Serial Verb Constructions in Three Tibetan Languages

Dubi Nanda Dhakal

Tribhuvan University

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a description of the serial verb construction (henceforth SVC) in three Tibetan languages- Gyalsumdo, Nubri and Tsum, spoken in Nepal focusing mainly on two verb constructions. The data is collected with the native speakers in different periods and analysed based on the contemporary literatures of SVC.In three selected languages,they share the same arguments (mainly the subject). Temporal and motion verbs are attested in the final position in an SVC in these languages. All of these languages have a closed set of verbs that appear as V2 in SVC. The ordering of most of the verbs participating in SVC are consistent in their occurrence. The three verb serialization is attested only in Nubri.

Keywords: Serial verbs, Tibeto-Burman, argument, monoclausality, grammaticalization

Introduction

The serial verbs should have a single predicate, monoclausality, shared grammatical categories, shared arguments among others (Aikhenvald, 2006, Bisang, 2009, Aikhenvald, 2018, Zeissler, 2004, pp. 892-893). To elaborate the points, there are some defining properties of the serial verbs: (a) the serial verbs contain two (or more) verbs under a single intonation contour, (b) the verbs must be full lexical verbs which can head simple predicates in their own right, (c) the verbs share at least one argument, and (d) the verbs behave as a single unit for tense, aspect, and polarity marking (Aikhenvald, 2006). Foley and Van Valin emphasize argument sharing as the core feature of SVC. They note that SVC 'are constructions in which verbs sharing a common core argument are merely juxtaposed with no complementizers or intervening conjunctions.' (Foley & Van Valin, 1984, p. 189). The verb-verb concatenation is an areal feature of the languages

belonging to Tibeto-Burman (Trans-Himalayan) family. This sort of construction is attested across the language families spoken in the region (Kageyama, Hook & Pradeshi, 2021, p. 1).

Discussing the features of SVC, Aikhenvald (2018, p.1) mentions:

> In many languages of the world, a sequence of several verbs act together as one unit. They form one predicate, and contain no overt marker of coordination, subordination, or syntactic dependency of any other sort….Serial verbs describe what can be conceptualized as a single event. They are often pronounced as if they were one word. Serial verbs tend to share subjects and objects. They have just one tense, aspect, mood, and modality value….The components of serial verbs cannot be negated or questioned separately from the whole construction.

In the grammatical descriptions of Trans-Himalayan (TH) languages, short descriptions of verb sequences are discussed in a number of grammatical description. Muheim (2022) brings together SVC of nine different languages, and includes marginal cases in further six languages. When the subgroup of TH languages are considered, Amdo Tibetan is one of the languages discussed and analyzed in this study that is directly relevant to this paper. There are, however, sketchy treatment of SVC in the grammatical description of languages spoken in Nepal, and bordering areas, such as Lende dialect of Kyirong (Huber, 2002) among other.

DeLancey (1991, pp. 7-8) notes that there are three stages of the grammaticalization in the SVC in Tibetan language, viz. (a) 'dropping of the mark of subordination in the first verb', (b) '"auxiliarization", is the loss by the grammaticalized verb of its phonological and morphological independence', (c) 'grammaticalized morpheme occurs as, rather than in construction with, finite verb inflection'. These points will be considered while presenting the SVC in these languages. One of the major features that is common in SVC in TB language as noted in DeLancey (1991, p. 9) is "that a construction with a sequence of two verbs separated by a subordinator is biclausal, while an unmediated sequence of verbs belongs to a single clause." Haspelmath (2016, pp. 7-8) has narrowed the definition of the serial verbs. He mentions, "A serial verb construction is a monoclausal construction consisting of multiple independent verbs with no element linking them and with no predicate-argument relation between the verbs."

The structure of this paper is as follow: The linguistic contexts of each of the languages is mentioned in section two. The methodology of the data collection, and the theoretical bases of the analysis is discussed in section three. The serial verbs in each of the languages in this study are presented and analyzed separately in section four. Section five presents historical annotation of the serial verbs found in these languages. And finally, the paper is concluded in section six.

Language Backgrounds

Gyalsumdo, Nubri, and Tsum are Trans-Himalayan languages (Tibeto-Burman languages), all varieties of Tibetan, spoken in the high mountainous regions in Nepal. All of these languages consistently share the features of Sinospheric languages (cf. Matisoff 1991, p. 485). In the same way, all of these languages (Gyalsumdo, Tsum, and Nubri) are tonal, and share a number of linguistic features of central Tibetan languages. There are different sets of plain and honorific nouns and verbs in all of these languages. They share common vocabulary as mentioned in various sources, such as Dhakal, Hildebrandt and Krim (2016) for Gyalsumdo, Donohue and Dhakal (2016b) for Tsum, Dhakal (2018) for Nubri, and also share kinship terms (Dhakal, 2021). The honorific nouns are used to refer to the monks and monasteries whereas plain nouns are used elsewhere. They also share similar grammatical features, such as causative construction (Dhakal, 2017a). These languages are verb-final. Some constituents of the noun phrases, such as numerals, and adjectives follow the noun phrases whereas the demonstratives precede the head nouns.

Bradley (1997, p. 5) proposes the genetic classification of the languages included in this study are given as follows: Tibeto-Burman: Western TB: Central Bodish (Tibetan): Central: gTsang: Gyalsumdo, Nubri, Tsum. Tournadre (2014, p. 122) groups all of the Tibetic languages spoken in Nepal-China border into 'southern' group. This group includes all of the languages such as Lo-ke, Nubri, Gyalsumdo, Lhomi among others. Bielmeir et al. (2018) include them under 'Northern Border Area Dialects' under central Tibetan languages.

Gyalsumdo (Glottocode: gyal1236; ISO: kte) is spoken in the three main villages (Chame, Bagarchap and Thonce) in the Manang district of western Nepal (cf. Hildebrandt & Joe, 2011, Dhakal, Hildebrandt & Krim, 2016). The language has not been reported as a distinct language in the national census, neither has it been included in Ethnologue yet (cf. Eppele et al., 2012). They have

also not been enumerated under 'nationalities' by the Government of Nepal. It is estimated that there are around 200 speakers of Gyalsumdo in Manang (Hildebrandt & Joe, 2011). There are some studies related to various aspects of Gyalsumdo (cf. Dhakal, 2016a, Dhakal, Hildebrandt, & Krim, 2016; Joe, 2016) among others.

Nubri (ISO kte) is a Tibetan variety spoken in the northern Gorkha in Tsum-Nubri village council. The Nubri speaking villages were located in formerly four Village Development Committees (VDCs) viz. Bihi, Prok, Lho and Sama VDCs (all of them are now included in Tsum Nubri Villlage Municipality). In Bradley's classification (1997), Tsum is the closest neighbour of Nubri. The Nubri people are listed as 'Larkes' by the Government of Nepal. The people living in Prok, Samagaun and Lho exclusively speak Nubri. In addition to this, about half of the speakers living in Bihi speak Nubri, and other half of the population speaks Kuke. It is assumed that the speakers of Nubri are more than 2000 in Nepal. There are some references directly to different areas of Nubri grammar, such as tonal morphology (Donohue, 2021), vowel phonemes (Donohue & Donohue, 2023), noun phrase (Dhakal, 2019b), verb agreement in Nubri (Dhakal, 2022) among others.

Tsum (Glottocode: tsum 1240; ISO ttz) is a Tibetic language spoken in the Gorkha district of western Nepal. There are about 4,800 speakers of Tsum in Gorkha, and in some other parts of Nepal. The Tsumbas (Tsum people) have been enumerated under nationalities in Nepal by the Government of Nepal as 'Siyars'. 'However, the number as recorded in the recent census is lower than this. Tsum and Nubri languages are enumerated as a single language in the past census. There are a total of 4284 speakers of Tsum in Nepal as recorded in the past census (National Statistics Office, 2023). There are some studies related to different areas of Tsum grammar, such as Tsum tone (Liu, 2015), nominal inflection (Dhakal, 2016b), noun phrase (2017b), causative construction (Dhakal & Donohue, 2015) among others.

Methodology and Data Collection

The data for this paper were collected during 2016-2019. In addition to the elicited data, some texts have been examined to look at the occurrences of the SVC in different languages. A number of texts were interlinearized during the Earthquake Project . The data for Nubri mainly came from Dhakal (2023) in addition to some elicited sentences and texts. Similarly, the data for Gyalsumdo came mainly from Dhakal (2016b). Data for Tsum is mainly based on author's field notes, and some interlinearized texts.

Initially, the data were taken in order to prepare a preliminary description of morphology and syntax of each of the three languages included in this study. The preliminary manuscripts of Nubri and Gyalsumdo were prepared, and their data are mainly based on them. The analysis of the serial verbs is terra incognita as these languages are under-studied in general, and in the context of SVC in particular. In addition to the theoretical bases of SVC in typological context, the SVC in Tibeto-Burman languages (DeLancey 1991; Muheim, 2022) have also been consulted.

Syntax and Semantics of Serial Verbs

DeLancey (1991) discusses the origin of verb serialization in Tibetan. The serial verb construction in Tibetan in particular can be explained in terms of grammaticalization (also see Tournadre, 2001, p. 57). DeLancey (1991, p. 1) explains how the grammaticalization takes place "in which an initial biclausal structure with two verbs, each contributing its own lexical sense to the overall meaning of the sentence, ends up as a uniclausal verb + auxiliary construction, in which one of the verbs has undergone semantic "bleaching" and entered a new syntactic category". There are a set of verbs which are grammaticalized (Tournadre & Jiatso, 2001, p. 57). The fact that the periphrastic constructions are used to express tenses, aspects, and moods are discussed in various references, such as (cf. Beyer, 1992, p.62). The serial verbs in Sino-Tibetan languages are reported in a number of languages, such as Tani and other languages in

Northeast India, Kurtöp in Bhutan, and in a number of Bodish languages (Thurgood & LaPolla, 2017).

In the context of the Tibetan languages, DeLancey (1991:6) summarizes the verbs that often take part in SVC are given in (1).

Lexical sense	Grammaticalized sense
(1) go	*distal motion*
come	*proximal motion*
sit, stay	*progressive*
put	*do with deleterious effect*
finish	*completive perfect*
taste	*experiential perfect*
know	*know how to*

As we see in (1), there are some verbs which often participate as the second members in serial verb construction. The verbs from this closed set are the secondary verb (V2). When they appear in VV construction, the first verb is uninflected. The TAM is always carried by the finite verb appearing in the clause-final position (with the second verb in VV sequence) but it has scope over both verbs. They are not the head syntactically, and semantically. The order in which the constructions of an individual language are discussed is based on their occurrence in the references included in this study. Some of the verbs mentioned in DeLancey (1991) are illustrated with historical annotation in Huber (2002).

Serial Verbs in Tsum

Tsum is a verb final language. In the broader context, Tsum does not retain verb agreement system traditionally known as 'conjunct/disjunct (Dhakal et al., 2016). There seems to be an influence from neighbouring languages in its finite verb morphology. Some common features shared by SVC is that they form a single event, no material at all can occur between the verbs in VV construction, and no overt markers are need in this construction to link the verbs.

(a) *Sin* **'finish'**

We see the verb sin 'finish' is used as a lexical verb in (2) with a distinct 'event', but it is a member of serial verb construction

(3). It yields the meaning of 'completion', 'perfection', or 'terminative' meaning expressing an aspectual function. It is a highly grammaticalized verb in the discourse. The construction in (3) remains semantically complex as they denote a single event.

(2) khoi leka sinso

kho-i	leka	sin-so
he-ERG	food	finish-PST

'He finished his work.'

(3) khoi hjopa sa sinso

kho-i	hjopa	sa	sin-so
he-ERG	food	eat	finish-PST

'He finished eating food.'

Unlike in (2) in which the verb carries the meaning of an event, the verbs sin 'finish' when used as a serialized verb is used to show the perfective meaning. The lexical meaning in this context is bleached, and merely and only shows the meaning of 'completion'. Additionally, it shares the same argument. In example (3), the ergative marked pronoun is the argument of the both of the verbs in VV sequence.

(b) dza 'keep'

We see that the verb is used as a lexical verb in (4) but as a member of SVC in (5, 6) to mean continuation. It is a verb which is frequently used in SVC. The same argument is shared by the verbs in (6, 7).

(4) *khoi gham naŋla tʃela dzaso*

kho-i	gham	naŋla	tʃela	dza-so
he-ERG	box	inside	thing	keep-PST

'He kept the things in the box.'

(5) *mukpagi nam kawa dza re*

mukpa-gi	nam	kawa	dza	re
cloud-INST	sky	cover	keep	COP

'The cloud is covering the sky.'

(6) *khoi ãp tsilbu naŋla sa: dza*

kho-i	ãp	tsilbu	naŋla	sa:	dza
he-ERG	mango	basket	inside	collect	keep

'He was collecting the mangoes in the basket.'

The same argument is shared by the verbs in (5, 6). It is also to be noted that the verb root alone carries the past event in (6). The verb denotes that past tense although there is no overt tense marker attaching to the verb.

(c) *hoŋ-, hõ* **'come'**

The verb hoŋ 'come' as a serial verb may occur with or without verbal particles that is appended to the verb. It shows the inward movement.

(7) *kho ghotsala hõ*

kho	ghotsa-la	hõ
he	house-LOC	come

'He came home.'

(8) *dhanda namḍu kher hõ*

dhanda	namḍu	kher	hõ
Now	plane	come	arrive

'Now the plane (already) arrived.'

(9) *mala tshoŋ hoŋ*

mala	tshoŋ	hoŋ
below	run	come

'(I) came down running (I ran and came).' [Anzom1.00.00.44]

In the examples (9-10), the meaning of SVC is completion.

(d) *te* **'give'**

The verb 'give', when used as a member of SVC, yields the meaning of 'benefaction'. It shows that the speaker does something for other's benefits.

(10) *ãi bhõla ṭaŋa téso*

ã-i	bhõ-la	ṭaŋa	té-so
mother-ERG	daughter-DAT	money	give-PST

'The mother gave money to the daughter.'

(11) *ãi sotop bhõla tsu téso*

ã-i	sotop	bhõ-la	tsu	té-so
mother-ERG	ring	daughter-DAT	put	give-PST

'The mother wore the ring to the daughter.'

The verb 'give' is considered a common source of benefactive (Heine & Kuteva, 2004, p. 54). In example (11), the string of verbs share the common subject, and object. The shared argument (subject) in example (11) is the subject marked with the ergative, viz. ã-i 'mother-ERG', and the direct object is sotop 'ring'.

(e) *ɲuŋ* *'experience'*

The lexical verb ɲuŋ 'experience/taste' is used as a main verb (14) and as a member of SVC to narrate the 'experience' (14-15). Examples follow.

(13) *ŋai dhukpo ɲuŋso*

ŋa-i	dhukpo	ɲuŋ-so
I-ERG	hardship	experience-PST

'I experienced the hardship.'

(14) *khøki di mande namgaŋ sa ɲuŋa*

khø-ki	di	mande	namgaŋ	sa	ɲu-ŋa
you-ERG	this	medicine	ever	eat	experience-NPST

'Have you ever tasted (experienced) this medicine?'

(15) *ŋə-i   di   mande   tʃhø   ta   ɲu*

ŋə-i	di	mande	tʃhø	ta	ɲu
you-ERG	this	medicine	taste	look	experience

'You have tested this medicine.'

We also see that the final verb is marked with the inflectional morpheme in (15) like the lexical verb being marked with the finite morpheme.

(f) *ḍo 'go', pɣ 'go, change'*

The lexical verb ḍo 'go/change' is used as a main verb (16) and as a member of SVC. When it is used as a member of SVC, it means 'change of states' as shown in (17).

(16) *tsumla mi midʒe lelamu gjur ɖo*

tsum-la	mi	midʒe	lela-mu	gjur	ɖo
Tsum-LOC	man	life	easy-CMPR	change	go

'People's lives are becoming easier in Tsum.'

(17) *ŋa tas tse ɖøwa*

ŋa	tas	tse	ɖø-wa
I	card	play	go-PST.3

'I was playing (kept playing) cards.'

The lexical verb pɤ 'go/change' is used in SVC. It yields the meaning of 'change of states' as shown in (18).

(18) *khoi ŋala tʃhortenthu ʈhi pɤso*

kho-i	ŋa-la	tʃhorten-thu	ʈhi	pɤ-so
he-ERG	I-DAT	monastery-ALL	lead	go-PST

'He led me upto the monastery.'

(g) *ɖhø 'sit'*

The lexical verb ɖhø 'sit' is used in SVC yielding the continuative aspect. The fact that the posture verb 'sit' yields is reported in some TB languages, such as Tibetan (DeLancey, 1991), and Boro (Boro, 2012, p. 7).

(19) *kho ghortsala ɖhøso*

kho	ghortsa-la	ɖhø-so
he	house-LOC	sit-PST.3

'He sat at home.'

(20) *ŋa tas tse dhøwa*

ŋa	tas	tse	dhø-wa
I	card	play	sit-PST.1

'I was playing (kept playing).'

The auxiliary verb khu 'be able' is highly grammaticalized verb. In combination with other verbs, it means 'be able to V' as shown in (21), and its negative form is given in (22). We don't have examples where this verb can be used independently.

(21) *ŋəi ɖha khu*

ŋa-i	ɖha	khu
I-ERG	read	can

'I can read.'

(22) *ŋai ɖha makhu*

ŋə-i	ɖha	ma-khu
I-ERG	read	NEG-be.able

'I can not read.'

This is to be noted that the negative -m~m- is common in Sino-Tibetan languages (LaPolla, 2017). We could not obtain the lexical verb 'know' in the list of verbs that appear in VV strings of verbs.

There are expressions that appear as se- 'know', há- 'know' but they are preceded by the verbs which is marked with the nominalizer -dzi, such as kol-dzi 'make-NMLZ' etc. as shown in (23, 24).

(23) *ŋeki ara koldzi seso*

ŋe-ki	ara	kol-dzi	se-so
we-ERG	liquor	make-NMLZ	know-PST

'We knew to make the liquor.'

(24) *ŋela mé ghandzun partsi hake mijuŋ*

ŋe-la	mé	ghandzun	par-tsi	háke	mi-juŋ
we-DAT	fire	how	burn-NMLZ	know	NEG-COP

'We didn't know how to burn fire.'

As discussed in this section, the multiverbal constructions in Tsum possess a number of features that characterize the SVC. The 'versatile' serial verbs discussed in DeLancey (1991) also are attested in Tsum except the verb 'know'. Both of the verbs appearing in SVC comprises single event, and the tense, aspect, and modality (TAM) is carried by the second verb in the strings. Both of the verbs are under the scope of the TAM value. They share a single argument that appear as subject, and object. The verbs used in the construction are contiguous, which means that no element outside of the verb complex can intervene except the negative marker. No overt markers are needed in this construction to link the verbs. This differs significantly from the Amdo Tibetan discussed in Muheim (2022, p. 23).

Serial verbs in Gyalsumdo

Gyalsumdo is a verb final language. The auxiliaries follow the main verbs if both of them appear in the verbal complex. The verbs which most frequently take part as the second verb in serial verb constructions in Gyalsumdo are sin- 'finish', láŋ- 'give', ḍho- 'go'. Gyalsumdo characterizes the verb marking traditionally known as 'conjunct/ disjunct' (Dhakal, 2019a). The past tense is realized by adding the tense and agreement suffix, or by the verb root alone in the narratives, and natural texts. The verb inflection is on the second verb in

the string of verbs, and no affix occurs between the verb stems involved.

a. *sin 'finish'*

The verb sin 'finish' participates as a member of serial verb construction. The verb sin 'finish' in (25) used as a lexical verb. It occurs follows a verb without marking any verbal suffix in between the first and the second verb.

(25) *ŋàki leka sinsuŋ*

ŋà-ki	leka	sin-suŋ
I-ERG	work	finish-PST.DJ

'I finished working.'

(26) *khoki to se sinsuŋ*

kho-ki	to	se	sin-suŋ
he-ERG	rice	eat	finish-PST.DJ

'He finished eating rice.'

The verb sin shows the terminative, or completive meaning in SVC. It is a grammaticalized verb and occurs very often in the discourse.

b. *ter 'give'*

The verb ter 'give' participates as a member of SVC. When this occurs as a serial verb construction, this follows a verb without marking any verbal suffix in it. Examples follow.

(27) *ŋà atʃiki ŋàla phorpa tersuŋ*

ŋà	atʃi-ki	ŋà-la	phorpa	ter-suŋ
I	older.sister-ERG	I-ACC	cup	give-PST.DJ

'My elder sister gave me a cup.'

(28) *ŋà khjokaki ŋàla tʃʃa kol tersuŋ*

ŋà	khjoka-ki	ŋà-la	tʃʃa	kol	ter-suŋ
I	husband-ERG	I-ACC	tea	boil	give-PST.DJ

'My husband boiled the tea for me (for my benefit).'

`It is to be noted that the argument is shared by the string of verbs that appear in SVC.

c.   *láŋ 'give'*

The verb láŋ 'give' is used as a serial verb construction yielding 'benefactive' meaning. It can mean 'to V in favor of somebody'. Example illustrates its use as a serial verb in (31) in which the verb láŋ 'give' is preceded by ke ghjap 'call'.

(29) *ŋàla ale kja láŋ*

ŋà-la	ale	kja	láŋ
I-DAT	rupees	one hundred	give.IMP

'Give me one hundred rupees.'

(30) *khola leme tʃik ke ghjap láŋ*

kho-la	leme	tʃik	ke	ghjap	láŋ
he-DAT	times	one	voice	call	give.IMP

'Call him once.'

The word ghjap 'hit' in compound verb ke ghjap 'call' also appears in several other verbs, such as kira ghjap 'hunt', kore ghjap 'go around' among others.

d.   *ɖho 'go'*

The verb ɖho 'go' is used as a serial verb construction to show continuation. It is also used as a main verb as in (31), but is also used as a member of serial verb construction in (32). Examples follow.

(31) *khuŋja ɖhosuŋ*

khuŋja	ɖho-suŋ
they	go-PST.DJ

'They went.'

(32) *kho tʃhwe ɖho jɒ̀*

kho	tʃhwe	ɖho	jɒ̀
He	read	go	COP

'He is reading.'

e.   *phim 'go'*

The verb phim 'go' is used as a serial verb construction to mean 'continue'.

(33) *huni kide tʃhoŋ phimso*

huni	ki-de	tʃhoŋ	phim-so
and.then	dog-DEF	run.away	go-PST.DJ

'And then the dog was running away.' [Frog.Story.60]

f.   *hoŋ 'come'*

The verb hoŋ 'come' is used as a serial verb construction to indicate 'proximal movement' as illustrated in (33).

(33) *hupka tshimo thøn hoŋ*

hupka	tshimo	thøn	hoŋ
owl	big	come.out	come

'Having come out, a big owl came.' [FrogStory.39]

In this example, the first verb encodes how the motion is conducted and the second one encodes direction.

g. *ɲuŋ 'experience'*

The verb ɲuŋ 'experience' is used as a serial verb to yield the perfective meaning. As noted in Denwood (1999, p. 174), the verb "is grammaticalized as an experiential perfect like English 'have/has/had ever Vb.-ed'". We've found no verbal particles which are attached to the experiential verb in Gyalsumdo. This is fully grammaticalized as an auxiliary.

(34) *ŋà lamala thu ɲuŋ*

ŋà	lama-la	thu	ɲuŋ
I	monk-ACC	meet	experience

'I have met the monk.'

(35) *ŋàki namɖul su ɲuŋ*

ŋà-ki	namɖul	su	ɲuŋ
I-ERG	aeroplane	climb	experience

'I have flown in (lit. climbed) plane.'

h. khu 'able to'

The ability is expressed by the modal verb khu 'able' (39-40).

(36) *lakpa ghaŋrɤla dza khukere*

lakpa	ghaŋrɤ-la	dza	khu-kere
Lakpa	glacier-LOC	climb	ability-NPST.DJ

'Lakpa can climb the glacier.'

(37) *khoki tʃwe dhi khukere*

kho-ki	tʃwe	dhi	khu-kere
he-LOC	book	write	ability-NPST.DJ

'He can write letters.'

Negation prefix is attached to the first verb, but have scope over both verbs in the string.

(38) *kho se masin du*

kho	se	ma-sin	du
He	eat	NEG-finish	COP

'He did not finish eating.'

(39) *ŋà ɲalni medhe du*

ŋà	ɲal-ni	me-dhe	du
I	sleep-DESID	NEG-sit	COP

'I don't want to sleep.'

As this discussion has shown, the VV strings in Gyalsumdo have some typical features of SVCs. The

serial verbs share arguments. In all examples found in the grammar, the subject is the shared argument. The inflection marking is on the second verb, and its scope is over both verbs. However, unlike in Tsum, and Nubri, negation is prefixed to the first verb in the example we have obtained (39).

Nubri serial verbs

Nubri is a verb final language. The auxiliary verbs follow the main verbs if both of them appear in the verbal complex. Nubri have a closed set of verbs that appear in SVC like in Gyalsumdo and Tsum. The verbs host the TAM in the Nubri verbs. The finite verbs in Nubri can be described as 'conjunct' vs. 'disjunct' (Dhakal, 2022) as that in most of the Tibetan languages. The negative marker mə- is prefixed to the first verb as SVC.

(a)   sin 'finish'

The lexical verb sin 'finish' occurs as a second member in SVC. The verb 'finish' is grammaticalized in its meaning. It expresses the 'completive aspect'. DeLancey (1991, p.6) mentions that the verb 'finish' in Tibetan also has the grammaticalized meaning of 'completive aspect'.

(40) *kho leka sinsoŋ*

kho	leka	sin-soŋ
he	work	finish-PST.DJ

'He has finished the work.'

(41) *kho gompa ʃø sin hinum*

kho	gompa	ʃø	sin	hinum
he	gompa	build	finish	possibility

'He might have built the gompas.'

(42) *bhetsakja dzhaŋ sin mala*

bhetsa-kja	dzhaŋ	sin	mala
child-PL	send	finish	below

(We) already sent the children below (to Kathmandu).' [Nubri1.10]

The verb sin 'finish' adds the terminative meaning in (41-42).

(b)   *hoŋ 'come'*

The verb hoŋ 'come' occurs as a second member in SVC. The verb hoŋ 'come' is grammaticalized in its meaning, and shows the 'proximal motion'. This is like in the Tibetan as described by DeLancey (1991, p. 6).

(43) *bhõ sumbo hoŋsoŋ*

bhõ	sum-bo	hoŋ-soŋ
girls	three-CLF	come-PST

'Three girls came.'

(44) *ŋa hombune lok hoŋ hin*

ŋa	hombu-ne	lok	hoŋ	hin
I	Kathmandu-ABL	return	come	COP

'I returned from Kathmandu.'

(45) *ŋa ta ɲidi ʈhik kher hoŋhin*

ŋa	ta	ɲi-di	ʈhik	kher	hoŋ-hin
I	horse	two-DEF	pull	take	come-PST.CJ

'I rode (led) two horses.'

As can be seen in (45), there is a sequence of three verbs to mean 'ride' in Nubri. These three verbs show a single event.

(c) *ḍo 'go'; pu 'go'; phin 'go'*

Like the verb come shows the proximal motion, the movement verbs ḍo 'go', pu 'go' phin 'go' occur as a second member in SVC. The verb ḍo 'go' and pu 'go' phin 'go' are grammaticalized in their meanings, and shows the 'distal motion'. This is like in the Tibetan as described by DeLancey (1991, p.6).

(46) *khogi ḍhe kher ḍosoŋ*

kho-gi	ḍhe	kher	ḍo-soŋ
he-ERG	rice	carry	go-PST.DJ

'He carried away the rice.'

(47) *kho ḍho pudzoŋ*

kho	ḍho	pu-dzoŋ
he	run	go-PST.DJ

'He ran away.'

(48) *hala ḍho phin*

hala	ḍho	phin
that.side go	go	

'(Then I) went that side.' [043.Nubri1]

(49) *bhaksala hɤhja dza phin*

bhaksala	hɤhja	dza	phin
sometimes	towards	climb	go

'Sometimes (we) climbed.' [Nubri1.56]

In these examples, the second verb encodes direction.

(d) *te 'give', ʃak 'keep'*

The lexical verb te 'give' has a benefactive meaning when it is used as the second member of serial verb construction.

(50) *ŋa bhõ dʒupa ɲikarla arak tehin*

ŋa	bhõ	dʒupa	ɲi-kar-la	arak	te-hin
I	girl	thin	two- EMPH-DAT	liquor	give-PST.CJ

'I gave liquor to both of the girls.'

(51) *khogi ŋà gholak ʈɤ tetsuŋ*

kho-gi	ŋà	gholak	ʈɤ	te-tsuŋ
he-ERG	I	cloth	wash	give-PST.DJ

'He washed clothes for me.'

(52) *ŋà tʃelak khimla ʃakhin*

ŋà	tʃelak	khim-la	ʃak-hin
I	thing	house-LOC	keep-PST.CJ

'I kept the things at home.'

(53) *ŋà hjop ʃɛ ʃak hin*

ŋà	hjop	ʃɛ	ʃak	hin
I	food	eat	keep	PST

'I ate food (for others sake).'

(d) *de 'sit'*

When the verb de 'sit' occurs as second verb in the serial verb construction, it yields the progressive meaning.

(54) *ki hoŋ de duk*

ki	hoŋ	de	duk
dog	come	sit	COP

'The dog is coming.'

(55) *ŋà leka dzhe de hin*

ŋà	leka	dzhe	de	hin
I	work	do	sit	COP

'I was doing the work.'

(e) *ɲuŋ 'taste, experience'*

The verb ɲuŋ 'experience' is used to express the experience. Examples follow.

(56) *i gho ɲuŋ*

i	gho	ɲuŋ
grandmother	hear	experience

'Have (you) heard this, grandmother?'

(57) *khø lopʈa ɖho ɲuŋ jø me*

khø	lopʈa	ɖho	ɲuŋ	jø	me
you	school	go	experience	COP	NEG

'Have you gone to school or not?' [Nubri1.15]

The verb form ɲuŋ is related to asking and narrating about the experience. It is not strictly related to any tense as we find in English or Nepali. It is also used to indicate the perfect aspect.

(58) *ani ʃu maɲuŋ*

ani	ʃu	ma-ɲuŋ
nun	sit (HON)	NEG-experience

(I) have not lived (in monasteries as) a nun.' [TashiChoeden.9]

(59) *ŋa bhøla ɖho ɲuŋ*

ŋa	bhø-la	ɖho	ɲuŋ
I	Tibet-LOC	go	experience

'I have been (gone) to Tibet.'

(60) *ŋa bhøla ɖho maɲuŋ*

ŋa	bhø-la	ɖho	ma-ɲuŋ
I	Tibet-LOC	go	NEG-experience

'I have not been (gone) to Tibet.'

The negation is marked usually in the first verb in SVC to maintain that that the SVC constitutes a single event. However, the negative marker is marked to the second verb, such as søn ma-ɲuŋ 'I have not ridden the horse' etc.

(69) ŋewã ɲi ɲalde lep mahoŋ

ŋewã	ɲi	ɲal-de	lep	ma-hoŋ
day	two	sleep-DEF	come	NEG-come

'(I) could not sleep for two days (lit. the sleep did not come for two days).'   [Tsewang.95]

Although there is usually strings of two verbs in SVCs in Nubri, there are cases in which three verbs appear in sequences in it. The verb hoŋ appears at the end in this construction. Nubri shares a number of features that characterize the SVCs. They appear in sequences without any intervening elements between them except the negative marker. Since there are a few occurences of the negative marker in the verbal complex, more detailed investigation is needed in this context. The inflection marking is on the second verb, but has scope over to both of the verbs. This can thus be interpreted that the sequences of verbs are a single event.

Historical and Broader Tibetan Context

The verbs that appear in SVC as a second members can be associated with the standard Tibetan. As noted in Denwood (1999, p. 171), "Different serializing verbs vary in their grammaticalization in and phonological independence". The formal feature discussed herewith is the verb-verb concatenation with no intervening affixes in between them. The number and kinds of the degree of grammaticalization differs across these languages. However, this is a pervasive feature attested long time in Tibetan languages (Zeissler & Tournadre, 2021). In addition to the other features, the formal structure (verb-verb concatenation with no intervening affixes between them) is attested in a number of Tibetan languages of this region. Zeissler and Tournadre (2021, p. 358) further mention that the overall semantic interpretation in some Tibetan languages may be directional, intensifying, aspectual and others.

ost of these verbs are historically related to written Tibetan (WT). The historical annotation mentioned in this section is based on Huber (2002, p. 209-210)

except otherwise mentioned. The most frequently found verb sin- 'to be finished' is related to WT zin 'to draw near to an end, to be finished' (also see. Jäschke 1881, p. 487 cited in Hedlin, 2011, p. 113). The verb ɖo 'sit' as realized in Tsum, and its various forms in other languages is associated with WT sdod 'to sit, to stay'. The verb ter 'give' is related to WT ster 'give'. The verb dza 'put' in Tsum is related to WT ''jog, bźag, gźag, źog' 'to put, to place'. The verb form hoŋ 'come' in Gyalsumdo is related to WT ong 'to come'. The verb ɲuŋ 'experience' in all of these languages is related to WR myong 'to perceive, to experience'. The auxiliary verb khu 'be able' may be historically related thūÙ, thup (Goldstein & Narkid, 1999, p. 60, Zeissler, 2004, p. 242).

The lexical verbs which participate in SVC bleach the original lexical meaning, and gradually are in the process of grammaticalization from the lexical verbs to the auxiliaries, and to the affixes at the end of the cline. As we see in the examples, most of the verbs in these languages are monosyllabic. In some cases, these verbs retain compositional meanings. However, in the grammaticalization cline, the serialized verbs can be merely described as 'auxiliaries'. As noted in DeLancey (1991), the verbs 'finish', 'put', and 'experience' are the verbs which are more grammaticalized than other verbs.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed serialized verbs in Gyalsumdo, Nubri and Tsum. The identified SVCs in these languages have uniformity regarding the characterizing features of the constructions as they feature them as a single event and the scope of TAM over to the both of the verbs. Although two verbs occur in SVC, there are cases in which

three verbs participate in the construction with the final verb hoŋ in Nubri. No overt markers occur between the VV sequences except negative marker. Similarly, they share the argument, and the verbs are contiguous. They are passing through different stages of grammaticalization yielding different grammatical meanings such as tense, aspects, and directions. Although in most of the cases, two verbs participate in the serial verb construction in these languages, there are cases when three verbs can be placed in this kind of construction. In this case, the verb hoŋ 'come' is used as a final verb. The verbs retain their original tone value. Some variations are found regarding the grammaticalization processes in these different languages. All the grammaticalized verbs that take part in SVC have their lexical counterparts. They are formally, and semantically close, and they are used independently.

References

Aikhenvald, A. Y. (2006). Serial verb construction in typological perspective. In Aikhenvald, A. Y. & Dixon, R. M. W [Eds.], Serial verb construction: A cross-linguistic perspective, (pp. 1-68). Oxford University Press.

Aikhenvald, A. Y. (2018). *Serial verbs*. Oxford University Press.

Beyer, S. V. (1992). The classical Tibetan language. State University of New York Press.

Bielmeir, R., Häsler, K., Haller, C., Haller, F., Hein, V., Huber, B., Volkart, M., Preiswerk, T., Tsering, N., Widmer, M. & Zemp, M. (2018). Comparative Dictionary of Tibetan Dialects (CDTD), Vol.2. de Gruyter Mouton.

Bisang, W. (2009). Serial verb constructions. Language and Linguistics Compass. 15.1. 792-814.

Boro, K. (2012). Serialized verbs in Boro. North East Indian Linguistics, 4. 83-103.

Bradley, D. (1997). Tibeto-Burman languages and classification. In Papers in Southeast Asian Linguistics No. 14: *Tibeto-Burman languages of the Himalayas.* (pp. 1-72). Pacific Linguistics.

DeLancey, S. (1991). Origins of verb serializations in modern Tibetan. Studies in Language. 15.1. 1-23.

Denwood, P. (1999). Tibetan. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Dhakal, D. N. (2016a). Morphology and Syntax of Gyalsumdo. A research report submitted to Center for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS), Tribhuvan University.

Dhakal, D. N. (2016b). Nominal Inflections in Tsum in Areal-Typological Perspective. Interdisciplinary Journal of Linguistics. 9, 72-84.

Dhakal, D. N. (2017a). Causative constructions in Lhomi, Gyalsumdo, Nubri, and Lowa. Gipan Vol.3.1.65-82.

Dhakal, D. N. (2017b). Noun Phrase Structure in Tsum. Interdisciplinary Journal of Linguistics Vol.10. 73-84.

Dhakal, D. N. (2018). A Nubri Lexicon (Languages of the world / Dictionaries 70) (2018). Lincom Europa.

Dhakal, D. N. (2019a).Conjunct/Disjunct Distinction in Gyalsumdo. *Indian Linguistics*.79.1-2. 65-77.

Dhakal, D. N. (2019b). Nouns and noun phrase structure in Nubri. *Gipan. 4*. 38-53.

Dhakal, D. N. (2021). Kinship Terms in Gyalsumdo, Nubri and Tsum. Indian Linguistics. *Indian Linguistics.*81.3.4. 27-41.

Dhakal, D. N. (2022). Finite verb forms in Nubri with a focus on conjunct-disjunct distinction. *Nepalese Linguistic*s. 35.41-49.

Dhakal, D. N. (2023). A sketch of Nubri morphosyntax. *Lincom* Europa.

Dhakal, D.N. & Donohue, M. (2015). Inchoative/causative verb pairs in Tsum. *Nepalese Linguistics*. 30.45-49.

Dhakal, D.N., Donohue, M., Gautam, B. R. & Liu, N. (2016). Diagnosing a contact history for Tsum. *Nepalese Linguistics*. 31.21-28.

Dhakal, D.N., Hildebrandt, K. A. & Krim, J. (2016). Gyalsumdo: A Community-Based Dictionary (2016). Kathmandu: Center for Nepal and Asian Study, Tribhuvan University.

Donohue, C. (2021). Tonal morphology in Sama Nubri. Studies in Language.45.2. 408-447.

Donohue, C., & Donohue, M. (2023). The vowels of Nubri from the perspectives of other Tibetan languages. Nepalese Linguistics.37.1. 10-18.

Donohue, M. & Dhakal, D.N. (2016). A Tsum Lexicon (Languages of the world/ Dictionaries 61).Muenchen: Lincom Europa.

Eppele, J. W., Lewis, M. P., Regmi, D. R. & Yadava, Y. P. (2012). Ethnologue: Languages of Nepal. Linguistic Survey of Nepal and SIL International.

Foley, W. & Van Valin, R. D., Jr. (1984). Functional Syntax and Universal Grammar. Cambridge University Press.

Goldstein, M.C., & Narkid, N. (1999). English-Tibetan dictionary of modern Tibetan. University of California Press.

Haspelmath, M. (2016). The serial verb construction: Comparative concept and cross-linguistic generalizations. Language and Linguistics 17(3). 291–319.

Hedlin, M. (2011). An investigation of the relationship between the Kyirong, Yòlmo, and Standard Spoken Tibetan speech varieties (unpublished MA thesis). Payap University, Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Heine, B. & Kuteva, T. (2004). World lexicon of grammaticalizations. Cambridge University Press.

Hildebrandt, K. A. & Perry, J. J. (2011). Preliminary notes on Gyalsumdo, an undocumented Tibetan variety in Manang district Nepal. Himalayan Linguistics. 10.1:167-186.

Huber, B. (2002). The Tibetan dialect of Lende (Kyirong): a grammatical description with historical annotations. VGH Wissenschazsverlag/ International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies GmbH.

Joe, J. P. (2016). Tone and prosodic constituency in Gyalsumdo. PhD diss., King's College, University of Cambridge.

Kageyama, T., Hook, P. E. & Pradeshi, P. (2021). Introduction. In Kageyama, T., Hook, P. E. & Pradeshi, P. (Eds.), Verb-verb complexes in Asian languages (pp. 1-14). Oxford University Press.

LaPolla, R. J. (2017). Overview of Sino-Tibetan morphosyntax. In Thurgood, & LaPolla R.J. (Eds.), The Sino-Tibetan languages, (pp. 60-69). Routledge.

Liu, N. (2015). Tsum tone: A challenge for typology and phonological description. MA thesis, Australian National University.

Matisoff, J. A. (1991). Sino-Tibetan linguistics: Present state and future prospects. Annual Review of Anthropology 20: 469-504.

Muheim, N. (2022). Uncovering serial verb construction in Tibeto-Burman (unpublished MA thesis). University of Zurich, Faculty of Arts.

National Statistics Office. (2023). National Population and Housing Census 2021. National Statistics Office.

Thurgood, G & LaPolla, R. J. (Eds.) (2017) The Sino-Tibetan languages (2nd edition). Routledge.

Tournadre, N. & Jiatso, K. (2001). Final auxiliary verbs in literary Tibetan and in the dialects. Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area 24.1: 49-110.

Tournadre, N. (2014). The Tibetic language and their classification. In Hills, N. & Thomas, O. T. (Eds.), Trans-Himalayan linguistics (pp. 105-130). De Gruyter.

Zeisler, B. (2004). Relative tense and aspectual values in Tibetan languages. A comparative study. Mouton de Gruyter.

Zeisler, B., & Tournadre, N. (2021). Semantically related verb verb combinations in Tibetan and Ladakhi: 1300 years of stable transition. In Kageyama, T., Hook, P. E. & Pradeshi, P. (Eds.), Verb-verb complexes in Asian languages (pp. 354-396). Oxford University Press.

◆◆◆◆