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# *Kot nou vire tourne nou tand li* Serial Verb Constructions at the Interface between Grammar and Culture: Case-Study Kreol Seselwa (Seychelles Creole) *

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*Abstract:*

This paper investigates the form and function of Verb Chains and Serial Verb Constructions (SVCs) in Kreol Seselwa (Seychelles Creole, KS), a French-based Creole language spoken in the Indian Ocean. Prior to Bickerton's seminal paper in 1989, it was widely assumed that Serial Verb Constructions were not part of KS grammar. More recent studies (Adone 2012; Syea 2013a, 2013b; Gabel 2018) have shown that these constructions do exist in Indian Ocean Creoles and in KS. Likewise, in this paper, we will demonstrate that from a typological perspective, prototypical as well as non-prototypical SVCs can be found in KS. In our analysis, we provide evidence that an ethnosyntactic framework can account for certain SVCs in KS. We argue that their form and function can be accounted for by cultural logic hence stressing the link between grammar and culture.

*Keywords:* adult grammar/early child grammar, ethnosyntax, Kreol Seselwa (Seychelles Creole), serial verb constructions, verb chains

## *1. Introduction*

In this paper, we address a long-standing issue in Creole Studies, namely whether verb chains or/and serial verb constructions exist in Kreol Seselwa

* This paper is dedicated to the memory of Derek Bickerton who has inspired us.

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(Seychelles Creole), a French-based Creole in the Indian Ocean. In the past several scholars have argued that serial verb constructions were not found in Kreol Seselwa (henceforth KS) (Bollée 1977; Seuren 1990; Michaelis 1994; Corne *et al.* 1996), while Bickerton (1989, 1990, 1996) brought some instances of serial verb constructions (henceforth SVCs) to our attention and argues that SVCs are part of KS grammar. Most recently, Syea (2013a, 2013b) has argued that serial verb constructions do indeed exist in both Mauritian Creole (MC) and KS.

The main goal of this paper is to discuss SVCs found in KS from an ethno-syntactic perspective. We argue that the patterns of SVCs found in this French-based Creole are in line with most of the patterns already identified in other Creole languages (cf. Muysken and Veenstra 1994 for an overview). Furthermore, we adopt the view that the grammar of a language reflects the culture of the speakers. Thus, we argue that certain types of SVCs in KS which are not present in other languages are best analysed as a reflex of the language/culture approach. Bearing this in mind, SVCs are naturally accounted for by the process of creolisation/nativisation. Thus, we conceptualise creolisation as not only a linguistic but also as a social process "in the course of which new common languages and sociocultural practices are developed" (Knörr and Trajano Filho 2018: 3). The study of SVCs in KS illustrates how people "construct commonalities in terms of language and social and cultural practices that lend expression to their experiences and life worlds" (Knörr and Trajano Filho 2018: 3).

This paper is organised as follows: in section two, we introduce some definitions of SVCs that have been offered to account for the cross-linguistic patterns of SVCs. In section three, we present an overview of the discussion on SVCs in the French-based Creole languages as seen in the field of Creole Studies, followed by a brief overview of the theoretical framework of Ethnosyntax in section four and a sociolinguistic profile of KS in section five. In section six, we provide information on the methods used for data collection and then explore SVCs in KS from a scenario in which grammar and culture are linked. Finally, part seven discusses the SVCs from an ethnosyntactic point of view, followed by a conclusion in section eight.

## *2. Theoretical issues*

### *2.1 Definitions*

In this paper we will use two terms, first, 'verb chains' as a cover term to refer mono-clausal constructions in which two or more verbs appear and second, 'serial verb constructions' that can be seen as a subtype of verb chains as their definition is more restricted (cf. below). The term 'verb chains' is mainly restricted in this paper to denote complex constructions with mul-

tiple verbs witnessed in first language acquisition whereas the term SVC is reserved for complex constructions found in the adult grammar. The data in early KS child grammar shows that these complex constructions are always target consistent from a syntactic perspective. However, it is the verb combinations that are different to the adult's model at times. Furthermore, we show that some adult structures also fit the description of verb chain and can thus be regarded as such, as we will discuss below.

The existence of serial verb constructions has been documented across language groups including West African languages, South East Asian languages, Oceanic, New Guinean and Australian languages, and languages in the Amazon (Aikhenvald 2006: 1). Interestingly, they are also attested in various Creole languages including English-, French-, and Spanish-based Creoles.

In spite of the plethora of theories proposed to account for SVCs in languages, the notion of SVC remains problematic in the literature (Joseph and Zwicky 1990; Bisang 1995; Stewart 2001; Aikhenvald and Dixon 2006; Haspelmath 2016). For instance, it has been proposed that SVCs serve as additional Case or Theta role markers due to lack of prepositions (Bickerton 1981; Sebba 1984). However, as Muysken and Veenstra (2006: 262) have argued, this cannot be confirmed due to several reasons, two of them being that languages with SVCs do exhibit prepositions and that SVCs do have more functions than just case marking (cf. also below). A different approach to account for the existence of SVCs in languages has been proposed by Law and Veenstra (1992) and Muysken and Veenstra (2006) who suggest that it is connected to the lack of rich verbal tense and agreement morphology. However, according to Aikhenvald (2006: 53), there are isolating languages with serial verb constructions, and non-isolating languages with SVCs. Against this background, the linguistic variation found so far, needs to be accounted for.

In this paper, we propose to analyse SVCs in a theory which links grammar and culture. In this way we believe certain cultural traits of a community and constrains imposed by the language can be better captured. Consequently, the use of certain grammatical devices chosen by communities is better accounted for, which in turn allows variation. We adopt Aikhenvald's (2006) view that there is a wide range of SVCs including the prototypical SVCs with maximal properties to those with minimal properties depending on formal as well as functional properties. We will come back to this point in the data analysis and in the discussion sections.

Sebba (1987: 5) states that Christaller was the first scholar to mention this phenomenon in his 1875 grammar about Twi, an African Language. At that time, he termed this phenomenon "accidental combination" (Christaller 1875: 144) and noted that in one sentence two verbs can be combined to express one action. Over the decades there has been a growing number of studies dealing with the defining properties of SVCs (such as Stahlke 1970; Bambgose 1974; Jansen *et al* 1978; Awóyalé 1988; Zwicky 1990; Seuren

1991; Muysken and Veenstra 1994, 2006; Aikhenvald and Dixon 2006; Bisang 2009; Haspelmath 2016; Gabel 2018, just to list a few). The most common definition of a SVC is "[…] a sequence of verbs which act together as a single predicate, without any overt marker of coordination, subordination, or syntactic dependency of any other sort" (Aikhenvald 2006: 1). As already mentioned previously, we thus have a clause with two or more verbs which describe one action/event which does not require any type of connectors such as *and*, *or, after, in order to* etc. In non-serializing languages such as English, these sequences of verbs can either be expressed with one single verb or with a main and a subordinate clause and prepositions (Aikhenvald 2006: 4).

In serializing languages, all verbs in an SVC can stand on their own. This is different to verb + verb sequences in English such as *will be going* as none of the verbs can appear on their own. A further defining property of SVC is the so-called prosodic property. As SVCs are mono-clausal, there is no pause between the verbs and no break in intonation contour can be discerned as is the case at the end of a sentence or a clause. Thus, this property allows for a distinction between SVCs and asyndetic constructions (Aikhenvald 2006) as for example in *he came, saw, won*.

In addition to these three properties above, the verbs in an SVC typically have the same tense, mood and aspect value. Negation has scope over all the verbs in an SVC. This property makes it clear that that the action being described is thought of as one event. Even though this event may consist of different sub-events, they are nevertheless tightly connected and form a unit (Aikhenvald 2006).

The last property mentioned here is that the verbs share arguments. This property has been heavily discussed in the literature. In prototypical SVCs, subjects are always shared though this is not a necessary condition for SVCs[1] (Law and Veenstra 1992: 187). In, for instance, so called subject-switch serials, the subject of the second verb in the structure is the object of the first verb (Aikhenvald 2006: 14). These SVCs are quite rare and are hence seen as non-prototypical SVCs. If subjects are shared, oftentimes the subject only appears overtly once per SVC. However, in some languages, the subject or the subject pronoun can be overtly repeated on the second or all verbs in the structure (Byrne 1991: 211; Aikhenvald 2006: 51).[2]

### *2.2 Types of SVCs*

There are two main approaches proposed to account for the various types of SVCs. On the one hand, we find a formal classification, and on the other

[1] For the view that subject sharing is obligatory, cf., for instance, Baker (1989).

[2] Cf. also Aikhenvald's (2006) concordant marking parameter in chapter 2.2 below.

hand, we see a classification based on the functions of SVCs. The formal classification proposed by Aikhenvald (2006) contains four parameters. She distinguishes between multi-word and single word, symmetric and asymmetric, contiguous and non-contiguous, and finally concordant and non-concordant SVCs. In multi-word SVCs, the respective verbs, shared arguments and possibly other material contained within the SVC are represented by separate lexemes/morphemes, whereas in single-word SVCs these are represented by several morphemes contained within one lexeme. Aikhenvald (2006: 37) terms this "root serialization".

Symmetric SVCs contain two or more verbs from an open class, i.e. no selectional restrictions are imposed on any of the verbs. This is in contrast to asymmetric SVCs in which at least one verb has to come from one semantic field or is a fixed lexeme (Aikhenvald 2006: 21). A similar approach has been proposed by Muysken and Veenstra (2006: 241) who distinguish between verbs in SVCs that are more or less lexically free and express subevents which are more or less independent.

Aikhenvald's (2006: 37) contiguity parameter defines whether or not material can intervene between the two or more verbs. In contiguous SVCs, the verbs are adjacent, whereas in non-contiguous SVCs other constituents such as objects or adjuncts appear between the verbs. Finally, Aikhenvald's (2006) last distinction refers to the question as to whether tense, mood and aspect as well as subject marking is repeated on all of the verbs (concordant marking) or whether only the first verb exhibits these categories (non-concordant marking).

This suggested classification is embedded in a scalar and prototype approach, as already mentioned above. Aikhenvald distinguishes prototypical asymmetric and non-prototypical asymmetric SVCs, similar to prototypical symmetric and non-prototypical symmetric SVCs. Furthermore, cross-linguistically speaking, SVCs with shared subjects are considered to be more prototypical than those in which SVCs are not shared as in so-called switch subject SVCs. According to Aikhenvald (2006: 44), also non-concordant SVCs, i.e. those SVCs in which only the first verb exhibits TMA as well as subject marking, are more prototypical across the world's languages than concordantly marked SVCs, in which the respective grammatical markers are repeated on each verb.

The second approach, i.e. a functional/semantic classification, can be found in many publications on SVCs (e.g. Jansen *et al.* 1978; Sebba 1987; Bisang 1995; Aikhenvald 2006; Ansaldo 2006). We will follow Muysken and Veenstra's (1994, 2006) terminology in this article as their publications contain the most relevant proposed in the literature. They distinguish between directional, argument introducing 'give', 'say' and 'take', aspectual, degree, causative, resultative and open-ended SVCs.

Directional SVCs involve two or more verbs of motion, one of which indicates the direction towards, away or around something. Usually, the verb

indicating the direction of the motion is found in $V_2$ position. This can be exemplified with the following sentence, taken from Muysken and Veenstra (2006: 244)

(1) A kúle gó
3SG run go
'He ran away' *Saramaccan*

According to Aikhenvald (2006: 22), this SVC is "extremely common in most productively serializing languages" and is formally classified as an asymmetrical SVC.

The class of argument introducing serials has in common that they increase the valency of the SVC and – as the name suggests – introduce objects as well as other complements into the structure. Argument introducing 'give' indicates that the action of the first verb is done for somebody (an object with a BENEFICIARY theta-role is added) or introduces the recipient of a transaction (an object with a GOAL theta-role is added). Argument introducing 'say' serials include one verb of thinking, speaking or knowing and in the final verb position of the SVC they exhibit the verb 'say' that introduces a complement clause which describes what has been thought, spoken or known. Finally, argument introducing 'take' can be used to add an instrument to the serial with which an action is performed (INSTRUMENTAL theta-role) or describes what is happening to an object (THEME theta-role). All argument introducing SVCs are classified as asymmetric following Aikhenvald's (2006) classification. Furthermore, since they introduce objects, they are usually non-contiguous. In the following *Saramaccan* examples, taken from Muysken and Veenstra (2006: 246ff.), all of the argument introducing SVCs are displayed in turn.

(2) A tjá sondí kó dá dí Faánsi sèmbè
3SG carry thing come give DET French man
'He presented something to the Frenchman' give SVC – GOAL

(3) Séi wan ijsie dá mi!
sell DET ice-cream give 1SG
'Sell an ice-cream for me!' give SVC – BENEFACTIVE

(4) Mi sábi táa á búnu
1SG know say 3SG=NEG good
'I know that it is not good' say-SVC

(5) A téi dí páu náki hen gbóó úe káá
3SG take DET stick hit 3SG ideophone throw finish
'He already had taken a stick and beaten him down with it' take SVC – INSTRUMENT

(6) Me téi dí búku butá alá
ISG=NEG take DET book put there
'I didn't take the book and put it there' take SVC – THEME

Aspectual SVCs describe an action as completed or ongoing. According to Muysken and Veenstra (2006: 246), the verb indicating aspect usually appears in second position, as can be seen from their following example:

(7) Mi jabí dí dóo kabá
ISG open DET door finish
'I have finished opening the door' *Saramaccan*

In contrast, Aikhenvald (2006: 23) gives an example from Kristang originally presented in Baxter (1988) in which the aspectual verb is in first position. Here, the question has to be raised as to the demarcation of SVCs and other V+V structure. Whereas verb plus 'finish' can be seen as an SVC, 'finish' plus verb could potentially also be analysed as a structure involving a non-finite V complement of the aspectual verb in the first position. This is for instance the case in English *He finished cooking*. Hence, their TMA value would be different and they should be excluded from the phenomenon of SVCs as per definition (Veenstra, p.c.). However, this is quite difficult to ascertain especially in isolating languages without overt inflection on the verbs, as for instance in KS. Hence, for the time being we will treat 'finish' + V as a verb chain present in child as well as adult grammar that can also potentially be classified as an SVC (cf. also the discussion in Gabel 2018).

Another function that can be fulfilled by SVCs is the indication of degree. In these SVCs, a comparison is expressed with the help of the second verb, which is usually some form of 'pass' or 'surpass' (example taken from Muyken and Veenstra 2006: 247).

(8) A bebé daán pása/moó mi
3SG drink rum pass/more ISG
'He drinks more rum than me' *Saramaccan*

Causative SVCs consist of two sub-events of which the second is caused by the first. These SVCs usually contain some form of 'make', though this verb oftentimes appears as $V_2$ between two verbs as a connector of the events expressed by $V_1$ and $V_3$ (Muysken and Veenstra 2006: 249).

(9) Dí tjúba tá kái mbéi hen uwíi munjá tooná kó bè
DET rain ASP fall make 3SG hair wet turn come red
'It is raining so that her hair becomes wet and turns red' *Saramaccan*

In resultative SVCs, the second verb describes the result of an event predicated by the first verb. According to Muysken and Veenstra (2006), the posi-

tion is fixed but the class of potential verbs is unrestricted. However, Veenstra (2004) has shown that the choice of verbs in Saramaccan is constrained by the transitivity setting, i.e. transitive with transitive and unaccusative with unaccusative verbs can be combined. Thus, a transitive verb cannot appear together with an unaccusative verb in a resultative SVC. Finally, the last function of SVCs that can be discerned are open-ended SVCs. They describe one complex event as a series of subevents. Two examples are given below, both taken from Muysken and Veenstra (2006: 249ff.):

(10) De sikópu hen kíi
3PL kick 3SG kill
'They kicked him dead' *Saramaccan* (Resultative)

(11) A kísi dí fou náki kíi limbó bói njan
3SG catch DET bird hit kill clean cook eat
'He caught the bird, struck it dead, cleaned, cooked, and ate it' *Saramaccan* (Open)

In resultatives as well as open-ended SVCs, the verbs usually have iconic/temporal ordering. Furthermore, the verbs are also mostly not constrained in any other way in the latter two serials apart from the syntactic constraints in resultatives presented above. Hence, they are classified as symmetric SVCs in Aikhenvald's (2006) approach.

## *3. The study of SVCs in Creole studies*

One of the first overview of SVCs in Creole languages was compiled by Jansen, Koopman and Muysken in 1978 and included different Creoles over the world. However, most of the studies concerned with SVCs first focused on the Creole languages in the Caribbean and elsewhere. For instance, the first extensive study of SVCs in Creoles was undertaken by Sebba (1987) investigating the phenomenon in Sranan. Other examples of studies of SVCs in Caribbean Creoles are Winford (1993) or Veenstra (1996).

Previous studies on SVCs in the Indian Ocean Creoles (IOCs) have especially focused on the question as to whether these structures can be found or as to whether they are absent in these Creole languages. This discussion was tied to the question of the genesis of Creoles and, hence, a political issue. Those who maintained that Creoles have considerable substrate influence and/or substrate origin did not assume that SVCs were present in IOCs. Since most of the assumed substrate languages for IOCs do not exhibit SVCs, IOCs likewise could not exhibit those structures. Bickerton (1989, 1990) in turn argued that these structures can indeed be found in IOCs and hence the substrate origin of Creole languages cannot be maintained, thereby making a point for his Language Bioprogram Hypothesis (1984). Based on fieldwork on the Seychelles, he concluded first, that SVCs are present and second, that

all types proposed above with the exception of degree serials can be found. In contrast to that, Seuren (1990) denied the existence by asserting that his informants all rejected SVCs and corrected the structures to coordinated sentences including an overt coordinator or subordinator such as *and, for* and others or to asyndetic structures uttered with a break/pause in intonation contour. Corne *et al.* (1996) likewise argued that in KS, all structures that superficially look as if they were SVCs are actually asyndetic constructions that do not exhibit overt coordinators. Bickerton (1996) rejected Corne *et al.*'s (1996) analysis based on syntactic as well as intonational properties of SVCs in contrast to asyndetic construction analysis. One of the most recent publications on MC by Syea (2013a, 2013b) also finds SVCs to be present in IOCs. However, in contrast to all preceding publications, he traces their occurrence in MC and KS neither to a universal nor to a substrate origin.[3] He maintains that SVCs in MC are a language internal development originating in imperative constructions used on the plantations. Nowadays, most agree that SVCs are present in KS and MC (cf. for instance the respective structure datasets of the languages in APiCS, Gabel 2018), though the discussion is still going on which of the types presented above are part of the grammar and why these structures exist in IOCs.

Besides the studies mentioned above, Adone (2012) has recently worked on the acquisition of SVCs in KS. She finds that young children around the age of 2;4 start producing verb chains of the directional type al + V (go +V) pattern. This led her to conclude that there is an option for the V+V adjacency pattern in early Creole acquisition. Given that SVCs are relatively scant in spontaneous speech, she administered a set of experiments. All 6 groups of children from age 3; 0-6; 11, 80 altogether, produced SVCs. Most of the SVC types reported by Bickerton for KS were attested in the data, except for say serials (*poudir)* and degree serials. There were new combinations of verbs in the data indicating innovations in child grammar. In a second study conducted in (2014) Adone showed that children between 4;0-6;0 of age produced many novel verb combinations which were accepted by the adult control group, thus showing that they go beyond the input they receive.

## *4. Theoretical framework: An ethno-syntactic approach to language*

As previously mentioned this paper approaches language not as an isolated system of structures but as tightly entangled with cultural patterns. While this view is an integral part of anthropological research, it has by far

[3] A different explanation of the occurrence of SVCs in MC has recently been proposed by Veenstra (2017) who argues that they can be traced to Bantu influence, similar to Gilman (1993) and Corne *et al.* (1996), a theory rejected by Syea (2013a).

not been as popular in linguistics. Nevertheless, such a holistic approach to language and culture has been proposed by scholars such as Lucy (1992), Hale (1966), Wierzbicka (1996), Haviland (1993), and Levinson (2003) amongst others, who revisited ideas from Cognitive Anthropology, Symbolic Anthropology and Practice Theory in careful avoidance of deterministic or causal interpretations of the language-culture nexus. This reassessment of the relationship between language and culture has given rise to the field of Ethnosyntax, which can be regarded as a subarea of anthropological linguistics and focuses on the reflection of cultural patterns in linguistic structures – and vice versa. As such, grammatical patterns are seen as "thick with cultural meaning" (Enfield 2002a: 3). The embedding of linguistic structures in a larger language ecology (Hymes 1974; Haugen 2001) enriches their analysis and provides a more holistic and comprehensive approach towards language. In this regard, Enfield (2002a: 4) differentiates between ethnosyntax in a 'narrow' and 'broad' sense. While the former traces "the direct encoding of cultural meaning in the semantics of morphosyntax", as it is postulated by Wierzbicka's Natural Semantic Metalanguage approach and its application to cultural scripts (e.g. Wierzbicka 1994; Goddard and Wierzbicka 2004), the latter focuses on linguistic structures that reflect cultural practices rather than "encoding culture-specific 'statements'" (Enfield 2002a: 8). Our analysis of SVCs in KS will take ethnosyntax in a broad sense as a starting point.

Such an interdisciplinary approach to linguistic structures and their reflection of cultural patterns has rarely been applied to the study of Creole languages.[4] However, we find several detailed cross-linguistic analyses of how SVCs go hand in hand with cultural conceptualisations.

The overarching pattern we find is that the way complex events or activities are conceptualised on a cultural level may influence how a verb chain is interpreted and also whether a certain SVC is accepted by native speakers as grammatical or not. Bruce (1988: 28), cited in Enfield (2002b: 231) notes that the relation of events in an SVC depends on whether they are "conceived as notably more commonly associated together [and whether they] form a culturally important concatenation". Similarly, Durie (1997) discusses how, amongst processes of lexicalisation and productivity, SVCs underlie cultural conceptualisation of event types, leading to grammaticality judgements that cannot be explained on a purely syntactic level. His explanation of instances in which speakers reject SVCs even though structurally speaking they follow all necessary constraints is based on cultural patterns of conceptualisation (326-327). According to him, it is "stereo-typical schema for event-types,

[4] However, see Hollington (2015) for a discussion of 'travelling concepts' in Jamaican and Brück (2016) for an analysis of the interaction of cultural patterns and multimodal reference marking in Kreol Seselwa.

which are culture-specific to varying degrees" (327) that guide the interpretation of an SVC as grammatical or ungrammatical.

As a consequence, an ethnosyntactic approach to event conceptualisation can be seen as relying on cultural logic (Enfield 2002b), implying that the choice of events concatenated in an SVC may not be subject to grammatical constraints only. Enfield (2002b) refers to an often cited example from White Hmong provided by Jarkey (1991: 169-70):

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (12) | a. | Nws | dhia | shov | geej |
| | | 3SG | dance | blow | bamboo.pipes |
| | | 'He dances playing the pipes' | | | |
| | b. | *nws | dhia | mloong | nkauj |
| | | 3SG | dance | listen | song |
| | | 'He dances and listens to music' | | | |

While a) and b) are not different on a grammatical level, b) is rejected by White Hmong speakers due to cultural conceptualisation. The bamboo pipes are traditionally played in a performance that also entails dancing, which is why play and dance are perceived as one unitary event. Dancing and listening, on the other hand, are perceived as two independent events, which is why they cannot be combined in an SVC.

The role of typicality and cultural logic in SVCs is also a core element in Enfield's (2002b) analysis of associated posture constructions in Lao. Enfield links the choice for an SVC construction to the pragmatic choice of 'what is normal' to culturally acceptable concatenations, which in turn has an impact on whether certain constructions are restricted to specific cultural domains or display a higher degree of productivity. Cultural logic has been shown not only to influence whether a certain SVC is acceptable or not, but also whether complex constructions are interpreted as SVCs at all. Evidence is provided by Diller's (2006) analysis of Thai verb chains, which he claims to "culturally cohesive patterns of action" (162). He draws attention to the fact that different complex constructions, such as SVCs but also purpose clauses and subordinate constructions not only underlie grammatical constraints, but also depend on contextual and cultural interpretation. The following example illustrates this flexibility of interpretation:

(13) phi:$^{2}$-saw:$^{4}$ nagn$^{2}$ rot$^{3}$ pay chiangmai$^{1}$
elder-sister sit car go Chiangmai
'My older sister took the bus to Chiangmai'

Diller (2006: 169)

According to Diller, the example above can be interpreted as a SVC coding for a cohesive event or as a purpose clause, i.e. a subordinate construction, in which the bus is taken in order to go to Chiangmai. The interpretation of Thai verb chains seems to be further motivated by conventionalisation.

Among the cohesive pairs that tend to occur together very often due to culturally motivated conceptionalisation we find e.g. *light-up / inhale* ('He lit it and smoked it'), *pick-up / look* ('He picked it up and looked at it') or *look-for / buy* ('She shops for it') (Diller 2006: 170). Finally, Diller (2006: 175) also mentions a case in which the cultural framework even overrides grammatical rules – in the case of a popular folktale, a "playfully emphatic SVC construction" is acceptable to native speakers even though it contradicts the same-subject constraint.[5] Taking both grammatical, pragmatic and cultural factors into account, Diller (2006: 175) concludes that the interpretation of verb chains is quite flexible, leading to "'grey' transition areas between verb serialization [in the narrow, typological sense] and other multiverb phenomena".

## *5. Sociolinguistics of KS*

KS is a French-based Creole spoken in the Indian Ocean. It is the L1 of approximately 99% of the population (Fleischmann 2008: 69) and is spoken by approximately 100,000 people in the Seychelles as well as in other countries such as for instance UK, Australia and New Zealand (Michaelis and Rosalie 2013: 261). Together with English and French it is one of the three national languages of the Seychelles. In school, KS is a medium of instruction until Primary 2 and is subsequently taught as a subject in the school curriculum (Minister Ledikasyon 2004). KS is also the language of parliament. However, studies such as Fleischmann (2008), Hoareau (2010), Brück (2016) and Gabel (2018) have shown that English is preferred in formal situations, especially in written contexts. This can be traced back to the colonial history as well as to the important status of English as a lingua franca nowadays.

KS has been described as an "offshoot of Mauritian Creole" (Michaelis and Rosalie 2013: 262) as its origins have been traced back to the Creole language which has emerged on Mauritius and which has then been exported to the Seychelles via slave trade from the 1770s onwards (Hull 1979, Baker and Corne 1982; Michaelis and Rosalie 2013).[6] From the very start of settlement on the Seychelles, KS has been subject to influences from Reunion Creole (Baker and Corne 1982), which is why similarities to both Mauritian Creole and Reunion Creole can be found (Baker and Corne 1982). On a lexical level, influences from Eastern Bantu languages and Malagasy have also been attested, which, however, make up only a small percentage of the loanwords found in KS (Michaelis and Rosalie 2009). While the existence of Bantu

[5] But cf. above and Aikhenvald (2006) amongst others for a discussion of this same-subject constraint.

[6] For a different view on the origin of KS, cf. Chaudenson (1974, 1979) who argues that its source is Reunion Creole rather than Mauritian Creole.

words on the lexicon of KS cannot be denied, we believe there is up-to-date no solid evidence for the morpho-syntactic influence of Bantu languages on KS.[7] KS follows the typological trend found in many Creole languages. It is an analytic language that exhibits a fixed SVO word order. Further grammatical features of the nominal system include optional number markers, a determiner system in which articles and demonstratives overlap to a certain degree, as well as the occurrence of null subjects and bare nouns (cf Baptista 2007; Déprez 2007; Brück 2016 amongst others).

The verbal system is characterised by preverbal TMA markers and the negation marker *pa* (Michaelis and Rosalie 2013; Choppy 2013), whose combination always follows the strict order of NEG - T - M - A. In the tense system, we find the markers *ti* and *fek*[8] coding for past and *pu* and *a(va)* coding for future.[9] Present tense is expressed by zero marking. Among the aspect markers we find *pe* (progressive) and *i(n)* (perfective), with habitual aspect being expressed by zero marking. The individual markers can also be combined to express e.g. past before past (*ti'n*), progressive past (*ti pe*), future in the past (*ti pou*) and counterfactual modality (*ti a, ti a'n*) (Michaelis and Rosalie 2013; Choppy 2013). Further constructions, such as *kapab* + V or *bezwen* + V are also used to express modality (Michaelis and Rosalie 2013).

Furthermore, verbs can exhibit long forms (e.g. *manze*, 'eat'; *ale*, 'go') and short forms (e.g. *manz, al*).[10] Whether the long or the short form is used seems to depend on the syntactic environment (Choppy 2013; Corne 1977). The short form is used if the verb is followed by a complement, such as an object or another verb. The long form appears, for example, if the verb does not license any complements, if it appears clause or sentence finally, or if the verb receives stress (Choppy 2013: 87ff.). The picture of the long/short verb form alternation is not as clear if an adjunct follows the verb as compared to complements. Hence, there seems to be a considerable amount of variation with regard to this syntactic environment (Corne 1977: 83). Very simplified speaking, the long form appears in clause final position and is preferred before adjuncts, whereas the short form appears before any type of licensed complement. Interestingly, in SVCs the long form appears, indicating that in serials the two verbs are not in a complement relationship with each other (cf. also discussion in Gabel 2018).

[7] For a different view, cf. Veenstra (2017).

[8] However, more recent data has shown that the use of *fek* has decreased in everyday speech (Gabel 2018).

[9] For an analysis of *a(va)* and *pou* as Mood markers, cf. Gabel (2018).

[10] There is also a group of verbs that have a single form only, such as *dormi*, 'sleep', *dekouver*, 'discover', or *krwar*, 'believe'. According to Choppy (2013: 85), these group are either characterised by a specific phonological pattern, e.g. ending with *-er* or *-i*, or part of an irregular category, as in the case of *krwar*. The only exception being *vini*, 'come' with its short form *vin* (Choppy 2013: 85).

Finally, much discussion has revolved around the use of *i* in KS, which seems to be a multifunctional element. While in the pronominal system it encodes the third person singular, it can also function as a pleonastic pronoun or as a reprise pronoun in circumstances of topic dislocation (Corne 1974, 1977; Papen 1978; Brück 2016: 188-189). Moreover, the 'mysterious i' (Corne 1974) has been argued to function as a present tense marker (Bickerton 1989), an agreement marker (Bickerton 1993) or a dummy TMA marker (Michaelis 1994). A defining criterion of those cases in which *i* does not assume a pronominal function is that it cannot co-occur with NEG or any of the TMA markers (Bickerton 1993; Michaelis 2000). Since it seems to be in complementary distribution with other tense markers, it may be some form of predicate marker. However, it is only restricted to 3rd person contexts and mainly used after singular nouns.[11] Apart from its unclear status in non-pronominal uses, its origin is likewise not clear. Pending further analysis, we will assume that it is a predicate marker (PM) following the notation used in APiCS (Michaelis & Rosalie 2013) if it is not used pronominally.

## *6. SVC in Kreol Seselwa*

### *6.1 Methods of data collection*

In this paper, we use different methods of data collection. Adone (2012 and 2014) collected SVCs in spontaneous speech with both adults and children. She also conducted a series of experiments with both adults and children aged between 3;0- 5;11. One of the main goals in the data elicitation part in 2012 was to establish whether children understand and produce SVCs with various verb combinations, and if they do, which patterns of SVCs children follow. They were asked to listen to a puppet which was learning to speak KS and to correct it if necessary when the puppet made 'mistakes'. The puppet would use various SVCs to describe a series of pictures. In 2014, she conducted a second batch of experiments. Children watched short videos of e.g. Batman doing various things (e.g. take/put) and were asked to describe what they saw. Both series of experiments confirmed that young children understood and produced SVC. The results discussed in Adone (2012 and 2014) reveal clearly that children at a very young age produced verb chains and subsequently SVCs as these become target-consistent. Adone also compiled a list of SVCs in KS in collaboration with M.T. Choppy in 2015 and 2016 which also have consolidated the adult corpus.

In 2014 and 2015, Gabel has also collected data on SVCs in adult language. Her data include spoken as well as written sources. For the spoken corpus, she

[11] But this is not necessarily the case. It can also appear after plural nouns (Adone and Brück p.c.; and Gabel, 2018).

conducted interviews with 41 participants who took part in semi-spontaneous as well as elicitation tasks. The first task was to describe an activity, a recipe or a festivity such as Christmas. Even though the topic was indicated by the researcher, the rest of the task was unstructured and, hence, spontaneous speech was recorded. The second task consisted of an elicitation task in which the participants watched short videos displaying an action without sound that they had to describe to the interviewer afterwards. The short films were based on SVCs reported to be present in other Creole languages as well as in KS and on other actions which potentially could be described with the help of an SVC. Finally, acceptability judgments were presented to the participants so that a deeper insight into the structure of SVCs in KS could be gained. The written corpus of the study consisted of 16 texts, chosen by random sampling.[12] The combination of data collection with children and adults yields a rich corpus which provides us some deep insights on SVC in KS necessary for the analysis. All examples in the following section 6.2 are either taken from Adone's or from Gabel's data corpus described above.

### *6.2 Data*

In this section, we will have a closer look at the types of serial verb constructions found in contemporary Seselwa. First, we will describe SVCs in KS from the formal point of view proposed by Aikhenvald (2006) and second, we will list the types of SVCs ordered by the functions that have been identified (in, e.g. Muysken and Veenstra 2006).

Several observations concerning Aikhenvald's (2006) four formal parameters presented above can be made. As KS is a rather isolating/analytic language, all SVCs in KS are multi-word SVCs and no root serialization can be observed. Furthermore, the first verb of the SVC always appears in its long form, unless it licenses a direct object which appears between V1 and V2. Hence, one can state that no complement relationship can be found between V1 and V2 (cf. also Gabel, in prep) in SVCs. This, however, does not apply to all verb chains, as we will argue below.

Concerning Aikhenvald's (2006) second parameter, it can be seen that KS has asymmetric (14) as well as symmetric SVCs (15).

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (14) | En | msye | in | pran sa | bisiklet | in | pedale |
| | A | man | ASP | take DET | bicycle | ASP | pedals |
| | 'A man has taken his bicycle and has pedalled' | | | | | | |

[12] For a more detailed overview and description of the methodology and analysis used in the study cf. Gabel (2018).

(15) Pe fri dizef met dan pwalon
ASP fry eggs put in pan
'He is frying the eggs in the pan'

In the first example above, the first verb in this SVC comes from a restricted class ('take') that serves to introduce an argument, here 'bicycle'. From a functional typological perspective, this SVC can be classified as an argument introducing 'take' SVC (cf. below). The second example displays an open SVC in which an event is described which consists of two very closely connected subevents. Here, both verbs come from unrestricted classes and no other selectional restriction is imposed. With the help of these two examples, Aikhenvald's third parameter, the contiguity parameter, can also be described. In both cases above an object intervenes between the first and the second verb and hence, both can be classified as non-contiguous SVCs. In KS contiguous SVCs can be found as well in which no material comes between V1 and V2, as is evident from the following example:

(16) Sa myse pe monte desann
DET man ASP ascend descend
'The man is going up and down (the stairs)'

Furthermore, as can be seen from the examples given so far, SVCs in KS can be concordantly marked (14) as well as non-concordantly marked (15 and 16). In the latter, the aspect maker *pe* only appears on the first verb, though the second verb is understood to have the same aspect value. In contrast, in (14), the aspect marker *in* is repeated on V2. Apart from concordant TMA marking, KS also exhibits concordant subject marking, i.e. the subject pronoun can be repeated on the second verb as well. This is illustrated by the following sentence (17):

(17) Ou pran bilenbi ou rape
PRN take bilenbi PRN rasp
'You take the bilenbi and you rasp them'

Bickerton (1989) has argued that concordantly marked SVCs (in his terminology 'tensed SVCs') are preferred to non-concordantly marked SVCs. This tendency is confirmed by Gabel's data from 2014 and 2015 and, as we will argue below, this is one of the reasons why SVCs in KS are often non-prototypical in comparison to the world's languages and have often been misdiagnosed.

Finally, subjects as well as objects may be shared in KS, as all examples (14-17) above demonstrate. However, we also find SVCs in which the subject is not shared and which can be classified as switch subject SVCs, for instance in the following example:

(18) En zonm in pous en lot zonm ater in tonbe
DET man ASP push DET other man ground ASP fall
'A man has pushed another man to the ground and he (i.e. the second man) has fallen'

Likewise, though object sharing is often the case in transitive SVCs in KS, there are also instances in which objects are not shared in transitive configurations, as can be seen from the following example:

(19) Nou grat sa lapo atet reken nou tir sa bann disab ki lo la
PRN grate DET skin head shark PRN pull DET PL sand PRN P DEM
'We grate that skin of a shark's head and pull all the sand which is on it'

### *6.2.1 Directional serials*

As indicated above, these serials use verbs of motion and direction either in the first or second position. The second verb usually indicates the direction of the motion, as can be seen from the following examples:

(20) Pti lisyen in taye in ale
Small dog ASP run ASP go
'The small dog has run away'

(21) Mami anmennen sorti travay
Mami bring exit work
'My mother brings it (Ladob) from work'

In addition to these rather prototypical directionals, we also find SVCs with two verbs of motion in KS that describe an event that can either be interpreted literally or figuratively (cf. also our analysis of these constructions in the discussion below).

(22) Get pti tonton pe monte desann peron
Watch small uncle ASP ascend descend stairs
'Watch the uncle going up and down the stairs' (literal)

(23) I pe monte desann
PRN ASP ascend descend
'He is going back and forth' (figurative)

(24) Bann Zerar ti pe ale vini Sesel Moris
PL Zerar TNS ASP go come Seychelles Mauritius
'The Zerar family were going back and forth between the Seychelles and Mauritius' (figurative)

(25) Zot in marse vire
PRN ASP walk turn
'They were going around in circles' (figurative)

(26) Zot pe rise pouse
PRN ASP pull push
'They are arguing/ They are not making a decision' (figurative)

Finally, directional SVCs can also be employed in KS to express a purpose, for instance in example (27) or (28) below.

(27) Bann Zerar in sorti Dubai (in) al lostrali
PL Zerar ASP exit Dubai (ASP) go Australia
'The Zerar family comes from Dubai to go to Australia'

(28) Alice sorti lafrens vin fer granzar Sesel
Alice exit France come make showoff Seychelles
'Alice comes from France to show-off in the Seychelles'

### *6.2.2 Argument-introducing serials*

Within this subclass of SVCs, one can further distinguish between argument introducing 'take', 'give' and 'say' serials. The status of argument introducing 'say' serials in KS is not clear. Bickerton (1989) argues that this construction once was present in KS and has been grammaticalised into the complementiser *poudir*. However, the origin of *poudir* remains unclear and hence cannot clearly be attributed to the phenomenon of SVCs, as Gilman (1993) and Kriegel (2004) argue. Hence, we will leave argument introducing 'say' aside for the following discussion, especially since they were not present in Adone's 2014 corpus as well as in Gabel's spoken data.[13]

In contrast to 'say' serials, argument introducing 'take' can be found in the KS data. On the one hand, we find a lot of examples with prototypical 'take', pran in the first verb position which introduces arguments either with an INSTRUMENTAL or a THEME theta role:

(29) I pran larzan partaz avek son pti
PRN take money split with his small
'S/He takes the money and splits it with his/her child' (THEME)

(30) Ou pran pwason ou sizle li
PRN take fish PRN sizzle PRN
'You take the fish and sizzle it. (THEME)

(31) Marie son bon nek pran larzan rann
Marie PRN good only take money returns
'Marie is only good in borrowing and returning money' (THEME)

[13] A detailed analysis and discussion can be found in the above-mentioned texts as well as in Gabel (2018).

(32) I pran bato koko bat li (…)
PRN take broom coconut hit PRN (…)
'He hit him with a coconut broom' (INSTRUMENTAL)

On the other hand, other verbs that are semantically similar to *pran*, 'take', such as *tir*, 'pull', *trape/atrape,* 'grab', *anmase*, 'gather' also can be found in V1 position in KS, as the following examples illustrate:

(33) Ou tire dan kes met dan pos
PRN pull from cash put in pocket
'You take from the cash and put it in the pocket'

(34) I tir kaka met ble
PRN pull shit put blue.
'He has not properly washed the clothes'

(35) I'n anmas boul i'n anvoye
PRN.ASP gather ball PRN.ASP throw
'He has gathered the ball and he has thrown it'

(36) Sinwa dir tir dan pos met dan kes
Chinese say pull in pocket put in cash register
'The Chinese say you take from pocket put in cash register'

The second type of argument introducing SVCs, namely 'give' serials, can also be found in KS, though they are not as predominantly present as 'take' SVCs. Some examples are given below:

(37) Toultan I touy koson donn bann vwazen
Always PRN kill pig give PL neighbors
'He always kills a pig and gives it to the neighbours/He kills a pig for the neighbours'

(38) En msye in anmenn en liv in donn en lot dimoun
DET man prn bring DET book ASP give DET other person
'A man brings a book and gives it to another person/ brings a book for another person'

Finally, many other verb combinations are possible that introduce arguments into the structure, as the following examples show:

(39) I kas dizef met dan bol
PRN break egg put in bowl
'He breaks the egg and puts it in a bowl'

(40) En msye i antre lap- i ouver laport i referme
DET man PM enter do- PM open door PM closes
'The man enters a do- opened a door and closes it again'

(41) I'n larg en tas ater i'n kraze
PRN.ASP throw DET cup ground PRN.ASP break
'He throws a cup to the ground and he breaks it'

However, these combinations might better be classified as open SVCs (in the case of (39) and (40)) or as resultative SVCs (41) since they display a description of two subevents in an iconic order or one subevent and the result respectively.

### *6.2.3 Aspectual serials*

In prototypical aspectual SVCs, the second verb indicates the duration of an event. In KS, this can be exemplified with the help of the following examples, in which we find a verb plus *fini*, 'finish' in V2 position:

(42) M'ale mon fini, nou pran...
PRN.GO PRN finish, PRN take…
'When I'm done going (to Christmas mass), we take…'

(43) Ou ganny sans reflesir lo bann keksoz ki'n passe in fini prezan
PRN get chance reflect on PL thing THAT.ASP pass ASP finish now
'You get the chance to reflect on things that have passed in the last year'

Even though these SVCs do exist in KS, they are quite rare. In Gabel's semi-spontaneous as well as elicitation data corpus, they surface only twice. Likewise, Adone (2012) has not found many of these constructions in adult speech. This might be due to the fact that a similar construction is present in KS which is predominantly used. In these constructions we find the verb expressing the aspectual notion in first place and another lexical verb in 2nd position. This can for instance be seen in the following examples:

(44) Zot fek fini manz son Ladob
PRN ASP finish eat PRN Ladob
'They have just finished eating his/her Ladob'

(45) I'n aret donn gren
PRN.ASP stop give grief
'S/he has stopped pestering me'

In the second example, it becomes evident that in these constructions the short form of the verb is used in the first position, i.e. *aret* instead of *arete*.[14]

[14] The verb *fini* does not have a short form.

Hence, a complement relationship exists between the two verbs. Therefore, these structures may best be classified as verb chains in a broader sense rather than as SVCs in a narrow sense.[15] This also holds true for constructions that involve the verb *ale* in first position in the following example. These constructions, similar to *fini*+Verb, are very common in KS.

(46) I'n al pran liv
PRN.ASP go take book
'S/he has taken the book'

Apart from these prototypical aspectual SVCs as well as common verb chains, some SVCs in KS can also have an aspectual notion and express the duration of an event. This has already been mentioned above in section 6.2.1 concerning certain directional SVCs. For instance, *monte desann* as well as *ale vini* stress the recurring and iterating nature of the events and also express a certain restlessness. We will come back to this notion in the discussion. Another type that is used to code aspectual sense in KS are SVCs involving a posture verb in the first position. For instance, in the examples below, *asize*, 'sit' as well as *debout,* 'stand' express that the two events are simultaneously taking place. Another and slightly different semantic interpretation of *asize* in SVCs will be displayed below in section 6.2.5.

(47) Marmay pe asize manze anba lavarang
Child ASP sit eat on veranda
'The child is sitting and eating on the veranda'

(48) I pe debout reve
PRN ASP stand dream
'S/he is standing and dreaming or: S/he is day-dreaming'

### *6.2.4 Resultative serials*

Resultative SVCs are also present in KS. Within this type, we find subject switch serials. For instance, in the following examples the understood subject of the second verb is the object of the first one.

(49) En zonm in pous en lot zonm ater in tonbe
DET man ASP push DET other man ground ASP fall
'A man pushes another man to the ground and he falls'

[15] The long form is possible in the examples cited above if there is stress on it and the first verb is foregrounded.

(50) Zot in ris lakor kase
PRN ASP pull rope break
'They pulled on the rope so that it broke'

However, this does not necessarily have to be the case, as can be seen from the following two examples in which both verbs are either intransitive (51) and hence do no license objects or in which both are transitive but share the same object (i.e. *son madanm,* 'his wife') (52).

(51) Son tas i tonbe kraze
PRN cup PM fall break
'His cup fell and broke'

(52) I'n bat son madanm in tuye
PRN.ASP beat PRN wife ASP kill
'He has beaten his wife to death'

*6.2.5 Open SVCs*

Finally, the last type of SVCs that can be found in KS are open SVCs in which usually no restriction is posed on the selection on the verb and the verbs usually appear in iconic and temporal order. Many verb combinations are possible but in the following section, we focus on certain open-ended SVCs that are relevant for our discussion.

For instance, we find SVCs that contain the verbs *bwar*, 'drink' as well as *manze* 'eat', often followed by a third verb *anmize*, 'enjoy/amuse'. The two former verbs can appear in either the first or the second position in this SVC, as the following examples show.

(53) Zot pe manze bwar anmize
PRN ASP eat drink enjoy
'They are eating, drinking, having a good time'

(54) Zot pe bwar manze anmize
PRN ASP drink eat enjoy
'They are drinking, eating, having a good time'

Even though both SVCs are very similar, they have a slightly different connotation, as we will argue below in the discussion. Furthermore, we also find other SVCs in KS which involve the verbs *manze* and *bwar* such as the following:

(55) Nou'n asize manze bwar
PRN.ASP sit eat drink
'We sat down, ate and drank'

The interpretation of this SVC is slightly different to example (47) since the actions expressed follow the temporal order between *asize* and *manze/bwar*. Furthermore, even though as per definition no selectional restrictions are imposed on open SVCs, the verbs in this construction cannot switch their places. This is explained by the fact that it is a sequence of events taking place within a cultural logic. The last open SVC that we would like to mention here is the following:

(56) Son bon nek pik zip fer kankan
PRN good only pin skirt make cancan
'The only thing she is good at is to pin up the skirt and dance the cancan'

Similar to directional SVCs mentioned above, this SVC also has a literal as well as a figurative meaning as will be shown below.

## *7. Discussion*

A closer look at the SVC types found in KS reveals that on the one hand, we find prototypical SVCs from a formal as well as a functional point of view. On the other hand, many of these SVCs structurally do not share the prototypical features of SVCs as defined by Aikhenvald (2006). This finding is not surprising given that KS is a young language. For instance, most serials in KS are concordantly marked for TMA. According to Aikhenvald (2006), SVCs across the world's languages are rather non-concordantly marked and only the first verb exhibits tense, mood and aspect marking. Furthermore, subject pronouns can be repeated before the second verb, as the examples in the data section above have shown. This is also a rather non-prototypical feature. In addition, other material can intervene between the first and all other verbs as well. This also can be shown in other languages, though oftentimes SVCs are contiguous as they share core arguments (Aikhenvald 2006). KS has switch-subject serials as well as argument/object introducing SVCs as displayed above. Furthermore, in some languages it has been attested that in resultatives, only transitive verbs or intransitive verbs can be combined (Veenstra 2004). This is not always the case in KS. For instance, in the combination *pouse-tonbe*, 'push-fall', as displayed above, we find a transitive verb combined with an intransitive one.

Apart from non-prototypical formal properties that can be observed in KS, also from a functional point of view some SVCs exhibit rather non-prototypical features. For instance, some semantic types that have been discerned are either non-existent (e.g. degree serials) or their classification as SVCs is not determined (in the case of argument introducing 'say' serials). Furthermore, some types are present but rare, as is the case with aspectual SVCs of the form V+*fini*. However, other types such as directionals may be

used to express aspectual notions such as repetition, which is a non-prototypical function of directionals. Finally, some SVCs have certain semantic properties that have an influence on the grammaticality of the structure, as we will show below.

Following the ethno-syntactic framework presented in section 4 we argue that some of the non-prototypical functional SVCs found in KS can be accounted for by cultural logic. The use and interpretation of such SVCs in KS can be put into three categories: (1) typicality of events influencing the order of verbs, (2) aspectual interpretations, and (3) figurative interpretations. The first element here is the role of typicality and cultural logic in SVCs. Following Enfield (2002b) we can explain the order of certain verbs in an SVC as a consequence of what is culturally seen as normal. With cultural logic we can show whether a type of SVC is regarded as acceptable or not. Assuming that in each community there are cultural scripts that dictate our behaviour, we find SVCs such as the following as 'culturally normal': *Asize manze bwar; Manze bwar anmize.* In *asize manze bwar* we have an order that reflects the behaviour of the participants. This order reflects a culturally normative behaviour which is reported in a narrative in which someone recalls that e.g. they have been working hard before, have been to church or have been involved in an argument, and then continues with *nou'n asize manze bwar* implying that they took the time to spend together, to sit, eat and drink, thus enjoying their food. It typically takes place in a relaxed atmosphere when people meet on a Saturday afternoon party or Sunday lunch after church. A construction with **bwar manze asize* is not regarded as acceptable.[16] The typicality of this order can not only be seen in current Seselwa life but may also be traced back to the early days in which slavery was still practised. Based on stories, after days of forced labour on the plantations, the slaves would meet at the beach. They would sit and eat in order to regain their strength and only after that, beverages would have been consumed. If the posture verb *asize* is not used with *manze bwar*, the reading is different. It implies that people ate and drank a lot in the sense of gorging oneself on food and drinks.

The same applies to the SVC *manze bwar anmize*. The logical order is to start with a meal and then proceed with drinking of wine, beer or rum and later dancing (typically *sega* dancing). This series of event expresses the typical Creole conceptualisation of celebration. Similarly, to *asize manze bwar*, we can also draw a careful connection to the times of slavery. Only after everyone has been fed, drinking and celebrating *anmize*, (singing and dancing),

[16] For a similar analysis about the ungrammaticality of certain SVCs in Sranan and Yorùbá cf. Durie (1997: 327), in which he argues that "[…] the unacceptability [of these sentences] will find their proper explanation in stereo-typical schema for event-types, which are culture specific to varying degrees".

would have been possible. In opposition to the latter example, however, a different order of events is possible and entails a slightly different interpretation. *Bwar manze anmize* is not ungrammatical, but people read it as drinking/getting drunk as the more focussed activity. It is quite possible that a strategy of foregrounding is employed to shift the focus of activity. Added to that, it is interesting to note that in a grammaticality judgement, speakers accept these sentences without hesitation. But some speakers might point to the difference in meaning.

In addition to the order of verbs in a verb chain, cultural logic can also explain the existence of different interpretations of one and the same construction, similar to the different interpretations Diller (2006) has reported for Thai SVCs. For example, verb combinations such as *rise pouse, monte desann*, or *ale vini* may receive a literal interpretation of two actions that are part of one conceptualised event. In addition, however, they may also be used to express duration of action. In such cases, their function is to stress the duration or the repetitive nature of an event, making them aspectual. Hence, other types of SVCs than those that are prototypically classified as aspectuals are used to express aspectual notions.

The third way in which cultural logic is reflected in SVCs is cultural knowledge in figurative interpretations. In addition to their aspectual function, the verb combinations *rise pouse, monte desann*, or *ale vini* can also receive figurative meaning in contexts in which a sense of restlessness is implied. In other contexts, they can express a sense of wasting time. An example would be *zot ankor pe rise pouse olye travay ansanm,* in which the SVC *rise pouse* is used to express that people are wasting time by arguing with each other. Another example of a figurative interpretation of an SVC is *pik zip fer kankan*. This typically Creole expression is shared by the Creole community in the Seychelles. When presented with this expression, Mauritian Creole speakers do not understand the meaning. If we take the construction literally, we could translate it as 'to put pins in the skirt and make noise'. However, this construction is usually interpreted figuratively, resulting in a meaning of 'creating trouble'. An inherent understanding of the Seselwa cultural background is also required to correctly understand the SVC construction in *Alice sorti lafrans vin fer granzar Sesel.* There is a high proportion of people from the Seychelles who live in either Great Britain or France, some of whom come back to their island to visit their relatives. This sometimes causes some tension in families which is sometimes expressed through negative comments about those ex-pats. The fact that the ex-pats dress differently and have 'more European-like' behaviours (e.g. they speak French with a local Paris accent) has led to islanders to conceptualise these ex-patriots as typically being 'show off ponies'. This is expressed in the verb combination *sorti x* ('come out/from') *vin fer granzar* ('come show off').

A further example *Sinwa dir tir dan pos met dan kes* is worth mentioning here. This example refers to money and money making. Here again some cul-

tural knowledge is required in order to grasp this SVC. Chinese people were brought to both Mauritius and the Seychelles because of trade and business. Thus, a Chinese person is very closely associated with trade and business. The typical shopkeeper is a Chinese man, although there are an increasing number of Indian people involved in shopkeeping nowadays. As such, the SVC is taken to mean to make money by emptying one's pocket and putting the money in the cash register.

Another example is the combination of a posture verb with another verb *debut pran mazinasyon* or *debut reve* ('stand and imagine' to mean 'day dream') which seem to be the most natural posture connected in KS for day dreaming. The use of the verb *reve* on its own would yield another reading, namely that the person is dreaming not day dreaming. To day dream cannot be conceived of as two action verbs such as *marse/reve* ('walk'/'dream') or *taye/reve* ('run'/'dream'). *Dormi/reve* ('sleep'/'dream') is a possible combination but it does not mean 'day dream'. In this case, it simply means to dream.

The further construction to illustrate the close connection between cultural knowledge and SVCs in KS is *tir kaka met ble*. This is a construction that KS people understand immediately. This expression means 'to clean'. Literally, it means 'take shit away from and put some washing powder' (which used to be in the form of small tabs and of a blue colour).

The final example, worth mentioning is the rejection of the SVC *I ti telefon dokter (i) ti vini,* 'He called the doctor and the doctor came'. This switch subject serial was used in Gabel's judgment task. As established in the data chapter, switch subject serials do exist in KS and we do find the combination transitive V + intransitive V (as in *pouse-tonbe*). However, in the case of *I ti telefon dokter (i) ti vini* this sentence was rejected by all participants. When asked after the reason why this is not a licit structure in KS, one participant responded that doctors on the Seychelles do not visit the homes of the people but that all patients had to go see the doctor or the hospital themselves. From a structural point of view, this SVC is possible, but the rejection is accountable in terms of cultural logic. Given that a doctor's visit is not part of the community's practice, speakers judge this sentence as ill-formed. The same applies to sentences such as *sorti leglis ek lekor al brile* 'leave the church and take the corpse to the place where it is incinerated'. Given that in the Seychelles it is not common practice to incinerate Christians when they passed, the typical scenario is *sorti leglis al met lekor dan simitier* ('leave church and take the corpse to the cemetery to bury'), this sentence is bound to be rejected and it is. Most participants ranked it as ungrammatical, because its interpretation depended solely on what is conceived as a cultural practice in this community. For those who did not give a clear ungrammatical judgment, the comment afterwards was that such a practice is not common for Christians but for Indians. In both examples, it is obvious that the intertwined role of cultural practices and cultural logic determine the acceptability of certain patterns of SVCs.

So far, we have an explanation for certain types of SVCs found in KS. We have proposed that certain types of SVCs found in KS are most probably best accounted for by an ethno-syntactic approach. Looking at the culture and the language together, we are able to explain the order of verbs/events in the two-three verb constructions. It thus becomes obvious that cultural logic is essential to the explanation.

Although discussing all the details on early child KS would beyond the scope of this paper, we find it compelling to mention that verb chains and subsequently SVCs are witnessed in early KS child grammar. This finding, in fact, strongly supports the stand that we take in this paper, namely that these complex constructions are anchored in KS grammar and should be regarded as part and parcel of KS grammar. At this point, we refer the reader to Adone (2014).

## *8. Conclusion*

This paper has discussed the different types of SVCs and their functions in KS grammar. We have deliberately opted for the terms 'verb chains' to refer to the constructions we mostly find in early child grammar and 'serial verb constructions' when referring to the multiple verb constructions we find in the adult grammar. The misconception that IOCs do not exhibit SVCs is related to the early discussion on Indian Ocean Creoles and the role of African languages in their formation. The fact that there was no clear evidence for African languages involved in the structures of the IOCs was implicitly taken to be the reason why SVCs could not be present. Furthermore, the fact that SVCs in KS do not always exhibit the prototypical features of SVC found elsewhere might also have contributed to the view that SVCs do not exist in KS.

Creole languages are young languages with some degrees of variability in their system. This variability can in turn be accounted for by the fact that these languages are mainly oral languages. Although KS is established as an official language and is used a medium of instruction, there is still a long way to go before there is a standardised version developed. Although much attention is directed towards issues involving orthography and lexicon of KS by Komite Kreol, there is by far less attention on the grammar of the language.

We have further illustrated that the way complex events or activities are conceptualised on a cultural level may influence how a verb chain is interpreted. On a par with the analyses provided by Jarkey (1991), Enfield (2002b) and Diller (2006), we have shown that cultural logic is reflected in both the structural features of SVCs and as well as in their interpretation. As our analysis has illustrated, the order of verbs in a verb chain may be restricted not by grammatical factors but by the notion of culture-specific typicality. Furthermore, one and the same construction may receive a literal multiverb interpretation, an aspectual interpretation or a more figurative interpretation, depending on the context. Finally, we have shown how certain SVCs are lexi-

calised to an extent that only the presence of cultural background knowledge can lead to a correct interpretation.

The study of SVCs in KS thus shows that a purely grammatical analysis misses out on further fine-grained levels of the processes involved in such complex constructions. Extending the analysis by also taking cultural conceptualisations into account can shed light not only on the forms and functions of complex constructions but also confirms the inherent link between linguistic structures and cultural practices.

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