Serial verb constructions in Ede (Rhade)

Subfield: Language contact/Syntax
Author: Tam Nguyen
Email: tnguyen8@uoregon.edu

Abstract:

Ede (also called Rade, Rhade, Rhode), a language of the Chamic branch of Malayo-Polynesian, is spoken mainly in Daklak and other provinces in the Southern plateau region of Vietnam. The paper discusses two types of serial verb constructions (henceforth SVCs) in Ede in terms of their relative degree of integration.

The main property of the first type of SVCs in Ede is equal verbal status. In other words, each verb in the first type is equal in contributing lexical and syntactic content to the construction. There are two SVCs in the first type in Ede: nuclear SVC and core SVC. A nuclear SVC and a core SVC, as follow Foley and Olson's definition (1985), are constructions containing a sequence of verbs sharing the same tense, aspect, mood and modality, and act as a single predicate without overtly marking morphemes of coordination or subordination. The difference between Ede nuclear SVC and core SVC is the fact that the former has all sequential verbs sharing the same arguments while the other doesn't. All verbs in core SVCs may have different arguments. This difference also shows a degree of integration of two constructions: nuclear SVC in Ede is more integrated than core SVC. The following examples will show nuclear SVC (ex.1) and core SVC in Ede (ex.2).

(1)　Ða mnuih　hiu　duah　　huăk　　mă kan　　hŏng kngan.
　　　PL　people　go　look-for　feel-around　catch fish　　with hand

　　　'Many people go to look for, feel around and catch fish by hand.'

(2)　Phung ƀuôn　sang nao　　đru　pŭ　　atâo　　　kma hlăm bông
　　　3pl　village house go　　help　take　dead-person　put in coffin
　　　'People in the village go help to take a dead person put in the coffin.'

The second type of SVCs (the modifying SVC) will show another status of verbal sequence, where the verbs aren't equal: one will be a modifier for others and that verb won't contribute to lexical content of the construction. The changed status verb becomes a so-called case marker in a sentence in some case-marker languages. This change per se makes higher integration for this type of SVCs than the previous one in Ede.

(3)　Amĭ　kâo　　mñam abăn, kpin　pioh　čhĭ　brei kơ arăng
　　　Mother 1sg　weave blanket, skirt for　　sell　give to 3pl
　　　'My mother weaves blankets, skirts for selling to people.'

"Brei" in the above example has no contribution to lexical content of the construction. Its verbal status is different from example (4) in which it is the main verb. It modifies other verbs by a dative maker function.

(4)　Kâo　brei　kơ　ñu　sa　　ƀĕ　giê　čih
　　　1sg　give　to　3sg　one　CLF　pen　write
　　　'I give him one pen.'

Three distinct types of SVC can be distinguished in Ede according to the degree of syntactic integration. The core SVC is the least integrated, the nuclear is a higher integrated construction while the modifying SVC is the highest one.

Reference:

Bamgbose, A. (1974). On serial verbs and verbal status. *Journal of West African languages, 9*, 17-48.

Bamgbose, A. (1982). Issues in the analysis of serial verbal constructions. *Journal of West African languages, 12*, 2-25.

DeLancey, S. (1991). The Origins of verb serialization in modern Tibetan. *Studies in Language, 15*, 1-23.

Foley, W. A., & Olson, M. (1985). Clausehood and verb serialization. In J. Nichols & A. Woodbury (Eds.), *Grammar inside and outside the clause: Some approaches to theory from the field* (pp. 17-60). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

Lord, C. (1973). Serial verbs in transition. *Studies in African linguistics, 4*, 269-96.

Lord, C. (1993). *Historical change in serial verb construction*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co.

Sebba, M. (1987). *The syntax of serial verbs: An investigation into serialization in Sranan and other languages*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co.

Stewart, O. T. (2001). *The serial verb construction parameter.* New York: Garland Pub.

Thepkanjana, K. (1986). *Serial verb constructions in Thai*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Thurgood, G. (1999). *From ancient Cham to modern dialects: Two thousand years of language contact and change*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.