Serial Verb Constructions in Three Tibetan Languages

Dubi Nanda Dhakal
Tribhuvan University

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. Hildebrand & 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 is 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).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lexical sense</th>
<th>Grammaticalized sense</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) go</td>
<td>distal motion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>come</td>
<td>proximal motion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sit, stay</td>
<td>progressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>put</td>
<td>do with deleterious effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finish</td>
<td>completive perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taste</td>
<td>experiential perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>know</td>
<td>know how to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 semiantically 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 āp tsilbu naŋla sa: dza
    kho-i āp 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-, hō ‘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) **koŋ ghowsa la hō**

koŋ ghowsa-la hō
he house-LOC come
‘He came home.’

(8) **dhanda namdı kher hō**

dhanda namdı kher hō
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) ** dåi dhõla ŏnso**

ā-i dhõ-la ŏn-so
mother-ERG hardship experience-PST
‘The mother gave me hardship.’

(11) **dai sotop dhõla tsu ŏnso**

ā-i sotop dhõ-la tsu ŏn-so
mother-ERG ring daughter-DAT put give-PST
‘The mother gave 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. ā-i ‘mother-ERG’, and the direct object is sotop ‘ring’.

(e) **nuŋ ‘experience’**

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

(13) **nai ḏukpo nuŋso**

ŋa-i ḏukpo ḏuŋ-so
I-ERG hardship experience-PST
‘I experienced the hardship.’

(14) **khøki di mande namgō sa nuŋa**

khø-ki di mande namgō sa ḏu-ŋa
you-ERG this medicine ever eat experience-NPST
‘Have you ever tasted (experienced) this medicine?’

(15) **ŋə-i di mande tʃhø ta nu**

you-ERG this medicine taste look experience
‘You have tasted 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) **ɖo ‘go’, pʏ ‘go, change’**

The lexical verb ɖo ‘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).
Dhakal, D. N. (2024). Gipan, 6(1)

(16) **tsum-la mi midʒe lelamu gjur dọ**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>tsum-la</th>
<th>mi</th>
<th>midʒe</th>
<th>lela-mu</th>
<th>gjur</th>
<th>dọ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tsum-LOC</td>
<td>man</td>
<td>life</td>
<td>easy-CMPR</td>
<td>change</td>
<td>go</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘People’s lives are becoming easier in Tsum.’

(17) **ŋa tas tse dọwa**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ŋa</th>
<th>tas</th>
<th>tse</th>
<th>dọ-wa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>card</td>
<td>play</td>
<td>go-PST.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘I was playing (kept playing) cards.’

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

(18) **khoi yala tʃhortenthu ʈhi pʏso**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>kho-i</th>
<th>ŋa-la</th>
<th>tʃhorten-thu</th>
<th>ʈhi</th>
<th>pʏ-so</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>he-ERG</td>
<td>I-DAT</td>
<td>monastery-ALL</td>
<td>lead</td>
<td>go-PST</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘He led me up to the monastery.’

(g) **dḥo ‘sit’**

The lexical verb dḥo ‘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 dḥoso**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>kho</th>
<th>ghortsala-la</th>
<th>dḥo-so</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>he</td>
<td>house-LOC</td>
<td>sit-PST.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘He sat at home.’

(20) **ŋa tas tse dhọwa**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ŋa</th>
<th>tas</th>
<th>tse</th>
<th>dhọ-wa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>card</td>
<td>play</td>
<td>sit-PST.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘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 ḋha khu**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ŋə-i</th>
<th>ḋha</th>
<th>khu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I-ERG</td>
<td>read</td>
<td>can</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘I can read.’

(22) **ŋai ḋha makhu**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ŋai</th>
<th>ḋha</th>
<th>makhu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I-ERG</td>
<td>read</td>
<td>NEG-be.able</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘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) नेकि आरा कोल्द्झि सेसो

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>नेकि</th>
<th>आरा</th>
<th>कोल्द्झि</th>
<th>सेसो</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>we-ERG liquor make-NMLZ know-PST</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘We knew to make the liquor.’

(24) नेला मेघ ग्हान्जुन पार्स्ती हाके मिजुन

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>नेला</th>
<th>मेघ</th>
<th>ग्हान्जुन</th>
<th>पार्स्ती</th>
<th>हाके</th>
<th>मिजुन</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>we-DAT fire how burn-NMLZ know NEG-COP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘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’, ɖho- ‘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) नाकि लेका सिन्सुन

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>नाकि</th>
<th>लेका</th>
<th>सिन्सुन</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I-ERG work finish-PST.DJ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘I finished working.’

(26) खोकी टो से सिन्सुन

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>खोकी</th>
<th>टो</th>
<th>से</th>
<th>सिन्सुन</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>he-ERG rice eat finish-PST.DJ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘He finished eating rice.’

The verb sin shows the terminative, or complective 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) नात्फिकी नाला फ्होर्पा तर्सुन

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>नात्फिकी</th>
<th>नाला</th>
<th>फ्होर्पा</th>
<th>तर्सुन</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I older.sister-ERG I-ACC phorpa give-PST.DJ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
‘My elder sister gave me a cup.’

(28) ŋà khjokaki ŋàla tʃja kol tersuŋ
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. ingleton ‘give’
The verb ŋàŋ ‘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 ŋàŋ ‘give’ is preceded by ke ghjap ‘call’.

(29) ŋàla ale kja ŋàŋ
I-DAT rupees one hundred give.IMP
‘Give me one hundred rupees.’

(30) khola leme tʃik ke ghjap ŋàŋ
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) kียนja ɖhosuŋ
they go-PST.DJ
‘They went.’

(32) kho tʃhwe ɖho jø
He read go COP
‘He is reading.’

f. phim ‘go’
The verb phim ‘go’ is used as a serial verb construction to mean ‘continue’.

(33) huni kide tʃhoŋ phimso
and.then dog-DEF run.away go-PST.DJ
‘And then the dog was running away.’ [Frog.Story.60]
(33) **hupka tshimo thon hoy**

hupka  tshimo  thon  hoy  
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 ghaŋrʏla dza khukere**

lakpa  ghaŋrʏ-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) \textit{ɖo 'go'; pu 'go'; phin 'go'}

Like the verb come shows the proximal motion, the movement verbs \textit{ɖo 'go', pu 'go, phin 'go} occur as a second member in SVC. The verb \textit{ɖo 'go'} and \textit{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) \textit{khogi ɖhe kher ɖoSony}

\begin{verbatim}
khog ɖhe kher ɖo-sny
he-ERG rice carry go-PST.DJ
\end{verbatim}

‘He carried away the rice.’

(47) \textit{kho ɖho pudzon}

\begin{verbatim}
kho ɖho pu-dzon
he run go-PST.DJ
\end{verbatim}

‘He ran away.’

(48) \textit{hala ɖho phin}

\begin{verbatim}
hala ɖho phin
that.side go go
\end{verbatim}

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

(49) \textit{bhaksala hyhja dza phin}

\begin{verbatim}
bhaksala hyhja dza phin
sometimes towards climb go
\end{verbatim}

‘Sometimes (we) climbed.’ [Nubri1.56]

In these examples, the second verb encodes direction.

(d) \textit{te 'give', fak 'keep'}

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

(50) \textit{ŋa bhô ɖzupa ni karla arak tehin}

\begin{verbatim}
ŋa bhô ɖzupa ni-kar-la arak te-hin
I girl thin two-EMPH-DAT liquor give-PST.CJ
\end{verbatim}

‘I gave liquor to both of the girls.’

(51) \textit{khogi ŋa gholak ʈy tetsun}

\begin{verbatim}
kho-gi ŋa gholak ʈy te-tsun
he-ERG I cloth wash give-PST.DJ
\end{verbatim}

‘He washed clothes for me.’

(52) \textit{ŋà ʈfelak khimla ʃakhin}

\begin{verbatim}
ŋà ʈfelak khim-la ʃak-hin
I thing house-LOC keep-PST.CJ
\end{verbatim}

‘I kept the things at home.’
(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*

\[
\text{dog come sit COP}
\]

‘The dog is coming.’

(55) *ŋà leka dzhe de hin*

\[
\text{I work do sit COP}
\]

‘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*

\[
\text{grandmother hear experience}
\]

‘Have (you) heard this, grandmother?’

(57) *khø lopʈa dḥo ɲuŋ jø me*

\[
\text{you school go experience COP NEG}
\]

‘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 fu maɲuŋ*

\[
\text{nun sit (HON) NEG-experience}
\]

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

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

(59) *ŋa bhøla dḥo ɲuŋ*

\[
\text{I Tibet-LOC go experience}
\]

‘I have been (gone) to Tibet.’

(60) *ŋa bhøla dḥo maɲuŋ*

\[
\text{I Tibet-LOC go NEG-experience}
\]
‘I have not been (gone) to Tibet.’

The negation is marked usually in the first verb in SVC to maintain that 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) ɲewã ni nalde 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 occurrences 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.

Most 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 dɔ ‘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


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