

Serial and other multi-verb constructions in the Kalahari Basin Area (KBA)

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1. Introduction

- + Serial verb construction (henceforth SVC) – one of various types of multi-verb construction (henceforth MVC), aka “verb-based complex predicates”
- standard SVC definitions focus on the absence of an overt sign that any of the combined verbs is morpho-syntactically “linked” and/or “deranked”:

unmarked juxtaposition of two or more verbs or verb phrases (with or without subject and/or object), each of which would also be able to form a sentence on its own (Bisang 1995: 139)

sequence of verbs which act together as a single predicate, ***without any overt marker of coordination, subordination, or syntactic dependency of any other sort*** (Aikhenvald 2006: 1)

monoclausal construction consisting of multiple independent verbs ***with no element linking them and with no predicate-argument relation between the verbs*** (Haspelmath 2016: 292)

+ we focus here on two points:

- a) considerable linguistic convergence of unrelated languages in the Kalahari Basin area regarding MVCs irrespective of structural properties
 - b) the question of distinguishing SVCs from other MVCs
- > we do not treat the entire inventory of MVCs, which is larger and also involves types with overt segmental marking

2. Multi-verb constructions in the Kalahari Basin area (KBA)

- + Non-Bantu languages in southern Africa formerly subsumed under a “Khoisan” family (Greenberg 1963)
- rather constitute a convergence area “Kalahari Basin (area) (KBA)” (cf. Güldemann 1998, Güldemann and Fehn 2017)
- languages classified genealogically into three families:

Family

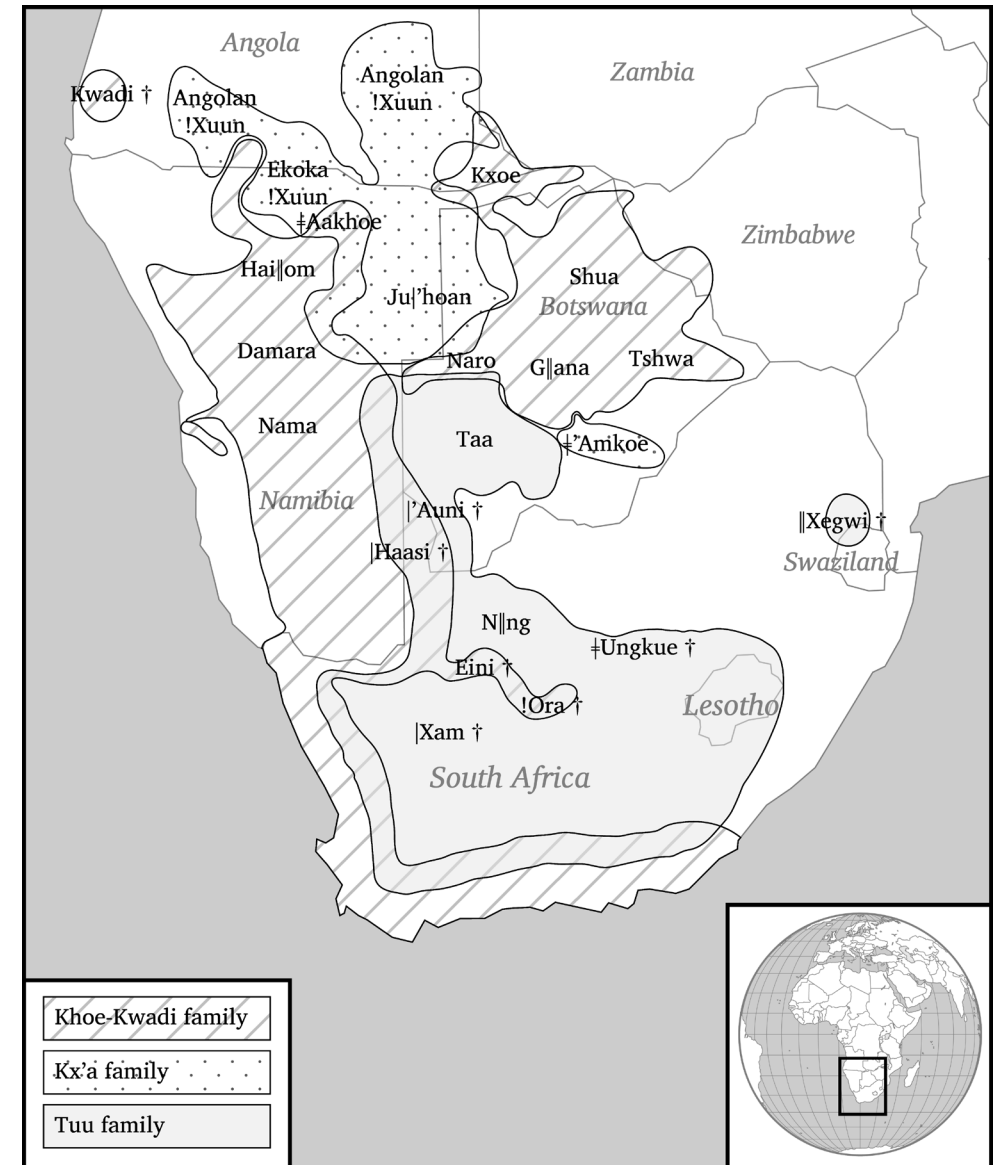
Tuu + Kx'a (Non-Khoe type):

Khoe-Kwadi:

Syntax

head-initial

head-final



Map 1: Three lineages and languages of the KBA

+ KBA defined by numerous isoglosses, notably semantic-functionally parallel multi-verb constructions which are mostly analyzed as SVCs

> extensive literature:

Tuu	Taa: !Ui:	Traill (1994), Güldemann (2013c, f) Kießling (2013) Güldemann (2013d) on Xam
Kx'a	Ju: ǀ'Amkoe:	Collins (2003), Dickens (2005), König (2010), Pratchett (2022) Collins (2002, 2003), Berthold & Gerlach (2017)
Khoe	Kalahari Khoe: Khoekhoe:	Kilian-Hatz (2008) on Caprivi Khwe, Visser (2010) on Naro Haacke (1999, 2014), Rapold (2014)

2.1 Serial verb constructions in Non-Khoe

- + numerous semantic SVC types shared across unrelated **head-initial** Non-Khoe languages
- predominantly of the “nuclear”/“root serialization” type (cf. Olson 1981, Foley & Van Valin 1984)

- > we present here a selection of types from two languages:
 - under a. = Ju|’hoan dialect of Ju (Kx’a family)
 - under b. = West !Xoon dialect of Taa (Tuu family)

- list not complete but only illustrates the extent of shared types across the area
- a language (group) is also considered to possess a type, if synchronically grammaticalised

Sequential cause-effect

(1)a. *útò nǎq'ú !àò jù*

1.car knock fall.down 1.person

The car knocked the person over. (Dickens 2005: 81)

b. *ń nǎ àqhrè qx'ùè n//àhè*

1SG PERF destroy bring.down.SG:3i > house.3i

I have demolished the house. (Kießling 2013: 43)

Dative/Benefactive

(2)a. *tè ká hà kú //’ain//’ain /’àn hà kòm*

CLCO when PRO1 IPFV warm.up give PRO1 FG

And just as she was warming it up for him, [...]. (Pratchett, in prep.)

b. *n si n//are ki n!uri n/aa* (n|aV < *n|aa ‘give’, rare core serialization)

1SG IPFV tell MPO:1 > story.1 DAT:2SG

I tell you a story (Güldemann field notes)

Path (V1 + ‘enter’, ‘descend’, etc.)

(3)a. *n/òqm kòàq tè g/àè g!à’ámá dòm*
 1.springhare afraid CLCO arrive enter 4.hole

The springhare was afraid and went into a hole. (after Bieseke 2009: 23)

b. *ě sí sín-àhrá úqín kà /”áàn súde*
 PRO3i IPFV push insert.SG:1SG LOC:2ii > fire.2ii inside.2ii

He pushes me into the fire. (Kießling 2013: 55)

- note valency agreement across combined verbs

Accompanying manner

(4)a. *dà'ábí!óá tshí ú*
 2.children laugh go

The children went off laughing. (Pratchett, in prep.)

b. *ń sí g/óqhán 'n#àqá kě n//àhè sùè*
 1SG IPFV limp go.out.SG LOC:3i > house.3i inside.2ii

I am limping out of the house. (Kießling 2013: 48)

Centripedal (vs. centrifugal) motion (V1 + ‘come’)

(5)a. *mí m gòàq kx'àè tsí-á à*
 1SG ? R.PST get come-VE 2SG
 I brought you [here], [...]. (Pratchett, in prep.)

b. *ń sí n!àhàn sài kě n//àhè*
 1SG IPFV walk come LOC:3i > house.3i
 I am walking up to the house (hither). (Kießling 2013: 41)

Centrifugal (vs. centripedal) motion (V1 + ‘go’)

(6)a. *kátò’à hã kx’àè ú-á hã ...*

when PRO1 get go-VE PRO1

Once he had taken him [there], [...]. (Pratchett, in prep.)

b. *ń sí n!àhàn sáà kě n//àhè*

1SG IPFV walk go LOC:3i > house.3i

I am walking up to the house (thither). (Kießling 2013: 41)

Phasal aspect (V1 + ‘finish’, ‘continue’, etc.)

- (7)a. *mí tè 'm tòàn ká tè tchì tòàn ká*
 1SG ? eat finish PRO4 CLCO drink finish PRO4
 [It is] I [who'll] eat it all up and drink it all up. (Biesele 2009: 19)
- b. *ě yǎ áàn /'ùrí Ɔái*
 PRO3i PERF eat finish:1 > meat.1
 He has eaten up the meat. (Kießling 2013: 51)

2.2 Verb-juncture constructions in Kalahari Khoe vs. SVCs in Non-Khoe

- + verb-juncture constructions in **head-final** Kalahari Khoe as most salient MVC
 - three major contexts of “juncture” related via grammaticalization of V2 (cf. Voßen 1997, 2010)
- > Figure 1

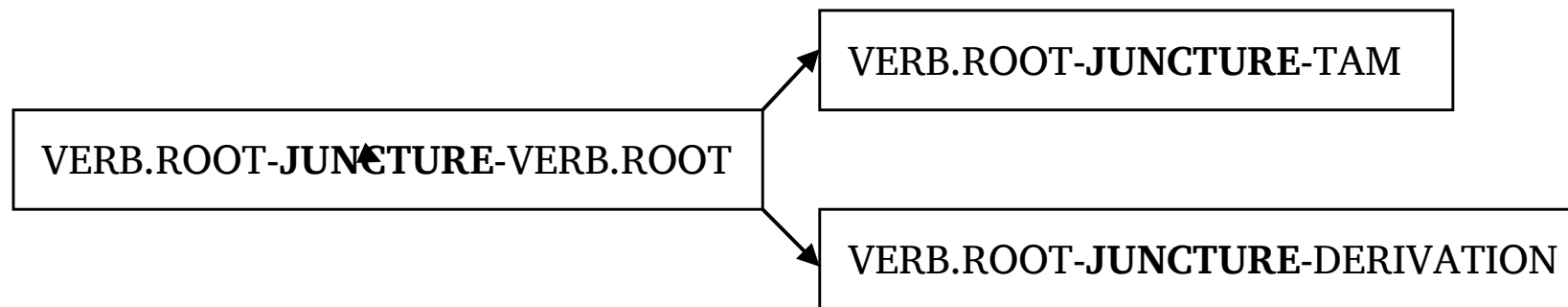


Figure 1: Three functions of verb-juncture constructions and their historical relationships

+ three types of verb-juncture constructions in Ts'ixa:

MVC under a., derivation under b., TAMP under c.

(8)a. *g/ínì-sì tè xalası-mè /xè //ábu-a ngéè*
 fly-F.SG IMM.PST glass-M.SG next.to fly-JUNCT pass
 The fly just flew past the glass.

b. *kuú-m kà tí kò tí kà /úán-sà 'à tyúun-a-ma* [-ma < 'give']
 dress-M.SG MPO 1SG IPFV 1SG POSS child-F.SG OBJ buy-JUNCT-BEN
 I buy the dress for my daughter.

c. *tí tsxaan-hàn* [juncture suffix assimilated to verb root, -hàn < 'exist']
 1SG become.tired:JUNCT-STAT
 I am tired. (Güldemann and Fehn 2016, < Fehn field notes)

- + verb-juncture construction type under a. is functionally highly similar to SVCs in unrelated Non-Khoe languages

- > we present here a selection of types from two languages:
 - under a. = N!aqriaxe dialect of the Non-Khoe language †'Amkoe (Kx'a)
 - under b. = Ts'ixa of the Kalahari Khoe branch of Khoe (Khoe-Kwadi) with the juncture suffix

- list not complete but only illustrates the extent of shared types across the area
- a language (group) is also considered to possess a type, if synchronically grammaticalized

Sequential cause-effect

(9)a. *mā ēn !'áú 'n/áá*

1SG TAM fall sit

I fell into a sitting position.

b. *noxá = m̄ ín = mà tí kò muùn-à 'ààn*
 snake = M.SG DEM.REF = M.SG 1SG IPFV see-**JUNCT** know

I recognize this snake.

(Güldemann and Fehn 2017: 510)

Dative/Benefactive (V1 + ‘give’)

(10)a. *mā yā n/ūbō súú āmè sì n!áā*
 1SG IPFV talk give 1SG.POSS POSS friend
 I talk for my friend.

b. *'émè tí 'à k'oxú ká †uùn-à-mà* (*mà* < ‘give’)
 3M.SG 1SG OBJ meat MPO buy-**JUNCT**-BEN
 (I asked him) to buy meat for me. (Güldemann and Fehn 2017: 511)

Path (V1 + ‘enter’, ‘descend’, etc.)

(11)a. *mā yā !hhōōn /’òò bōksī kī !ōà nā*
 1SG IPFV push enter box MPO house LOC
 I am pushing the box into the house.

b. *nguú = m ’à tí kò g//ai-a ky’oà*
 house = M.SG LOC 1SG IPFV run-JUNCT exit
 I run out of the house.

(Güldemann and Fehn 2017: 511)

Accompanying manner

(12)a. *mā nà //qx'áā tsáá*
 1SG TAM sing come
 I am coming while singing.

b. *tí kò pere g//àì*
 1SG IPFV flee:**JUNCT** run
 I run like a fugitive.

(Güldemann and Fehn 2017: 510-1)

Accompanying posture ('sit', 'stand', 'lie' etc. + V2)

(13)a. *mā !úí !ōā n/úbō*

1SG raise stand talk

I talk standing.

b. *tí kò nyúun-a //’àmè katsí=sà ’à*

1SG IPFV sit-**JUNCT** beat cat=F.SG OBJ

I beat the cat sitting.

(Güldemann and Fehn 2017: 511)

Perfect/current relevance (V1 + ‘exist’)

(14)a. *tyàmà ’n/āā ā kī kātàbòksì n!āqrè* (*ā* < ‘exist’)

dog sit RELV MPO box bottom

The dog sits at the bottom of the box.

b. *tí tsxaan-hàn* (*hàn* < ‘exist’)

1SG become.tired:**JUNCT**-STAT

I am tired.

(Güldemann and Fehn 2017: 511)

- + functional similarity of verb-juncture constructions to SVCs motivated some scholars to subsume them under SVCs despite formal properties contradicting mainstream definitions
- > currently also perceived as SVC in typological literature

- Kilian-Hatz (2006) for Khwe: juncture = "pure [SVC] construction marker" (ibid.: 111)

The morpheme 'II' [aka juncture TG] is also suffixed obligatorily to each verb in an SVC except to the last one. [...] the morpheme 'II' in Khwe functions as a **pure construction marker in SVCs** and does not have any coordinating or subordinating function anywhere else in the grammar.

- Haacke (2014) for Khoe in general and Khoekhoe in particular

- 3 juncture functions cannot be subsumed under a single construction (e.g., canonical SVC)
- modern Khoe construction is likely to go back to a [**non-finite** + finite verb] construction inherited from Proto-Khoe-Kwadi (Güldemann and Fehn 2016)

(15) *[[ROOT-(a)RA]_{DEPENDENT} = ROOT_{HEAD}]

- + juncture suffix both synchronically and diachronically a morpho-syntactic linker that has scope over the preceding verb root and marks it as dependent regarding the following verb
- > V1-JUNCTURE-V2 construction is not SVC-like according to mainstream definition

2.3 Multi-verb constructions without a "juncture" in Khoekhoe

- + Khoekhoe branch of Khoe lacks the segmental juncture morpheme but is rich in linkerless MVCs analyzed as serial or compound verbs (both lexicalized and productive)
- > Güldemann (2006: 117-9) proposes that such complex predicates have been influenced by canonical SVCs of Non-Khoe through specific substrate interference by !Ui languages (Tuu)
- specific MVC types with a scattered distribution provide more robust evidence for contact
- > **non-causative S/A-switch SVCs** attested so far only in:

Ju	(but no other Kx'a)	>	(16)a.
Xam	(but no other Tuu)	>	(16)b., and
North Khoekhoe	(but no other Khoe)	>	(16)c.
- |Xam and North Khoekhoe belong to the Cape contact area (Güldemann 2006)

Non-causative S/A-switch SVC

(16)a. *hà tsí g/àè sè cú-á |Ari kò //ámí*

PRO1_x come arrive _xsee_y _ylie-VE PN_y MPO 4.middle

He came and saw |Ari lying in the middle. (Pratchett field notes)

b. *si tang //a-ng dǒ'a n/ĩ tēe !k'waa aa /uuk-a*

1PL.E_x ? go-and ? _xsee_y _ylie hartebeest.1_y 1REL die-STAT

We did go and see a dead hartebeest lying there! (Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 10-1)

c. *audo-s-a ra mú !goaxa*

car-F.SG-OBJ_y IPFV _xsee_y _yapproach

see a car approaching. (Haacke 1995: 357)

+ N. Khoekhoe calque with quirky linear syntax of pivot detached from its verb with S/A role

- (17)a. ... [[*n/ũ* *tēe*] *!k'waa*] ... "Root" MVC
 see _ylie hartebeest.1_y ... [V O]
 ... see a (dead) **hartebeest lying** (there). (Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 10-1)
- b. [*audo-s-a* *ra* [*mû* *!goaxa*]] "Root" MVC
 car-F.SG-OBJ_y IPFV see _yapproach [O V]
 see **a car approaching**. (Haacke 1995: 357)
- c. *ich habe* [[*es* *kommen*] *sehen*] "Core" MVC
 I_x have it_y come:INF_y see:INF [O V]
 I have seen **it coming**.
- d. *ich* [*sehe* [*es* *kommen*]] "Core" MVC
 I see:1SG.PRS it_y come:INF_y [V O]
 I see **it coming**.

+ non-causative S/A-switch SVC in North Khoekhoe not productive and regular but:

a) restricted to five verbs: *mũũ* 'to see', *hòò* 'to find', *!khóó* 'to catch, hold', *!khóé* 'to (out)run', *!nàrì* 'to move/drive'

b) structurally distinct from predominant MVC type

+ more frequent MVC characterized by a suprasegmental change called "weak flip-flop" on the non-final V1 (cf. Haacke 1997, 2014)

- suprasegmental weak flip-flop in Khoekhoe largely occurs in contexts where Kalahari Khoe displays the segmental juncture suffix and can be reconstructed as its prosodic reflex after erosion (Rapold 2014)

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- suprasegmental weak flip-flop largely occurs in contexts where Kalahari Khoe displays the segmental juncture suffix and can be reconstructed as its prosodic reflex after segmental phonetic erosion (Rapold 2014)
- correspondence includes cognate constructions, e.g., perfect/current relevance in (18)

Perfect/Current relevance (V1 + *hãã ‘exist’)

(18)a. Khwe

*khùrǐ-na-xu-a-hã**(xu < *xuu ‘leave’)*

end-JUNCT-COMPLETIVE-JUNCT-PERF

[It (= the story)] is finished just here. (Rapold 2014: 169, after Kilian-Hatz 2008: 102)

b. North Khoekhoe

//ǃ-b ge *hàrá-hãã**(lexical tone of V1: hárá)*

3-3M.SG DECL swallow:WEAK.FLIP.FLOP-PERF

He has swallowed. (Rapold 2014: 170, after Haacke 1999: 195)

3. Summary

1 Contact interference regarding MVCs is potentially extensive

- constructional "metatypy" achieved by different processes, e.g., in North Khoekhoe:

a) surface calque (including non-causative S/A-switch SVC of alien Non-Khoe SVC)

b) adaptive segmental change of inherited syndetic MVC to asyndetic SVC-like MVC

SVC concept and definition are cross-linguistically problematic.

- "traditional" SVCs with considerably different morphosyntactic structures: e.g., Shluinsky (2017) on Kwa

- MVCs other than SVCs partly have a functional profile strongly overlapping with SVCs: e.g., Hyman (1971) on "consecutives", Bisang (1995) on converbs

> initial SVC definition hard to maintain from a cross-linguistic perspective

Non-segmental properties of MVCs are important diagnostics.

- expression of deranked and/or dependent status of a verb in MVCs may not be obvious morpho-syntactically but still overt by:

a) suprasegmental features, as in Khoekhoe > requires detailed prosodic MVC analysis!

b) mere sequential ordering against the backdrop of a head-initial or head-final verb phrase

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