**Multi-Verb Constructions in Sri Lanka Malay**[1]

**Abstract**

This paper investigates serial verbs and related constructions in Sri Lanka Malay and shows that at least four types have to be distinguished (Motion Verb Serialization, Vector Verb Serialization, Compound Verbs, Clause Chains). The constructions found are quite different from those found in 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; one is of Indonesian origin, and one is mixed. 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). This recombination of features can only be explained with an account which acknowledges the possibility of grammatical contributions from all input languages, whether substrate, superstrate, or any other.

**Keywords**: Sri Lanka Malay; Sinhala; Tamil; Indonesian; serial verb constructions; clause chains; vector verbs; substrate reinforcement; metatypy.

## 1 Introduction

Serial verb constructions form an important part of Creole Studies and General Linguistics alike. Many Creoles in the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean as well as some in the Pacific Ocean share similar structures of verb serialization; these structures have led scholars to suspect a systematic link between those languages, based on some universal properties of language (Bickerton 1981). In this paper I investigate serial verb constructions and related

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phenomena in a language which has as of yet only received limited treatment in the domain of verb serialization: Sri Lanka Malay. Sri Lanka Malay is of particular interest in that it has no significant European or African input in its grammar or lexicon. The lexicon is mainly Malay/Javanese, while the grammar is solidly Dravidian.[2] This makes the language a good testing ground for theories in the domain of language contact developed elsewhere, for example with regard to creole formation.

The contact languages of the Indian subcontinent have received less attention in the field of language contact studies than their Atlantic and Pacific counterparts (but see Baxter 2009). Given the influence of neighbouring South Asian languages, they can be expected to show some structures not found in the Atlantic or Pacific Creoles. 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.[3] 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. These are most notably the Atlantic and the Pacific Creoles.

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

2Whether this Dravidian structure has been brought about by the Dravidian language Tamil or the Indo-Aryan language Sinhala, which has many Dravidian structures, or both Tamil and Sinhala, is still a topic of debate (De Silva Jayasuriya 2002, Smith & Paauw 2006, Ansaldo 2008, Nordhoff 2009).

3The genesis of Sri Lanka Malay is one of the most fascinating topics related to the study of this language, but it is beyond the scope of this paper.

4); different theories of the genesis of serial verb constructions are evaluated in Section 5. I present my conclusion and the discussion of the findings in the Creolist and South Asianist contexts in Section 6.

## 2 Historical background

Sri Lanka Malay is the language of the ethnic group of Malays in Sri Lanka. These are the descendants of immigrants (soldiers, exiles, convicts, and slaves) brought between 1650 and 1850 by the Dutch and British colonial powers (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 has 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, Ansaldo 2008) is still a subject of debate. There is considerable disagreement about the timing and relative import of influences from Tamil and Sinhala; this 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), where I analyze arguments brought forward by both sides and conclude that the amount and quality of linguistic and socio-historical evidence provided so far do not allow a clear conclusion. 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.[4]

Figure 1 gives an overview of the origin of the Malay immigrants during Dutch rule (above) and British rule (below). We see that during Dutch rule, the bulk of the immigrants came over from Batavia (today Jakarta) where they were hired in the local *kampongs*. However, these soldiers were for the most part not originally from Batavia but had only recently arrived there from other parts of the archipelago (Hussainmiya 1987, 1990, Bichsel-Stettler 1989, Adelaar 1991, Paauw 2004, Nordhoff 2009). The Moluccas were a particularly important source of military personnel. There is consensus that the Batavian and Moluccan varieties of Low Malay have had the biggest influence on the grammar of Sri Lanka Malay,[5] mirroring demographical patterns. Borneo, Sumatra and Papua, to name some of the remaining larger islands, were not significant sources for recruits and hence did not exert any discernible influence on the demography or dialect of the soldiers who were to be sent to Ceylon. The Malaysian peninsula was not important either as far as Dutch rule was concerned.

4The 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.

5The relative importance of these two major varieties is however less established (Adelaar 1991, Paauw 2004).

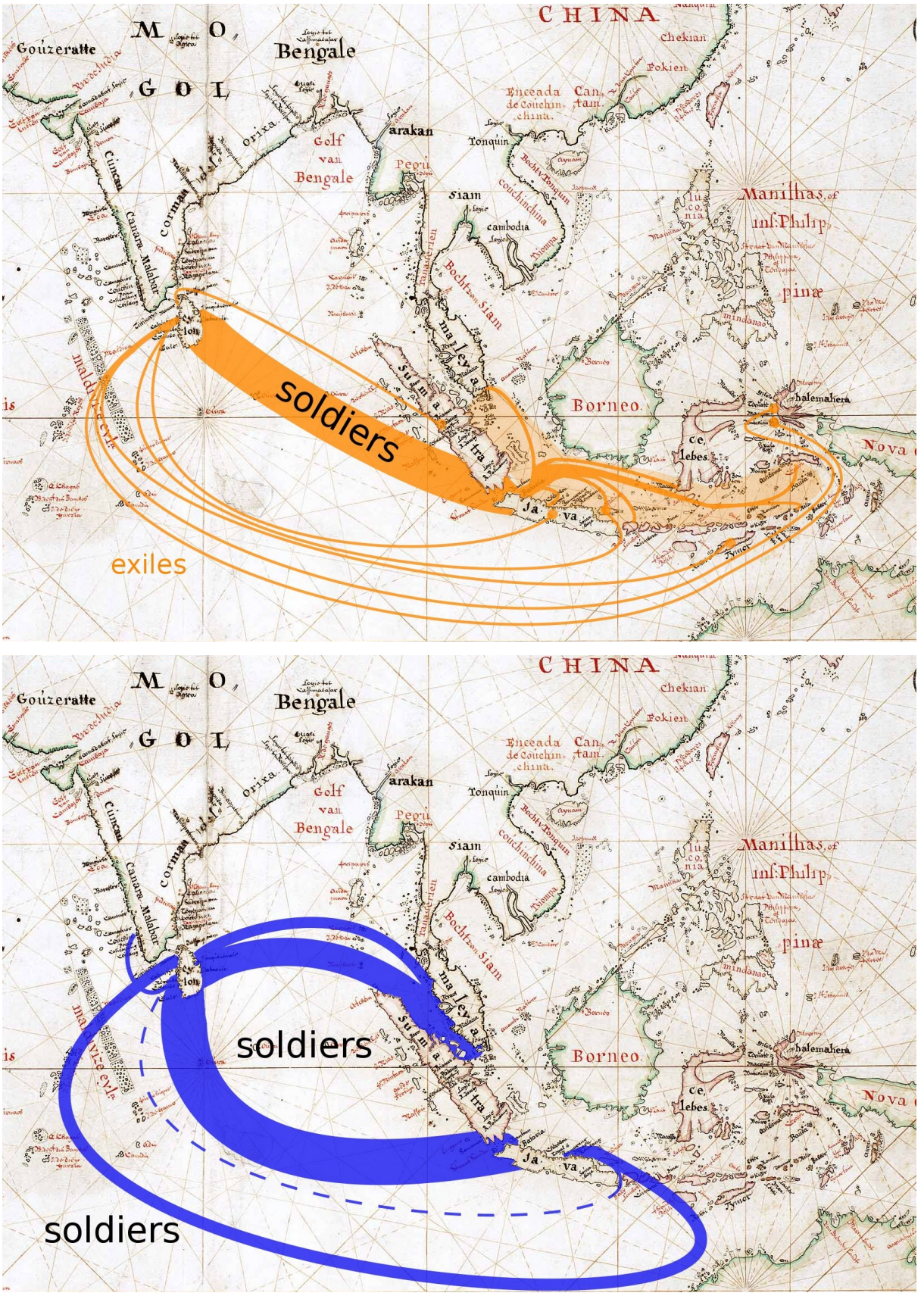


Figure 1: Migration patterns during rule by the Dutch (above) and the British (below) (Nordhoff 2009).

This changed when the British took over. After continuing recruiting in Batavia for some time, they shifted their recruiting center to Penang and later Malacca on the peninsula for political reasons. More ethnic Malays from the mainland came to Sri Lanka, but their language failed to have a significant impact on the formation of Sri Lanka Malay; this is one of the reasons for the assumption that the language had already stabilized when they arrived, in line with the 'Founder Principle' (Mufwene 1996). Even during British times, no recruitment from Sumatra, Borneo, or Papua took place. When discussing the possible origin of multi-verb constructions, the places with relevant dialects are therefore Batavia, the Moluccas, and the Lesser Sunday Islands.

## 3 Serial verb constructions

Serial Verb constructions are a linguistic technique employed in Creoles as well as in many other languages of the world. They are somehow less prominent in European languages though. This section will present four largely complementary research traditions which have tackled the issue. These include research on Atlantic Creoles, research on Pacific Creoles, and research on non-Creole languages. In all three areas, similar observations have been made, but the findings have often not crossed the boundaries of the respective subdiscipline. The fourth area, South Asian studies, is concerned with slightly different phenomena, which do not qualify as SVCs as readily, but are nevertheless important to understand the development in Sri Lanka Malay.

### *3.1 Serial verbs in Atlantic Creoles*

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 FRENCH 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), who provides examples with with intransitive verbs and hence no intervening NPs, shown in (2).

(2)

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ron | go l | ef | 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 they are remarkably different from the structure of the English translation. Structures of the sort NP V (NP) V (NP) have been discussed 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 | sɔ́ | àsɔ́n | yi | __ | àxi | mɛ̀ 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)

SVCs have been used as a major argument in the universalist vs. substratist debate. 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), and closer analysis of the actual constructions in the Creole and substrate led scholars like Bickerton (1981), Byrne (1987), and Veenstra (1996) to conclude that an origin in the substratum is unlikely and that universal forces must be the driving agent behind these constructions in Creole languages. One argument which is repeatedly used by proponents of universalism is the following:

(4) a. Constructions A, B, and C could be due to substrate effects, but construction D cannot.
b. Construction D must therefore be brought about by universal effects.
c. By the principle of parsimony, we do then not need substrate effects for the explanation of A, B, and C, either. (cf. e.g. Veenstra 1996:179)[6]

The reasoning stated above is based on the idea that Creole languages follow exactly one *bauplan*, and that a multi-causal approach is less desirable than a principled explanation. Below, I will show that serial verb constructions in Sri Lanka Malay must be analyzed as hailing from a variety of sources, and a combination of the input languages and universal forces must be posited. The monocausal rule formulated above cannot be upheld. This finding complements earlier arguments made for Saramaccan (McWhorter 1992, 1997), Melanesian Pidgin and Hawai'i Creole (Siegel 1997, 1999, 2000, 2008), and Pacific Creoles (Meyerhoff 2008).

### *3.2 Serial verbs in Pacific Creoles*

Pacific Creoles seem to have less serialization in general than their Atlantic counterparts

6'If a creole language can develop one type of serial verb constructions [sic] independently of its substrate, why should it not be possible to develop all types independently and in spite of substrate influence? '

(McWhorter 1992). They also have the non-adjacent NP V NP V structures mentioned above. An example is (5).

(5) 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
(Crowley 2002:229, interlinear gloss added)

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

(6) Kali I **katem** **splitem** wud BISLAMA
Kali I cut.TRANS split.TRANS wood
'Kali cut the log in two.' (Crowley 2002:223, interlinear gloss added)

This sentence becomes ungrammatical if *wud* 'log' intervenes between the two verbs and they are thus not adjacent:

(7) *Kali I katem wud spletem BISLAMA
Kali I cut.TRANS wood split.TRANS
(Crowley2002:223, interlinear gloss added)

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.

*3.3 Serial verbs in the general typological literature*

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) – an obvious choice due to demographic relations. This has been complemented to a certain degree by data from varieties of Chinese (e.g. Sebba 1987, Lord 1993). Research on serial verb constructions in South America, South Africa, South (East) Asia, or Papua New Guinea has only had limited impact on the field of Creole studies (Durie 1997, Crowley 2002).[7] 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 focusing 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 in 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

7An exception being McWhorter (1997)

properties. These are listed next.

**differentiating properties:**

7. Contiguity of components [37]
8. Phonological wordhood of components [37]
9. Morphological wordhood of components [38]
10. Occurrence of agreement on one or several verbs [39]

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

11. Symmetric or asymmetric relation between the verbs [21]

This criterion applies to the verb classes from which the component verbs are drawn. If all positions in the constructions can be filled by any verb, we are dealing with *symmetric* SVCs. If one of the positions is restricted to members of a small class (*minor verbs* in Durie 1997), this not being the case for the other position(s), then we are dealing with *asymmetric* serialization.

Surveying a large number of areally and genetically diverse languages, Aikhenvald observes that SVCs differ widely in these languages. No archetypal 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 strategy 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 the fact 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.

### *3.4 Serial verbs in South Asia*

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. 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 involve a participle and an inflected verb, or an infinitive and an inflected verb. This means that they violate Aikhenvald's criterion of monoclausality, which "allow[s] no marker of syntactic dependency on [component verbs]" [6]; thus, they are not serial verb constructions in the strict sense.[8] We will nevertheless 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:

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (8) | enna | muɖivu[9] | ceydu | viṯ-ṯ-ay | TAMIL |
| | what | conclusion | do.PTCPL | leave-PAST-2S | |
| | 'What conclusion have you come to? ' (Fedson 1993:65) | | | | |

8I focus here on the presence of markers of syntactic dependency, like participles and infinitives, which distinguish the South Asian constructions from the other constructions discussed in this paper. The question of whether the mere presence of a participle or an infinitive automatically makes the construction multiclausal is a different one and will not be pursued here. See Aikhenvald (2006) and Butt (2003) for two opposing views.

9The sources used in this article employ different conventions to represent retroflex graphemes in Sinhala and Tamil (dot underneath, uppercase, IPA). In this article, retroflex graphemes in Sinhala and Tamil are uniformly represented by their IPA-sign even if the source used another convention. Furthermore, the sources use different conventions for the transliteration of Tamil intervocalic stops. I here adopt the phonetic approach and render intervocalic stops as voiced, even if the source had them as voiceless.

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[10] 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 may 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 'auxiliary' (Smith & Paauw 2006) and 'vector verb' (Nordhoff 2009). In the present paper, I will stick to the latter term.

### *3.5 Serial verbs and implications for theories of Creole Genesis*

There are two main theories for the emergence of Serial Verbs in Creoles. The first one relates to the Language Bioprogram Hypothesis propagated by Bickerton (1981, 1984). An important ingredient of this approach is impoverished input, most prominently the loss of prepositions. When children were confronted with a pidgin input without prepositions, they faced the problem of recovering theta-roles from the input, since those were not overtly marked. In order to repair this perceived deficiency, the children developed serial verbs as a fall-back strategy, drawing on lexical content available to them. The reason for the perceived similarity of serial verb constructions in Creole languages is that the children all drew on the Bioprogram to make up for the impoverished input (Byrne 1987).

10Although the participle form is morphologically based on the past stem.

The second theory argues that serial verbs in Creoles are a direct reflex of structures found in the substrates, and that we are dealing with interference and transmission in second language acquisition (e.g. Lefebvre 1989, McWhorter 1992). A clear example pointing in this direction has been given above in (3).

In order to evaluate the respective merit of these theories with regard to Sri Lanka Malay, I will first sketch the different types of serial verb constructions found in this language and their possible origins in the ancestor languages. I will then evaluate the compatibility of the findings with the 'Impoverished Input' theory and the 'Substrate Transfer Theory'.

## 4 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 data stem from the Upcountry Variety (Nordhoff 2009), but it is likely that these types will be found in other parts of the island as well.[11] The first three types meet Aikhenvald's criteria and are genuine Serial Verb Constructions, while the fourth one fails the criteria and can thus not be regarded as a serial verb construction in the way that it is defined in this paper. I will first spell out the characteristics distinguishing the different constructions and then discuss the four different types that are found in Sri Lanka Malay.

### *4.1 Characteristics*

In surveying the four types of multi-verb constructions we find in SLM, I use the following characteristics to distinguish the different types of MVCs. The characteristics are roughly ordered starting with phonology then morphology and syntax and then semantics:

- number of phonological words ω
- number of TAM-markings

11'Upcountry' designates the central parts of the island of Sri Lanka of generally higher altitude. The varieties of Sri Lanka Malay spoken there seem to form a rather coherent network. This dialect area must be distinguished from the Southern area around Hambantota and Kirinda. It is unclear at present whether the Upcountry variety and the variety spoken in Colombo, on the coast, can be considered the same. For the purpose of this paper, I restrict the scope of investigation to the Upcountry variety.

- 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 characteristics shall be explained briefly.

### *4.1.1 Phonological words*

As observed by Smith et al. (2004), SLM phonological words may at most have one long vowel. This means that as soon as we encounter two long vowels in a string, we can be sure that we are dealing with at least two words. An example for this is (9).[12]

(9) *c**ii**na **oo**rang* 'China-man'

The long vowels *ii* and *oo* show that each of these lexemes is parsed into a phonological word of its own, i.e. (ciina)$_{\omega}$(oorang)$_{\omega}$

Another important generalization is that long vowels can only be found in penultimate syllables of a phonological word (Tapovanaye 1995). Example (9) shows this pattern: the two long vowels occur in the penultimate syllables of their respective phonological words. If ever a candidate string contains a long vowel in another position than penultimate, we are forced to parse the string into two phonological words. An example for this is (10).

(10) *r**oo**ja k**u**mbang* 'rose flower'

In this string, we find a long vowel before the penultimate position, *oo* in *rooja*. This forces us to parse the string into two phonological words, namely (rooja) ω (kumbang)ω.[13]

12SLM examples are given in the practical orthography employed in Nordhoff (2009). Potentially unfamiliar renderings include <dh,th> for dental stops, <d,t> for postalveolar/'retroflex' stops, <j,c> for palatal stops, <à,ì,ù> for centralized vowels, <v> for /ʊ/. Prenasalized consonants are indicated by a breve over the nasal part <m̆b, n̆d, n̆j, n̆g>.

13For reasons of space, the full metrical analysis of SLM words is not developed here; the reader is refered to

The third generalization we will use is that open penultimate syllables of disyllabic words are obligatorily lengthened.[14] This is illustrated by the examples above. If there are several possibilities to parse a string into phonological words, and one ends up with a short vowel in an open penultimate syllable, we have to discard this parsing. This can be illustrated by

(11) *k**a**ca m**aa**tha* 'mirror' + 'eye' = 'spectacles'

For this string, two alternative parsings exist: (kaca)ω (maatha)ω and (kacamaatha)ω . Given that the former has a short vowel in an open penultimate syllable (*ka*) of a purported phonological word, we have to discard this possibility. The only acceptable parsing is (kacamaatha)ω, showing that we are only dealing with one phonological word here.[15] These three tests will be used below to establish the number of phonological words we find in an SLM multi-verb construction.

### *4.1.2 Number of TAM-markings*

SLM has a number of prefixes expressing tense, aspect, and mood, such as *arà-* 'NON-PAST',[16] *su-* 'PAST', *anà-* 'PAST', *anthi-* 'IRR',[17] *asà-* 'CONJUNCTIVE PARTICIPLE', and *mà-* 'INF'. The number of these prefixes in the multi-verb construction is counted for this feature.

### *4.1.3 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. Examples would be *duuduk* 'sit' and *puukul* 'hit' in (12), which are used to give a progressive (*duuduk*) and violentive[18] (*puukul*) interpretation to an action, even if no actual

Nordhoff (2009:113-129) for a full account.

14This generalization does not hold for trisyllables like *makanan* 'food' or *nigiri* 'country', where open penultimate syllables may be short.

15Words with only short vowels are also permitted (Apoussidou & Nordhoff 2008). An example for this is *k**a**mp**o**ng p**e**ns**e**n* 'pensioner's quarters'. In these cases, no easy cues exist on how to parse the word. The examples in this article try to avoid these ambiguous cases.

16This marker has often been analyzed as present tense. See Nordhoff (2009:288f) for the reasons to more appropriately gloss it as 'non-past' instead.

17This marker has often been analyzed as future tense. See Nordhoff (2009:290f) for the reasons to more appropriately gloss it as 'irrealis' instead.

18I am not aware of any established technical term for 'violent execution', and I would be grateful for

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 characteristic.

(12) Ithu=kapang,[19] ithu moonyeth pada=le [anà-**maayeng duuduk**
DIST=when DIST monkey PL=ADDIT PAST-play sit
thoppi pada]=dering[20] inni oorang=nang su-**bale-king** **puukul**. SLM
hat PL=ABL PROX man=DAT PAST-return-CAUS hit
'Then the monkeys also violently threw back to the man the hats with which they had been playing.' (K070000wrt01)[21]

### *4.1.4 Number of unbleached verbs*

All the verbs in a sequence which are not bleached (see above) are unbleached. Their number is retrieved for this characteristic.

### *4.1.5 Contiguity*

This characteristic 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).[22]

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 (13), while the second one is adjacent serialization, where the verbs must not be separated by an NP (14).

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suggestions.

19I follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules in using a hyphen (-) for affixes and an equal sign (=) for clitics.

20Sri Lanka Malay is very permissive in the formation of relative clauses (Nordhoff 2009:516-529) and allows the relativization on instruments in a gapping construction with dropping of the case postposition. *Thoppi pada* 'hats' in the relative clause *anà-maayeng duuduk thoppi pada* can have a variety of roles ('The hats which were playing', 'The hats which were being played', 'The hats on which X was playing' or, in this case, 'The hats with which X was playing'). The instrument/theme of the act of throwing in the main clause on the other hand (again *thoppi pada* 'hats') is overtly marked by the ablative marker *=dering*.

21All Sri Lanka Malay examples are drawn from my corpus and can be accessed at `http://corpus1.mpi.nl/ds/imdi_browser/?openpath=MPI519670%23`

22Non-adjacent serialization is equivalent to the "core serialization" of the authors mentioned.

(13) 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
(Crowley 2002:229, interlinear gloss added)

(14) a. Kali I **katem** **splitem** wud BISLAMA
Kali I cut.TRANS split-TRANS wood
'Kali cut the log in two.' (Crowley 2002:223, interlinear gloss added)
b. *Kali i **katem** wud **spletem** BISLAMA
(Crowley 2002:223, interlinear gloss added)

### *4.1.6 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 (8) 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 characteristic 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.

### *4.1.7 Number of events*

This characteristic 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).

*4.2 Motion Verb Serialization*

The characteristics outlined above will now be applied to the different types of MVCs we find in Sri Lanka Malay. The first construction I will discuss is Motion Verb Serialization. This is exemplified by (15) and (16).

(15) Hathu haari, hathu oorang thoppi mà-juval=nang kampong=dering
INDEF day INDEF man hat INF-sell=DAT village=ABL
kampong=nang su-**j<u>aa</u>lang** **p<u>ii</u>**. SLM
village=DAT PAST-walk go
'One day, a man went and walked from village to village to sell hats.'
(K070000wrt01)

(16) Aanak su-**l<u>aa</u>ri** **kl<u>uu</u>ling**. SLM
child PAST-run roam
'The child went astray.' (K061019sng01)

This type is characterized by the verbs being parsed into two phonological words. This can be seen from the long vowel in *jaalang* 'go' in (15), which forces *jaalang* to be parsed into its own phonological word. The argument for *laari* 'run' in (16) is analogous. Furthermore, we see that there is only one TAM-prefix, in both cases *su* 'PAST'.

Motion Verb Serializations encode movement. The first verb tends to encode manner — *jaalang* 'walking' in (15), *laari* 'running' in (16)— while the second verb encodes path[23] — itive in (15) with *pii* 'go' and circular in (16) with *kluuling* 'roam'.[24] Both verbs contribute

23I 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).

24While the Std. Malay cognate *keliling* 'around' is an adverb, *kluuling* has verbal properties in SLM. It can for instance be combined with a verbal preclitic as in the following examples, which is not possible for adverbs.

(a) Thapi English kala-blaajar Seelong samma thumpath bole=kluuling. SLM
But English if-learn Ceylon all place can=roam
'But if you learn English, you can go to any place in Sri Lanka.'(K051222nar05)

with their full meaning (manner and path, respectively); there is no bleached verb.[25] [26] The verbs are contiguous. An anonymous reviewer asks whether the contiguity of the two verbs could not be the result of a dropped verbal prefix, so that we are indeed dealing with two full clauses. It is true that TAM-marking on the verb is occasionally dropped in SLM, but this normally only happens in fast speech. To counter the small chance that the examples given above are the result of fast speech phenomena, below I give some more examples of Motion Verb Serialization where positing a dropped TAM-prefix is not an option. The first example involves Motion Verb Serialization in a subordinate temporal clause, marked on the first verb by the prefix *kapang-* 'when'.

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (17) | Oorang | pada | kapang-**laari** | **dhaathang**, | ini | daara | sgiithu=le |
| | man | PL | when-run | come | PROX | blood | that.much=ADDIT |
| suusu | su-jaadi. | SLM | | | | | |
| MILK | PAST-BECOME | | | | | | |

'When people came running, the blood had turned into milk.' (K051220nar01)

*Kapang-* has scope over the whole event of coming; both *laari* 'run' and *dhaathang* 'come' are within its scope. Adding a verbal prefix like *su-* 'PAST' to *dhaathang* 'come' reduces the scope of *kapang-* to *laari* alone. This leads to a change in meaning – the sentence would mean 'When people were running (somewhere), they came and they saw that the blood had turned into milk'. From the context it is clear that this is not the intended meaning.

The second type of evidence for the unified nature of Motion Verb Serialization comes from infinitives. Infinitives treat the Motion Verb Serialization complex as one syntactic constituent, as can be seen from the following example:

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (18) | [Aajuth=yang | buurung | mà-[**angkath baapi**]] | su-diyath. SLM | |
| | dwarf=ACC | bird | INF-lift | take.away PAST-try | |

'The bird tried to carry the dwarf away.' (K070000wrt04)

25It is true that both 'go' and 'come' do not have very elaborate semantics, but what 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.

26Hugo 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 possiblility 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).

The infinitive prefix *mà-* precedes the first verb *angkath* 'lift' in this example. If *angkath baapi* were not in the same clause, *mà* would have to be found attached to *baapi* 'lift' and not to *angkath* 'lift'. Additionally, if the past tense prefix *su-* is added to *baapi* 'take.away', forcing a biclausal interpretation of the string *angkath — su-baapi,* the resulting meaning is 'The bird brought it in order to lift it and then tried it.' This meaning is not the one intended here, besides being quite hard to grasp in the first place.

Subordinate clauses with *kapang-* 'when' and *mà-* 'INF' thus show that the component verbs of Motion Verb Serializations have the same syntactic status as monolexematic verbal predicates and are in fact not biclausal but monoclausal.

The movement expressed by Motion Verb Serialization finally is only one event. Table 1 sums up these facts.

| | **Full Verb Serialization** |
|---|---|
| ω | 2 |
| TAM | 1 |
| # unbleached V | 2 |
| # bleached verbs | 0 |
| Contiguous? | Y |
| Position of bleached verb | n/a |
| Position of unbleached verb | Left and right |
| # events | 1 |

Table 1: Properties of Sri Lanka Malay Motion Verb Serialization. '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 theses 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.

### *4.3 Origin of Motion Verb Serialization*

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 will be done for Motion Verb Serialization as well as for the other types.

Motion Verb Serialization does not have a clear counterpart in Tamil or Sinhala. However, in Malay varieties of the Northern Moluccas, 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**=apa … SLM
1S=ACC CP-search come=cp ..
'He came in search of me.' (K051213nar06)[27]

(20) Bagaimana cara dia akan **pi** **cari** dia pe
how method 3S FUT go search.for 3S POSS
tamang? NORTH MOLUCCAN MALAY
friend
'How will he look for his friend? ' (Paauw 2008:3.73)

Still, the order manner-path can also be found in Indonesian varieties of Malay, as the following example shows:

(21) Bemo len Tarus **maen** [**pulang** **bale**] angka panumpang KUPANG MALAY
minibus route Tarus play go.home return pick.uppassenger
'The minibus on the Tarus route regularly goes back and forth taking passengers home.' (Jacob & Grimes 2007:4)

27The speaker switches to English after this clause (*he knew about me*) and then gets mixed up in his narrative so that the main clause, which would normally be expected to follow this non-finite clause with *asà*, actually never gets uttered.

Both the syntax and semantics of this construction point to the retention of an ancient feature rather than to influence from the Lankan languages. It must be noted that 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).[28]

### *4.4 Vector Verb Serialization*

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; the second verb 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),
- *kaasi* 'give' (=alterbenefactive),
- *puukul* 'hit' (=violentive),
- *thaaro* 'put' (=hostilitive)

Abbi & Gopalakrishnan (1991) divide vector verbs into three groups: ASPECTUAL, ADVERBIAL, and ATTITUDINAL. It appears that the SLM vector verbs can be found in all three domains (e.g. inchoative for aspect, violentive for adverbial, hostilitive for attitudinal).

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 were parsed into the same phonological word as the final verb. This contrasts with *kasi-* 'give' in Compound Verbs (to be discussed below), which has a short vowel in the same position.

(22) *British government* Malaysia Indonesia ini nigiri pada

28It is nevertheless interesting to note that Papia Kristang (a Portuguese lexifier Creole in Malaysia) also shows this kind of serial construction (Baxter 1988:212), showing that other languages with input from Malay developed this construction as well.

British government Malaysia Indonesia PROX country PL samma anà-**peegang ambel**. SLM
all PAST-catch take
'The British government captured all these countries.' (K051213nar06)

(23) Kanabisan=ka=jo duva oorang=le anà-**thaau ambel**. SLM
last=LOC=EMPH two person=ADDIT PAST-know take
'Finally the two women understood.' (K070000wrt05a)

For 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 (22) and inchoative (23).

One feature that Vector Verb Serialization shares with Motion Verb Serialization 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 (22)/understanding (23). 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 (Table 2).

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

Table 2: Properties of Sri Lanka Malay Vector Verb Serialization

*4.5 Semantic difference between Vector Verb Serialization and Motion Verb Serialization*

Vector Verb Serialization and Motion Verb Serialization are very similar in their structure. They both form two phonological words, take only one prefix, and are contiguous. Where they differ is in their semantics: Vector Verb Serialization features a bleached verb; in motion verb serialization, none of the verbs are bleached. A test which can be used to distinguish between the two is the *is a kind of*-test. For a verb sequence XY, this tests whether the following two propositions are true.

(24) XY is a type of X
(25) XY is a type of Y

For Vector Verb Serialization, only one of those is necessarily true, while for Motion Verb Serialization, both are true. I will illustrate this test with the following two examples, (26) for a Vector Verb Serialization and (27) for Motion Verb Serialization.

(26) Se ini buk arà-soovek-kang thaaro. SLM
1S PROX book NON.PAST-torn-CAUS put
'I am tearing the book to pieces.' (K081104eli06)

(27) 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)

The tests are:

(28) a. is (26) a kind of tearing? YES, in a violent way

b. is (26) a kind of putting? NO, no item is placed on a surface

(29) a. is (27) a kind of walking? YES, in a motion away from the deictic center
b. is (27) a kind of going? YES, in a walking manner

To conclude, Motion Verb Serialization and Vector Verb Serialization are quite similar at first glance, but they can be distinguished by the bleached nature of one of the verbs in Vector Verb Serialization.

### *4.6 Origins of the Vector Verb constructions*

Vector Verbs are a prominent feature of Tamil in particular, and South Asia in general. They have been discussed less extensively for Indonesian varieties of Tamil. David Gil (p.c.) informs me that Vector Verbs are found in Sumatran varieties of Malay, but as stated above in the historical section, there were no connections between Sumatra and Sri Lanka. Paauw (2008) contains some information about similar constructions in Eastern Indonesian varieties of Malay, which are comparable to Vector Verbs in some respects. Even if the syntax is not exactly parallel, they might have formed the model from which the SLM constructions we find today emerged.

The syntax of Vector Verb Serialization as found today in SLM has clear syntactic parallels in Tamil (Lehmann 1989, Schiffman 1999), and possibly in Sinhala.[29] The following example is from Smith & Paauw (2006) and shows the parallel structure between SLM and Tamil.

(30) ziharath-yang su- picakan __ __ thaaro __ __ SLM
ziyaratt-e __ oɖe -cc -i poo̱ -ṯ -aanga TAMIL
shrine-ACC PAST- break -PAST -PTCPL put -PAST -AGR
'They tore down the shrine.' (Smith & Paauw 2006:171)[30]

29The 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).
30The 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.

Some more examples of Tamil Vector Verb Constructions are given below (also see (8) above).

(31) kumaar cigaret **uud-i ·t** **taɭɭu-ki_r-aa_n** TAMIL
Kumar cigarette smoke-CP push-PRES-3SM
'Kumar smokes one cigarette after another (=iterative)' (Lehmann 1989:223)

(32) anda a_rai puuʈʈ-i ·k kiɖa-kki_r-adu TAMIL
that room lock-CP lie-PRES-3SN
'The room is kept locked (=durative)' (Lehmann 1989:223)

There are some comparable constructions in Ambon Malay and related varieties, but the choice of vector verbs and their syntax differs from what we find in Sri Lanka. The Tamil example in (30) has much more elaborate morphology, but overall, its syntax is much closer to SLM than the Ambon Malay 'Complex Verb' Construction (Paauw 2008:227), of which (33) is an example.

(33) Antua punya perkerjaan itu cuma tiap hari **suka** **menjai**
3S.FORMAL POSS work DIST only every day like sew
pake tangan AMBON MALAY
use hand
'Her work every day was simply to sew by hand.' (Paauw 2008:227)

The lexical verb *suka* 'like' has the aspectual value of habitual here. We see that the verb expressing aspect precedes the main verb, the mirror image of what we find in Tamil and SLM.

Next to the syntax being closer to the Tamil model, the set of verbs which are recruited for grammatical purposes is quite different in Indonesia on the one hand and Sri Lanka on the other hand. Table 3 gives a brief overview. This table lists different basic meanings, the meanings when used as vector verbs, and the languages where these pairings are attested.[31] The column for 'Malay varieties' lists the verb and the particular variety where it is found. While some overlap between Sri Lanka Malay and other Malay varieties exists, it is clear that

31Papua Malay is excluded from this list since Papua does not have any historical links with Sri Lanka.

the parallels to Tamil are more important.

| Primary meaning | Vector meaning | SLM | Tamil | Sinhala | Malay varieties |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| keep | DUR | simpang | – | – | – |
| take | INCHO | ambel | – | – | – |
| hit | VIOLENT | puukul | – | – | – |
| take | SELFBEN | ambel | koo | ganavaa | – |
| give | ALTERBEN | kaasi | koɖu | denavaa | Kupang: kasi (David Gil, p.c.) |
| be[32] | PROG | duuduk | iru | – | – |
| put | HOSTIL | thaaro | pooɖu | – | – |
| lose | PEJOR | – | tolai | – | – |
| push | ITER | – | taɭɭu | – | – |
| lie | DUR | – | kiɖa | – | – |
| tear | SCREWUP | – | kiɻi | – | – |
| go | PEJOR | – | poo | – | – |
| hold | INTENT | – | koɭ | – | – |
| put | PROSPECT | – | vai | – | – |
| leave | PFTV, CONTEMPT | – | viɖu | – | – |
| finish | COMPL | abis | – | ivara(yi) | general: (h)abis |
| take | COMPL | – | – | – | Kupang: ame |
| throw | HOSTIL | – | – | – | Kupang: buang |
| play | ITER | – | – | – | Kupang: maen |
| watch | HABIT | – | – | – | Ambon, Banda: jaga |
| like | HABIT | – | – | – | Ambon, Banda: suka |
| give | CAUS | – | – | – | Ambon, Banda,Kupang, Manado,North Moluccan Malay: kasi/kase |
| SOURCES | | Nordhoff (2009) | Chater (1815) Matzel (1983) Jayawardena-Moser (2004) Karunatillake (2004) | Arden (1934) Lehmann (1989) Fedson (1993) Schiffman (1999) | Jacob & Grimes (2007) van Minde (1997) Paauw (2008) |

Table 3: Vector verbs with their primary and bleached meanings in Lankan and Indonesian

32 SLM also 'sit'.

languages. SLM shows some parallels with Tamil, less with Sinhala, and close to none with Indonesian varieties. Some usages unique to SLM can also be found at the top of the table.

The history of Vector Verbs is thus very interesting and involved. It appears that the bud already present in Eastern Indonesian varieties encountered fertile soil in Sri Lanka and prospered, although the ultimate form it took was conditioned by the local ecology. The combination of a tiny feature present in one language which flourishes once it is in contact with languages where this feature is more important is known in the literature under the rubric of 'substrate reinforcement' (Siegel 1998). Siegel applies this to the formation of Melanesian Pidgin, where certain structures of the local substrate languages found matches in English and thus gave rise to particular structures in three different dialects of Melanesian Pidgin (i.e. Tok Pisin, Solomons Pijin, and Bislama).

### 4.7 Compound Verbs

The third 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'.[33]

An example is given in (34).

(34) 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* were 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

33A reviewer remarks that Saldin (2007) contains three additional items with *kasi*, namely *kasibərat* 'to hand over', *kasikən:al* 'introduce', and *kasimu:ka* 'to face, to confront'. The reviewer suggests that the *kasi-V* construction might actually be more productive than described above. While I do not want to exclude the possibilty that *kasi-V* could also be used with other verbs, it would have to be a lot less frequent than the other types of multi-verb constructions, since I have never come across *kasi-V* with any other verb than *thaau* 'know' and *kaving* 'marry'. As for the three additional items in Saldin (2007), two of them do not qualify as Verbal Compounds because of the non-verbal nature of *bərat/bìrrath* 'heavy(ADJ)' and *mu:ka/muuka* 'face(N)'. In these cases, we are clearly dealing with a different, but related, word formation process, which has lexicalized and is no longer semantically compositional in the way *kasithaau* or *kasikaaving* are. The third item, *kasikən:al/kasikìnnal* is a welcome addition to the set of Compound Verbs, meaning that this set can be extended from two to three.

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 characteristics discussed suffice to distinguish this construction from the other ones discussed above.

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 (Table 4).

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

Table 4: Properties of Sri Lanka Malay Compound Verbs.

### 4.8 Origins of the Compound Verbs

The origin of the compound verbs is clearly Malay. Sinhala and Tamil do not employ them. The use of precisely the construction mentioned above (*kasi*+*thaau* ‘give’+‘know’=‘inform’) is widespread in Indonesian varieties (David Gil, Scott Paauw p.c.). 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 (35).[34]

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

While in Sri Lanka, the status of this construction seems to be quite fossilized, with *thaau* 'know' and *kaaving* 'marry' as the only attested verbs, in Indonesia, *kasi* is more productive. The following examples show combinations with *inga* 'think' and *pulang kembali* 'return home'.

(36) (I had completely forgotten that we have a test tomorrow.)
Untung le ngana da **kase** **inga** pa kita. MANADO MALAY
luck PAR 2s ASP AUX remember at 1s
'Fortunately, you made me remember again.' (Stoel 2005:35)

(37) Lalu antua **kasi** **pulang** **kembali** itu anak. AMBON MALAY
then 3SG.FML give go.home return DEM child
'Then she returned the children to their homes.' (Paauw 2008:227)

It is clear that the Compound Verb Construction is a retention of an Indonesian feature, but its productivity decreased on Lankan soil, possibly because the local languages Sinhala and Tamil lacked a similar construction.

### *4.9 Clause Chains*

The fourth construction I will discuss is not a serial verb construction in the narrow sense. Yet

34This construction is also found in Papia Kristang, another contact language with a Malay substrate (Baxter 1988:214f).

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-*.[35]

The term conjunctive participle is common in Indian linguistics, but is less often found in works on Creole languages or Malay varieties, since these languages normally do not show the phenomenon in question. There are a number of other names, among them 'gerund' or 'absolutive', as well as some other qualifications of 'participle', like 'adverbial', 'verbal', 'indeclinable' etc. See Masica (1976:110) for a discussion. This verb form is a salient feature of the Indian linguistic area as noted by Masica (1976) and is the daily bread of a linguist in South Asia. Such forms are reported much less often from the Caribbean or the Malay world. If they exist at all in those languages, their status is much more marginal than in South Asia, where they are one of the most frequent verb forms, possibly the most frequent.

The principal function of this verb form is to coordinate two or more events, most often in temporal succession. In this sense, it is similar to the English construction *Having done X, Y happened*, for instance *[[Having come home drunk,] John could not find his keys]*.In this utterance, the event of coming home is found in a subordinate clause. The utterance can also be made into two coordinated clauses*[John came home late] AND [could not find his keys]* or *John came home late. He could not find his keys*. This paratactic structure is definitely dispreferred in South Asia and highly unnatural.

The South Asian pattern is illustrated in (38).

(38) a. Oorang pada **asà-**pirrang, SLM
man PL CP-wage.war
'After having waged war'
b. derang=nang **asà-**banthu,
3pl=DAT CP-help

35Clause chains represent an analytical problem as to their syntactic analysis. The clauses in (38) 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 & Foley (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.

‘and after having helped them’

c. siini=jo **su**-ciinggal.
here=EMPH PAST-settle
‘the people settled down right here.’ (K051222nar03)

One crucial property of conjunctive participles is that they are non-finite and cannot be used in main clauses on their own.[36] (38a) or (38b) uttered in isolation will leave the addressee confused, waiting for the finite clause to complete the utterance. This is similar to the English utterance *Having waged war.* The addressee’s normal reaction to such a sentence would be *And then, .., what?* This inability to occur on their own distinguishes conjunctive participle clauses from ‘chained’ clauses like

(39) a. The men waged war. ENGLISH
b. The men helped the king.
c. The men settled down right here.

which could be uttered in isolation without confusing the addressee.

Returning to (38), the verbs in this stretch of discourse are obviously parsed into different phonological words and have more than one TAM-marking. All verbs are full verbs; none of the verbs are bleached. In contrast 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 (38) for instance, we are dealing with an event of fighting, followed by an event of helping, followed by an event of settling. These properties are summarized below.

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

36There are some qualifications to this for perfect tense constructions, but these normally contain a dropped auxiliary (cf. Slomanson 2008).

| | |
|---|---|
| position of unbleached verb | n/a |
| # events | 2 |

Table 5: Summary of Sri Lanka Malay Clause Chains

### *4.10 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.[37]

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (40) | Kumaar siini | asdhaatang, | seeyang | supanggel | SLM |
| | Kumaar metenṭa | ävillaa, | maṭa | kataa.keruvaa. | SINHALA |
| | Kumaar ingee | vandu, | ennai | kuuppiṯṯaan | TAMIL |
| | Kumaar here | CP.come | me | called | |

'Kumaar came here and called me.' (based on Lehmann 1989:266)

In Indonesia, 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. While Indonesian varieties of Malay can of course juxtapose clauses, they do not have at their disposal an explicit clause linking mechanism like the one found in Sri Lanka, which is the result of language contact (cf. Slomanson 2008:1645). The emergence of clause chains in Sri Lanka Malay can be seen as an instance of metatypy: The Malay language in Sri Lanka was a very small in-group language in an environment where Tamil was spoken by the coreligionist group of the Moors, and Sinhala in the wider context of society. Knowledge of at least one of these languages was mandatory, but very often, Sri Lankan Malays were very fluent in both. This opposition between a small in-group language ('esoteric') and large languages of wider communication ('exoteric') has been described by Malcolm Ross for a variety of settings under the rubric of metatypy (Ross 1996, 1997, 2001, 2007). The basic idea is that constant use of the language of wider communication leads to the entrenchment of that language's grammatical patterns in the minds of the speakers, who finally end up using the same patterns

37The structures are not 100% parallel, as Tamil and SLM use the accusative on the object, while Sinhala uses the dative. This is not glossed in example (40) for reasons of readability.

in their own, in-group, esoteric language where it did not exist at first (also compare Nadkarni 1975). Aspects of Sri Lanka Malay morphosyntax have been explained as result of metatypy by Ansaldo (2008, 2009), and Nordhoff (2009), and Clause Chains can be added to this list.

### 4.11 Summary

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

| | Motion Verb S | Vector Verb S | Compound Verbs | Clause Chains |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ω | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| TAM | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1+n |
| # unbleached V | 2 | 1 | 2(1) | 2 |
| # bleached V | 0 | 1 | 0(1) | 0 |
| contiguous? | Y | Y | Y | N |
| position of bleached verb | n/a | right | (left) | n/a |
| position of unbleached verb | left and right | left | (left and right) | n/a |
| # events | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Process | retention | lexifier reinforcement; independent development | retention and loss | non-lexifier influence |

Table 6: 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 feature: 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 right side. Motion Verb Serialization is characterized by the equal status of both component verbs, which co-head the construction. Finally, clause chains 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 Multi-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.

This diversity is also found in the evolution of these constructions: While Compound Verbs are a retention of Eastern Indonesian structures, their range of application has narrowed, and these constructions can actually be regarded as lexicalized and no longer productive. This differs from Motion Verb Serialization, which is a retention which continues to thrive. Vector Verb Serialization on the other hand has the twist that an originally marginal construction was fostered by the contact languages and developed considerably, changing its syntactic properties on the way. It furthermore developed independently and recruited full verbs for grammatical purposes which are not found in any of the input languages. Clause Chains finally are different from the three constructions already mentioned in that they show no retention of Indonesian features. Like many other structures in Sri Lanka Malay (SOV, postpositions, bound morphology), they are the result of metatypy towards the Lankan languages.

An array of different processes (retention, substrate reinforcement, metatypy) are thus responsible for the diverse picture SLM Multiple Verb Constructions present today. While universalism seems underrepresented here, it does actually play a role in vector verb formation: The syntactic structure of Tamil was taken over; the extra morphological marking (participle) was not. This less morphological approach can be seen as an effect of universal forces, which disfavour morphology.

## 5 Sri Lanka Malay and the genesis of serial verbs in Creoles

Bickerton (1981, 1984) suggested that Creoles developed serial verbs in order to make up for the loss of prepositions. In Bickerton (1988), he clarifies that complementizers and adverbs are also among the lost elements whose function is reinstated through the emergence of serial verbs (also see Byrne 1987). The reason for the emergence of serial verbs in Creoles is thus a functional deficiency in the preceding pidgin, a dysfunctionality which is diachronically unstable and will soon be improved through the use of serial verbs.

This explanation is difficult to reconcile with the Sri Lanka Malay data. There never was a dearth of adpositions in Sri Lanka Malay, although the erstwhile prepositions of Trade Malay

changed sides and became postpositions. Among the retained adpositions,[38] we can mention:[39]

- *dering* < *dari* 'from',
- *nang* < *nang* 'to' (Javanese),
- *ka* < *ke, dekat* 'at',
- *(sà)saama* < *sama* 'with',
- *thingka* < *tengah* 'when',
- *kaapang* < *kapan* 'when',
- *lanthran* < *lantaran* 'because',
- *subbath* < *sebab* 'because'

We see that the adpositional system is quite stable in both meaning and phonological shape. There is no reason to assume that children would have found the adpositional system lacking in any way. No gap had to be remedied by serial verbs. As a matter of fact, among the lexemes used to indicate theta-roles in Indonesian varieties, the most salient one not retained in Sri Lanka Malay is *pakai* 'with',[40] which doubles as the verb 'to use' in Indonesian varieties (cf. (33)). In its stead, Sri Lanka Malay subsumes the function of instrumental under a generalized ablative based on the postposition *dering*. We thus find that the construction with *pakai* 'with, making use of, use', quite close to a serial verb construction, is replaced by a construction with a postposition in Sri Lanka Malay. This is exactly the opposite of the path suggested by Bickerton. Sri Lanka Malay shows that the universalist position cannot explain the full range of phenomena related to the emergence of serial verbs in contact languages.

It is clear that the development of serial verbs in Sri Lanka Malay is not some kind of repair strategy making up for gaps in the grammar. Still, there is no doubt that Sri Lanka Malay has dramatically increased its use of serial verb constructions. As shown above, Sri Lanka Malay Serial Verb Constructions are internally diverse, and the different types can be traced to different origins. This strengthens the substratists' point to a certain extent. It is true that grammatical structures, among them serial verb constructions, were integrated into Sri Lanka Malay from a language other than the lexifier, in this case Sinhala and Tamil. But there are also constructions originating in the grammar of the lexifier itself, so that we are dealing

38I focus on the etymological status as prepositions here. In contemporary Sri Lanka Malay, some of the adpositions have further grammaticalized into case markers.
39Many of the adpositions, both contemporary and historic, are polyfunctional. The fact that only one meaning is given here does not preclude the existence of other meanings.
40There is a reflex in the lexical verb *paake* 'to wear'.

with a recombination of lexifier and non-lexifier features of grammar. This shows that influence from the non-lexifier is only part of the answer, and that the grammar of the lexifier must also be taken into account. The lexifiers of the Creoles that have received most attention lack SVCs, so that this possibility has not received a lot of attention in the literature.

The grammar of Sri Lanka Malay shows that serial verb constructions can have a variety of origins and come from both the lexifier or a non-lexifier. Is this relevant for Creoles which emerged in a more traditional setting, e.g. in the Caribbean? Of course it is. The Sri Lanka Malay case is evidence that a language can adopt (and adapt) serial verb constructions from a non-lexifier. If this possibility exists in Sri Lanka, it must be entertained as a serious possibility for the Atlantic as well. As a consequence, substrate influence can no longer be dismissed in a principled way along the lines of Bickerton (1988) or Veenstra (1996).

There is disagreement among the researchers on Sri Lanka Malay as to what processes led to the emergence of this language. One school, headed by Ian Smith, argues that Tamil-speaking 'Moor' wives tried to acquire Trade Malay, and that the structures found in SLM are a result of that. The second position, taken by Peter Bakker and Umberto Ansaldo, argues that imperfect learning did not play an important role and that the structures we find are due to convergence or metatypy. In the first case, we are thus dealing with a case of language shift, from Tamil to Malay. In the second case, we are dealing with a case of language maintenance of Malay in a Tamil/Sinhala speaking environment.

In my opinion, shift from Tamil to Malay is very unlikely. The Moors outnumbered the Malays 20:1; if we include the non-Muslim speakers of Tamil, the ratio is 40:1. We can compare this to an immigrant group in the US, Polish. There are about 9,000,000 Polish Americans in the US, among 308,000,000 Americans, a ratio of 1:34. Given such a setting, would we expect Americans to learn Polish, and transfer English structures to Polish? This sounds highly unlikely, to say the least. This analogy shows that in a setting where the immigrant group is outnumbered by orders of magnitude, the immigrant language is an unlikely target language for speakers of the local majority language. This is even more the case when there is no military power or official function attached to the immigrant language, which is what distinguishes Trade Malay (and Polish) from colonial languages like English, French, or Spanish.

Sri Lanka Malay thus presents a case of language maintenance. This distinguishes it from Creoles, where we are dealing with a case of language shift (*pace* Chaudenson 2001). The

scenarios leading to the emergence of serial verbs can therefore not be the same. What Sri Lanka Malay does show is that serial verbs can emerge in a setting of language maintenance. Furthermore, in the same language, serial verbs can have different origins; a recombination of features from the lexifier with features from non-lexifier languages is possible.

If we accept, for the sake of discussion, the possibility that SLM structures are due to L1 transfers from Tamil speaking women, the conclusion remains the same: We are dealing with a recombination of features from lexifier and non-lexifier in the same domain, namely serial verbs.

## 6 Conclusion and outlook

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. It is impossible to speak of a single type of SLM serial verb because of this internal diversity with regard to phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Rather, one has to look at a whole array of constructions to come to grips with the phenomenon of verb serialization in SLM. This internal complexity of the domain does not suggest compliance with a simple, basic universal structure. Furthermore, the scenario of 'gap repair' proposed by universalists for the emergence of serial verbs does not hold for Sri Lanka Malay since there was no gap to begin with. At least for Sri Lanka Malay, we can rule out the possibility that the serial verbs we find in this language are the result of universal forces of first language acquisition.

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 normally did 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, BE, PUT, etc), but has shunned 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.

Two of 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 three (Compound Verb, Vector 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 (Ansaldo 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: all input languages have 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, 2008, Meyerhoff 2008, Migge 1998, 2003, Migge & Goury 2008), and this triple interplay is indeed also what we find in Sri Lanka Malay. A narrow approach, whether universalist, substratist, or superstratist, will fail to account for the SLM facts. Instead a holistic approach allowing for grammatical contributions from all input languages (sub-/super-/adstrates) is required.

**Abbreviations**

| | |
|---|---|
| abl | ablative |
| acc | accusative |
| addit | additive |
| agr | agreement |
| aux | auxiliary |
| caus | causative |
| cp | conjunctive participle |
| dat | dative |
| dem | demonstrative |
| dist | distal |
| emph | emphatic |
| fut | future |
| indef | indefinite |
| inf | infinitive |
| irr | irrealis |
| loc | locative |
| pl | plural |
| poss | possessive |
| prox | proximal |
| ptcpl | participle |
| trans | transitive |

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