Habitual serial verbs

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Outline

1 Habituals in the world's languages

2 Survey of habitual SVCs

3 Two issues: 'independent' verbs and CTPs

4 Conclusions

Section 1

Habituals in the world's languages

Habituals

- Linguistic forms or constructions expressing that a situation typically occurs
- Modify a predicate and appear in many different guises: affix, clitic, particle, auxiliary, SVC...

Example: Yuchi *-ne*

(1) Yuchi (isolate, Oklahoma, yuch1247)

    a. *sahã:de ʼi   hɛ̃-wa-**ne***
       always tobacco 3sg(Yuchi.m).act-chew-hab
       'He chews tobacco all the time.'

    b. *ʼi   hõ-wa   =:le*
       tobacco 3sg(Yuchi.m).act-chew =emph
       'He's really chewing (and chewing) that tobacco!'
       (Linn 2001: 263, 77)

How are habitual meanings expressed?

Table 1: Habitual markers in 100 languages

	n
Affix	28
Clitic	2
Auxiliary	4
SVC	2
Particle	8
Other	4
Unclear	8
More than one type	8
None found	36
Total	100

Habitual SVC in Kwomtari

(2) Kwomtari (Kwomtari-Nai, Papua New Guinea, nucl1593)

   a. *Inalilufwa glei Pita-le ri-ne-ke*
      people   NEG Peter-GL come-1/3PL.R-SEQ
     *feta-ne-**a**-ne-i.*
     see-1/3PL.R-do-1/3PL.R-NEG
     'The people did not habitually come and look at Peter.'
     (Spencer 2008: 118; *a* in compound SVC)

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    b. *Te yeu   na-fo-ne   eese-ife-a-me-ne.*
       FOC laugh say-3SG.O-1/3PL.R thus-ACM-do-DDUR-1/3PL.R
       'We laughed at her, we were doing like that to her.'
       (Spencer 2008: 110; *a* as pro-verb)

Section 2

Survey of habitual SVCs

Research questions

- RQ1: Which source verbs are attested in habitual SVCs?
- RQ2: What are the formal and functional characteristics of habitual SVCs?
- RQ3: Are there languages with more than one habitual SVC?

Convenience sample

- Eighteen languages where we found references to (possible) habitual SVCs
- Information from grammars, dictionaries, articles on individual phenomena, and language experts

Types of habitual SVCs

Table 2: Habitual SVCs in convenience sample

Type	Glosses	Languages
DO	'do', 'make', etc.	Anamuxra, Kwomtari
QUAL	'be good'	Ambel
MOVE	'go', 'carry', etc.	Bininj Gun-Wok, Northern Paiute, Sezo, Yace
LOC	'be', 'stay', etc.	Dumo, Manus Koro, Paamese, Sivisa Titan, Tariana
LIKE	'like', 'befriend'	Hualapai, Khmu, Lao, Wari'
USUAL	'be usual'	Muna, Papuan Malay
KNOW	'know'	Papuan Malay

Section 3

Two issues: 'independent' verbs and CTPs

One definition of SVCs

"A serial verb construction is a monoclausal construction consisting of *multiple independent verbs* with no element linking them and with *no predicate-argument relation* between the verbs." (Haspelmath 2016: 296; emphasis added)

"Independent" verbs

- According to most definitions, both (or all) verbs in a SVC should also be able to occur independently of each other
  - Note that like Haspelmath, we are not excluding compound SVCs (unlike Ross 2021: 229)
- But if the meaning of a verb is different in and outside of the SVC, is it then "the same" verb?
- Cf. Enfield (2009: 448): "Opinions will differ as to whether two lexical entries with different but related meanings should be considered 'the same verb'."

Northern Paiute *yakwi* 'carry'

(3)   *uuni-ku*   *tɨ-ma-**yakwi**-na*
that.kind-OBL ANTIP-IP(hand)-carry-PTCP
su=tɨ-woitsami-dɨ   *ka=tokaano*
NOM=ANTIP-watchman-NMLZ OBL=night
'That's what he was carrying, that night watchman' (Thornes
2003: 542)

Northern Paiute habitual *ya(kw)i*

(4) Northern Paiute (Uto-Aztecan, USA, north2954)

   a. *yaisi owi-u   yotsi-u-ga-**ʔyakwi**   tui-haʔu-tui*
       then DEM-SUFF fly.SG-PUNCT-TRNSL-HAB any-how-any
       '... and (it) would fly off from there in every direction.'
       (Thornes 2003: 186)

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b. *su=mi=naa   pɨnoʔo awamoasɨ*
   NOM=1PL=father also   early.morning
   yotsi-u-yai-na
   rise-PUNCT-HAB-PTCP
   'Also, our father would get up early in the morning...'
   (Thornes 2003: 410)

Same verb? – not unique to SVCs

(5)   Danish (Indo-European, Denmark, dani1285)

    a.   *hun **plej-ede** at*   *løb-e*   *meget hurtigt i det*
          she HAB-PST VB.COMP run-INF very   fast   in it
          'She [a hamster] used to run very fast in it [her wheel]'
          (osmedkaeledyr.dk)

    b.   *Munk-ene*   ***plej-ede***   *de*   *syg-e og bad*   *for*
          monk-DEF.PL care_for-PST DEF.PL sick-PL and pray.PST for
          dem
          them
          'The monks cared for the sick and prayed for them'
          (museumskanderborg.dk)

Serial and/or complement-taking predicate?

- Are CTPs identified formally or functionally?
- If formally, any kind of verb juxtaposition without a complementizer may count as a SVC (cf. Aikhenvald 2018)
- If semantically, the identification crucially depends on how the lexeme in question is translated

CTP or SVC in Papuan Malay

(6)   Papuan Malay (Austronesian, Indonesia, papu1250)

    a.   *mama de blum taw tempat itu*
       mother 3sg not.yet know place DEM.DIST
       'Mother doesn't know that place yet.' (Kluge 2023: 7)

    b.   *Dong taw maing foli*
       3PL know/HAB play volleyball
       'They habitually play volleyball' (Kluge 2023: 8)

Section 4

Conclusions

Some concluding points

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- The analysis of several cases in our 18 languages is unclear
- Two habitual SVCs described in one language, Papuan Malay
- Even if SVC status is often debatable, looking for (potential) SVCs is very rewarding for historical linguistics
    - While the historical origin of a habitual affix will often be obscure, the source of a habitual SVC is usually transparent
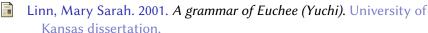
Thank you!

All comments are welcome:

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