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Published in:
Working Papers (Lund University, Department of Linguistics)

2005

Citation for published version (APA):

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Verb serialization in Kammu

Arthur Holmer

1 Background

1.1 Kammu – general properties
Kammu is spoken by approximately 500,000 people primarily in northern Laos, northern Thailand, and northwestern Vietnam. It belongs to the Khmuic branch of Mon-Khmer languages. It is an isolating language, with no inflectional morphology and little derivational morphology (basically causatives and nominalizations). Word order is SVO, NA, NG and prepositional. Kammu wh-questions are formed by means of wh- in situ. Anaphoric relations can reach across clause boundaries: an anaphor in an embedded clause can be bound by the matrix subject. Some relevant examples are given in (1).

1  a. yõŋ ð cú pè màḥ rùŋ
   father 1s want eat rice steam
   ‘My father wants to eat steamed rice.’

   b. mèè kùuũ màḥ?
   2sm see who?
   ‘Who did you see?’

   c. kɔɔ wèè tàa kàaŋ tèe
   3sm return LOC home REFL
   ‘He returned to his home.’

   d. ð wèèt tràak nàm
   1s buy buffalo big
   ‘I bought a big buffalo.’

1This paper represents partial results of the research project Kammu reference grammar (Holmer, Svantesson & Tayanin), funded by The Swedish Research Council. The data upon which this paper is based derives in its entirety from the Kammu native speaker Damrong Tayanin. I hereby gratefully acknowledge his patient help and guidance, without which none of the work reported here would have been possible. Naturally, any mistakes are mine and mine alone.
1.2 Serial verb constructions
Various prototypical properties have been attributed in the literature to serial verb constructions (henceforth SVCs): shared arguments, defined either in terms of grammatical relations (e.g. subjects) or in terms of argument structure and semantic role (e.g. patients), shared tense, and shared propositional truth value. These all derive from the single most salient property of SVCs, namely that each construction represents a single event, and that the verbs in an SVC serve to express various facets of this event in different ways. In this paper, it will be assumed that this is the basic defining characteristic of an SVC. Other properties, in particular argument-sharing properties, will be seen as cross-linguistic or language-specific consequences of this.

2 Serial verb constructions in Kammu
Many grammatical relations between predicates in Kammu are expressed by means of what can be referred to impressionistically as verb concatenations. These are of various types, which can be distinguished according to various parameters, e.g. the presence or absence of subject markers, the (obligatory or optional) presence or absence of conjunctions or other linkers, the function of the construction itself and the coreference relations between the arguments of the two verbs. I have chosen to classify SVCs in terms of their function, rather than on other criteria. Nothings hinges on this choice except that it appears that such a classification illustrates, better than any other, the semantic relations between the verbs involved.
Having defined SVCs in 1.2 as constructions which make use of several verbs to denote a single event, the problem remains to define how an event is to be recognized. Ideally, we would wish to find a syntactic definition which can be applied across the board, without having to refer to the nuances of meaning of each separate example. Since Kammu has no morphological marking of tense / aspect on the verb itself, the idea of tense-sharing does not seem particularly promising. However, the behaviour of the preverbal irrealis / future marker cœ will be applied as a test. If cœ can be inserted between two verbs (henceforth V1 and V2), this is interpreted as a delay between the realizations of V1 and V2, i.e. implying that we are dealing with two events.

Thus, in (2a), V1 and V2 may or may not be interpreted semantically as two facets of the same event (depending on how wide our definition of an event is). However, in (2b), the insertion of cœ shows that (2b) clearly involves two events, since a delay is explicitly encoded between the actions represented by V1 and V2 respectively and that (2b) is therefore not an SVC.

2  
a. ḍ wèt plé pn-mâh kóon têe  
 1s buy fruit CAUS-eat child REFL  
  ‘I bought fruit to feed my child.’

b. ḍ wèt plé cœ pn-mâh kóon têe  
 1s buy fruit IRR CAUS-eat child REFL  
  ‘I bought fruit to feed my child later.’

Crucially, since there is no major change in meaning between (2a) and (2b), other than the delay itself, it follows that (2a) is not an SVC either, but rather contains a purpose clause. If, on the other hand, the addition of cœ had changed the entire interpretation of the construction (we will see examples in section 2.4), this would be evidence that the construction lacking cœ is an SVC whereas the construction containing cœ is not.

The importance of using the distribution cœ as a syntactic criterion, rather than impressionistically addressing the interpretation of each example, will become clear in section 2.5, where two examples which are linearly identical and semantically comparable are shown to be syntactically quite distinct by means of this test.

2.1 Prototypical SVCs and motion verbs
The most prototypical kind of serial verb construction in Kammu is, as in other serial verb languages, that used with motion verbs. We shall use this type as a base from which to explore other types. SVCs of motion in Kammu
can involve the use of a substantial number of verbs, denoting manner, path, directionality, target, etc. Example (3) is a more or less maximal example.

3 ồ tár là pùi cùur rôc taa kûŋ
1s run go.through.undergrowth forest descend arrive LOC village
‘I ran down through the undergrowth to get to the village’

SVCs of motion have a strict linear ordering – any change in the order of the verbs results in marginality or ungrammaticality (4).

4 a. ồ tár cùur là pùi rôc taa kûŋ
1s run descend go.through.undergrowth forest arrive LOC village
b. ồ là pùi tár cùur rôc taa kûŋ
c. *ồ cùur là pùi tár rôc taa kûŋ
d. *ồ cùur tár là pùi rôc taa kûŋ

While the other elements of a serial verb construction conspire to produce a given reading of the action itself, the resultative element (e.g. rôc ‘come’ in (3)), which is, if present, obligatorily SVC-final, rather contributes to the Aktionsart. Semantically, this distinction may be rather subtle, but the syntactic consequences are important. A resultative may not appear in an irrealis clause (5a), a negated clause (5b) or together with a modal auxiliary (5c). The same examples also illustrate that omitting the resultative ensures grammaticality.

5 a. ồ côc tár (*rôc) taa kûŋ
1s IRR run arrive LOC village
‘I will run to the village.’

b. ồ póc tár (*rôc) taa kûŋ
1s NEG run arrive LOC village
‘I didn’t run to the village.’

c. ồ cù tár (*rôc) taa kûŋ
1s want run arrive LOC village
‘I want to run to the village.’

If the resultative is used specifically with irrealis côc, the construction can be rescued by anchoring the event by means of a temporal adverb (6a), an option not open with negation or modal auxiliaries. Alternatively, the SVC can be split up using the particle ùun ‘PURPOSE’ (< ùun ‘give, let’), as in (6b).
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6 a. kɔɔɔ ɛvɔɔ tɔɔ rɔɔt tɔa kʊŋ *(siipəŋ)
3sm IRR run arrive LOC village tomorrow
‘He will run all the way to the village tomorrow.’

b. ɔ cɔɔɔ tɔɔ *(ùun) rɔɔt tɔa kʊŋ
1s IRR run to arrive LOC village
‘I will run to get to the village.’

Another important feature of resultatives is that they are subject to certain cooccurrence restrictions concerning wh-phrases. A locational goal may be questioned with a wh-phrase (7a). On the other hand, it is at best marginal to question the subject of the construction (7b). Instead, a cleft is used (7c).

7 a. mɛe tɔɔ rɔɔt tɔa mɔ?
2sm run arrive LOC where?
‘Where did you run all the way to?’

b. ?mɔ tɔɔ rɔɔt tɔa kʊŋ
who? run arrive LOC village
I.R: ‘Who ran all the way to the village?’

c. ɔmɔ mɔ tɔɔ rɔɔt tɔa kʊŋ
be who? run arrive LOC village
‘Who was it that ran all the way to the village?’

Resultatives are most felicitous when the event of which they denote the result is referential, i.e. in a declarative realis clause. Therefore, tests concerning the behaviour of cɔɔ must necessarily be applied to examples without a resultative. Applying the insertion of cɔɔ between V1 and V2 as an SVC test, we see that motion SVCs clearly qualify as SVCs (8a, b). Further, we see that a negation may not be inserted either between V1 and V2 (8c).

8 a. ɔ cɔɔɔ tɔɔ (*cɔɔɔ) cʊur tɔa kʊŋ
1s IRR run IRR descend LOC village
‘I shall run down to the village.’

b. ɔ tɔɔ (*cɔɔɔ) cʊur tɔa kʊŋ
1s run IRR descend LOC village
‘I (*shall) run down to the village.’

c. ɔ tɔɔ (*pɔɔɔ) cʊur tɔa kʊŋ
1s run NEG descend LOC village
I.R: ‘I didn’t run down to the village.’
It is hard to find a context in which it is felicitous to negate an SVC of motion, unless some further information is added to the clause. When this occurs, the most natural interpretation seems to depend entirely on the context (9).

9  a. ḍo pōo ṭār cūur tāa kūŋ (?((mēe kāay lāl ḍo ṭār)
  ḍ1s NEG run descend LOC village 2sm still say ḍ1s run
  ‘I didn’t run down to the village, but you still claim that I ran.’
  (I came down to the village, but not running)

  b. ḍo pōo ṭār cūur tāa kūŋ, ḍo ṭār yēh tāa rē
  ḍ1s NEG run descend LOC village ḍ1s run go LOC field
  ‘I didn’t run down to the village, I ran to the fields.’

Incidentally, the relationship between manner and motion can also be expressed with adverbs derived from verbs of manner, but not verbs of motion (10a, b). This is exactly analogous to the situation holding in a verb-framed language such as Spanish\(^2\) (Talmy 1985).

10  a. ḍ čūur tŋ-tār
  ḍ1s descend ADV-run
  ‘I ran down. / I descended running.’

  b. *ὁ ṭār tŋ-cūur
  ḍ1s run ADV-descend

Taking motion SVCs as a prototype, we now compare other constructions to determine which features can be considered typical of SVCs.

2.2 Argument sharing
Where intransitive verbs of motion are concerned, argument sharing ensues as a matter of course. The single argument of each of the verbs of motion must necessarily be identical, otherwise we could not be dealing with a single instance of predication. It is therefore particularly interesting to investigate what happens when one of the verbs is transitive. Observe the following examples with a verb expressing caused movement (11).

11  a. ḍ (*cēk) wāt āh kūt tāa čēk
  ḍ1s IRR throw meat enter LOC drying-basket
  ‘I *will throw / threw the meat into the drying-basket.’

\(^2\)A relevant example would be Spanish Salió corriendo, lit. ‘S/he exited running.’, i.e. ‘S/he ran out.’
b. ̀cɔ̀ wát âh ̀un (?kɔ̀) kùut tàa cèek
   1s IRR throw meat let 3sm enter LOC drying-basket
   ‘I will throw the meat into the drying-basket.’

The first point to note is the cooccurrence restriction on the irrealis marker cɔ̀ and the resultative final verb (11a). If the irrealis marker is present, the construction can be rescued using ̀un ‘let’, splitting the SVC (11b). With transitives the use of ̀un requires the resumptive pronoun kɔ̀ ‘3sm’.

SVCs of caused motion also respect the same wh-restrictions as intransitive motion SVCs. While the goal location may be questioned with a wh-word (12a), neither the patient (12b) nor the causer (12c) may be wh-questioned, unless the event is made referential with an adverbial.

12 a. mèè wát ̀sèŋ k’rùk tàa mɔ
   2sm throw stick fall LOC where?
   ‘Where did you throw the stick so it fell?’

b. mèè wát mɔŋ k’rùk tàa ɔm *(knàay)
   2sm throw what? fall LOC river there/that
   ‘What did you throw so that it fell into the river there?’

c. mɔ wát âh kùut tàa cèek ??(knàay)
   who? throw meat enter LOC drying-basket that/there
   ‘Who threw the meat all the way into that drying-basket?’

Caused-motion SVCs are parallel in behaviour to intransitive motion SVCs. In both cases, the resultative requires the event to be referential, precluding irrealis and wh-interrogatives, unless referentiality is otherwise ensured. However, the two SVC types have different argument sharing properties. For the intransitives, the shared argument is the subject. For transitives, the object of V1 is the subject of V2. According to Baker’s 1989 or Collins’ 1997 treatment of SVCs, this is not a problem, since it can be argued that the controlling argument is, in both cases, the Patient of V1, and the controlled argument is the Patient of V2. Thus, it would appear, at first blush, that argument sharing in Kammu SVCs supports Baker’s and Collins’ view that the shared argument in an SVC is an internal argument of both verbs (13).

13 INTRANSITIVES: [ V1 TH₁j ] [V2 Ø₁-(=TH)]
TRANSITIVES: [AGT V1 TH₁j ] [V2 Ø₁-(=TH)]
The schema in (13) does not only hold for verbs of caused motion. Other types of verbs, with more prototypical patients, follow the same pattern (14).

14  a. kɔ̀ tii tráak tèe háan
    3sm  beat buffalo REFL  die
    ‘He beat his buffalo to death.’
Further, similar restrictions concerning \textit{wh}-interrogatives and irrealis mood hold with these examples. Neither a causer (15a) nor a causee (15b) can be \textit{wh}-questioned without an anchoring adverbial. Irrealis is marginal, but splitting the SVC with \textit{ùun} results in grammaticality (15c).

\begin{enumerate}
\item a. \textit{mò kñúus mèe krññ̂ tâa pté \textdagger (kncò néey)}
\vspace{1em}
\hspace{1em}\\
\textit{Who pushed you so you fell to the ground?}
\vspace{1em}
\item b. \textit{mèe kñúus mò krññ̂ ?(kncò néey)}?
\vspace{1em}
\hspace{1em}\\
\textit{Whom did you push so he fell yesterday?}
\vspace{1em}
\hspace{1em}\\
\textit{(i.e. speaker saw push so he fell yesterday)}
\vspace{1em}
\item c. \textit{ò cèè kñúus ?(ùun kòo) krññ̂}
\vspace{1em}
\hspace{1em}\\
\textit{I will push him so he falls.}
\end{enumerate}

The examples in (14) and (15) allow us to keep our generalization from (13), namely that the shared argument in an SVC is the Patient (or an internal argument). In fact, if we instead insert an unergative verb as V2 in the construction, this results in marginality or ungrammaticality (16a-c). Again, the construction can be rescued by splitting the SVC with \textit{ùun} (16c).

\begin{enumerate}
\item a. \textit{?kòò tíi kóɔn tèe yàam}
\vspace{1em}
\hspace{1em}\\
\textit{I.R: He beat his child so it cried.}
\vspace{1em}
\item b. \textit{?kòò tíi kóɔn tèe ëh kàaân}
\vspace{1em}
\hspace{1em}\\
\textit{I.R: He beat his child so it worked.}
\vspace{1em}
\item c. \textit{ò tíi só tèe ?(ùun kòo) tù}
\vspace{1em}
\hspace{1em}\\
\textit{I beat my dog so it ran away.}
\end{enumerate}

However, this does not imply that the resultative is necessarily an unaccusative verb. Firstly, stative verbs are subject to the same restrictions as unergative verbs in this position, irrespective of whether they take experiencer arguments (17a) or theme arguments (17b). Secondly, arguably unaccusative verbs of motion which clearly involve some degree of
volitionality are equally illicit as resultatives (17c). Thirdly, both statives and unergatives may appear in this position, provided they are accompanied by an expressive which denotes inchoativity and non-volitionality (17d, e, f). The importance of volitionality is particularly clear in the contrast between the minimal pair (17c) and (17g), where the latter does not involve any volition on the part of the subject of V2, and where V2 is therefore grammatical as a resultative.

17  a. *ô tîi kôŋ yım
   1s hit 3sm red
   I.R: ‘I beat him until he was red.’

   b. *ô tîi kôŋ têe m̀ọọŋ
      1s hit child REF Reflex sad
      I.R: ‘I hit my child so it was sad.’

   c. *k̀ọọ tîi kôŋ têe yàb tàa ré
      3sm hit child REF Reflex go LOC field
      I.R: ‘He beat his child so it went to the fields.’

   d. ô tîi kôŋ têe m̀ọọŋ-ẹ̀ẹ̀lọ̀y
      1s hit child REFLEX sad-EXPR
      ‘I hit my child so it became sad.’

   e. ô tîi sọ têe tù-slọọt
      1s hit dog REFLEX run.away-EXPR
      ‘I hit my dog so it ran away.’

   f. k̀ọọ tîi kôŋ têe yàam-críaık
      3sm hit child REFLEX cry-EXPR
      ‘He beat his child so it cried out.’

   g. k̀ọọ k̀ùús kôŋ têe kṛ̀àŋ tàa pté
      3sm push child REFLEX fall LOC ground
      ‘He pushed his child so it fell on the ground.’

The behaviour of resultatives follows more or less automatically by definition. Given that a resultative indicates that V2 is a result of V1, V2 must imply a change of state, and can therefore not have a stative meaning. Further, since V2 must be an automatic consequence of V1, V2 cannot involve any volitionality and its subject must be non-volitional.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to use our SVC test on examples (17 d-f), due to another restriction on the cooccurrence of expressives with irrealis c̀ọ (18a). However, the ungrammaticality of inserting a pronoun between V1 and V2 as subject of V2 suggests that we are, indeed, dealing with SVCs
18 a. * kè cè yàam-cíak
   3sm IRR cry-EXPR
   I.R. ‘He will cry out.’

b. *ò tìi kóon tèe kè còon-pìya
   1s hit child REFL 3sm sad-EXPR
   I.R. ‘I hit my child so it became sad.’

The crucial facts shared by SVCs with a resultative verb is that they can
not combine freely with irrealis còa, and that the subject of the resultative
may not be freely wh-questioned.

Further, as far as argument sharing is concerned, we must conclude that
SVCs in Kammu do not necessarily imply sharing of an internal argument
(contra Baker 1989 and Collins 1997), unless we can argue that the
expressive itself can treat the Agent of V2 as its Theme, by virtue of
expressing non-volitionality and / or inchoativity. This treatment is
reminiscent of Jackendoff’s 1990 distinction between two tiers in syntax. The
exact application of Jackendoff’s model is, however, outside the scope of this
paper.

2.3 Resultativity and purpose

We have seen that ungrammatical SVCs can be rescued by splitting them into
two verb constructions, each denoting one event. In practice, this results in an
interpretation where V2 is the purpose, rather than the result, of V1. So far
we have seen the use of the verb ùun ‘let’ in this context (19).

19 ò tìi só tèe ùun kòo tò
   1s hit dog REFL let 3sm run.away
   ‘I beat my dog so it ran away / to make it run away.’

This ùun construction is just a subset of purpose constructions, and these,
as a whole, are not to be viewed as SVCs, since they allow the insertion of
the irrealis còa between V1 and V2 (20).

20 ò wëet plé (còa) pn-màh kóon tèe
   1s buy fruit IRR CAUS-eat child REFL
   ‘I bought fruit to feed my child later.’

While purpose clauses are not SVCs, they are sometimes indistinguishable
from them on the surface, unless the còa test is applied (the results of which
also tally well with native speakers’ intuition that (20) represents two events,
not one). For this reason, purpose clauses are relevant for comparison with other constructions which are demonstrably SVCs, as will be done in the following sections.

2.4 Instrumental and simultaneity SVCs

In section 2.3 we saw that purpose constructions typically had transitive V1 and V2, and that subjects, but not necessarily objects, are shared. This description would, however, as it stands, cover equally well another class of constructions, namely instrumental SVCs, which are characterized by the object of V1 being the instrument with which the action denoted by V2 is performed. Instrumental SVCs differ sharply from purpose constructions in that cəə-insertion in instrumental SVCs changes the only possible reading from an instrumental reading to a purpose reading. While it is grammatical to add cəə to (21a), the fact that such an addition radically changes the interpretation of the clause shows that (21a), but not (21b), is an SVC.

21 a. kəə màːt sʔɔŋ tē tī nāa
   3sm take stick REFL hit 3sf
   ‘He hit her with his stick.’

   b. kəə màːt sʔɔŋ tē cəə tī nāa
   3sm take stick REFL IRR hit 3sf
   ‘He took his stick so as to hit her.’

Instrumental SVCs express the instrument used to perform the action of V2. A similar construction, which simply indicates simultaneity between V1 and V2, is distinguished from the instrumental in that the object of V1 is not interpreted as an instrument (22a). Further, V1 need not be transitive (22b).

22 a. kəə màːt plé yēh tāa ré
   3sm carry fruit go LOC field
   ‘He went to the fields carrying an apple.’

   b. kəə tīn pɔ màːh
   3sm stand eat rice
   ‘He is standing and eating.’

This construction requires a static reading of V1, which tallies well with the function of indicating simultaneity. Given the static reading of V1, insertion of cəə leads to ungrammaticality rather than a purpose reading (23). This in fact leads to a methodological problem: since cəə-insertion is excluded from the simultaneity construction for independent reasons, it is
perhaps not valid as a test for SVC status as far as this construction is concerned. We shall treat it as an SVC for now, returning to this problem in section 3.

23 *kɔɔ mɔt tɛe tɛe cɔɔ yɔh taa rɛ
3sm carry bag REFL IRR go LOC field
I.R: ‘He carried his bag to go to the fields.’

Both instrumentals and simultaneity SVCs are compatible with irrealis cɔɔ (24a, b) and the negation pɔɔ. When the SVCs are negated, they are primarily interpreted as negating the content of V1 (24c, d).

24 a. kɔɔ cɔɔ mɔaat sɔɔŋ tɛe tii nàa
3sm IRR take stick REFL hit 3sf
‘He will hit her with his stick.’

b. kɔɔ cɔɔ mɔt tɛe tɛe yɔh taa rɛ
3sm IRR carry bag REFL go LOC field
‘He will take his bag with him to the fields.’

c. kɔɔ pɔɔ mɔaat sɔɔŋ tɛe tii nàa
3sm NEG take stick REFL hit 3sf
‘He didn’t hit her with his stick (perhaps someone else’s stick).’

d. kɔɔ pɔɔ mɔt tɛe tɛe yɔh taa rɛ
3sm NEG carry bag REFL go LOC field
‘He goes to the fields without his bag.’

Finally, both instrumental SVCs and simultaneity SVCs display the same pattern with respect to wh-question formation. Wh-questioning the object of V1 is generally acceptable (25 a, b), whereas it is ungrammatical to wh-question the subject (25 c, d). Wh-questioning the complement of V2 is marginal (25 e, f) but much better than wh-questioning the subject.

25 a. mɛɛ mɔaat máh tii kɔɔ?
2sm take what? hit 3sm
I.R: ‘What did you hit him with?’

b. mɛɛ mɔt máh yɔh taa rɛ?
2sm carry what? go LOC field
‘What did you carry going to the fields?’

c. *mɔ máaat sɔɔŋ tii mɛɛ?
who? take stick hit 2sm
‘Who hit you with a stick?’
d. *mò mít tèey yòh tàa rē?
   who? carry bag go LOC field
   ‘Who carried a bag going to the fields?’

e. ?mèe młaat sìọọ tīi mè?
   2sm take stick hit who?
   ‘Who did you hit with a stick?’

f. ?mèe mít tèey tèe yòh tàa mè?
   2sm carry bag REFL go LOC where?
   ‘Where did you go carrying a stick?’

To summarize, instrumental and simultaneity SVCs are rather similar, the main difference being the consequences of cọọ-insertion. In the following sections we shall see other SVCs which cannot be split using cọọ either.

2.5 Directionality
A transitive V2 can be combined with a V1 denoting movement or direction (26a). Semantically, the resulting construction appears to be indistinguishable from a purpose construction. However, there are two important syntactic differences between this directional SVC and a purpose construction. Firstly, it is sharply ungrammatical to insert irrealis cọọ between V1 and V2 (26a). Thus, it appears that this kind of SVC can not be split. Secondly, the directional V1 may not take a locational complement (26b). If a locational complement is desired, it can only be inserted after the object of V2 (26c).

26 a. kòọ yòh (*cọọ) tàp mèen
   3sm go IRR set rat-snare
   ‘He goes to set rat snares.’

   b. *kòọ yòh tàa kùŋ priąŋ wèet tràak
   3sm go LOC village other buy buffalo
   I.R: ‘He went to another village to buy a buffalo.’

   c. kòọ yòh wèet tràak tàa kùŋ priąŋ
   3sm go buy buffalo LOC village other
   ‘He went to buy a buffalo in another village.’

In contrast to the resultative SVC, there is no restriction against the use of the construction in irrealis (27) in the directional.

27 kòọ cọọ yòh tàp mèen
   3sm IRR go set rat-snare
   ‘He goes to set rat snares.’
If a directional SVC is negated, the scope of the negation is determined pragmatically, referring either to V1 (28a), V2 (28b) or both (28c).

28  a. kǝǝ póø yøh wèët trāäk tåa kʊŋ pɾiɲ
    3sm NEG go buy buffaloLOC village other
    ‘He didn’t go to buy buffaloes in another village (perhaps elsewhere).’

    b. kǝǝ póø yøh táp mɛen
    3sm NEG go set rat-snare
    ‘He didn’t go to set his traps (he maybe went for another reason).’

    c. kǝǝ póø yøh wèët trāäk
    3sm NEG go buy buffalo
    ‘He didn’t go to buy buffaloes (he probably didn’t buy any).’

Finally, this type of SVC displays the same kind of wh-restriction as instrumentals: objects can be wh-questioned (29a), but the subject can only be questioned if the object is definite / specified (29b).

29  a. mèe yøh wèët móh?
    2sm go buy what?
    ‘What did you go to buy?’

    b. mɔ yøh wèët trāäk ?(knɔay)?
    who? go buy buffalo that
    ‘Who went to buy that buffalo?’

Thus, the most important defining characteristic of directional SVCs is that they cannot be split with cǝǝ into two events, and that wh-questioning the subject is marginal unless the event is anchored in some way.

2.6 Indirect object construction
The most remarkable SVC in Kammu is that used in double object constructions. An indirect object must be marked with what is sometimes described as an indirect object postposition, namely tè, which is synchronically identical to the verb ‘to get’. Omitting this marker results in ungrammaticality. Relevant examples are given in (30).

30  a. ǝ̀ uùn kǝǝ *(tè) kmúul
    1s give 3sm IO money
    ‘I gave him money.’

    b. kǝǝ cǝǝ tè kmúul
    3sm IRR get money
‘He will get money.’

It might be argued that te is only etymologically related to the verb ‘to get’ and that it is synchronically simply an indirect object marker. Support for this argument can be derived from the fact that te in many cases has lost its lexical meaning, and can be used with indirect object constructions which do not involve the act of receiving anything concrete (31).

31 nœ rôos kô te
3p angry 3sm IO
‘They are angry with him.’

However, the double object construction displays further complexities. When the relationship of the direct object to the indirect object is that of eating or drinking, te can be replaced by p÷ ‘eat’ (32a) or ëwìak ‘drink’ (32b). In fact, if te is used in this type of construction, there is a corresponding semantic difference (32c, cf. 32a).

32 a. nàa káar õ p÷ òh hyìar
3sf roast 1s eat meat chicken
‘She roasted chicken for me to eat.’

b. kô kô õ ëwìak pùuc
3sm brew 1s drink wine
‘He brews wine for me to drink.’

c. nàa káar õ te òh hyìar
3sf roast 1s IO meat chicken
‘She roasted chicken for me (I might give it away).’

Clearly, therefore, the double object construction still reflects to a certain extent the semantics of V2, although it appears to be in the process of grammaticalization. Thus, this construction can not be extended to other types of verbs where it might be natural to assume the same kind of relation (33).

33 a. ¿kô te nàa múm õm
3sm boil 3sf wash water
I.R. ‘He boils water for her to bathe in.’

b. ¿kô wëet õ wàn tiaw
3sm buy 1s wear trousers
I.R. ‘He buys trousers for me to wear.’
c. *ô cebb rìan mèe nàeŋ
1s IRR teach 2sm know
I.R. ‘I shall teach you so you know.’

The double object construction can not be split using cebb (34a), indicating that it is a clear instance of an SVC. If negated, the scope of the negation seems to cover the whole clause (34b), as opposed to the behaviour of the purpose construction with a similar meaning (34c).

34 a. *ô kœn mèe cebb ?wìak pùuc
1s brew 2sm IRR drink wine
I.R. ‘I brew wine for you to drink later.’

b. ô pœa káar yɔŋ tée pò ìh hýìar
1s NEG roast father REFL eat meat chicken
‘I don’t roast chicken for my father (probably doesn’t roast at all).’

c. ô pœa káar ìh hýìar ʊn yɔŋ tée pò
1s NEG roast meat chicken give father REFL eat
‘I don’t roast chicken for my father (probably for someone else).’

In this construction both the subject of V1 and the shared object can be wh-questioned freely (35a, b). However, the subject of V2 can only be questioned if the event is made referential, e.g. by specifying the object (35c).

35 a. mèe káar mèe pò ìh hýìar?
who? roast 2sm eat meat chicken
‘Who roasted chicken for you to eat?’

b. mèe káar kœa pè mǎh?
2sm roast 3sm eat what?
‘What did you roast for him to eat?’

c. mèe káar mèe pò ìh hýìar ?(knàay)?
2sm roast who? eat meat chicken that
‘Who did you roast that chicken for to eat?’

The most crucial difference between this type of SVC and more prototypical SVCs concerns argument sharing. In the double object SVC, the objects of V1 and V2 are coreferent, but the subjects are not.

3 Interestingly enough, exactly this construction is the only comparable one of which I am aware outside Kammu, namely the colloquial Cantonese phrase  wa lèi ji ‘I tell you’ (lit. I say you know).
### Table 1. Features of Kammu SVCs (…X… means ‘X within an SVC’)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>IRR</th>
<th>IRR…</th>
<th>NEG1</th>
<th>NEG…</th>
<th>COREF</th>
<th>WH1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) RES.</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>V1.PAT=V2.NON-VOL</td>
<td>*V1.PAT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) I.OBJ.</td>
<td>OK</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>total</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>V1.S≠V2.S</td>
<td>*V2.S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V1.O=V2.O</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5) SIMUL.</td>
<td>OK</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>V1</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>V1.S=V2.S</td>
<td>OK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) PURP.</td>
<td>OK</td>
<td>OK</td>
<td>V2</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>V1.S=V2.S</td>
<td>OK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3. Summary of SVC patterns

#### 3.1 The surface facts

We have outlined five different types of SVCs in Kammu: resultative constructions, indirect object constructions, directional constructions, instrumental constructions and simultaneity constructions. In Table 1, the properties of these are contrasted with those of purpose constructions, which, we have argued, are not to be viewed as SVCs, given that they necessarily depict two events rather than one.

A couple of facts stand out clearly. While all the constructions involve argument sharing, there is no pattern common to all. Both 1 and 2 involve the sharing of PAT of V1 with an argument of V2 which is either an object (in 2), or at any rate non-volitional (in 1). Further, 3 arguably also involves argument sharing of PAT of V1 (since V1 must be an unaccusative motion verb), albeit with the subject of V2, regardless of thematic role. On the other hand, 4, 5 and 6 are characterized by subject sharing, again irrespective of thematic roles. Recall that 6 is not, according to our definition, an SVC at all.

Further, the interpretation of negation varies greatly across construction types. Negation is ungrammatical with 1, and refers to the entire SVC in 2, whereas its interpretation is pragmatically determined in 3. In 4-6, in contrast, the interpretation of the negation is relatively fixed, selecting one of the verbs (V1 in 4 and 5, V2 in 6). As far as 4-6 are concerned, it is interesting to note that the negation specifically refers to the verb that has what appears to be an adverbial function in the clause (instrument in 4,
As far as the ungrammaticality of *wh-constructions is concerned, the coreference pattern confuses the issue to a certain degree. Certain positions are not realized in certain constructions, since they are obligatorily coreferent with preceding arguments. But if we abstract away from this, we see that for constructions 1 through 4, the argument which can not be *wh-questioned is the subject of V2: either overtly, as in 2, or via coreference relations, as in 1, 3 and 4. In contrast, any argument can be *wh-questioned in 5 and 6.

The generalizations are summarized in Table 2. In this context it is interesting to note that constructions 1 and 2 conform in their entirety to Collins’ 1997 claim that SVCs must share an internal argument (albeit that Collins does not explicitly discuss the possibility of V1 and V2 having two different agentive subjects, as is the case in 2). Construction 4 incidentally also conforms to this pattern, if we follow Collins’ assumption that instruments are also internal arguments (of V2). In construction 3, the only controller can be a patient, but it controls a subject gap. Constructions 4 through 6 define argument sharing entirely in terms of subjecthood.

Thus there seems to be a gradient as far as argument sharing from more prototypical to less prototypical SVCs according to Collins’ definition. Other properties which seem to be typical of Kammu SVCs are present in a decreasing degree from constructions 1 through 6. It is difficult to determine a clear cutoff point – depending on which criterion we examine, the most restrictive cutoff point is presumably between 3 and 4, and the most liberal one between 5 and 6, taking the cœ-insertion test as criterion. However, as mentioned in section 2.4, construction 5 excludes cœ-insertion for independent reasons (since V1 must have a static reading). This could in fact

4 Exactly the same situation obtains in English, where negation is primarily interpreted as referring to an adverbial. *He doesn’t drive fast* usually means that he drives slowly, not that he doesn’t drive at all.
imply that 5 is not an SVC at all, in which case a possible boundary coincides with the data from *wh*-question restrictions.

### 3.2 Negation, *wh*-questions and SVCs

The tables above show a set of properties which we have claimed are typical of SVCs in Kammu. We have not, however, discussed reasons why these properties should have any relevance for verb serialization, with the exception of argument sharing, which has been covered at length. The purpose of this final section is to speculate on whether the negation properties and *wh*-restrictions are coincidental or in some way related to the nature of SVCs.

The question of negation is relatively unproblematic. If a negation selectively negates the content of a single verb, this suggests that the two verbs encode separate predications. If, on the other hand, the negation negates both verbs equally, this rather suggests that they represent a single predication. Likewise, if the reference of the negation is determined pragmatically, it could, in principle, negate either verb to an equal degree, also suggesting that there is no syntactic mechanism forcing one interpretation above the other, in other words that there is no structural asymmetry between the verbs.

*Wh*-restrictions, on the other hand, represent a more subtle problem. First, it should be noted that none of the restrictions outlined above can be attributed to purely structural considerations: if they could, we would not find that the *wh*-question can be rescued by temporal adverbs or demonstratives specifying the object. Rather, the reason must be semantic or pragmatic. The subject of V2 can only be questioned if the remainder of the clause is temporally or spatially anchored. Why should this be a typical property of SVCs?

*Wh*-constructions can typically have two interpretations: either a) the existence, but not the identity, of the questioned element is known; or b) neither the existence nor the identity is known. In the first case, the *wh*-question can be replaced with a clefted *wh*-question, in the second case it cannot. If the predicate of a clause is expressed by a serial verb construction, the verbs generally complement one another in supplying further information about the status of the arguments. In this sense, the presence of more than one verb (i.e. an SVC) generally presupposes at least the existence of the
argument to which it refers. This further implies that only the identity, not the existence, of the relevant argument can be questioned felicitously, and one way to ensure this interpretation is to anchor the entire predicate in such a way that the \textit{wh}-question becomes tantamount to a cleft.

4 Conclusion
In this paper, it has been shown that several constructions in Kammu display, to a varying degree, cross-linguistic and language-internal properties typically attributed to SVCs. This generates an interesting problem for theoretical accounts of SVCs to date: assuming that there is a single valid test for distinguishing SVCs from constructions such as covert coordination, the common properties which are shared across the resulting boundary must still be accounted for, either by means of structural parallels or by means of surface analogy.

References

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