

## Where do we draw the line on serial verb constructions?

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Verb serialization is a concept that has been discussed for over 130 years and yet there is no clear agreement on what it is. Defina (2016: 891) defines Serial Verb Constructions (SVCs) as “syntactic constructions where multiple verbs occur in a single clause with no coordination or subordination.” This definition and several discussions of SVC properties usually capture the fact that it is a single clause and consists of two or more verbs. Unfortunately, when one gets into the specifics of the construction in many languages, these key properties are either abandoned or glossed over. For instance one encounters some analyses of clauses containing a verb and a grammaticalized—hence no longer a fully-fledged—verb as an SVC. In other instances, constructions involving covert-coordination clauses or causal constructions in which a clause functions as an argument of a verb are analyzed as SVCs. I argue that such constructions should not be analyzed as SVCs. Using data from Kwa languages, I show that when one sticks to a narrow definition, some languages which are traditionally considered to be prototypical serializing languages may end up not possessing the construction at all. An advantage of this strategy is that it explains why some verb sequencing are less typical in some languages than in others.

### Reference

‘Do serial verb constructions describe single events?: A study of co-speech gestures in Avatime.’  
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