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

Bernhard Hurch & Jennifer Brunner
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?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Asymmetrical</strong></th>
<th><strong>Symmetrical</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>„involves two or more verbs of different status.“</td>
<td>„combines verbs of any semantic type“</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‚major’ component = semantically and grammatical unrestricted class.</td>
<td>„[t]he only restriction on combining […] semantic plausibility“</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‚minor’ component = limited and closed subclass of verbs of a certain semantic set.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) direction</td>
<td>(i) sequences of subactions, concomitant actions related together, or alternating between one another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) aspect, extent, or change of state</td>
<td>(ii) cause-effect and result</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) modal values</td>
<td>(iii) manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iv) phasal meanings</td>
<td>(iv) synonymous / parallel verb serialization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(v) adding an argument and increasing valency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>„tend to undergo grammaticalization“</td>
<td>„symmetrical serial verb constructions tend to become lexicalized and develop idiomatic meanings“</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>→ „lexical enrichment“</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(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

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. Yse cabar la tierra: Cao nojot cambo noiot. Ylo mismo en el preterito y futuro, V.G. Yno 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’ xiliŋ ní mjau banjuẽ’ẽ ke ni sikiera
   The bird is very young/weak that no even
     la’ju’u          lakĩŋũt [...]  
   3s-prs-can           3s-prs-take_off/launch
   ,The young bird can’t even take off’

2. [...] bu’ matuãŋ-k u gamã gasãa’
   The husband-1S already 3s-pst-go 3s-pst-cut
     biu mpẽ [...]  
     the grass
   ,My husband went to cut the grass’
SVCs in Otopame-Languages

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

dá jwa\textsuperscript{h}the dá ho\textsuperscript{h}je

dá=jwa\textsuperscript{h}t=\varnothing=he \quad [dá=ho\textsuperscript{hk}=\varnothing=he]
1.PSD=acabar=3OBJ=1PL.EX \quad 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 bɛjña o-nginchi ra-maa ra-zenguə 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.)

\[
\text{ihíéku símaʔn } \text{ki-t’u} \quad \text{ki-tahn-és} \\
2\text{sg} \quad \text{perro} \quad \text{pres.2.c5-caminar} \quad \text{pres.2.c1.bañar-dl}
\]

‘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-*ʔéhē?  *wa-sei-k*  *nda*  *ntsu’*-k  *ngon-hīū?*  *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)

*Sí*  *kupú*  *tū?-ūēĩ*  *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-tahāo*  *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-cuʔu*  *kuás*  *tu?-ūēĩ*  *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

Y cuando heuk? ni-hi?u ni-wie re šimhĩã
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)

nammàignŋ’ ndo’uàjot
3SPT_acabar 3SPT_hablar_3PL
he-finished he-spoke-to-them
When he had finished addressing them
(Gibson, A Curing Ceremony, Description)

Cojòi mod comán ndojuéet napò páccas,
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)

y peuk la-wá kí-pihe šihu?a
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)
„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**

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