The sun went down.’

- Overt suffix linking the verbs.

- Similar to SVCs, but does not match definition.
Not serial verb constructions:

*Compound Serial Verb Constructions*

xig + ab + op  \(\text{(Pirahã: Everett 1986:301)}\)
take turn go
‘bring back.’

- Compounds, not independent words
- Similar to SVCs, but does not match definition.
- *Also considered, but not discussed today.*
325 language survey

• Based on the methodology of the *World Atlas of Language Structures*
• Based especially on Haspelmath’s chapter on Nominal and Verbal Conjunction, with several additional languages added
• Data from descriptive grammars as well as secondary sources describing SVCs in these languages
Acknowledgments

• The survey was conducted with four research assistants: Ryan, Kelsey, George and Jack.

325 Languages

Abkhaz, Abun, Acehnese, Acoma, Agarabi, Ainu, Alamblak, Alyawarra, Ambae (Lolovoli Northeast), Amele, Apurinã, Arabic (Egyptian), Araona, Arawak, Arop-Lokep, Arrernte (Mparntwe), Babungo, Badimaya, Bagirmi, Baka (in Cameroon), Bali-Vitu, Banoní, Basque, Batak (Karo), Bawm, Berber (Middle Atlas), Binin Gun-Wok, Bozo (Tigemaho), Brahui, Brokskat, Buduma, Buma, Burushaski, Busa, Cahuilla, Canela-Krahô, Cantonese, Cayuga, Chamorro, Chechen, Chemehuevi, Chichewa, Chocho, Chukchi, Coahuilteco, Coos (Hanis), Coptic, Dagbani, Dargwa, Degema, Dhaasanac, Dhivehi, Djugay, Doyayo, Drehu, Dullay (Gollango), English, Erromangan, Evenki, Ewondo, Fijian, Finnish, Fongbe, French, Gapapaiwa, Garo, Georgian, German, Gola, Gooniyandi, Greek (Modern), Greenlandic (West), Guarani, Gujarati, Gunbalang, Gurr-goni, Haida, Hamtai, Hatam, Hausa, Hawaiian, Hebrew (Modern), Hindi, Hixkaryana, Hmong (Njua), Hoava, Hungarian, Hunzib, Ika (Arhuaco), Imonda, Indonesian, Iraqw, Italian, Itzaj, Jabêm, Jakaltek, Jaminjung, Japanese, Ju‘hoan, Kairiru, Kalkatungu, Kamaiurã, Kambera, Kana, Kannada, Kanuri, Karen (Pwo), Karok, Kashmiri, Kâte, Kera, Ket, Kham, Khanty, Khasi, Khmu’, Khoekhoe, Kiribati, Koasati, Kobon, Kolami, Kombai, Korean, Korku, Koromfe, Korowai, Koyraboro Senni, Krongo, Kulu Ngañhcara, Kukú, Kuot, Kutenai, Kwaio, Lai, Lak, Lakhota, Lamang, Lango, Latvian, Lavukaleve, Laz, Lele, Lepcha, Lezgian, Lilooet, Longgu, Lugbara, Luvale, Maale, Ma‘di, Madurese, Maithili, Malayalam, Mam, Mandarin, Mangarrayi, Mangghuer, Maori, Mapudungun, Marathi, Maricopa, Marquesan, Matsés, Maybrat, Mbay, Mbili, Meithei, Midob, Mixtec (Chalcatongo), Miya, Mocovi, Mohawk, Monumbo, Mosetén, Mundari, Mupun, Musgu, Mussau, Nak, Nagatman, Nahuatl (Mecayapan Isthmus), Nahuatl (Tetelcingo), Nambikuára, Navajo, Ndebele (in South Africa), Ndébbana, Nelemwa, Nepali, Newar (Dolakha), Nez Perce, Ngalaran, Nhand, Nias, Nisga, Niuafo’ou, Niuean, Nivkh, Nkore-Kiga, Nsenga, Nuaulu, Obolo, Ojibwa (Eastern), O’odham, Oromo (Harar), Otomi (Mezquital), Paamese, Páez, Paiute (Northern), Paliwan, Palauan, Passamaquoddy-Maliseet, Pech, Pero, Persian, Pirahã, Pitjantjatjara, Popoloca (Metzontla), Puluwat, Purépecha, Qafar, Qiang, Quechua (Huallaga), Quechua (Imbabura), Returã, Rotuman, Russian, Saami (Kildin), Saami (Northern), Salt-Yui, Sango, Sangu, Sanuma, Selkup, Sentani, Shoshone, Shir, Siuslaw, Slave, So, Somali, Southeast Ambrym, Spanish, Squamish, Sudest, Suena, Sundanese, Supyire, Tabas, Tagalog, Taiif, Tamabin, Tamil, Tarar, Tabua, Tepehuan (Southeastern), Teribe, Tetun, Thai, Thompson, Tibetan (Shigatse), Tidore, Tigrinya, Tikar, Tinrin, Tiwi, Tobeló, Tommo So, Totonac (Xicotepec de Juárez), Trumai, Tsat, Tugun, Tukang Besi, Turkish, Tuvaluan, Tzutujil, Udihe, Udmurt, Ulithian, Upper Kuskokwim, Urubú-Kaapor, Usan, Vafsi, Vietnamese, Walman, Warao, Wardaman, Wari’, Wichí (Mataca), Wolof, Yagua, Yaqui, Yawelmani, Yawuru, Yidiny, Yimas, Yoruba, Yukaghir (Kolyma), Zapotec (Quiegolani), Zoque (Chimalapa), Zulu, Zuni, Arapesh (Mountain), Asmat, Barasano, Burmese, Cree (Plains), Daga, Dani (Lower Grand Valley), Grebo, Kayardild, Kewa, Khalkha (Mongolian), Kiowa, Makah, Malagasy, Martuthunira, Maung, Ngiyambaa, Oneida, Rama, Rapanui, Swahili, Wichita, Irish, Selknam
Distribution of SVCs

325 languages; 120 (red) have SVCs, 37%; 205 (blue) do not.
But this distribution does not take frequency/extent into account.
SVCs generally found in areas where they have been research extensively, but they are found in various regions, on all continents!
Serial verbs in SOV languages
Converbs in SOV languages
Converbs in SVO languages
Distribution of SVCs within SVO?

• General conjunctions:
  1. Same ‘and’ conjunction used for N+N and V+V
  2. Comitative ‘with’ ≠ conjunction ‘and’

• (Pseudocoordination requires an established conjunction in the language by definition.)

• 25/41 languages with a gen. conj. have SVCs
• 42/59 language without a g.c. have SVCs
• Not statistically significant. However...
Distribution of SVCs within SVO?

• With general conjunctions:
  Abun, Arabic (Egyptian), Arop-Lokep, Buma, English, Erromangan, Finnish, Guaraní, Hmong Njua, Indonesian, Kwaio, Maybrat, Mocoví, Mussau, Ndebele (in South Africa), Palauan, Puluwat, Russian, Saami (Northern), Siar, Taiof, Tetun, Thai, Totonac (Xicotepec de Juárez), Walman

• Without general conjunctions:
  Babungo, Bagirmi, Bali-Vitu, Banoni, Buduma, Cantonese, Dagbani, Degema, Ewondo, Fongbe, Hatam, Ju 'hoan, Kana, Khmu', Koromfe, Lango, Lele, Mandarin, Mbay, Mupun, Nkore-Kiga, Paamese, Pero, Southeast Ambrym, Tamabo, Tiwi, Tugun, Wichí (Mataca), Yoruba, Arapesh (Mountain), Ambae (Lolovoli Northeast), Jabêm, Karen (Pwo), Khasi, Nahuatl (Tetelcingo), Nuaulu, Rotuman, Sango, Sundanese, Taba, Tidore, Vietnamese
Defining SVCs (again)

• Just about every part of the definition has been questioned, with “exceptions”
• But by definition a definition cannot have exceptions!!
• At least **30 (15%)** of the 205 languages in the current sample that do not have SVCs have been described as **having SVCs**.
• *(Not all languages with SVCs described as such, so less than 80% accuracy in descriptions!)*
Working Definition

• Serial verb constructions (SVCs) are:
  – two or more juxtaposed verbs
  – with no marker of dependency or linking element
  – expressing a single event in a single clause
  – with shared values for Tense-Aspect-Modality and negation
  – and shared arguments (subject and/or object)
  – potentially encoding various semantic relationships.
No overt linker?

• Definitions of SVCs often phrased like: “no conjunction or dependency marker” (e.g., Aikhenvald 2006)
• May allow for overt linkers, special “serial” markers:
  \[\text{katça rela-a amʉemʉe-kʉrʉ-a-lʉ}
  \text{man teach-SVC wander-PL-3=REM}\]
  (Aikhenvald 2011:21; Olawsky 2006)
• Based on data from Formosan languages, Shibatani (2009) argues we cannot maintain the formal properties of SVCs:
  1. overt linking elements cannot be excluded from SVCs
  2. converbs therefore can also be considered SVCs
Pseudocoordination and SVCs

- Pseudocoordination (PC) constructions share many properties with SVCs

- In this section, I will show two things:
  - The definition for SVCs almost fits PC
    - Except that PC involves a linker homophonous to ‘and’
  - The types of PC are similar to the types of SVCs

- I will argue both are Multi-Verb Predicates
Distribution of PC in 325 languages
Distribution of pseudocoordination

- Found in at least 32 of the 325 languages

- Found extensively in Indo-European (especially Germanic, Romance and Slavic), as well as Semitic, ‘Khoisan’ and Austronesian

- In general, underdescribed and difficult to differentiate from coordination (ambiguous)
Defining PC like SVCs

• **Pseudocoordination is:**
  – two or more verbs
  – Linked by an element homophonous to ‘and’
  – expressing a single event in a single clause
  – with shared values for Tense-Aspect-Modality and negation
  – and shared arguments (subject and/or object)
Defining PC like SVCs

– expressing a single event in a single clause
– with shared values for Tense-Aspect-Modality and negation

• Go and get ≠ go and then also get
• I went and got a sandwich.
• *I went and have a sandwich.
• Go and get it! / *Go and not get it!
Defining PC like SVCs

– and shared arguments (subject and/or object)

*I’ll go and you get a book

• Several types of transitive PC attested as well...
Three types of transitive PC

- Norwegian/English ‘take NP and...” instrumental construction (den Dikken 1991, Hopper 2008)
  
  Take the hammer and hit the nail.

- Spanish ‘topic auxiliary’ (Arnaiz & Camacho 1999)
  
  Juan va y María lo besa. ‘J. gets unexpectedly kissed by M.’

- Manam causatives (Oceanic, Lichtenberk 1983)
  
  wásá ḋúsi i-emaʔ-í-be i-moaʔúsu
  wind loin.cloth 3SG-cause-3SG-and 3SG-move
  ‘The wind made the loincloth move.’
Associated Motion

• Morphology for ‘go and’ (itive) and ‘come and’ (ventive) found around the world, described especially in Australia.
  – Morphology of this sort found in at least 1/3 of the 325 languages (up to 150), (cf. Ross 2015)
• Most common is ‘going’ vs. ‘coming’ contrast:
  Maasai (Nilotic, Kenya/Tanzania; Tucker & Mpaayei 1955: 127)
  asi asieku asioyo
  ‘to be impatient’ ‘to come quickly’ ‘to go away quickly’
Itive and Ventive

Maasai (Tucker and Mpaayei 1955, 126; 123)

- **A-rew-aa nkishu**
  1SG-drive-ITV cattle
  ‘I shall drive the cattle away.’

- **Te-re-u nkishu**
  IMP-drive-VEN cattle
  ‘Drive the cattle this way!’
Serial Verbs and PC

• Most common type of SVCs is with motion verbs
• “Every serializing language I have encountered includes a category of motion serialization, where a verb of motion is combined with some other verb in such a way that the motion verb comes first and the moving argument is the Agent of the second verb.” (Durie 1997: 310)
• “Every serializing language has ... verbs of motion ... [and some languages only have] this type of serialization.” (Aikhenvald 2006: 48)

• Also very common for pseudocoordination (‘go and get’)

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• Also very common for pseudocoordination (‘go and get’)
Five+ forms of MVP

Note that SVCs already include 3 forms:

• SVC1: two uninflected juxtaposed verbs
• SVC2: two identically inflected verbs
• SVC3: one inflected and one uninflected verb

• PC: two verbs linked by ‘and’
• Converb: one verb marked as ‘subordinate’
Uninflected second verb in PC?

• Frisian *imperativus pro infinitivo* construction uses the imperative/stem form of a second conjoined verb:

  de polysje soe by him komme en **nim** syn papieren mei
  the police should to him come.INF and take.[“**IMP”**] his documents with
  ‘The police should come [to him] and take his documents.’
  (de Haan & Weerman 1986:93)

• A similar construction is found in Bantu (Schadeberg 2010):

  A-ka-ingia na ku-keti juu ya kiti
  SUBJ-TAM-enter and INF-sit above PREP chair
  ‘He went in and sat down on the chair...’
Converbs + Pseudocoordination?

• In Dullay (Gollango), spoken in Ethiopia, a unique construction was found:

ašša pa kasʿadʿ-a

go.IMP and ask-2SG.SUBORD

‘go and ask’

(Amborn, Minker & Sasse 1980:123)
Multi-Verb Predicates

– two or more verbs
– expressing a single event in a single clause
– with shared values for Tense-Aspect-Modality and negation
– and shared arguments (subject and/or object)

→ But maybe all of this is the same phenomenon!

Multi-Verb Predicates should have all these features
Complex predicates?

• All of these constructions are types of Complex Predicates, of course.

• But Complex Predicates can involve not just verbs: “take a bath” for example.

• Therefore: Multi-Verb Predicates
Conclusions

• “Serial verb constructions” is a problematic term focused on form over function and applied inconsistently by different researchers
• Generalizations are missed if we narrowly define SVCs by their form
• A better concept is Multi-Verb Predicates
• More generally in my research I think there should be less emphasis on a direct, inherent association of meaning and form
Thank you!

• There’s a lot more than I could include in this 20 minute talk—

• For comments, questions, copies of the slides, bibliography or additional data, please email: djross3@illinois.edu