



How to find serial verb constructions. The relevance of spontaneous speech for a descriptive grammar of Central Pame

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Introduction – What are SVCs?

„A serial verb construction (SVC) is a sequence of verbs which **act together as a single predicate, without any overt marker** of coordination, subordination, or syntactic dependency of any sort. Serial verb constructions describe what is conceptualized as a **single event**. They are monoclausal; their **intonational properties** are the same as those of monoverbal clause, and they have **just one tense, aspect and polarity value**. SVCs may also share core and other arguments. Each component of an SVC must be able **to occur on its own**. Within an SVC, the individual verbs may have same, or different transitivity values.“

(Aikhenvald/Dixon 2006, 1)

Introduction – What are SVCs?

Asymmetrical	Symmetrical
<p>„involves two or more verbs of different status.“</p> <p>„major’ component = semantically and grammatical unrestricted class.</p> <p>„minor’ component = limited and closed subclass of verbs of a certain semantic set.</p>	<p>„combines verbs of any semantic type“</p> <p>„[t]he only restriction on combining [...] semantic plausibility“</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) direction (ii) aspect, extent, or change of state (iii) modal values (iv) phasal meanings (v) adding an argument and increasing valency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) sequences of subactions, concomitant actions related together, or alternating between one another (ii) cause-effect and result (iii) manner (iv) synonymous / parallel verb serialization
<p>„tend to undergo grammaticalization“</p>	<p>„symmetrical serial verb constructions tend to become lexicalized and develop idiomatic meanings“</p> <p>→ „lexical enrichment“</p>

(Aikhenvald 2018, 6; 55ff, 82ff.)

Introduction – What is Central Pame [pbs]/?

- Otopamean language in Mexico / San Luis Potosí
- At the risk of ousting through Spanish; but (contrary to Northern Pame) still monolingual speakers and intergenerational transmission
- Xi'ui / Xi'oi / Šiʔui
- Some thousand speaker
- Underdescribed / SIL
- headmarking;
highly fusional
morphological marking
- Fieldwork on regular basis since 2012



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:San_Luis_Potosi_in_Mexico_\(1824\).svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:San_Luis_Potosi_in_Mexico_(1824).svg)

Introduction – What we want to show today

- SVCs are not an innovation of Central Pame and not a mere integration of Spanish infinitive constructions
- SVCs presumably exist in other Otopame-languages (but their status remains unclear and they are „still“ missing in the literature)
- Different registers/styles are extremely relevant...
 - **...in order to find SVCs and other grammatical phenomena**
 - **...for the writing of specific grammars**
 - **...what has not yet been taken (enough) into account in descriptions/grammars of OP-languages**

SVCs in Southern Pame

Southern Pame: extinct

Francisco Valle (18th century) mentions analogous constructions:

„Este lo suelen vsar juntando dos Verbos, ambos en vn mismo tiempo de indicativo [...] Yo puedo trabajar: **cao tojòt no tajo itajo**. Y se cabar la tierra: **Cao nojot cambo noiot**. Y lo mismo en el preterito y futuro, V.G. Y no quise defender. **cagao gogiat gamage**.“

These [constructions] tend to combine two verbs, both in the same indicative tense [...] I can work: **cao tojòt no tajo itajo**. I used to dig the soil: **Cao nojot cambo noiot**. And the same in preterite and future, e.g. I wanted to defend. **cagao gogiat gamage**.“

SVCs in Northern Pame

(Scott Berthiaume 2021, pers. comm.)

1. *Biu' xiliṯ nṯ mjàu banjuẽ'ẽ ke ni sikiera*
The bird is very young/weak that no even

la'ju'u ***lakĩjṯt [...]***
3s-prs-can **3s-prs-take_off/launch**

,The young bird can't even take off'

2. [...] *bu' matuãn-k u gamã gasãa'*
The husband-1S already **3s-pst-go** **3s-pst-cut**

biu mpè [...]
the grass

,My husband went to cut the grass'

SVCs in Otopame-Languages

Otomí de San Idefonso Tultepec, Querétero
(Palancar 2009, 532)

dá jwa^hthe dá ho^hje

dá=jwa^{ht}=∅=he

[dá=ho^{hk}-∅=he]

1.PSD=acabar=3OBJ=1PL.EX

1.PSD=hacer-3OBJ=1PL.EX

‘terminamos de hacerlo.’

(lit. ‘lo terminamos, lo hicimos.’)

SVCs in Otopame-Languages

Mazahua de San Pedro el Alto, Temascalcingo

(Cárdenas Martínez & Lastra 2011, 47)

*ngenu bεjña o-nginchi **ra-maa ra-zengua** nu xira*

DEM/mujer/3PRET-penser/**3FUT-ir/3FUT-saludar**/ART/esposo

‘Esta mujer pensó ir a visitar a su marido’

SVCs in Otopame-Languages

Chichimeco Jonaz, Guanajuato/San Luis Potosí

(Lizárraga Navarro 2021, pers. comm.)

ihiéku símaʔn ***kí-tʔu*** ***kí-tahn-és***
2sg *perro* ***pres.2.c5-caminar*** ***pres.2.c1.bañar-dl***

‘Tú andas bañando a los perros.’

SVCs in Otopame-Languages

But:

... SVCs in other Otopamean languages are limited to **asymmetrical constructions** (ex. andative, venitive, modals) and their status need to be clarified (Spanish?)

Still:

... We can not rule out **symmetrical constructions**

Why?

→ only elicited data of other languages

SVCs in Central Pame



**Asymmetrical &
Symmetrical SVCs**

Symmetrical SVCs in Central Pame

Wa-?éhē? *wa-sei-k* *nda* *ntsu'-k* *ngon-hĩũ?* *Lencha.*
3s.pc-decir **3s.pc-contar-io1** 1/num tía-1s 3s-nombre nprop
 Dice me cuenta una mi tía su nombre Lencha.
 (BH – GRJ, ALIM, Narración)

Si *kupú* *tũ-?ũẽĩ* *tu-chao* *kíč?ehign*
 esp mod **1s.pc-hacer** **1s.pc-preparar** npos.sg.comida
 Sí así **hago** **preparo** comidas.
 Si así hago la comida.
 (BH – FBM/FLD, ALIM, Dialogue)

kuhui *tu-wauc'* *lá-tahãõ* *kun* *diwiehent*
 mod **1s.pc-exprimir** **1s.pc-moler** esp npos.p.ajo
 entonces (lo) exprimo muelo con ajos
 exprimo bien, muelo ajos
 (BH – FBM/FLD, ALIM, Dialogue)

Uh lá-cu?u *kuás* *tu-?ũẽĩ* *la-séñ.*
 inj 1s.pc-morder 3s.derecho **1s.pc-hacer** **1s.pc-abrir**
 Uh, muerdo mejor (le) hago abro.
 Uh, le quito la cascara dura con los dientes, lo limpio.
 (BH – FBM/FLD, ALIM, Dialogue)

Asymmetrical SVCs in Central Pame

<i>Y cuando</i>	<i>heuk?</i>	<i>ni-hi?u</i>	<i>ni-wie</i>	<i>re</i>	<i>šimhĩã</i>
esp esp	pp2s	2s.pt-poder	2s.pt-tejer	art.p	npos.p.petat
Y cuando	tu	pudiste	tejiste	los	petates

Y cuando tu aprendiste a tejer el petate

(BH – FBM/FLD, ALIM, Dialogue)

nammàign' ndo'uàjot

3SPT_acabar 3SPT_hablar_3PL

he-finished he-spoke-to-them

When he had finished addressing them

(Gibson, A Curing Ceremony, Description)

Cojòin ⁿ	comáⁿ	ndojuéet	napò	páccas,
mod	1SPT_ponerse	3SPT_cortar_3PL	dem	meat
Then	he-began	he-cut-up	that	meat,

so he began cutting the cow up in pieces

(Gibson & Olson & Olson, Four Pame texts, story)

<i>y</i>	<i>peuk</i>	<i>la-wá</i>	<i>kí-pihe</i>	<i>šihu?a</i>
esp loc	2s.pc-ir	2s.pc-cargar	npos.p.palma	
y	donde	vas	cargas	palmas ?

y donde recoges por las palmas?

(BH – FBM/FLD, ALIM, Dialogue)

SVCs in Central Pame

...are not constructed the way they are **because** of the „missing“ infinitive. Comparison with other languages without infinitive showed different strategies (ex. connecting verbs with subordinating marking strategies) and not SVCs.

SVCs: the importance of recording unrestricted speech

... became evident during the analyses of data

... not even 1 SVC in hundred of structures of questionnaires (**ALIM**)

... plenty of SVCs in unrestricted speech (esp. dialogues)



SVCs: the importance of recording unrestricted speech

„To understand how serial verb constructions are used under various circumstances in day-to-day life one needs to **observe the language in its spontaneous use**. Gossip, casual remarks, or overheard conversations often provide more enlightening clues than narrated stories. [...] Serial verb constructions are **often a prominent feature of informal conversations**. A corpus which consists just of traditional narratives may not include these.“

(Aikhenvald 2018, 251)

SVCs: the importance of recording unrestricted speech

Source	Kind of data	Predicates in clauses/statements	SVCs	ASYM-SVCs	SYM-SVCs	indistinct
GRJ - Tigre - ALIM; BH	story	161/66	24 / 14,9%	12 / 50%	9 / 37,5%	12,50%
FLD - Historia - ALIM; BH	autobiography	124/55	25 / 20,2%	18 / 72%	6 / 24%	1 / 4%
FBM-FLD; Dialog; - ALIM; BH	dialogue	233/203	36 / 15,5%	11 / 30,6%	24 / 66,6%	1 / 2,8%
Ogress, Four Pame texts, GOO	story	138/61	16 / 11,6%	8 / 50%	5 / 31,2%	3 / 18,8%
The Feast of the Dead, Four Pame texts, GOO	description	37/17	4 / 10,8%	2 / 50%	2 / 50%	0
Chi-Gyo'i, Four Pame texts, GOO	story	215/105	14 / 6,5%	12 / 85,7%	1 / 7,1%	1 / 7,1%
The Thunders, Four Pame texts, GOO	description	42/21	8 / 19,0%	5 / 62,5%	0 / 0%	3 / 37,5%
A Curing Ceremony, Gibson	description	35/17	4 / 11,4%	3 / 75%	0 / 0%	1 / 25%
The man who abandoned his wife, Gibson, 1966	story	19/74	19 / 25,7%	11 / 57,9%	1 / 5,2%	7 / 36,8 %
A New Rope, Olson, 1951	description	10/7	0	0	0	0

SVCs: the importance of recording unrestricted speech

Functions of (symmetrical) SVCs in spontaneous speech

- „accumulation“ → discourse phenomena?
 - „clearly common or cultural association“
- (Aikhenvald 2018, 183)

Conclusion: The relevance for grammar writing

You cannot describe what you don't see and what your data does not show



You need sufficient data of different kinds in order to not overlook specific phenomena that are relevant for grammatical description.



Theoretical framework:

What counts as a grammatical category in your inventory of description? (cf. SIL)



SVCs in Central Pame and in other Otopamean languages should be part of their grammars.

Merci

