

Multi-Verb-Constructions in Sri Lanka Malay¹

Abstract

This paper investigates serial verbs and related constructions in Sri Lanka Malay and shows that at least four types have to be distinguished (Compound Verbs, Vector Verb Serialization, Motion Verb Serialization, Clause Chains). The constructions found are quite different from Atlantic or Pacific Creoles. This is due to the different input languages: Two of the constructions can be traced to influence from the local languages Tamil and/or Sinhala while the other two are of Indonesian origin. Sri Lanka Malay is thus not a simple combination of South Asian Grammar and Malay lexicon but also shows retentions of Malay grammar as already demonstrated by Slomanson (2006). I finally argue that this recombination of features can only be explained under an account which acknowledges the possibility of grammatical contributions from all input languages, substrate, superstrate or other.

1 Introduction

Serial verb construction (SVC) play an important role in Creole linguistics. Atlantic Creoles are described in Sebba (1987) while an overview of SVCs in Pacific Creoles can be found in Crowley (2002). The contact languages of the Indian subcontinent have received less attention in the field (but see Baxter 2010). Given the influence of neighbouring South Asian languages, they can be expected to show some structures not found in the Atlantic or Pacific Creoles. This paper presents SVCs and related constructions in Sri Lanka Malay and discusses the possible origin of these structures in India or Indonesia, respectively.

Sri Lanka differs in a number of ways from the sociolinguistic settings prominent in earlier studies of Creole languages. There were no slaves or indentured labourers in significant numbers, no plantations, and no extraordinary hardship, but there were women and children (Schweitzer 1931[1680], Hussainmiya 1990), comparably high social prestige, close alliance with the colonial powers (Nordhoff 2009), high literacy in several languages (Bichsel-Stettler 1989), and a concentration on cities rather than the countryside. Furthermore the linguistic structure with SOV word order, postpositions, extensive bound morphology and complex syllable structure (Nordhoff 2009) is rather unusual compared to the well-described Creoles of the Atlantic. This has led scholars to question the creole nature of Sri Lanka Malay (Bakker 2000, Ansaldo 2008, Nordhoff 2009), but see Smith & Paauw (2006) for a diverging view.² Regardless of whether we see Sri Lanka Malay as a Creole or not, it is possible to compare this high contact variety with other high contact varieties having arisen in roughly the same time frame (17th century onwards) in other parts of the globe. Those are most notably the Atlantic and the Pacific Creoles.

In this paper I first discuss the theoretical concept of “Serial Verb Construction” and the different types featuring prominently in different research traditions (Section 2). I then survey phonological, morphosyntactic and semantic properties of four different types of multi-verb-constructions in Sri Lanka Malay (Section 3) and investigate parallels with Lankan and Indonesian languages (Section 4). I present my conclusion

¹I would like to thank Hugo Cardoso and Susanne Michaelis for earlier comments on this paper. The usual disclaimers apply.

²The genesis of Sri Lanka Malay is one of the most fascinating topics of the study of this language, which is beyond the scope of this paper.

and the discussion of the findings in the Creolist and South Asianist context in Section 5.

2 Serial Verb Constructions

The first extensive survey of serial verbs in creole languages was probably Jansen et al. (1978). An example of the structures encountered is given in (1)

- (1) *Li poté sa bay mó* GUYANESE CREOLE
 he brought that give me
 'He bought that for me.' (Jansen et al. 1978:130)

In the above example, the verbs *poté* 'bring' and *bay* 'give' together refer to one event, buying something for someone. The item bought, *sa* 'that', is found between the two verbs, and is an argument of both, as is the subject. Jansen et al. (1978) found that there was a remarkable similarity between Creole languages in the structure and use of serial verb constructions. A similar idea was formulated by Alleyne (1980) (with intransitive verbs and hence no intervening NPs), shown in (2).

- (2) *ron go lef im* JAMAICAN
kore bay lagá e PAPIAMENTU
kuri ale lese li HAITIAN
kule go disa en SARAMACCAN
 run go leave him
 'run away from him.' (adapted from Alleyne 1980:12)

In all the Creole sentences above, a unitary event of fast itive motion away from a spatial referent (*him*) is expressed by three verbs, while in English, only one verb is used. The sequence as well as the semantics of the verbs in the Creole languages are remarkably similar, and remarkably different from the structure of the English translation. Structures of the sort NP V (NP) V (NP) have been inventarized by Sebba (1987) for (mainly Atlantic) Creoles (also see Veenstra 1996, Winford 2008).

Serial Verb Constructions in Creoles have been traced to influence from the substrate languages, where similar structures are found (e.g. McWhorter 1992, Migge 1998, 2003). The following example from Lefebvre (1998:112) shows the parallel structures found in Haitian and one of its substrates, Fongbe.

- (3) *É sò àsón yi àxi mè* FONGBE
Li pran crab ale nan mache HAITIAN
 3rd take crab go in market in
 'He brought the crab to the market' (Lefebvre 1998:112)

There is a remarkable overlap between the structures of Fongbe and Haitian in (3). It is a reasonable hypothesis that the African slaves transferred some of the structures of their native tongue when they acquired the new language. Given that West African languages have widespread use of serial verb constructions (Sebba 1987, Lord 1993) the emergence of similar types of serial verb constructions in the Atlantic Creoles has been traced to these languages (Lefebvre 1998, among many others). The search for parallel structures in substrates has been criticized by Bickerton (1981:119–121), but today there seems to be a consensus in the field that substrate influences cannot be ruled out categorically, although they may not be able to account for the whole picture.

Pacific Creoles seem to have less serialization in general than their Atlantic counterparts (McWhorter 1992). They also have the non-adjacent NP V NP V structures mentioned above. An example is

- (4) a. *bae mi pulum rop i kam* Bislama
 FUT 1s pull.TRANS rope 3s come
 ‘I will pull the rope here.’ (Crowley 2002:229, interlinear gloss added)
- b. **bae mi pulum kam rop* Bislama
 FUT 1s pull.TRANS come rope

Next to this construction familiar from Atlantic Creoles, Pacific Creoles also feature adjacent NP V V NP structures, as in the following example from Bislama (also see Verhaar 1995).

- (5) *Kali i katem splitem wud* Bislama
 Kali I cut,TRANS split.TRANS wood
 ‘Kali cut the log in two.’ (Crowley 2002:229, interlinear gloss added)

This sentence becomes ungrammatical if *wud* ‘log’ intervenes between the two verbs and they are thus not adjacent.

- (6) **Kali i katem wud spletem* Bislama

Pacific Creoles thus add an important aspect to the study of SVCs in Creole languages: next to non-adjacent serial verb constructions, as found in the Atlantic, creole languages can also show adjacent constructions. Before turning to the Indian Ocean and Sri Lanka, it is worthwhile to take a look at the general typology of serial verb constructions found in the world’s languages.

Serial verbs are not only found in Creoles, but also in many languages which are not normally counted among the Creole Languages, e.g. many languages of (South) East Asia, Africa or South America (for an overview and references, see Durie 1997). The constructions found in West African languages have been studied extensively by Creolists (McWhorter 1992, Lord 1993, Mufwene 1993, Lefebvre 1998), as an obvious choice because of demographic relations. This has been complemented to a certain degree by data from Chinese varieties (e.g. Sebba 1987, Lord 1993). Research on serial verb constructions in South America, South Africa, South (East) Asia or Papua New Guinea have only had limited impact on the field of creolistics (Durie 1997, Crowley 2002). It appears that two parallel and complementary research traditions exist with little exchange between the two communities (Sebba 1987). As an illustration, the two comparative studies on Serial Verbs (Sebba 1987, Aikhenvald & Dixon 2006) do not have one single language in common, and even areally, they seem to cover different parts of the globe with Sebba focussing on West Africa and the Caribbean while the volume edited by Aikhenvald & Dixon covers other parts of the world.

In her recent survey, Aikhenvald (2006) discusses some parameters which can be used to establish a typology of serial verb constructions. These can be separated into defining properties and distinguishing properties. Defining properties are essential for every SVC. These are given below with an indication of the page in the source between brackets.

defining properties:

1. All the verbs must belong to a single predicate [4]
2. Only monoclausal constructions can count as SVC [6]
3. There must not be any intonation breaks [7]
4. The verbs must share TAM and polarity values [8]
5. The construction must not express more than one event [10]
6. The verbs must share at least one argument [12]

A construction satisfying all the criteria mentioned above is a serial verb construction. Next to their defining properties, serial verb constructions differ with regard to certain formal properties. These are listed next.

differentiating properties:

7. Are the verbs contiguous? [37]
8. Are we dealing with one or more phonological words? [37]
9. Are we dealing with one or more morphological words? [37]
10. Do we find cross-referencing of arguments on zero, one, or several verbs? [39]

These criteria will be explained in more detail below. For the discussion of the multi-verb constructions, criterion 10) is not relevant since cross-referencing of arguments on verbs (agreement) is never found in Sri Lanka Malay. But another distinction is important in Sri Lanka Malay, which is the final one, given below. This criterion is also mentioned by Aikhenvald (2006), but in a different section of her paper.

11. Is the relation between the verbs symmetric [30]?

Surveying a large number of areally and genetically diverse languages, Aikhenvald observes that SVCs differ widely in these languages. No archetypical model for SVCs can be found. Aikhenvald thus argues against earlier claims of the unified structure of SVCs in the languages of the world, which would be the result of a Serial Verb Parameter (e.g. Stewart 2001). Instead of being a fixed model, verb serialization is rather a technique which different languages employ, and which can be used in different ways, leading to diverging results (also see Sebba 1987, Lord 1993, Plag 1993, Crowley 2002, van Staden & Reesink 2008). Verb serialization is therefore not a unitary and monolithic phenomenon, but rather a cluster of related strategies which have in common that two or more verbs are used to form only one predicate. This is also what we found above in the brief survey of Atlantic and Pacific Creoles.

Turning to South Asia, we find that many languages also make use of constructions involving more than one verb, but they do not always fit within the definitions provided by either the Creolist or the general typological literature. This has to do with various markers of subordination like infinitives or participles, which will be discussed in more detail below. Probably as a consequence of the definition of Serial Verbs, these constructions have by and large been ignored by both the Creolist and the general typological literature, but they have their own theoretical debates (Hook 1974, Steever

1988, Abbi & Gopalakrishnan 1991, Butt 2003, Jayaseelan 2005), which are isolated from the other two traditions. Observing the particularity of the South Asian structures, Butt (2003) claims that the South Asian Constructions should not be subsumed under the rubric of serial verbs. To avoid possible confusion, I will use ‘Multi-Verb-Construction’ (MVC) as a general pretheoretical cover term for any construction with more than one verb, and ‘Serial Verb Construction’ as a theoretical term with the precise definition as per Aikhenvald. While in many South Asian languages, none of the MVCs would meet the criteria for SVCs, in Sri Lanka Malay, most of the MVCs are actually also SVCs.

Many South Asian Multi-Verb Constructions actually involve a participle and an inflected verb, or an infinitive and an inflected verb. This means that they violate criterion 2 (monoclausality) above, and are not serial verb constructions in the strict sense. We will still discuss them in this paper because we need the South Asian data as a backdrop for the development of the constructions we find in Sri Lanka Malay. South Asian Multi-Verb-Constructions usually involve only two verbs, which are adjacent and occur in clause final position. Full TAM-inflection is typically found only on the final verb, while the preceding verb is non-finite, normally a participle or an infinitive. The following example illustrates this pattern for a participle.

- (7) *enna muTivu ceytu viT-T-ay* TAMIL
 what conclusion do.PTCPL LEAVE-PAST-2s
 ‘What conclusion have you come to?’ (Fedson 1993:65)

We see that the first verb of the two-word sequence *ceytu viTTay* is in the participle form (indicated by *-u*) and does not carry tense or person affixes, while the second verb *viTTay* is fully finite and carries both indication of tense and person. The participle form is an indicator of the subordinate status of the first verb; as a consequence, this construction fails the criterion of monoclausality mentioned above. While on morphological grounds the last verb can be argued to be the head, it is semantically bleached and only serves to modulate (Butt 2003) the meaning of the first verb, which retains its full semantics. This modulation conveyed by *viTTay* is paraphrased by Fedson (1993:65) as follows: “The question is rhetorical; it does not ask for information from the addressee, but contradicts, denies, or belittles an overt claim or covert implication that the addressee had come to a conclusion, or made a decision.”

The final bleached verb is typically a member of a small set of verbs, which include GIVE, TAKE, LEAVE, SIT, KEEP, FALL, STRIKE, and some others (Hook 1974, Abbi & Gopalakrishnan 1991, Abbi 1994). These verbs have received a number of different names by different authors: vector verb (Hook 1974), explicator (compound) verb (Abbi & Gopalakrishnan 1991, Abbi 1994), and light verb (Butt 2003). For an overview of relevant theoretical discussion see Butt (2003). For Sri Lanka Malay, this form has been called aspectual auxiliary (Smith & Paaauw 2006) and vector verb (Nordhoff 2009). In the present paper, I will stick to the latter term.

3 Multi-verb-constructions in Sri Lanka Malay

In this section I will present four different types of multi-verb-constructions in Sri Lanka Malay. The first three types meet Aikhenvald’s criteria and are genuine Serial Verb Constructions, while the fourth one fails them and can thus not be regarded as a serial verb construction in the way defined in this paper. I will first spell out the

criteria to characterize the different constructions and then discuss the four different types that are found in Sri Lanka Malay.

3.1 Criteria

In surveying the four types of Multi-Verb-Constructions we find in SLM, I use the following criteria. The criteria are roughly ordered from phonology over morphology and syntax to semantics:

- number of phonological words ω
- number of TAM-markings
- number of unbleached (full) verbs
- number of bleached verbs
- contiguity
- position of the bleached verb
- position of the unbleached verb(s)
- number of events

These criteria shall briefly be explained.

3.1.1 Phonological words

As observed by Smith et al. (2004), SLM phonological words may at most have one long vowel. This long vowel is not mandatory: words with only short vowels are also permitted (Apoussidou & Nordhoff 2008). Long vowels can only be found in open penultimate syllables (Tapovanaye 1995).³ These facts can be used to test certain sequences for the number of phonological words they span. The following cases can be distinguished:

- two long vowels as in *ciina oorang* ‘China-man’ → two phonological words ω
- long vowel in antepenultimate position or earlier as in *rooja kumbang* ‘rose flower’ → two phonological words ω
- only closed syllables as in *kampong pensen* ‘pensioner’s quarters’ → ambiguous as to number of phonological words.
- short vowel in open penultimate of the first part of the sequence as in *(kaca maatha) ω* ‘mirror’+‘eye’=‘spectacles’ → one phonological word. Alternative parsing into two words would yield the ungrammatical **(kaaca) ω (maatha) ω* with two long vowels.

³This has been explained as a consequence of stress by Smith et al. (2004). Apoussidou & Nordhoff (2008) argue against this position based on phonetic analyses which show no evidence for syllable prominence. They explain the long vowel by a bimoraic foot requirement and extrametricality of the final syllable instead.

3.1.2 Number of TAM-markings

SLM has a number of prefixes expressing tense, aspect and mood, such as *arà-* ‘NON.PAST’, *su-* ‘PAST’, *anà-* ‘PAST’, *anthi-* ‘IRR’, *asà-* ‘CONJUNCTIVE PARTICIPLE’, *mà-* ‘INF’. The number of these prefixes in the multi-verb-construction is counted for this criterion.

3.1.3 Number of bleached verbs

Some serial verb constructions make use of so called ‘light verbs’, which are semantically bleached. This means that they do not contribute to the construction with their full lexical meaning. An example would be *duuduk* ‘sit’ and *puukul* ‘hit’ in example (8), which are used to give a progressive (*duuduk*) and violentive⁴ (*puukul*) interpretation to an action, even if no actual sitting or hitting takes place. *Duuduk* and *puukul* in these cases are bleached verbs. The existence and quantity of bleached verbs found in a SVC is retrieved for this criterion.

- (8) *Ithu=kapang ithu moonyeth pada=le [anà-maayeng duuduk thoppi]*
DIST=when DIST monkey PL=ADDIT PAST-play sit hat
pada=dering inni oorang=nang su-bale-king puukul. SLM
PL=ABL PROX man=DAT PAST-return-CAUS hit
‘Then the monkeys violently threw back the hats with which they had been playing.’ (K070000wrt01)⁵

3.1.4 Number of unbleached verbs

The number of all unbleached verbs is equal to the number of all verbs minus the number of bleached verbs. In example (8), the verbs *maayeng* ‘play’ and *baleking* ‘make return’ contribute to the meaning of the sentence with their unaltered and unbleached lexical meaning. Each of the two pairs of verbs in (8) thus consists of an unbleached verb followed by a bleached verb.

3.1.5 Contiguity

This criterion checks whether the verbs in the constructions are separated by one or more intervening arguments. If the two verbs in a construction are separable, we are dealing with non-adjacent serialization, whereas we are dealing with adjacent or nuclear serialization if no NP can intervene between the two verbs (Foley & Olson 1985, Crowley 2002).⁶

This difference in contiguity of the verbs has been illustrated above with examples from Bislama repeated here for convenience. The first construction is a non-adjacent serialization, where the two verbs are separated by an NP (9), while the second one is adjacent serialization, where the verbs must not be separated by an NP (10).

⁴I am not aware of any established technical term for ‘violent execution’, and I would be grateful for suggestions.

⁵All Sri Lanka Malay examples are drawn from my corpus and can be accessed at http://corpus1.mpi.nl/ds/imdi_browser. The code after the translation indicates the name of the file in the corpus.

⁶Non-adjacent serialization is equivalent to the “core serialization” of the mentioned authors.

- (9) a. *bae mi pulum rop i kam* Bislama
 FUT 1s pull-TRANS rope 3s come
 ‘I will pull the rope here.’ (Crowley 2002:229, interlinear gloss added)
- b. **bae mi pulum kam rop* Bislama
 FUT 1s pull-TRANS come rope
- (10) a. *Kali i katem splitem wud* Bislama
 Kali I cut-TRANS split-TRANS wood
 ‘Kali cut the log in two.’ (Crowley 2002:229, interlinear gloss added)
- b. **Kali i katem wud spletem* Bislama

3.1.6 Position of the bleached and the unbleached verb

Asymmetric SVCs are SVCs which consist of a full verb and a second verb drawn from a small class, which is typically semantically bleached (cf. example (7) and following discussion). There is one verb which contributes more to the semantics than the other one, which merely modifies the meaning of the first one (Butt 2003). In such combinations, the bleached verb can be either on the left side or the right side, and the unbleached verb then occupies the other position. Serial verb constructions can vary with regard to the position of the bleached and the unbleached verb. This criterion can only be applied in a meaningful way to asymmetric serial verb constructions. In symmetric serial verb constructions, both positions are filled by unbleached verbs.

3.1.7 Number of events

This criterion counts the number of events encoded in the multi-verb-constructions. A sequence like *veni, vidi, vici* for instance encodes three conceptually distinct events, while the sequence *eat+take=swallow* only encodes one (cf. Givón 1991, Durie 1997). A recent cross-typological discussion of what counts as an event can be found in Ameka et al. (2007).

3.2 Compound Verbs

The first type of Multi-Verb-Constructions found in SLM is a combination of the verb *kaasi* ‘give’ with another verb, typically *thaau* ‘know’ or *kaaving* ‘marry’. An example is given in (11).

- (11) *Badulla Kandy Matale samma association=nang masà-kasi-thaau.* SLM
 Badulla Kandy Matale all association=DAT must-give-know
 ‘Badulla, Kandy, Matale, we must inform all other associations.’ (K060116nar06)

This type is characterized by the verbs being parsed into only one phonological word. This can be seen from the absence of a long vowel in *kasi*, which would be obligatory if *kasi* was parsed into a phonological word of its own. Furthermore, we see that there is only one TAM-prefix, *masà-*. *Thaau* ‘know’ does not appear to be a bleached verb in this construction. As for the status of *kasi* ‘give’, two competing analyses are possible: either we treat *kasi* as lexical and consider that the act of giving

conveyed corresponds to the lexical meaning of this verb. Or, as an alternative analysis, one could treat *kasi* in this case as a bleached verb operating on valency, which increases the valency of monovalent *thaau* ‘know’ to bivalent *kasithaau* ‘inform’. In this paper, I remain neutral as to which analysis is to be preferred. The other criteria discussed suffice to tell this construction apart from the other ones discussed below.

The two verbs are contiguous. There is no material intervening between *kasi* and *thaau*. The whole construction finally encodes only one event, informing. The findings are presented in the table below.

	# ω	# TAM	# unbleached V	# bleached verbs	contiguous?	position of bleached verb	position of unbleached verb	# events
Compound Verb	1	1	2(1)	0(1)	Y	(left)	(left and) right	1

Table 1: Properties of Sri Lanka Malay Compound Verbs. ‘ ω ’ encodes the number of phonological verbs. ‘TAM’ indicates how many TAM-prefixes can be found in the construction. ‘Unbleached V’ and ‘bleached V’ refer to the quantities of these verbs in the constructions. ‘Cont?’ stands for contiguity. The position of the (un)bleached verb is treated in the next two columns. The last column tracks the number of events expressed by the Construction.

3.3 Vector Verb constructions

The second multi-verb-construction we find in SLM is the combination of an arbitrary verb with a second verb drawn from a closed class of so-called vector verbs, which modifies the main verb (Nordhoff (2009) following Hook (1974) and subsequent authors for similar constructions in Hindi). These comprise *duuduk* ‘sit’ (=progressive), *simpang* ‘keep’ (=continuative), *ambel* ‘take’ (=inchoative/=self-benefactive),⁷ *kaasi* ‘give’ (=alterbenefactive), *puukul* ‘hit’ (=violative), *thaaro* ‘put’ (=hostilitive).

The list above shows that these vector verbs convey aspectual information, but also attitudinal information, and diathesis. Combinations of unbleached verbs and vector verbs are parsed into two phonological words. This is shown in the following two examples. We see that the first verb has a long vowel, which we would not expect if it was parsed into the same phonological word with the final verb. This contrasts with *kasi*- in the Compound Verbs above, which has a short vowel in the same position.

- (12) British government Malaysia Indonesia ini nigiri pada samma
British government Malaysia Indonesia PROX country PL all
anà-*peegang ambel*. SLM
PAST-catch take.
‘The British government captured all these countries.’ (K051213nar06)

⁷Slomanson (2008) describes another use of *ambel* prevalent on the South Coast, where it indicates progressive. He argues that this form derives from **sambil* ‘while’, but through regular sound changes ended up to be homonymous with *ambel*, so that the two are no longer distinguished. It appears that this Southern use of *ambel* is not found in the Upcountry. The relations between the Southern *ambel* and the Upcountry *ambel* are unclear and need further research. In any case, both the Southern type described by Slomanson and the Upcountry type described here qualify as a Vector Verb construction.

- (13) *Kanabisan=ka=jo duva oorang=le anà-thaau ambel.* SLM
 last=LOC=EMPH two man=ADDIT PAST-know take
 ‘Finally the two women⁸ understood.’ (K070000wrt05a)

For the vector verb serializations, it is clear that we are dealing with only one unbleached verb; the second verb is drawn from a closed class of semantically bleached verbs. In the examples above, *ambel* ‘take’ does not have its literal meaning of seizure, but rather encodes self-benefactive (12) and inchoative (13). One feature the vector verb serializations share with the compound verbs is the contiguity of the two verbs. In neither of these constructions is there intervening material. Vector verb serializations finally encode only one event. In the examples above, there is one event of capture (12)/understanding (13). It is not the case that we would be told about an event of capturing followed by an event of taking or about an event of understanding followed by an event of taking. These findings are again summarized in the table below.

	# ω	# TAM	# unbleached V	# bleached verbs	contiguous?	position of bleached verb	position of unbleached verb	# events
Vector Verb Serialization	2	1	1	1	Y	right	left	1

Table 2: Properties of Sri Lanka Malay Vector Verb Serialization

3.4 Motion Verb Serialization

The third construction is Motion Verb Serialization. These are also parsed into two phonological words, as is clear from the vowel lengthening patterns, but both verbs contribute with their full semantics. None of the component verbs is bleached. This is illustrated in the following two examples.

- (14) *Hathu haari, hathu oorang thoppi mà-juval=nang kampong=dering*
 INDEF day INDEF man hat INF-sell=DAT village=ABL
kampong=nang su-jaalang pii. SLM
 village=DAT PAST-walk go
 ‘One day, a man went and walked from village to village to sell hats.’ (K070000wrt01)
- (15) *Aanak su-laari kluuling.* SLM
 child PAST-run roam
 ‘The child went astray.’ (K061019sng01)

Motion Verb Serializations encode movement. The first verb tends to encode manner —*jaalang* ‘walking’ in (14), *laari* ‘running’ in (15)—, while the second verb encodes path⁹ —itive in (14) with *pii* ‘go’, circular in (15) with *kluuling* ‘roam’.¹⁰ Both verbs contribute with their full meaning (manner and path, respectively); there is no

⁸While *oorang* ‘man’ is underspecified for sex, as is English *man*, in the source narrative the word clearly refers to female humans forcing the translation as *women*.

⁹I would like to thank Mary Chambers for pointing this out to me. There is of course a vast literature on the encoding of manner and path, e.g. Talmy (1985) or Givón (1991).

¹⁰While the Std. Malay cognate *keliling* ‘around’ is an adverb, *kluuling* has verbal properties in SLM.

bleached verb.¹¹ As in the other constructions, the verbs are contiguous. There is no bleached verb to be discerned in the construction.¹² The movement expressed by Motion Verb Serialization finally is only one event. The final table sums up these facts.

	# ω	# TAM	# unbleached V	# bleached verbs	contiguous?	position of bleached verb	position of unbleached verb	# events
Full Verb Serialization	2	1	2	0	Y	n/a	left and right	1

Table 3: Properties of Sri Lanka Malay Motion Verb Serialization

3.5 Clause chains

The fourth construction I will discuss is not a serial verb construction in the narrow sense. Yet it serves to delimit the domain of serial verb constructions proper. In this construction, a number of non-finite clauses are chained and put before a final finite clause. The non-final clauses are marked with the conjunctive participle prefix *asà-*, while the final clause can have any tense marking, e.g the past marker *su-*.¹³ This pattern is illustrated in (16).

- (16) a. *Oorang pada asà-pirrang*, SLM
 man PL CP-wage.war
 ‘After having waged war’
 b. *derang=nang asà-banthu*,
 3pl=DAT CP-help
 ‘and after having helped them’
 c. *siini=jo su-ciiñggal*.
 here=EMPH PAST-settle
 ‘the people settled down right here.’ (K051222nar03)

The verbs in this construction are obviously parsed into different phonological words and have more than one TAM-marking. All verbs are full verbs; none of the verbs is bleached. In distinction to the three other types already discussed, the verbs in clause chains are not contiguous. Finally, we are not dealing with a unitary monolithic event but rather with a multitude of events. In (16) for instance, we are dealing with

¹¹Hugo Cardoso points out that one could possibly argue that the second verb comes from a closed class. It is certainly true that only a limited number of verbs are found there, most typically *pii* ‘go’ and *dhaathang* ‘come’. The possibility of using *kluuling* ‘roam’, which is a very infrequent verb, suggests that the constraint is semantic (anything expressing a path) rather than morphological (any member of class X).

¹²It is true that both ‘go’ and ‘come’ do not have very elaborate semantics, but what it is important is the existence of a bleached status as compared to the lexical use. The meaning of *pii* ‘go’ is the same whether it is used as a single verb or in a Motion Verb Serialization, so that we cannot speak of a bleached status here.

¹³Clause chains represent an analytical problem as to their syntactic analysis. The clauses in (16) are not coordinate in the strict sense, since there is an asymmetric relation between the first two, which are non-finite, and the last one, which is finite. Their syntactic status is thus different, which is not what we expect under coordination. They are not clear instances of subordination either, since they are semantically independent from the last clause. These structures are found frequently in South Asia, Papua New Guinea, and other parts of the world, and Van Valin & LaPolla (1997) have coined the term ‘cosubordination’ to refer to them. In the context of this paper, it is sufficient to note that we are dealing with a multiclausal construction, which can by definition not be a SVC.

an event of fighting, followed by an event of helping, followed by an event of settling. These properties are summarized in below.

	# ω	# TAM	# unbleached V	# bleached verbs	contiguous?	position of bleached verb	position of unbleached verb	# events
Clause Chain	2+	1+n	2+	0	N	n/a	n/a	2+

Table 4: Summary of Sri Lanka Malay Clause Chains

3.6 Summary

The different properties of the constructions discussed are summarized in the following table.

	# ω	# TAM	# unbleached V	# bleached verbs	contiguous?	position of bleached verb	position of unbleached verb	# events
Compound Verb	1	1	2(1)	0(1)	Y	(left)	(left and) right	1
Vector Verb S	2	1	1	1	Y	right	left	1
Motion Verb S	2	1	2	0	Y	n/a	left and right	1
Clause Chain	2+	1+n	2+	0	N	n/a	n/a	2+

Table 5: Summary of Sri Lanka Malay Multi Verb Constructions

We see that the property which singles out Compound Verbs against the other constructions is the phonological criterion: Compound Verbs are parsed into only one phonological word, while all the other constructions span more than one phonological word. What distinguishes Vector Verbs from the remaining constructions is the position of the bleached verb on the left side. Motion Verb Serialization is characterized by the equal status of both component verbs, which co-head the construction. Clause chains finally differ in a number of domains from the other types. They encode more events, have more TAM-marking, more full verbs and are not contiguous, in distinction to the constructions mentioned above.

Multi-Verb-Constructions in SLM are internally diverse. There is not the one SLM Serial Verb Construction, but rather a number of different constructions, which share some defining properties while differing in others. The morphosyntactic device of verb serialization is thus employed in a number of different ways. While it could actually be expected that natural languages employ verb serialization in more than one way, for a contact language like Sri Lanka Malay it can be interesting to investigate parallels and possible origins in the languages which have had an influence on the development of this language. This is what I will do in the following section.

4 Origins of the SLM Multi-Verb-Constructions

4.1 Historical background

Sri Lanka Malay is the language of the ethnic group of Malays in Sri Lanka. These are the descendents of immigrants (soldiers, exiles, convicts, and slaves) brought between 1650 and 1850 by the colonial powers of the Dutch and the British (Hussainmiya 1987, 1990, Bichsel-Stettler 1989). During the three and a half centuries of their stay on the island, the language has changed its grammar dramatically (Adelaar 1991) and become a member of the Sri Lankan sprachbund (Bakker 2006). The two major languages spoken in Sri Lanka (Sinhala and Tamil) have both been argued to have exerted a certain influence on the development of Sri Lanka Malay. Whether the contribution of Tamil is more essential (Smith et al. 2004, Smith & Paauw 2006) or whether Sinhala has also had an impact (De Silva Jayasuriya 2002, Ansaldi 2005, 2008) is still a subject of debate. There is considerably disagreement about the timing and relative import of influences from Tamil and Sinhala, which can not be reviewed here in detail, but see Nordhoff (2009) for discussion of three competing analyses. The issue is complicated by the fact that Sinhala and Tamil show a great degree of typological and grammatical overlap (Smith 2003), so that often both languages offer good models for a SLM construction. In this paper I will follow Nordhoff (2009), who analyzes arguments brought forward by both sides and concludes that the amount and quality of linguistic and sociohistorical evidence provided so far do not allow to make a call. As a consequence, I do not rule out influence from either language and present parallels with both Sinhala and Tamil. If one of the two is discarded by future research, the data provided for the other one will still suffice to make the point. While Sri Lanka Malay has undergone heavy influence from at least one local language, there are parts of its grammar which have not been affected and are of clear Indonesian origin (Slomanson 2006). In the following, I will discuss multi-verb-constructions of Sinhala, Tamil and some Indonesian varieties of Malay which are parallel in structure with what we find in SLM. To avoid arbitrary selection of features from Indonesian languages ('cafeteria principle'), I add information about migration patterns where appropriate to substantiate the claims.¹⁴

4.2 Origins of the Compound Verbs

The origin of the compound verbs is clearly Malay. The use of precisely the construction mentioned above (*kasi+thaau* 'give'+ 'know'= 'inform') is widespread in Indonesian varieties (David Gil, Scott Paauw p.c., also confirmed by a google search). It is therefore safe to assume that this construction was already brought by the first immigrants. One could also argue that it had already lexicalized back in Indonesia. This analysis is supported by the fact that the pattern *kasi+V* does not seem to be very productive in at least Sri Lanka.

An example of the use of the cognate of *kasithaau* in an Indonesian variety (North Moluccan Malay) is given in (17). The Northern Moluccas were one of the main places from where the Dutch recruited the soldiers for Sri Lanka (Hussainmiya 1990).

- (17) *Tərus si paitua ini tərus kasi tau bilang sama si laki itu* NMM
then ADD old.man DEM directly AUX know say to ADD man DEM
'Then the old man told that man straightaway.' (Voorhoeve 1983:9, Text IV)

¹⁴The parallels presented here are taken to be suggestive of a probable historical scenario; it can of course never be ruled out that the features in question are autonomous developments independent of the structures found in the other varieties considered here.

This type of verb serialization is also found in Papia Kristang, another contact language with Malay substrate (Baxter 1988:214f).

4.3 Origins of the Vector Verb constructions

The vector verb serialization has clear parallels in Tamil (Lehmann 1989, Schiffman 1999), and possibly in Sinhala.¹⁵ The following example is from Smith & Paauw (2006) and shows the parallel structure.

- (18) *ziharath-yang su- picakan thaaro SLM*
ziyaratt-e oḍe cc i poot -t aanga TAMIL
 shrine-ACC PAST- break PAST PPL put PAST AGR
 ‘They tore down the shrine.’ (Smith & Paauw 2006:171)¹⁶

While the Tamil example has much more elaborate morphology, the choice and order of verbs still suggests Lankan influence here. As for Indonesian varieties of Malay, David Gil (p.c.) informs me that vector verbs are found in some Sumatran varieties. Sumatra did not send a significant number of immigrants to Sri Lanka, so that this influence is rendered unlikely by demography. Another factor which speaks in favor of Lankan influence is the set of verbs used as vector verbs. This comprises SIT, GIVE, TAKE, PUT, STRIKE, KEEP and HIT. This set shows very big overlap with the vector verbs typically found in Indian languages as compiled by Abbi & Gopalakrishnan (1991) and Abbi (1994).

4.4 Origin of Motion Verb Serialization

Motion Verb Serialization does not have a clear counterpart in Tamil or Sinhala. However, in Malay varieties of North Molucca, from where many soldiers were recruited to serve in Sri Lanka (Hussainmiya 1990, Adelaar 1991, Paauw 2004), we find a similar pattern. The following two examples show similar sentences in SLM (19) and North Moluccan Malay (20). Note that the order is manner-path in SLM but path-manner in North Moluccan Malay (NMM), in line with the general reversal of phrase structure we observe in SLM as compared to other varieties of Malay.

- (19) *See=yang asà-caari dhaathang SLM*
 1s=ACC CP-search come
 ‘He came in search of me.’ (K051213nar06)
- (20) *Bagaimana cara dia akan pi cari dia pe tamang? NMM*
 how method 3s FUT go search.for 3s poss friend
 ‘How will he look for his friend?’ (Paauw 2008:3.73)

The separate expression of manner and path is a quite common strategy in the languages of the world, so that this construction might very well also be an independent development, possibly driven by universal cognitive forces (Talmy 1985). Still it is interesting to note that Papia Kristang (a Portuguese lexifier creole in Malaysia) also shows this kind of serial construction (Baxter 1988:212), showing that languages with input from Malay do in fact develop this construction.

¹⁵The literature on vector verbs in Sinhala is quite limited, but preliminary elicitation suggests that the Tamil pattern is also found in Sinhala. Some rudimentary information can be found in Chater (1815).

¹⁶The SLM sentence is slightly modified to agree with the orthography used in the other examples. After consultation with native speakers, the form of the case marker after *ziharath* was modified as well in order to avoid ungrammaticality.

4.5 Origin of clause chains

Clause chains are a clear influence from the local languages. The following example illustrates the parallel structures we find in SLM, Sinhala, and Tamil.

- (21) *Kumaar siini asdhaatang, see-yang supanggal* SLM
Kumaara mehe ävvila, ma-va kata.käruvaa SINHALA
Kumaar ingee vandu, enn-ai kuuppittaan TAMIL
Kumaar here CP.come 1s-ACC called
'Kumaar came here and called me.' (based on Lehmann 1989:266)

In South East Asia, clause chains are only found in Papuan varieties (Paauw 2008). Papuans have not had any influence on Sri Lanka Malay, so that we can exclude Indonesian influence here.

5 Discussion

I have shown above that there are different types of multi-verb-constructions in Sri Lanka Malay. These include verbal compounds, serialization of vector verbs and motion verbs, and clause chains. The domain of verb serialization is internally diverse and not a unitary phenomenon, as already observed by Sebba (1987), Baker (1989), Zwicky (1990), Seuren (1991), Plag (1993), Durie (1997), and Aikhenvald (2006) in general.

Comparing the Serial Verb Constructions we find in Sri Lanka Malay with Atlantic and Pacific Creoles, an interesting picture emerges: The Atlantic Creoles have mostly Core Serialization, the Pacific Creoles have both Core Serialization and Nuclear Serialization, and Sri Lanka Malay has only Nuclear Serialization. Foley & Olson (1985) observe that Nuclear Serialization is more common among verb-final languages. Given that the input languages for the Atlantic Creoles did normally not have verb-final dominant word order, the predominance of core serialization is expected in this area. Conversely, Sri Lanka Malay is a verb-final language, where the concomitant type of nuclear serialization dominates.

In the field of South Asian studies, it is notable that Sri Lanka Malay has copied the lexical patterns found in the adstrates in what concerns vector verbs (TAKE, GIVE, SIT, PUT, etc), but has shun the grammatical marking of participle or infinitive. The relevant morphological devices are available in Sri Lanka Malay (participle *asà-* and infinitive *mà-*), but were not drawn upon when emulating the Lankan structures. While the general South Asian vector verb model does not conform to the definition of serial verbs because of these subordination markers, in Sri Lanka Malay Serial Verb Constructions these markers are not found and, as a consequence, the SLM construction does comply with Aikhenvald's definition of serial verbs. This adds an interesting facet to the study of South Asian type vector verbs which will be explored in future research.

The different types of multi-verb-constructions we find in Sri Lanka Malay have parallels in the local languages (Vector Verb and Clause Chain), while others (Compound Verb and Motion Verb Serialization) are shared with other Malay varieties, especially North Moluccan. SLM is thus not a clear offshoot of any one side of the Bay of Bengal, but rather a product of influences from both Indonesia and Sri Lanka, as already shown by Slomanson (2006). It has been questioned whether the terms of substrate and superstrate can be applied in a meaningful way to Sri Lanka Malay (Ansaldò

2008, Nordhoff 2009), but regardless of the repartition of the terms ‘substrate’ and ‘superstrate’ on the languages Malay, Sinhala, and Tamil, it is clear that neither substratism nor superstratism can explain the whole range of constructions. As far as Serial Verbs are concerned, it seems fair to say that substrate and superstrate forces have both had an impact. This was possibly filtered by universal communicative and cognitive preferences, which can explain the dropping of subordination markers. Recent works have argued for the joint influence of these factors (e.g. Sankoff 1994, Siegel 1998, Meyerhoff 2008), and this triple interplay is indeed also what we find in Sri Lanka Malay.

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