

# THE RISE AND FALL OF SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS

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*Determining the origins of serial verbs is a strenuous task [... since for] no language family in the world do we have enough historical evidence to confidently trace the roots and the development of [these types of] constructions – concludes Alexandra Aikhenvald in her 2018 book *Serial Verbs*.*

Despite this dearth of direct diachronic evidence, a number of generalizations related to the **ORIGIN** of SVCs and the tendencies governing the gradual development of their sources towards more canonical serializing structures have been proposed, mostly through comparative methods and typological research: **(a)** SVCs result from clause fusion, verbal modification, or concurrent grammaticalization; **(b)** while the first two scenarios account for the development of both symmetrical and asymmetrical SVCs, the third scenario is limited to the emergence of asymmetrical SVCs; **(c)** asymmetrical SVCs that express direction/orientation, aspect, extent, and change of state develop faster than modal, valency-increasing, and argument-adding SVCs, with SVCs used for comparative, valency-decreasing, and other purposes developing lastly; **(d)** the emergence of two-segment SVCs precedes the development of more elaborated structures; **(e)** symmetrical SVCs evolve only once asymmetrical SVCs have been developed; **(f)** the emergence of SVCs compensates for the reductive processes affecting inflectional morphology, thus being correlated with the expansion of analytical strategies; **(g)** the development of SVCs is motivated by language contact.

Evidence related to the development of SVCs after reaching the stage of a canonical SVC, and thus their **DEMISE**, is slightly more abundant although the generalizations proposed also rely heavily on comparative and typological research rather than direct diachronic data: **(a)** the fate of post-canonical asymmetrical SVCs is different from that of symmetrical SVCs: asymmetrical SVCs undergo grammaticalization, while symmetrical ones undergo lexicalization; **(b)** minor verbs in asymmetrical SVCs are decategorized: they evolve into auxiliaries, adpositions, particles, conjunctions, complementizers, and a range of bound morphemes, eventually losing their verbal status entirely; **(c)** functionally, minor verbs in asymmetrical SVCs tend to evolve into markers of tense, aspect, and modality, including evidentiality, as well as expressions of directional, locative, comparative, and superlative domains; **(d)** symmetrical SVCs develop into lexical units, ultimately contributing to the expansion of the verbal lexicon of a language; **(e)** all the above changes are gradual and give rise to fuzzy cases characterized by categorial ambiguity.

## Call for Submissions

Alexander Andrason & Alexandra Aikhenvald invite scholars working in the area of SVCs to contribute to the volume that aspires to advance our knowledge of the **evolutionary dynamics of SVCs**, in particular their rise and fall. We aim to test the above generalizations put forward by Alexandra Aikhenvald (2018) on a large and diverse language sample and provide a new body of evidence that shows how SVCs are dynamically related to other categories, whether pre-canonical (from which they derive) or post-canonical (into which they evolve). We welcome diachronic, comparative, and typological studies (of max. **8.000** words) dedicated to the emergence and demise of SVCs conducted from empirical and/or theoretical perspectives.



### Important dates

submission	1 May 2021
decision	1 August 2021
final manuscript	1 October 2021
publication	December 2021



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