Macroverbs and other complex predicates in Lemerig (Oceanic)

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Abstract

Lemerig, a language of Vanuatu described here for the first time, illustrates well the propensity of Oceanic languages to build their clauses around multi-verb expressions. Among the four main syntactic patterns that fit this description, we show that one – namely, *serial verb constructions* (SVC) – corresponds most closely to the notion of "verbal complex predicates" that is central to this volume. An SVC in Lemerig consists of two verbs (V_1 + V_2) that follow each other strictly, without any intervening material; their juncture is so tight that the [V_1V_2] sequence effectively behaves like a single "macroverb", endowed with a single TAM, a single negation, and a single argument structure. We identify a total of eight subtypes of SVC, based on our analysis of how such macroverbs handle the valency of their internal components.

Along with a synchronic description of Lemerig complex predicates, this study pays particular attention to the dynamics of verb serialisation, and to the tendencies of the second verb to grammaticalise into something else – applicatives, quantifiers, TAM markers, adverb-like "postverbs", etc. In doing so, we highlight the key role played by the postverbal (V_2) slot in favouring the emergence of grammatical innovations in the language.

1 Introduction: Complex predicates in Lemerig

This chapter will discuss *verbal complex predicates* (VCPs) in Lemerig – an Oceanic language spoken in Vanuatu. We will draw our inspiration from the questionnaire of the *ComPLETE* project (Vanhove *et al.* 2021, cf. Chapter 1), which defines a verbal complex predicate as a "monoclausal construction with a single set of argument positions, consisting of at least two verbs or 'verb-like' items". We interpret the latter criterion as a requirement that both components of a VCP must belong synchronically to the class of verbs (cf. Haspelmath 2016, Krauße *et al.* f/c). Lemerig has several constructions that fit those criteria, but we will also discuss borderline cases, where the verbal status of certain components is debatable.

Among the large Austronesian phylum, the Oceanic family is known for its abundance of complex predicates, particularly in the form of verb serialisation (Durie 1988, Crowley 2002, Bril & Ozanne-Rivierre 2004, Senft 2008); this grammatical feature may be due to a history of contact with Papuan languages (Blust 2005), which are also rich in serial patterns of various sorts (Senft 2004; see Foley 1986, 2017). Rather than propose another overview of complex predicates across the Oceanic family, the present chapter will zoom in to northern Vanuatu,

an area already well known for its tendency to use verb serialisation, as has been shown for Mwotlap (François 2004a, 2006), Vera'a (Schnell 2011), Vurës (Malau 2016, Krauße 2021) and Hiw (François 2017). We will delve into the syntax of one language in particular, called Lemerig, and explore the intricate mechanics of its complex predicates. This will be the opportunity to publish the first ever study entirely dedicated to Lemerig – a hitherto undescribed, almost-extinct language of the Banks islands, with only 2 fluent speakers today.

Our study will confirm the trends observed earlier in northern Vanuatu, while highlighting patterns that are unique to Lemerig. In spite of the small number of speakers we were able to interview, and the limited size of our corpus, we are able to showcase a whole array of syntactic constructions that suit the definition of a VCP. We will endeavour to organise the wealth of these different constructions based on their formal and syntactic properties, in line with the *ComPLETE* project.

Section 2 will briefly present the focal language Lemerig, our corpus, and the basic grammatical properties that will be relevant to this chapter. Section 3 will examine four different syntactic constructions, which – at least superficially – are potential candidates for verbal complex predicates. Section 4 will focus on *serial verb constructions* (SVC), the most clearcut case of a VCP in the language. We will break down this category into eight subtypes, based on the way they handle argument structure. Finally, section 5 will recapitulate the main cases of semantic change, both in terms of grammaticalisation and (co-)lexicalisation.

Along with our synchronic description, we plan to highlight the dynamic trends of Lemerig serial verbs, particularly the cases of semantic change that can be observed, depending on a verb's position in the clause. As we will see, the syntactic analysis can hardly be conducted without taking into consideration the semantics of all the components involved.

2 The focal language: Lemerig

2.1 The language

The focus of this chapter is Lemerig [lɪmɪˈriɣ], a moribund language of Vanua Lava island, in the north of Vanuatu. It is one of the 17 languages spoken in the Torres–Banks province (Figure 1). Together, these form the "Torres–Banks linkage" (François 2011); they belong to the Oceanic family, a large subset of the Austronesian phylum.

Lemerig is not acquired by children anymore, and is only remembered by two individuals today (François 2012). The authors of this chapter independently conducted fieldwork on the language, for several days each. François began studying Lemerig in 1998, when it still had about a dozen speakers, and recorded a number of them over the years (1998: Joj Lorin; 2003: Bes Tabeva, Rogen, Wolta Robin; 2006: Taitus Sërortēlsöm); all of them have since passed away. In 2018, Krauße interviewed Isso Vorēs, one of the last speakers remaining today, and was assisted by Markson Vorēs for the transcription.[1]

[1] Link to Lemerig corpus by Alexandre François (2021). Link to Lemerig corpus by Daniel Krauße (2018b). The speaker Isso can be heard in this video.

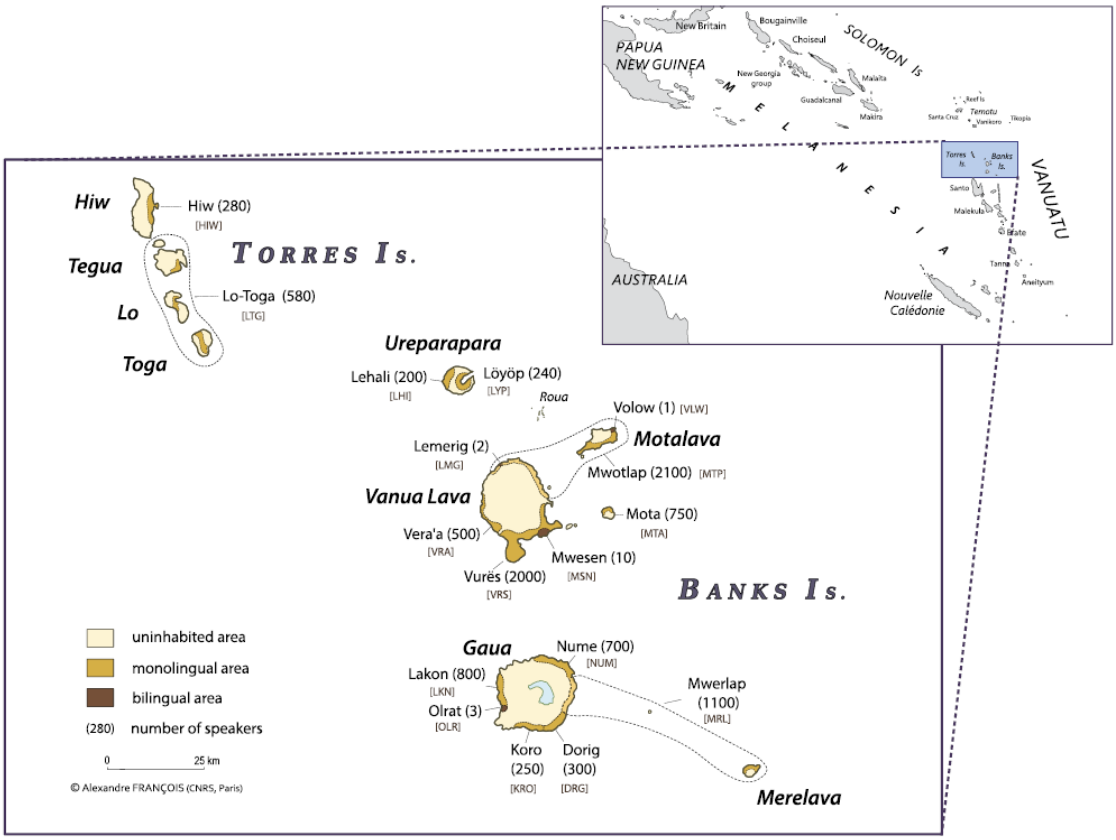

Figure 1 – Languages of the Torres and Banks Islands, in northern Vanuatu (François 2022)

Figure 2 shows a linguistic map of Vanua Lava, with placenames in the Vurës language; the brown area showing the zone where Lemerig used to be spoken until recently. The language's autonym is *nvāvāv 'a Lēmērig* 'language of the Lemerig area' [see (59)]: this refers to an area located in the northwest part of Vanua Lava, around the settlements of *Päk* and *Lusa* (Bek and Lesa in Figure 2), even extending historically all the way south to Lēon. Today, the two remaining speakers of Lemerig – Aiso (born 1951) and a woman named Helena (born 1959) – have left their ancestors' land; they reside in other places of the island, where the languages Vera'a and Vurës are spoken. Other traditional villages where Lemerig people used to live are Ñērēlegwēg, 'Ansēw, Tēpēg, Lalñe'āk and Qāñlāv, an area now settled by speakers of Mwotlap.

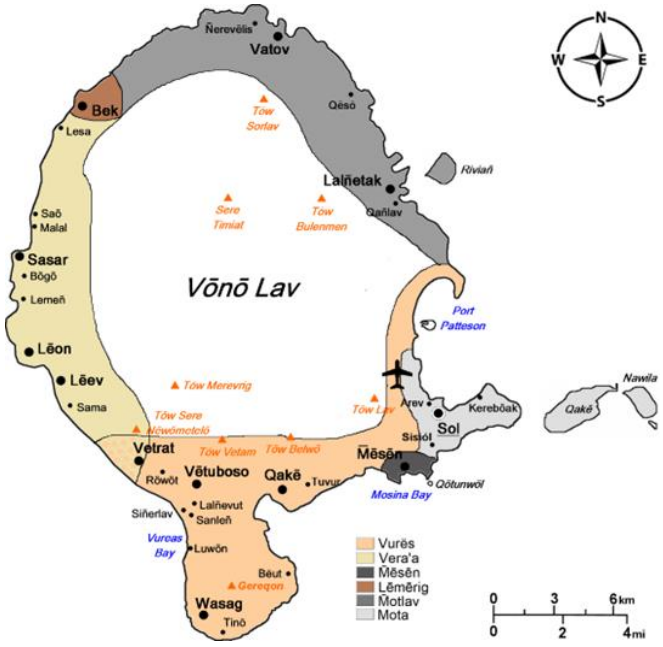

Figure 2 – Map of Vanua Lava, showing languages and settlements (Krauße 2021:224)

The earliest mention of Lemerig is by the Anglican missionary and anthropologist Robert Codrington (1885:332), who wrote: "the district of Pak [...] is quite small, comprising only five villages of a few houses each. [...] The language, however, is of much interest."

2.2 Previous research and corpus

Until we began studying it, Lemerig had received little attention in the linguistic literature, except for a very brief grammar sketch of *Päk* – a former variety of Lemerig (François 2012:89) – by Codrington (1885:332–337) and wordlists published by Tryon (1976) under the variety names "Bek" (*Päk*) and "Sasar".[2] More recently, François described various aspects of Lemerig, as part of his typological and historical studies on northern Vanuatu languages (e.g. 2009, 2011, 2015a, 2016, f/c *a*). He also published a book of traditional stories in Lemerig (François & Sërortēlsöm 2006), as well as a corpus of transcribed recordings, with an introduction to the language (François 2021). Examples taken from these recordings will provide links to individual texts.[3]

Lemerig is related, and similar, to its linguistic neighbours, several of which are well-described: e.g. Mota (Codrington 1885, Codrington & Palmer 1896), Mwotlap (François 2003, 2004a), Vera'a (Schnell 2011), Vurës (Malau 2016, Kraußе 2021), Hiw (François 2017), and Dorig (François f/c *b*); this proximity facilitated the transcription and analysis of our fieldwork material. Our combined field recordings total 150 minutes, corresponding to a digital corpus of 14,020 words; to which we can add 89 pages of handwritten notes from our interviews with speakers. François' field methods focused on collecting and analysing samples of connected speech in the form of narratives; but they also included conversational questionnaires (François 2019) and informal discussions with speakers. Kraußе's fieldwork targeted complex predicates as part of his thesis, with an initial focus on neighbouring Vurës (Kraußе 2021). Our data has proven sufficient to carry out all tests required for the questionnaire of the *ComPLETE* project.

2.3 Typological profile

Before we turn to complex predicates, it is useful to first introduce the most salient grammatical features of the language. For the purpose of this study, our main focus will be the structure of the clause and the internal syntax of the verb complex.

Lemerig has 15 consonants and 11 contrastive vowels – all short monophthongs (François

[2] Even though Tryon (1976) provided three separate wordlists for the varieties Päk (*Bek*), Sasar and Vera'a (*Vatrata*), he proposed to lump them together (1976:89) as a single language. While this is justified for the former two (Päk and Sasar being variants of *Lemerig*), it is now accepted that Lemerig and Vera'a constitute two distinct languages (François 2008, 2011; Schnell 2011).

[3] These narratives include one particularly long and rich text, which will be often cited in this study: this is the story, told by the late †Wolta Robin in 2003, of the mythical hero Qet and his brothers, who fight the giant Varvang (Robin 2003). Among the dozen versions of the myth recorded by François, over the years, in various languages of north Vanuatu, this 28'49" narrative is the longest.

2011:195, 2021).[4] The syllabic template is (C)V(C), and tautosyllabic consonant clusters are normally avoided. However, Lemerig has several proclitics consisting of a single consonant, sometimes preceding another consonant, which may result in a word-initial complex onset: e.g. noun article *n=* → *n=qönī* [nk͡pʷøŋ] 'day'; 3SG aorist *n=* → *n=m̄es* [nŋ͡mʷɛs] 's/he fell'; perfect aspect *m=* → *m='ö'* [mʔøʔ] 'held'.

Lemerig has a basic SVO syntax, as in (1).

(1) *Ti* ⟨*m='ev* *m̄ö'⟩* *n=gaga.*
3SG PFT=cut be.broken ART=rope
'He's cut the rope in two.' [DK.LM20180821ISS1:54]

Arguments are not indexed on the verb: they take the form of separate phonological words, whether noun phrases or free pronouns. Nouns and pronouns do not inflect for case, and semantic roles are exclusively marked by the position of constituents in the clause. As is typical in north Vanuatu languages (François 2016), pronouns encode clusivity and contrast four numbers: singular, dual, trial and plural: e.g. (16) *gätru* is 1IN.DU (first inclusive dual, 'you and I'), *tär'öl* is 3TRI (third trial, 'the three of them'). A verb can never have more than one object.

Lemerig is non-prodrop: pronouns referring to humans (e.g. 1SG *në*, 3SG *ti*, 3PL *tär*) are normally overtly expressed. Non-human referents (Eng. *it*), though, are often indexed using zero anaphora, whether as subjects or objects:[5]

(2) *Në* ⟨*k=vā'āk* *lik* *wël⟩* (Ø) *ewā* (Ø) ⟨*n=qē'⟩*.
1SG AO:1SG=put again DIR:THITH (it) COOR (it) AO:3SG=finish
'I put **it** back, and **it** was over.' [AF.LMG.Qet.074] [6]

The order of constituents in the clause is fixed:

[1] Template for a verbal clause in Lemerig
(Topic) Subject ⟨**TAMP**$_1$ **Head (Postverb**(s)**)** **TAMP**$_2$ **(DIR)**⟩ Object Complements

Oceanic languages typically have at the core of their syntax a constituent called "verb complex" (Durie 1988, Evans 2003), which consists of the verbal head, its modifiers, and their TAM inflection. It is highlighted in bold in [1]; throughout this paper, whenever relevant, we will indicate the limits of that verb complex using angle brackets ⟨…⟩, as in (1) and (2). Note that the verb complex does not include the predicate's arguments (subject or object).

While Oceanic languages allow many different word classes to act as the head of a predicate (François f/c a), the present paper will focus on examples where the predicate head is a verb or an adjective. Although adjectives contrast with verbs in other contexts, they behave like verbs inside predicate phrases; for this reason, they can arguably be treated as (stative-intransitive) verbs for the purpose of this study.

The position of TAM markers will be an important diagnostic in our analyses of complex

[4] Its 11 vowels /i ɪ ɛ æ a ɒ̟ œ ø ɔ ʊ u/ are transcribed respectively ⟨i ē e ä a ā ë ö o ō u⟩. Its 15 consonants /k͡pʷ p t k ʔ ŋ͡mʷ m n ŋ β s ɣ l r/ are rendered ⟨q p t k ' m̄ m n n̄ v s g l r⟩ (François 2021).

[5] Such zeros will be hidden in future examples – e.g. (46), (48), (53).

[6] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003271#S74*.

predicates. More precisely, north Vanuatu languages have a TAMP system (rather than TAM), i.e. a paradigm of unanalysable portmanteau morphemes that do not only encode **T**ense – **A**spect – **M**ood, but also **P**olarity (François 2003, f/c *b*; Malau 2016: 461). This explains the labels $TAMP_1$ and $TAMP_2$ in the template [I]. Thus, (3) combines modality (potential) with polarity (negation) in a single "negative potential" morpheme, albeit a discontinuous one (*ē=… m̄äs'ä* 'cannot'):

(3) *N=ga* ⟨***ē***=*mān* *marmar* ***m̄äs'ä***⟩ *näk.*
ART=kava **NEG.POT$_1$**=intoxicate be.strong **NEG.POT$_2$** 2SG
'The kava won't be able to affect you strongly.' [AF.LMG.q04.d35]

TAMP inflection often takes the form of a preverbal clitic, which fills only the $TAMP_1$ slot. This clitic may be syllabic – e.g. [positive] stative *ge=* in (13) – or consist of just a consonant – e.g. [positive] perfect *m=* in (1), aorist *k=* and *n=* in (2). The aspect category labelled "aorist" refers to a punctual event, whether it is anchored in the past, present or future (François 2003, 2009). Its exponents in Lemerig are 1SG *k=*, 3SG *n=* as in (2), and zero for other persons:

(4) *Näk* ⟨[Ø=] *'ör* *marmar*⟩ *n=lan̄si* *ēr!*
2SG [AO=] hold be.strong ART=end.of Casuarina
'(You) firmly hold the top of the pine tree!' [AF.LMG.Qet.234] [7]

When encoded by zero, the aorist will be left unglossed in our examples – as in (8) or (16).

Other morphemes are bipartite, occupying both the $TAMP_1$ and $TAMP_2$ slots in the template. This was the case with the negative potential in (3) above; likewise, the [positive] preterite takes a form *m=… 'i*:

(5) *N=nānār* *e,* *në* ⟨***m***=*'ār* *le'* ***'i***⟩ *lē=nor.*
ART=Pterocarpus TOP 1SG PRET$_1$=chop broken PRET$_2$ LOC=yesterday
'That tree, I chopped it apart yesterday.' [AF.LMG.Qet.040] [8]

Bipartite morphemes are crucial in determining which lexical material belongs inside the verb complex (verbal head, postverb(s)) vs. what belongs outside (arguments, complements); they will later help us assess the syntax of certain constructions in Lemerig. Some TAMP markers, like the presentative *'i* in (38), occupy only $TAMP_2$.

After the $TAMP_2$ slot comes the last element of the verb complex, namely, directional particles ("DIR" in template [I]): e.g. *wël* 'thither' in (2). Directionals form a closed class of six forms (e.g. *sag* 'up', *sōw* 'down', *me* 'hither'), and serve to locate or orientate an event in space (François 2015a). While postverbs fit in the postverbal slot [§2.4, §3.2], directionals occur after $TAMP_2$. In our examples, we will always gloss them with a prefix 'DIR:' in order to distinguish them structurally from postverbs. This is useful, especially, when the syntactic status (postverb or directional?) cannot be guessed from the meaning of the word itself: compare the glosses in (31) and (32) below, respectively for the postverb *sur* 'down' and the directional *sōw* 'down'.

[7] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003271#S234*.

[8] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003271#S40*.

In a multiclausal sentence, every clause bears its own TAM marking. Thus in (2), each of the two clauses coordinated using *ewā* 'and' inflected for the aorist. Lemerig has a complementiser *wë*, which inserts between the main clause and the complement clause:

(6) *Ti* ⟨*mörös* *'ä*⟩ ***wë*** ⟨*n=vanvan* *sar*⟩.
3SG want NEG COMP AO:3SG=RED~go DIR:inside
'He doesn't want to go in.' [AF.LMG.Qet.011] [9]

2.4 A note on postverbs

It is worth explaining what we mean with the term "postverb" in the formula [I]. That position in the clause is reserved for lexical elements immediately following and modifying the verbal head. Now, one important distinction here is between the postverbal slot, and the lexical class of postverbs. As a constituent in the clause, the postverbal slot may be filled by a variety of word classes, e.g. a second verb in a serial pattern, an adjective, or even a nominal. Thus, in (1), the postverbal slot is filled by *mōö'* 'be broken', which is a verb; in (3) and (4), it is filled by *marmar* 'strong', which is a lexical adjective. By contrast, certain lexical items in Lemerig are restricted to this postverbal slot, and can appear nowhere else in the clause: we propose to call them "postverbs" (following François 2011; see also Rangelov 2022). For example, the modifiers *lik* 'again' in (2), and *le'* 'broken' in (5), are postverbs, i.e. a kind of VP-internal adverb strictly restricted to the head-modifying function. We will discuss postverbs in more detail in §3.2. As we'll see, they are often derived from former verbs in a serial pattern; but taken synchronically, they have lost their status as a verb (François & Krauße 2024).

The principle of postverbal modification is recursive: a sequence {HEAD POSTVERB} can itself be modified by another postverb. Consider (7):

(7) *N=ge* *na,* *gät* ⟨***ē***=*tek* *'ö'* *vālākreg* ***mäs'ä***⟩.
ART=thing that 1IN:PL NEG$_1$=talk hold be.random NEG.POT$_2$
'That topic, you can't just talk about it freely.' [AF.LMG.q06.d18]

In (7), the head *tek* 'talk' is modified by the lexeme *'ö'* in postverbal position. Because both words are lexically verbs, the sequence *tek 'ö'* ⟨talk hold⟩ effectively forms a serial verb [§3.1]. In turn, this serial verb is modified by the postverb *vālākreg* '(be) random'. This remark will be useful, as it means that a complex predicate consisting of three or more lexical elements can always, in principle, be analysed as a combination of bipartite structures, going from left to right (cf. François 2006:236 for Mwotlap). The recursiveness of VCPs in Lemerig will be discussed again in §3.6.

To sum up, the sequence ⟨TAMP$_1$ + verb + postverb(s) + TAMP$_2$ (+directional)⟩ forms the "verb complex" of Lemerig. When this verb complex includes more than one lexical verb-like item (e.g. verb + verb; verb + adjective; or verb + postverb), such a construction is a good candidate for a *verbal complex predicate*. This constituent will therefore be central to the present study.

[9] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003271#S11*.

3 Candidates for VCPs in Lemerig

We have identified four constructions that would be good candidates for the status of VCPs in Lemerig:

1. A **serial verb** construction, in which the two serialised verbs are so tightly connected that they behave like a single verb in terms of argument structure and TAMP marking.
2. A **postverbal** construction consisting of a lexical verb and a secondary element, called "postverb", which displays verbal properties.
3. A prior-motion **predicate serialisation** displaying the structure "go/come + V", which is a form of associated motion construction (cf. Guillaume & Koch 2021).
4. An **argument-taking** construction involving modal and phasal verbs, such as *mörös* 'want', *'awi* 'not want', *gālāl* 'know', and *qē'ēg* 'begin'.

Among these patterns of multi-verb constructions in Lemerig, we'll see that not all constitute genuine VCPs. We will argue that only the serial verb and predicate serialisation constructions fulfil all criteria of a VCP. Whereas the other two only fulfil them partly, they are still worth discussing in the domain of complex predicates. We exemplify and discuss each of the four constructions in the following sections.

The main focus of this chapter will be Lemerig *serial verb constructions*, which we introduce in §3.1 and discuss in more detail in Section 4. The other three constructions are examined separately in §3.2 to §3.4.

3.1 Serial verb construction (SVC)

The first construction type we examine is labelled *serial verb construction* (SVC). Typical examples of SVCs in Lemerig include the following:

(8) *Tär* ⟨***row*** ***pu'*** *sar*⟩ *lē=woñën.*
3PL move.fast sit DIR:inland LOC=beach
'They landed on the beach.' [AF.LMG.Qet.143] [10]

(9) *Kimi* ⟨*m=**'ār*** ***qē'***⟩ *n=ok?*
2PL PFT=chop finish ART=canoe
'Are you done making your canoes?' [AF.LMG.Qet.015] [11]

(10) *Pa* *n=gasel,* *mēri* ⟨*ē=**oror*** ***'ö'*** *'ä*⟩*!*
but ART=knife child NEG_1=play hold NEG_2
"But a knife is not something for a child to play with!"
[lit. "But a knife, a child doesn't *play holding* it."] [AF.LMG.q05.d43]

Constructions such as (8–10) clearly qualify as *verbal complex predicates* (VCPs): all examples are monoclausal, and all components (*row* 'move fast', *pu'* 'sit, be stable', *'ār* 'chop', *qē*' 'finish', etc.) can function as verbs on their own, i.e. they can take the place of a predicate head in the

[10] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003271#S143*.

[11] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003271#S15*.

template [I]. We can be even more precise: among the various possible types of VCPs (cf. Vanhove *et al.* 2021), this construction meets the criteria of verb serialisation, or *serial verb construction* (SVC) – a syntactic type defined by various authors (e.g. Durie 1997; Crowley 2002; Aikhenvald 2006, 2018; Cleary-Kemp 2015; Haspelmath 2016; Lovestrand 2018; Kraußе 2021). An important criterion is that all lexical elements in these constructions appear in the same form as they would if they were the head of an independent predicate. This comes in contrast with other kinds of VCPs – such as converbs, auxiliaries, or light verb constructions – which usually entail some form of morphological asymmetry between the two verbs.

Lemerig SVCs are always uttered in a single prosodic unit, without a pause or intonation break. Crucially, no material whatsoever – neither lexical (arguments, adverbs) nor grammatical (TAM, linkers, subordinators) – is allowed to intervene between the components of an SVC.

Semantically speaking, the serialised verbs express a single event, often expressed with a single verb in English (e.g. *row pu'* 'land'). TAMP inflection only occurs once for the whole group – e.g. the perfect *m=* in (9). When the TAMP morpheme is bipartite [§2.3], it takes as its scope the entire string of verbs and surrounds the SVC like a bracket – e.g. *ē= … 'ä* in (10).

An SVC in Lemerig always has a single subject and cannot have more than one object – in very much the same way as a simple verb [§2.3]. That object must come after the string of serialised verbs, in conformity with the template [I]. Thus, even though the NP *n=ok* 'canoe(s)' in (9) is semantically the object of *'ār* 'chop', it can only appear after the whole SVC.

The template of an SVC in Lemerig corresponds to that of a simple clause [§2.3] – except, the sequence {Head+Postverb} here consists of the first verb (V_1) acting as the head and the second verb (V_2) as the postverbal modifier, as shown in [II]:

[II] Template for a Serial verb construction (SVC) in Lemerig
(Topic) Subject ⟨$TAMP_1$ {V_1+V_2} $TAMP_2$ (DIREC)⟩ Object Complements

The juncture between the two verbs takes place inside the verb complex, in a locus sometimes labelled "nucleus" (Van Valin 2010, this volume). As a result, this type of SVC has sometimes been described as *nuclear-layer serialisation* (Foley & Olson 1985:37-38; Crowley 2002).[12]

Even though each verb contributes its own semantics and argument structure, the level of juncture in an SVC is so tight that the combination {V_1+V_2} effectively behaves as if it were a single compound verb – with a single TAMP inflection, and a single argument structure. This configuration led François (2004a), in his description of similar constructions in neighbouring Mwotlap, to speak of "**macroverbs**" – i.e. a complex predicate that behaves in all respects as if it were a single verb. We will adopt this descriptor in our study to capture the grammatical effect of an SVC.

A crucial characteristic of SVCs in north Vanuatu is the way in which the argument structures of V_1 and V_2 end up merging into a higher-level argument structure, namely that of the macroverb {V_1V_2}. This can be described as a process of "argument pooling", as though the individual verbs pooled their arguments into a single argument structure for the SVC as a whole. For Mwotlap, François (2004a, 2006) demonstrated that this pooling process follows a

[12] *Nuclear-layer serialisation* contrasts with *core-layer serialisation*, which involves a sequence of predicate phrases – see §3.3.

regular algebra, so that the macroverb's structure can always be calculated based on that of its components (see also Krauße 2021:96). Applying this idea to Lemerig, we can state for the three examples above:

- (8) combines two monovalent verbs (V_1 *row* 'move' + V_2 *pu'* 'sit') sharing the same subject; the result is a monovalent macroverb *row pu'* 'land';
- (9) combines a bivalent verb (V_1 *'ār* 'cut, chop s.th.') with a monovalent one (V_2 *qē'* 'finish'); the result is a bivalent macroverb *'ār qē'* 'finish cutting s.th.';
- (10) combines a monovalent verb (V_1 *oror* 'play') with a bivalent one (V_2 *'ö'* 'hold s.th.'), yielding a bivalent macroverb *oror 'ö'* 'play with s.th.'

Section 4 below will describe these argument-pooling rules in more detail. The syntactic dimensions of valency and argument structure will provide formal criteria, as we endeavour to categorise Lemerig SVCs into various (sub)types. That formal categorisation, in turn, will provide a useful framework in order to observe another characteristic of Lemerig SVCs, namely their semantics. Indeed, just like in neighbouring languages (cf. François 2004a, 2006, Malau 2016, Krauße 2021, Krauße *et al.* f/c), Lemerig SVCs can be used to convey a range of functions. V_2 can specify the aspect of V_1, its spatial orientation, its result, or its manner. And because it is generally possible to associate a given function with specific argument-pooling patterns, our presentation of semantics in Section 4 will be organised along syntactic criteria.

But before we explore the diversity and intricacies of Lemerig SVCs, we continue our overview of verbal complex predicates (VCPs) in the language. Indeed, while SVCs are the most prototypical example of a VCP construction in Lemerig, they are not the only one. We will now briefly discuss three other candidates for VCPs in Lemerig, all similar to SVCs, yet distinct from them.

3.2 Postverbal construction (PVC)

Consider examples (11–13), all of which resemble the serial constructions we saw in §3.1:

(11) *Ti* ⟨*m=**'är*** ***pa'*** *wël⟩* *kē* *ge=mälägläg.*
3SG PFT=stand inwards DIR:THITH place STAT=dark
'He was hiding in that dark corner.' [AF.LMG.Rock.54] [13]

(12) *N=nānār* *e,* *në* ⟨*m=**'ār*** ***le'*** *'i⟩* *lē=nor.*
ART=Pterocarpus TOP 1SG $PRET_1$=chop broken $PRET_2$ LOC=yesterday
'That tree, I chopped it apart yesterday.' [AF.LMG.Qet.040] [14]

(13) *Kumru* ⟨*ge=**pu'*** ***gër***⟩ *gasel* *mu-k.*
2DU STAT=sit impeding knife POSS-1SG
'You are sitting on my knife.' (lit. sit impeding) [AF.LMG.q05.d04]

[13] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003278#S54*.

[14] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003271#S40*.

Each of these examples includes a TAMP-inflecting verb in the first position, followed by a second element (*pa'*, *le'*, *gër*). Some of these seem to have some verbal semantics, as suggested by our glosses ('broken', 'impeding'); but note that we deliberately chose non-finite translations to distinguish these cases from SVCs. Indeed, the second element in these predicates does not qualify – synchronically at least – as a verb, but as a *postverb* [§2.3]: these are lexemes whose only possible function in the language is the modification of the main verb in the postverbal position. We thus label these examples "postverbal constructions" (PVC).

Yet, apart from the word-class membership of the postverbal element, all other properties of PVCs are in fact exactly identical to those of SVCs. The string is uttered as a single prosodic unit and cannot be split apart by any lexical or grammatical material. TAMP is encoded only once, and bipartite TAMP morphemes take the whole string under their scope – see (12) ⟨*m='ār le' 'i*⟩ 'chopped apart'. Together, the combination {verb + postverb} behaves formally like a compound verb or "macroverb", in just the same way as SVCs. A PVC in Lemerig displays the following pattern:

[III] Template for a Postverbal construction (PVC) in Lemerig
(Topic) Subject ⟨$TAMP_1$= **{V + PV}** $TAMP_2$ (DIREC)⟩ Object Complements

Two types of postverbs may be distinguished, based on their valency properties: monovalent (intransitive) vs. bivalent (transitive) postverbs (François 2004a: 140). Monovalent postverbs are parallel to intransitive verbs. We briefly saw above, with examples (8) and (9), that intransitive verbs in V_2 position are generally transparent with respect to the argument structure of V_1: if V_1 is also monovalent, the whole macroverb will normally[15] be monovalent too; if V_1 is bivalent, then the macroverb will also be bivalent. The same reasoning applies for postverbs: thus in (11), the postverb *pa'* '(be) inward' is monovalent, and has no effect on the valency of the macroverb.

Bivalent postverbs, by contrast, have the peculiarity of increasing the valency of the construction when combined with a monovalent V_1, in much the same way as we saw in (10) with an SVC: *oror* 'play' → *oror 'ö'* 'play with [=holding] s.th.'. Thus, even though the postverb *gër* ('impeding, preventing access to') is not synchronically a verb in Lemerig, it has the capacity to add an argument to the verb complex:[16] (13) *pu'* 'sit' → *pu' gër* 'sit on s.th.'; the result is a bivalent macroverb. In other terms, certain postverbs share with verbs the capacity to increase the argument structure of the verbal head within a macroverb, in a way reminiscent of what we saw in SVCs.

The question then arises whether PVCs should be included in the present study of complex predicates. If we focus strictly on the construction type "*verbal* complex predicate" (VCP) which is the target of this volume, then in principle, postverbal constructions should not qualify, because the postverbal element does not belong to the class of verbs. However, there are several reasons for why we believe PVCs still have their place in the present study.

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[15] Section §4.4 will discuss a rare exception to this rule.

[16] The postverb *gër*, like its cognates in neighbouring languages, has a broad polysemy. An approximate rendering would be '[do V_1] so as to prevent s.o. from accessing s.th.' (hence the shorter gloss 'impeding'). It usually has an impact on the verb's argument structure: see François (2000) on Mwotlap *goy*, Krauße (2021:276–279) on Vurës *gōr*.

First, the syntactic parallelism between PVCs and SVCs is so strong that they could both be viewed as subtypes of a single construction from a language-internal, emic perspective (see François 2004a:139). Both constructions could be subsumed under the label "macroverb" {Head + postverbal modifier} where the postverbal modifier could manifest itself either as a genuine verb (resulting in an SVC) or as a postverb (resulting in a PVC). Therefore, a faithful description of SVCs should also include an account of PVCs. Even though PVCs may not qualify, by definition, as "*verbal* complex predicates", at least they clearly have their place in a study of complex predicates.[17]

A second reason for including postverbal constructions in a typology of VCPs is that the boundary between SVCs and PVCs is subtle and diachronically unstable. Historically, many postverbs originate in former verbs; the shift from verb to postverb is often so gradual that the word class itself is a moving target. For example, consider *rāk* 'off, away'. The 55 tokens of that word in our corpus are all in postverbal position, like in (14), so it must be classified as a postverb:

(14) *Tär* ⟨***'ev'ē*** ***rāk*** *wël*⟩ *n=vin ve'el e lē=naw.*
3PL throw away DIR:THITH ART=skin banana DEF LOC=sea
'They threw away the banana skin into the sea.' [AF.LMG.Qet.130] [18]

The neighbouring language Mwotlap has a cognate form *yak* (François 2004a:138), which is attested 278 times as a postverbal modifier 'off, away', but also 12 times as a main verb 'pick up, remove'. From a diachronic point of view, a plausible hypothesis is that the etymon **raga* of Proto-North Vanuatu – the shared ancestor of Mwotlap *yak* and Lemerig *rāk* – was originally a verb meaning 'to lift, to remove' (François 2005a: 498; Clark 2009: 165). At one point in time, that verb started to be routinely used in the V_2 slot in a serial pattern such as 'throw *remove*', equivalent of English 'throw away'. In Mwotlap, that function as a V_2 has become neatly predominant, yet not universal (96% of tokens as V_2, vs. 4% as V_1). As for Lemerig, the reflex of **raga* has evidently ended up specialising in the V_2 slot, thereby losing its use as V_1 altogether. This is how a verb, over time, can become a postverb. This process has been reported for various other languages of Vanuatu (Crowley 2002:112; François 2004a, 2011, 2017; François & Krauße 2024; Krauße *et al*. f/c, Rangelov 2020, 2022), and Lemerig is no exception.

In fact, it is quite plausible that a larger corpus and a more active speaker community of Lemerig could reveal a few (marginal) cases in which *rāk* could still be used as a verb on its own – just like in Mwotlap, or in Vurës for that matter.[19] In principle, it would take just one instance of *rāk* used as a main verb, for the 55 postverbal tokens of *rāk* to be reinterpreted,

[17] While this study will not examine PVCs in detail, we will mention postverbs again when we observe the diachronic evolution of SVCs, in terms of lexical change or grammaticalisation [§§4.1.2, 4.4.2, 5.1].

[18] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003271#S130*.

[19] All known instances of Vurës *rak* occur in postverbal position, whether in Malau's 2016 Vurës grammar or in Krauße's 2021 study on Vurës SVC; yet Malau's dictionary (2021:155) has a single instance of *rak* in V_1, and targeted elicitation has shown that it can also be used as a verb on its own – albeit very marginally. Thus, a constructed sentence like *no ma* ***rak*** *o ga* 'I lifted the rope' in Vurës was accepted by one of Krauße's consultants, though not produced in spontaneous speech.

in retrospect, as instances of SVCs. This example is testament of how fragile the boundary is between SVCs and PVCs in a language like Lemerig.

If we take the perspective of the speaker, the contrast between these two constructions is imperceptible. In order to form grammatical clauses, speakers do not need to make a difference between a lexeme that is still a verb but just happens to be used almost always postverbally, and a lexeme that has become a pure postverb. What matters for them is whether a given word can be used productively in the postverbal slot – regardless of whether that word can be used otherwise as a verb (forming an SVC), or not (forming a PVC).

Table 1 lists other examples of words which, like *rāk*, are only attested as postverbs in our Lemerig corpus, but which can be shown, based on comparison with cognate verbs in nearby languages like Mota (Codrington & Palmer 1896), to stem from earlier verbs (or adjectives) in SVCs. Etyma are given at the level of Proto-North-Vanuatu.

Table 1 – Some Lemerig postverbs originating in earlier (serialised) verbs or adjectives

FORM	MEANING AS POSTVERB	ETYMON	GLOSS OF FORMER V
rāk	'away, off'	*raga	'to lift, remove'
ʻas	'continually, on and on'	*taso	'to dash'
leʻ	'[cut+] crosswise, in half'	*late	'to snap'
wor	'[cut+] lengthwise, apart'	*wora	'to split, divide'
sur	'[go] down along, onto surface'	*suri	'to follow along'
waliög	'[go] round, in circle'	*walioɣi	'(to be) circular'
paʻ	'[go] inwards; hidden'	*bata	'(to be) hidden, secret'
ʻāʻāg	'[go] along, following'	*tataɣa	'to follow'
levga	'[go] past'	*levoɣao	'to cross'
varge	'[hold] tight'	*varaɣai	'to strengthen, tighten'
ris	'[turn] around'	*risi	'to change direction'

3.3 Predicate serialisation construction (PSC)

At first glance, sentences like (15) and (16) look like they could also constitute macroverb constructions like those we discussed in §3.1 and §3.2:

(15) *Në* *k=**van*** ***es~es*** *mānāt* *row* *lē=woñën.*
1SG AO:1SG=go ITER~stab fish seaward LOC=beach
'I'll go fish-spearing over there at the beach.' [AF.LMG.q01.d09]

(16) *Gätru* ***van*** ***sun*** *n=ga?*
1IN:DU go drink ART=kava
'Shall we go (and) drink kava?' [AF.LMG.q04.d05]

All lexical components of these predicates are synchronically verbs. They appear so close together that they could be viewed as an overall single predicate; both verbs are assigned to

the same subject, and they are endowed with a single overall argument structure and single TAMP inflection. Such constructions therefore qualify to be listed among the VCPs of Lemerig.

The question is rather whether they also belong to the type we labelled *serial verb construction* [§3.1], or whether they constitute their own type of VCP in Lemerig. Many constructions around the world with the same meaning and the same structure (e.g. *go pick some apples*) have been labelled "serial verbs" in the literature (Aikhenvald 2018:122-124, Cleary-Kemp 2015: 244-245, Lovestrand & Ross 2021:108). However, in the case of Lemerig, a more thorough examination reveals that the structure in (15–16) does in fact differ from standard SVCs, and is therefore better analysed separately. Rather than serial verbs, we will label them *serial predicates*, and the construction itself will be referred to as *predicate serialisation construction* (henceforth PSC).

In Lemerig, PSCs are semantically restricted to *prior motion*. The latter concept has been identified as a semantic type within the broader domain of "associated motion" (Guillaume & Koch 2021:8, Lovestrand & Ross 2021:98-100). Prior motion corresponds to those grammatical constructions that encode a close relationship between a motion event (e.g. 'go', 'come') and a second action that follows it immediately. Thus, (15) combines the prior motion of going (*van*) to the beach, and the subsequent action of fish-spearing (*eses māñāt*).

The PSCs of Lemerig always take the same verb as their first element, namely *van* 'go' (see below for the sense 'come'). The tightness of the connection is encoded formally by the lack of a complementiser or any other linker between the two verbs. And yet, while the sequence <V–V> of a PSC is superficially reminiscent of the one we saw in §3.1 for SVCs, we must note a number of formal and semantic differences that justify an analysis of the PSC as a separate construction.

First, PSCs allow certain elements to intervene between the two verbs, which is strictly prohibited in SVCs. For example, the motion verb *van* can be followed by a directional particle. The most common directional is *me* (glossed 'hither'), which orientates the motion towards the deictic centre. Whereas *van* alone, as in (16), is interpreted as going away from the deictic centre (*van* 'go'), its combination with the directional *me* 'hither' encodes the opposite meaning, i.e. 'come' (liter. 'go hither'):

(17) *N=ʻamān ʻāwān m=**van** **me** ʻö' n=savne-kiri.*
ART=man other PFT=go DIR:HITH hold LOC=thing-INDEF
[PSC] 'The other man came and held something out (to her).' [LM20180821ISS3:51]

While *me* is the directional most frequently found in this context, some examples show another directional, as in (18). Besides directionals, another element that may intervene between the two verbs of a PSC is TAM marking, which can optionally be repeated on the second verb, as here with *m=* for the perfect aspect:

(18) *E gōsōw ⟨**m**=van sag⟩ ⟨**m**=rem kal sag⟩.*
HUM rat PFT=go DIR:up PFT=climb go.up DIR:up
[PSC] 'The rat went up and climbed upwards.' [AF.LMG.Rat.05] [20]

[20] Link to audio: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003047* (at 0'28").

(19) *'Āvru vōru* ⟨***m***=*van me*⟩ ⟨***m***=*'ör*⟩ *n*=*pänä-ru.*
HUM:DU two PFT=go DIR:HITH PFT=hold ART=hand-3DU
[PSC] 'The two came and shook hands.' [LM20180821ISS2:90]

While such examples might seem like a string of separate clauses, it is important to note that PSCs cannot feature any linker or intonational break between its components. In this regard, they contrast with similar sentences that do not, in our view, qualify as a PSC, because they feature the insertion of a topicaliser *e* (20a), and/or include the subject of the second verb, e.g. 1SG *në* as in (20b):

(20a) *Në* ⟨*k*=*van*⟩ ***e*** ⟨*k*=*mi'ir*⟩.
1SG AO:1SG=go TOP AO:1SG=sleep
[BICLAUSAL] 'I'm going to sleep.' [AF.LMG.Qet.165] [21]

(20b) *Në* ⟨*k*=*van sar*⟩ ***e*** ***në*** ⟨*k*=*mi'ir*⟩.
1SG AO:1SG=go DIR:in TOP 1SG AO:1SG=sleep
[BICLAUSAL] 'I'm going in, and I'll sleep.' [AF.LMG.Qet.165] [22]

Compared to the clearly biclausal syntax of (20a) and (20b), standard PSCs such as (15) encode a tighter nexus between their predicates.

In sum, PSCs can be distinguished from multi-clausal sentences such as (20a–b); but they also differ from the SVCs that we saw in §3.1. To quote a distinction proposed by Foley & Olson (1985:37-38), and later applied to complex predicates in *Role & Reference Grammar* (Van Valin 2010, this volume), the ability for each verb to bear its own TAM inflection is a sign that serialisation is not taking place at the level of the "nucleus" (i.e. the lexical material within a single predicate phrase) like SVCs, but of the "core" (i.e. the juncture between two predicate phrases within a single clause). Or, to say it differently, PSCs correspond to serialised *predicates*, as opposed to the serialised *verbs* in an SVC [§3.1].

In examples such as (15–16), where the motion verb V_1 lacks a directional and the action verb V_2 lacks its TAM marking, the surface structure looks like a string of bare verbs; but this is an optical illusion: the underlying structure is in fact one of two chained predicates, which happen to lack some of the components that can theoretically intervene (directional, TAM). The canonical structure of the PSC in Lemerig is shown in [iv]:

[iv] Template for a Predicate Serialisation Construction (PSC) in Lemerig
(S) ⟨TAMP= **van** (DIREC)⟩ + ⟨(TAMP=) **V**⟩ (O)

Predicate serial constructions (a.k.a. "core-layer serialisation") have been reported for Vurës (Kraußе 2021:247, 314 fn. 161), for the languages of the Torres islands (François 2010: 508, 523) and further south in Vanuatu (e.g. Crowley 1987 for Paamese; François 2002: 189ff. for Araki). However, they are very rare in the Banks area where Lemerig is spoken. In Lemerig, the only case of a predicate serialisation is the prior motion PSC described here.

[21] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003271#S165*.

[22] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003271#S165*.

Incidentally, the "core" juncture often implies the ability for each verb to have its own objects – as in serial patterns of the type *I took knife cut meat*. However, this property typical of core-layer serialisation cannot be observed with Lemerig PSCs, because V_1 can only be the motion verb *van* 'go', which is monovalent anyway.

In addition to the difference of syntactic constituency that we just saw, PSCs and SVCs differ also semantically. For PSCs, the two component verbs can always be conceived as two subevents in a sequence: the motion, then the action. By contrast, SVCs always encode a single event.

In fact, the verb *van* 'go' may occur as V_1 in a PSC, or in an SVC. How can we tell them apart? The answer is that in an SVC, V_2 does not correspond to a separate subevent, but to another facet of the same event. For example, V_2 can be a directional verb which specifies the direction of the motion (21):[23]

(21) *'alōw e në ⟨k=**van** **kēl** me⟩.*
tomorrow TOP 1SG AO:1SG=go return DIR:HITH
[SVC] 'I'll come back here tomorrow.'
[*not*: *I'll come and return tomorrow.] [AF.LMG.Qet.43] [24]

Because we are dealing with an SVC, the directional *me* 'hither' cannot intervene between the two verbs as in (18–19) and must strictly follow the whole macroverb (**në k=van me kēl*).

Another case when *van* 'go' acts as V_1 in an SVC (rather than a PSC) is when it is followed by a stative verb such as *'ö'* 'hold, have' (or its synonym *'ör*), as in (22). Because V_2 is stative, it cannot be interpreted as a separate subevent (**go and then hold*), but only as another facet of the same event {go + hold} → 'carry' [§4.3.1]:

(22) *Ērge 'aṁan ⟨māl **van** **'ö'**⟩ n=li' e.*
HUM:PL man IAM go hold ART=firewood DEF
[SVC] 'The men have been *carrying* the firewood.'
[*not*: *go and hold the firewood] [AF.LMG.q10.d11]

The latter type of SVC can take any motion verb as V_1, not just *van* 'go'. The position of the directional *me* is independent evidence that *vala 'ör* 'run holding' must be analysed as an SVC:

(23) *Näk 'iriṉ n=naw, ⟨**vala** **'ör** kal me⟩.*
2SG draw ART=seawater run hold go.up DIR:HITH
[SVC] 'You draw some water, and quickly *bring* it up here.'
[liter. '…run holding it (going) up hither'] [AF.LMG.Qet.199] [25]

In sum, the tight structure of an SVC, with its inseparable verbs, is only possible when component verbs refer to simultaneous facets of a single event. But when the verbs correspond to two sequential events {motion + action}, the appropriate construction is one of serialised predicates, forming a PSC. The nexus formed by the verbal components in a PSC

[23] About the verb *kēl* 'return', see also §4.1.2 and 4.2.1 below.

[24] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003271#S43*.

[25] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003271#S199*.

such as (15–16) is less tight than that of an SVC, as shown by the ability of each component to bear its own TAMP and its own directionals. However, a PSC still qualifies as a VCP, because its nexus is still tighter than the one found in a mere string of two juxtaposed clauses such as (19a–b). This tight nexus is evident from the absence of an intonational break between the verbal components, and the very limited list of elements that are allowed to intervene between them.

Predicate serialisation will not be discussed again in this study.

3.4 Argument-taking construction (ATC)

Four verbs, namely *mörös* 'want' (24), *'awi* 'refuse, not want' (25), *qē'ēg* 'begin' and *gālāl* 'know' (30), regularly take part in another construction, which we label *argument-taking constructions* (ATC). At first sight, the following sentences could be mistaken for serial verbs such as the ones we saw in §3.1:

(24) *Në* *ge=**mörös*** ***in~in*** *vōs*.
1SG STAT=want RED~drink green.coconut
'I want to drink a coconut.' [AF.LMG.Wud.98]

(25) *O'oo,* *në* *ge=**'awi*** ***mi~mi'ir***.
no 1SG STAT=refuse RED~sleep
'No, I don't want to sleep.' [AF.LMG.EP1-41b]

However, ATCs involving these modal and phasal verbs are structurally different from SVCs. When these argument-taking verbs ($V_{A\text{-}T}$) are followed by a lexical verb, thus superficially resembling an SVC, that second verb with its arguments takes over the function of a complement clause (CC). The latter can be indicated by square brackets [...], and the verb complex of the matrix clause by angle brackets ⟨…⟩.

(24') *Në* ⟨*ge=mörös*⟩ [*in~in vōs*]$_{CC}$.

There has been some debate over whether constructions with $V_{A\text{-}T}$ can be analysed as SVCs. For example, Aikhenvald (2006, 2018) includes complement-clause constructions in her discussion of SVCs, whereas Haspelmath (2016) precisely defines SVCs as having no predicate-argument relation between the verbs. Zooming in to the languages of northern Vanuatu, we find that Malau (2016) includes $V_{A\text{-}T}$ in her analysis of SVCs in Vurës, whereas Kraußе (2021) demonstrates that ATCs involving $V_{A\text{-}T}$ ("modal verbs" in his terms) in the same language are better analysed as biclausal constructions. We follow Haspelmath (2016) and Kraußе (2021), and argue that argument-taking verbs do not participate in an SVC in Lemerig. Although an ATC does not fulfil the criteria of a VCP as defined for this volume, we think that it is useful to discuss their syntactic behaviour in the broader domain of complex predicates.

The main reason for not analysing constructions (24–25) above as SVCs or VCPs is that they are an instance of covert subordination. This is evidenced by two formal properties of ATCs:

- ➢ The matrix and the complement clause are underlyingly separated by the (often covert) complementiser *wë*;
- ➢ The $V_{A\text{-}T}$ can be modified independently.

Just like other languages in the area (cf. Kraußе 2021:248, François 2003:186), Lemerig tends to treat the complementiser as optional. Thus, while (26) has an overt complementiser *wë* between the matrix verb *mörös* 'want' and its complement, (27) shows a similar structure with parataxis. Note, in (27), the possibility to express also the pronoun of the subordinate clause, even though it coincides with that of the matrix clause:

(26) *Në* ⟨*ge=mörös*⟩ ***wë*** [***në*** ⟨*k=wōl*⟩ *'en* *maranag*]$_{CC}$.
1SG STAT=want COMP 1SG AO:1SG=buy ABL chief
'I wanted to buy it from the chief.' (lit. 'I wanted that I buy …') [AF.LMG.q04.d13]

(27) *Në* ⟨*ge=mörös*⟩ [***në*** ⟨*k=van* *me*⟩ ⟨*kaka*⟩]$_{CC}$.
1SG STAT=want 1SG AO:1SG=go DIR:HITH chat
'I wanted to come and chat.' (lit. 'I wanted I come chat') [AF.LMG.Qet.194][26]

Thus it would be grammatical to expand our initial examples (24–25) by adding the complementiser *wë*, and even the subject of the complement clause, although the more economical way is to omit these elements.

The second motivation for analysing ATCs in Lemerig as biclausal is that modal verbs like *mörös* can be modified independently:

(28) *Në* ⟨*ge=mörös* ***qogor***⟩ [⟨*oror* *'ö'*⟩]$_{CC}$.
1SG STAT=want RESTR play hold
[ATC] 'I *just* wanted to play with it.' [AF.LMG.q05.d42]

If the two verbs *mörös* 'want' and *oror* 'play' in (28) had a tight nexus like those of SVCs (cf. §3.1), the restrictive postverb *qogor* 'just, only' would not be inserted between the two verbs. It could only surface at the end of the macroverb, as is the case in (29) with the serial verb *vala galgal* 'pretend to run':

(29) *Näk* ⟨*vala* *gal~gal* ***qogor***⟩.
2SG run RED~lie RESTR
[SVC] 'You're *just* pretending to run.' [LM20180821ISS5:10]

In sum, the components of an ATC present signs of syntactic autonomy that confirm their biclausal status: the complement clause can be introduced by an optional complementiser, and the matrix verb can bear its own postverbal modifiers. Thus, while (30a) could have been mistaken for an SVC, its counterpart (30b), with its postverb *'örma'* 'readily, well' and its negation affecting only V_1, makes it clear that we are in fact dealing with a biclausal construction:

[26] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003271#S194*.

(30a) *Näk* ⟨*ge=gālāl*⟩ [*sun~sun* *ga*]$_{CP}$.
2SG STAT=know ITER~drink kava
'You know how to drink kava.'

(30b) *Näk* ⟨*ē=gālāl* ***'örma'*** ***'ä***⟩ [*sun~sun* *ga*]$_{CP}$.
2SG NEG$_1$=know readily NEG$_2$ ITER~drink kava
'You don't know well how to drink kava.' [AF.LMG.q04.d48]

An ATC in Lemerig displays the following pattern:

[v] Template for an Argument-taking construction (ATC) in Lemerig
(S) ⟨TAMP= **V$_{AT}$** (PV)⟩ [(COMP) (S) TAMP=) **V** (O)]$_{CC}$

Because ATCs in Lemerig are biclausal constructions, they fail to fulfil the criteria for a VCP. We will not discuss them again in this study.

3.5 Synthesis

Table 2 recapitulates the main properties of the four construction types we have just examined in the previous sections. The left column corresponds to certain key notions of the *ComPLETE* questionnaire.

Table 2 – Formal properties of the candidates for VCPs in Lemerig

	Serial verb construction (SVC)	**Postverbal construction (PVC)**	**Predicate serialisation construction (PSC)**	**Argument-taking construction (ATC)**
Independence of both elements	yes	only V_1	yes	yes
Contiguity	strictly contiguous	strictly contiguous	Directional + TAM can intervene	many elements can intervene
Juncture	nucleus	nucleus	core	clause
Semantics	various	various	prior motion	phasal & modal predicates
TAMP	encoded once with scope over whole macroverb	encoded once with scope over whole macroverb	encoded only on V_1 or on each verb	encoded only on matrix verb
Genuine VCP?	yes	no	yes	no

Table 2 may require some explanation. "Independence" refers to the verb's ability to occur as a single predicate in an independent clause in the form in which it occurs in the VCP. "Contiguity" refers to the ability for the VCP's constituents to be separated by other grammatical or lexical elements. This contiguity has direct relevance for the level of juncture (cf. van Valin 2010, this volume): if the VCP coincides with the verbal predicate itself, then the level of juncture is the NUCLEUS; if the VCP also includes the arguments of one of the predicating elements, the level of juncture is the CORE.

All four constructions outlined above consist of separate phonological and lexical words. The only other formal property that these constructions share is the inability to reverse the

order of the participating elements without a change in meaning. This is a common feature in serialising languages, as opposed to some languages with light-verb constructions (cf. Krauße 2021: 266). The remainder of this paper will focus on SVCs.

3.6 VCPs inside VCPs

The four construction types we have examined can be embedded in each other. In particular, any construction that includes a "verb slot" (V) can fill that position with a *macroverb*, whether in the form of an SVC or a PVC. Thus, in a PSC ('go and V'), the second part can be a macroverb, whether as a postverbal construction (31) or as an SVC (32):

(31) *'amarge 'āwān ⟨n=**van** me⟩ ⟨m=**pu'** **sur**⟩ lē='änäp.*
old.man other AO:3SG=go DIR:HITH PFT=sit down LOC=bed
[PVC in a PSC] 'The other old man came and sat down on the bed.' [LM20180821ISS3:43]

(32) *Ti ⟨n=**van**⟩ ⟨**row** **'āk** sōw⟩.*
3SG AO:3SG=go move.fast crouch DIR:down
[SVC in a PSC] 'He went and jumped over it.' [AF.LMG.Qet.230] [27]

Similarly, (28) above showed how a biclausal ATC can involve two macroverbs: one in the matrix clause (*mörös qogor* 'just want'), and one in the subordinate clause (*oror 'ö'* 'play with it').

4 Subtypes of serial verbs

Among the various forms of complex predicates examined above, the most intricate in Lemerig is no doubt the *serial verb construction* (SVC). Section §3.1 above presented its main syntactic properties. This section will now examine the different subtypes of SVCs, using as our main criterion the way these constructions handle the underlying argument structure of their components. This formal classification will help us describe the main semantic functions of Lemerig SVCs.

4.1 Type 1: Subject-sharing SVCs involving intransitives

4.1.1 Prototypical cases

The first type of SVC is the simplest: it involves two intransitive verbs, sharing the same underlying subject. This pattern already appeared in §3.1 and §3.6, with such examples as (8) *row pu'* {move.fast + sit} 'land' and (32) *row 'āk* {move.fast + crouch} 'jump down'. Another example of subject-sharing with intransitive verbs is given in (33), in which the subject (the ogre Varvang) is both the one who dies (V_1 *ma'*) and who disappears (V_2 *qäläñ*) at the same time:

[27] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003271#S230*. For another example of an SVC inside a PSC, see (18) above.

(33) *Sōwlē Vārvañ* ⟨*n=**ma'*** ***qäläñ*** *wal*⟩.
then Varvang AO:3SG=die disappear completely
'Finally Varvang died and disappeared.' [AF.LMG.Qet.241] [28]

In syntactic terms, we could say that the two verbs V_1 and V_2 "share the same subject". But strictly speaking, we know that an SVC can only have one surface subject – namely, the one taken by the macroverb as a whole. For this reason, it is more accurate to say that V_1 and V_2 share the same *underlying* subject.

If we use the letter *x* to encode the shared referent, we can represent the more abstract syntactic pattern behind this macroverb using a simple algebraic system (based on François 2004a for Mwotlap). The formula in [VI] encapsulates the regular correspondence between the underlying argument structure of component verbs (V_1, V_2) on the one hand, and the resulting structure of the macroverb (V_1V_2) on the other:

[VI] Argument formula of **Type 1:** **x-**V_1 **+ x-**V_2 → **x-[**V_1V_2**]**

One productive pattern of Type 1 is the combination of a posture verb as V_1 and a verb of activity as V_2:

(34) *Në* ⟨*m=**pu'*** ***rev~rev***⟩.
1SG PRF=sit INTR~write
'I'm sitting writing.' (Codrington 1885:335)

(35) *Ti* ⟨*n=**'är*** ***kel~kel*** *lik* *sōw*⟩ *lē='an.*
3SG AO:3SG=stand INTR~stir again DIR:down LOC=ground
'He's standing stirring (something) again on the ground.' [LM20180821ISS3:54]

Each SVC here describes a single event: the subject is in a certain position while carrying out a certain activity – e.g. *pu' revrev* 'write while sitting'; *'är kelkel* 'stir while standing'.[29] Such posture-based serial verbs have the potential for grammaticalising into a progressive aspect, as can be observed in the nearby Torres languages (François 2010:512); however, in Lemerig these phrases must still be read literally, as the indication of a physical posture.

Another example of Type 1 SVCs would be motion events, which may take the form of a macroverb, as in (21) above. In (36), V_1 encodes manner-of-motion (*vala* 'run'), while V_2 encodes the path (*qēl* 'go down'):

(36) *Ē* *Qet* ⟨*m=**vala*** ***qēl*** *row*⟩ *nē,* *n='et* *row.*
PERS Qet PFT=run go.down DIR:out DEM2 AO:3SG=see DIR:out
'Qet *ran down* to the shore, and looked out to sea.' [AF.LMG.Qet.086] [30]

Type 1 includes cases of strict SVCs involving two verbs, as in (33–36). But insofar as

[28] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003271#S241*.

[29] While the simple form of the verbs *rev* and *kel* would be transitive (respectively 'write ‹s.th.›' and 'stir ‹s.th.›'), reduplication has a detransitivizing effect on them – a phenomenon observed in neighbouring languages (e.g. François 2003:333, 2004b:189 on Mwotlap, Malau 2016:192 and Kraußе 2021:237–238 on Vurës).

[30] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003271#S86*.

adjectives behave like verbs in predicative phrases [§2.3], we can also include here cases where either element is an adjective, such as *'ēnēnē* '(be) straight', as in (37).

(37) *N=nānār e ⟨māl **'är** **'ēnēnē** kēl⟩.*
ART=k.o.tree DEF IAM stand (be.)straight REVER
'The tree was *standing straight* again.' [AF.LMG.Qet.038] [31]

Table 3 lists a few more attested examples of Type 1 SVCs in Lemerig.

Table 3 – Some examples of Type 1 SVC: Subject-sharing involving intransitives

x-V_1		x-V_2		→ x-[V_1V_2]	
pu'	'sit'	*gengen*	'eat (intr.)'	*pu' gengen*	'sit and eat'
män	'(be) ripe'	*lawlaw*	'(be) red'	*män lawlaw*	'(be) red ripe'
row	'move fast'	*pu'*	'sit'	*row pu'*	[bird, canoe] 'land'
row	'move fast'	*'är*	'stand'	*row 'är*	'jump upright'
row	'move fast'	*'āk*	'crouch'	*row 'āk*	'jump down'
'är	'stand'	*'ëgëlgël*	'(be) upright'	*'är 'ëgëlgël*	'stand upright'
'og	'be there, stay'	*vā(v)lākreg*	'(be) scattered'	*'og vā(v)lākreg*	'lie around'
vala	'run'	*qäläñ*	'disappear'	*vala qäläñ*	'run out of sight'

4.1.2 BORDERLINE CASES

Among SVCs of Type 1, we have seen serial patterns where both verbs have their full lexical value; but we also include in our discussion cases where the meaning of V_2 is noticeably different from when it occurs as a verb head V_1. In principle, they can still be legitimately analysed as examples of Type 1, but they constitute borderline cases. For example, the verb *kēl* is a motion verb when used as V_1, meaning 'return, go back':

(38) *Tär susu 'i köwö', wā n=mi'ig e ⟨n=**kēl** me⟩.*
3PL paddle PRSTV here and ART=coconut DEF AO:3SG=return DIR:HITH
'They paddled this way, and the (floating) coconut came back.' [AF.LMG.Qet.121] [32]

When used in postverbal position, the verb *kēl* sometimes retains its motion semantics, especially when combined with another motion verb – as in (21) above, or in (39):

(39) *Kē m=meren row ne, ti ⟨m=**qēl** **kēl** row me⟩.*
place PFT=day DIR:out DEM2 3SG PFT=descend return DIR:out DIR:HITH
'The next morning, he *walked back down* towards the shore.' [AF.LMG.Rock.36] [33]

But most often, postverbal *kēl* takes on a more abstract meaning, namely that of an iterative or reversive '(do V) again'.[34] It can modify posture verbs like in (37), as well as change-of-state

[31] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003271#S38*.

[32] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003278#S121*.

[33] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003278#S36*.

[34] Moyse-Faurie (2018:294) shows that Oceanic languages often grammaticalise the verb 'return' into

verbs, exemplified in (40):

(40) *N=pol* ⟨*m=**qäläñ*** ***kēl*** *wöle*⟩.
ART=ball PFT=disappear return/REVER again
'The ball has vanished *once again*.' [LM20180821ISS4:78]

In our corpus, the verb *kēl* is attested twice as predicate head (V_1) meaning 'return', and 114 times in the postverbal position with the reversive meaning '(move) back' or '(do) again'.[35] The overwhelming imbalance in favour of the postverbal position (98% of all occurrences) is a clear sign that *kēl* is on its way towards losing its verbhood, and fully grammaticalising into a postverb [see §3.2].

Technically, *'är 'ēnēnē kēl* (37) and *qäläñ kēl* (40) are still serial verb constructions (and VCPs) under our definition, because their postverbal element still has the status of a verb in the contemporary language. However, the semantic difference of *kēl* between its two positions raises the question of whether we are still dealing with the same lexeme after all. This is partly a matter of choice. If we consider both instances of *kēl* to reflect the same word, then *kēl* in (37) and (40) is as much a verb as it is in (39), and we are still dealing with an SVC. Conversely, we might consider that *kēl* has now split into two different homophonous lexemes: a verb *kēl* 'return' vs. a postverb *kēl* 'again'; in the latter case, (37) and (40) must be reanalysed as PVCs. The sort of ambiguity we are facing here is pervasive in the analysis of SVCs in North Vanuatu languages (François 2004a: 137); it raises, more generally, the problem of *heterosemy* (Lichtenberk 1991, François 2017: 299) and the theoretical question of the identity of lexical units in cases of grammaticalisation. Likewise, in English, shall we say that the verb *have* (as in *I have money*) and the auxiliary *have* (as in *I have lost money*) are two instances of the same lexeme, or two separate lexemes?

In the sections below, we will encounter more instances of ambiguous readings between SVCs and PVCs. This constant process of reinterpretation lies at the heart of the grammatical machinery of macroverbs in North Vanuatu languages.

4.2 Type 2: Subject-sharing involving transitives

The second type of SVC also involves two verbs that share the same subject, but at least one of the verbs is transitive. This may correspond to three subtypes: {Bivalent + Monovalent}; {Monovalent + Bivalent}; {Bivalent + Bivalent}.

4.2.1 Type 2a: Bivalent + Monovalent

The first subtype, labelled 2a, is a combination in which V_1 is underlyingly transitive, followed by an intransitive V_2, as in (41–42):

an iterative word '(do) again' – among other semantic extensions.

[35] In §4.2.1, we will see that *kēl* has also grammaticalised into a reflexive marker.

(41) *Ti* ⟨*m=**le*** ***kēl*** *me*⟩ *n=pok* *ti* *m=varñe* *'i* *lolon.*
3SG PFT=take return DIR:HITH ART=book 3SG $PRET_1$=read $PRET_2$ inside
'He *brought back* the book he had been reading.' (Codrington 1885:335)

(42) *Gätru* ⟨***'ö'*** ***kēl***⟩ *näk.*
1IN:DU hold return 2SG
'I'll *walk* you *back*.' [liter. 'you & I will *hold go.back* you'] [AF.LMG.Rock.29] [36]

The combination of a transitive V_1 with an intransitive V_2 sharing the same underlying subject is a macroverb (V_1V_2) that is overall transitive, inheriting the argument structure of V_1. If we adopt a *subject-verb-object* conventional order for our formulae, we can represent this pattern as [VII]:

[VII] Argument formula of **Type 2a:** **x-**V_1**-y + x-**V_2 → **x-[**V_1V_2**]-y**

This pattern is quite rare in Lemerig. It is not to be confused with another SVC type of the form {Bivalent + monovalent}, in which the underlying subject of each verb is different. That "switch-subject SVC", which is much more common than the same-subject SVC illustrated in [VII], will be examined in §4.3 below, under Type 3a.

Reflexive constructions in Lemerig also fall into type 2a, as they are formed by a bivalent verb V_1 followed by the monovalent verb *kēl* 'return' (cf. §4.1.2 for other uses of this verb). Example (43) consists of a macroverb *ta ma'* 'kill ‹s.o.›' – itself an SVC of type 3a consisting of *ta* 'do' + *ma'* 'die, (be) dead' – followed by the intransitive *kēl*. The latter (post-)verb, which has already begun specialising as a reversive, has here grammaticalised further to encode reflexivity:[37]

(43) *Ti* ⟨*n=ta* *ma'* ***kēl***⟩ *ti.*
3SG AO:3SG=do dead return/REVER 3SG
'He killed himself.' (Codrington 1885:336)

4.2.2 Type 2b: Monovalent + Bivalent

Another configuration is when V_1 is intransitive, but V_2 transitive. Here too, the resulting macroverb inherits the argument structure of the verb with most arguments, this time V_2. This principle has been described for complex predicates in general by Krauße (2021:96), who terms this the "highest adicity hypothesis": it states that the "adicity" (i.e. number of arguments) of a complex predicate is generally equal to that of the component with the highest number of arguments.

[VIII] Argument formula of **Type 2b:** **x-**V_1 **+ x-**V_2**-y** → **x-[**V_1V_2**]-y**

One example of Type 2b is when a motion verb like *van* 'walk, go' or *vala* 'run' is followed by the bivalent verb *was* 'reach':

[36] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003278#S29*.

[37] Neighbouring languages also encode reflexivity and reciprocity by using their reversive postverbs, i.e. *kēl* 'return; back, again' in Vurës (Malau 2016:553-555, Krauße 2021:287-288) and *lok* 'back' in Mwotlap (François 2005b:120).

(44) *Ti* ⟨*m=**vala*** ***was***⟩ *n=vekē* *nē,* *n='et* *sōw.*
3SG PFT=run reach ART=place DEM2 AO:3SG=see down
'He ran (all the way) to the place, and looked downwards.' [LM20180821ISS6:40]

The transitive V_2 *was* 'reach' brings a new argument to the clause, namely the target of the motion event: {run reach} = 'run to ‹a place›'. One could propose that V_2 has somehow grammaticalised into an allative preposition (cf. Durie 1988). However, the placement of the directional *me* between V_2 and the object in (45) prevents us from analysing *was* as a preposition:

(45) *Täru* *van,* ⟨***van*** ***was*** *me*⟩ *n=mërag* *'är* *'i.*
3DU go go reach DIR:HITH ART=Syzygium stand PRSV
'They walked, walked (this way) up to an apple tree that was standing there.'[AF.LMG.Rat.02]

Rather than an adposition, the sort of morpheme that postverbal *was* can be compared to is an applicative: that is, a morpheme that indeed governs an argument, but that forms a syntactic constituent with the verb rather than with the noun phrase. One could say that V_2 *was* increases the valency of V_1 *van*, as suggested by the formula in [VIII]. In such cases, the VCP inherits the transitive argument structure from V_2.

Another frequent case of Type 2b is when an intransitive motion V_1 (e.g. 'walk', 'return') is followed by a transitive V_2 meaning 'hold, carry', such as *'ör* [ʔɵr] or *'ö'* [ʔɵʔ]:[38]

(46) *Ti* ⟨*m=**kal*** ***'ö'*** *pa'*⟩ *lē=qek* *row* *gēn.*
3SG PFT=go.in hold inwards LOC=house DIR:out there
'He's carried [the knife] inside that house over there.' [AF.LMG.q05.d20]

(47) *Tär* ⟨*māl* ***mōl*** ***'ö'*** *me*⟩ *n=li'* *lē=qek.*
3PL IAM return hold DIR:HITH ART=firewood LOC=house'
'They've already come back home with some firewood.' [AF.LMG.q10.d11]

The result of such a combination is a transitive macroverb {V_1V_2} that encodes "caused accompanied motion" (Margetts *et al.* 2022), i.e. functional equivalents to English verbs like 'carry' or 'bring' – see also (22–23) above. From the syntactic point of view, the two verbs share their underlying subject *x*. V_2 can be said to increase the valency of V_1, as it were, by introducing a new argument *y* (e.g. a knife, some firewood). In such sentences, the grammatical function of V_2 'hold' can also be compared to that of an applicative, more precisely a comitative applicative: {enter + hold} = 'enter with ‹s.th.›', hence 'bring ‹s.th.› in'. As a matter of fact, Proto-Oceanic, the ancestor of Lemerig, used to encode that function using an applicative suffix **-akin* (Evans 2003); but that suffix lost its productivity in the Banks islands of Vanuatu, and was eventually replaced by serialising strategies exactly like the one in (47) (Kraußе & François 2023:67).

The literal meaning of *'ö'* as a main verb, namely 'hold, carry', is arguably still present in the caused-motion examples (46–47). But in other cases, the same verb has taken over a more abstract meaning of a general applicative ('[do V] with / about s.th.'). For example, we had seen how (10) *oror 'ö'* {play + hold} above translates as 'play with ‹s.th.›'. Likewise, V_2 *'ö'* 'hold'

[38] See (42) for the use of *'ö'* 'hold, carry' as V_1.

can serve as an applicative for speech verbs. Thus in (7), repeated here, it turned a monovalent verb *tek* 'talk' into a bivalent macroverb *tek 'ö'* 'talk about ‹s.th.›'.

(7) *N=ge na, gät ⟨ē=**tek** **'ö'** vālākreg mɨ̄säˈä⟩.*
ART=thing that 1IN:PL NEG$_1$=talk hold/APPL be.random NEG.POT$_2$
'That topic, you can't just *talk about* it freely.' [AF.LMG.q06.d18]

In sum, the same form *'ö'* shows stark differences in meaning, depending on whether it is the predicate head (V_1 'hold, carry') or a postverbal modifier (applicative: 'with', 'about'). One could wonder whether these are still synchronically the same lexeme [see §4.1.2 for similar cases]. If we answer that question positively, then we are dealing here with proper cases of SVC, albeit with some semantic adjustment. Alternatively, one may propose that *'ö'* has now grammaticalised into a "bivalent postverb" [§3.2] with applicative functions, in which case (7) would be an example of a postverbal construction (PVC) rather than an SVC. The problem with the latter hypothesis is the difficulty to place the cursor: if *tek 'ö'* in (7) is a PVC, what about the more literal examples (46–47): Should we still label them SVCs, or must we group all cases of postverbal *'ö'* with other PVCs?

This problem cannot be solved in a simple way, because it is always a matter of degree, and of intuitive appreciation. Whenever a verb is used as V_2 in a serial pattern, it tends to take over some new meanings compared to its use as V_1. We then have to account for a spectrum of cases: sometimes V_2 keeps a more literal, "verby" interpretation that is easily compatible with an interpretation as an SVC – like 'hold' in (46); but the same postverbal form may also be attested with more abstract or grammaticalised readings – like the applicative in (7) – which could be analysed as a different construction (i.e. a PVC). That said, if we are to define PVCs based on such semantic interpretations, the boundary between SVC vs. PVC readings becomes arbitrary, as it lacks any testable, formal correlate (but see Krauße *et al.* f/c for a proposal of such tests). To avoid that, it is reasonable to maintain our formal definition of SVCs: a macroverb is considered a case of verb serialisation every time the postverbal element V_2 can also be found in V_1 position in the same language, regardless of the semantic change involved.[39] Under this view, (7) must still be analysed as an SVC, in spite of the incipient process of grammaticalisation of *'ö'* from a lexical verb into something else.

4.2.3 Type 2c: Bivalent + Bivalent

Finally, a third subtype of SVC includes cases where both verbs are bivalent and share both underlying arguments. This can be captured by a formula:

[IX] Argument formula of **Type 2c:** **x-**V_1**-y + x-**V_2**-y** → **x-[**V_1V_2**]-y**

[39] Even this apparently simple definition can be problematic. For example, no serious syntactician would consider the English phrase *he **went down** the stairs* as an instance of an SVC, however there also exists the marginal use of *down* as predicate on its own, e.g. *he **downed** three pints of beer*. This is a general problem in languages with flexible word classes (cf. Rijkhoff & van Lier 2013, François 2017).

Such a configuration is in fact rare in Lemerig and in other languages of Vanuatu.[40] The two following examples involve *'esgö'* 'find' in V_2 position:[41]

(48) *Pän? Näk ⟨m=**sëk** **'esgö'**⟩?*
EXIST 2SG PFT=seek find
'Is it there? Have you found it?' [AF.LMG.q05.d26]

(49) *'irgi, në ⟨m=**tët** **'esgö'**⟩ va'anē !*
true 1SG PFT=think find now
'That's true, I remember now!' [AF.LMG.q05.d18]

Because these verbs have an inanimate object that is anaphoric, they involve zero anaphora [see (2) in §2.3]; but all the verbs involved are transitive – and so are the resulting macroverbs. These combinations {V_1 + *find*} follow a well-documented areal pattern (François 2011:214-217), where V_1 indicates the manner ('find s.th. by walking', 'find s.th. by listening'), while the telic element 'find' is expressed by the second element – whether a second verb in an SVC like in Lemerig, or a postverb in a PVC like in other languages (see Kraße 2021:282 for such PVC examples in Vurës).

One particular case of an SVC of Type 2c involves the verb *'et* 'see, look' [cf. (36) for its use as main verb]. When used postverbally, this verb *'et* encodes a verificative meaning 'check':

(50) *⟨**Rën̄~rën̄** **'et** sar⟩: wöte ti pän lē=qek?*
ITER~hear see/VERIF DIR:inside maybe 3SG EXIST LOC=house
'*Check (by listening)* inside: maybe he's in the house?' [AF.LMG.EG2-22a]

As the combination {hear + see} suggests, the meaning of *'et* in (50) is not literal vision, but a more abstract, verificative sense. The grammaticalisation of a verb 'see' into a meaning 'check' is also attested in French (*essaye voir* 'give it a try'; *écoute voir* 'check by listening'), and in certain languages of the Caucasus (Arkadiev & Maisak 2018: 143).

Closely connected to the verificative sense is the conative.[42] Thus, the combination *ta 'et* {do see} means 'try, attempt':

(51) *Në ⟨m=**ta** **'et** ⟩ wë në k=mi'ir.*
1SG PFT=do see/CONA COMP 1SG AO:1SG=sleep
'I've been *trying* to sleep.' [AF.LMG.Qet.175] [43]

This verb *'et* in V_2 position is also the source of the conative postverb *'etgal* '[do] tentatively'.[44] Examples include *ōlōl 'etgal* 'try to call s.o.' and *gen 'etgal* 'try to eat, taste s.th.'.

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[40] Bisang (2009:800) analyses such constructions as *cause-effect SVCs* (similar to our Type 3a below), perhaps because V_2 has a resultative effect, as it refers to the endpoint of the action expressed by V_1.

[41] See also (70) in §4.5.2.

[42] The grammaticalisation of 'see' into a conative 'try' is also observed in several Papuan languages (Foley 1986: 152), as well as South Asia (Coupe 2018: 195).

[43] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003271#S175*.

[44] This form *'etgal*, in turn, reflects a former SVC, historically composed of *'et* 'see' and *gal* 'pretend, lie'.

4.3 Type 3: Switch-subject resultatives

4.3.1 Type 3a: Resultatives involving transitives

We saw in §4.2 how SVCs are sometimes composed of verbs differing in valency, despite their sharing the same underlying subject. A much more common SVC pattern with verbs of differing valency is the resultative construction, which combines a transitive V_1 and intransitive V_2. However, in this type of SVC, the underlying subject of V_2 does not coincide with the subject of V_1, but with its object. Thus, consider example (52), in which V_2 *ma'* 'die' expresses the telic result of the volitional action described by V_1 *lān* 'strike', i.e. {I strike you + you die}:

(52) *Në* ⟨*mē=**lān*** ***ma'***⟩ *näk!*
1SG FUT=strike die 2SG
'I will kill you!' [lit. strike die] [AF.LMG.Qet.75][45]

Different forms of killing would be expressed using the same pattern, with a different verb as V_1: *vus ma'* 'kill with a blow', *'u' ma'* 'punch to death', or *vigir ma'* 'kill by strangling'. Another example of a resultative was given in (1) in §2.3, where {cut be.broken} had the same underlying structure, and also a resultative meaning.

Such resultative SVCs are sometimes referred to as "switch-function" (Aikhenvald 2018:46-47, Malau 2016:563) or "switch-subject" (Bradshaw 1993: 149, Kraußе 2021: 275). This pattern can be captured by a new formula:

[X] Argument formula of **Type 3a:** **x-**V_1**-y + y-**V_2 → **x-[**V_1V_2**]-y**

The switch-subject construction usually begins with an impact verb V_1 with high agency (e.g. 'hit', 'cut'), whereby an agent acts upon a patient; it is followed by a stative verb (or adjective) V_2, encoding the end state of that patient. Example (53), taken from a story, is a sequence of two sentences expressing the same idea. The first one follows a multiclausal strategy, where each verb has its own TAM marking (aorist, stative). The second sentence rephrases the same statement in the form of a monoclausal, resultative SVC:

(53) *Nov* *n=siv* *gā-n,* *ge=mētmēt,* *ge=mētmēt.*
heron AO:3SG=scrape FOOD-3SG STAT=clean STAT=clean
⟨*N=**siv*** ***mētmēt*** *'örma'* *wal*⟩.
AO:3SG=scrape (be.)clean well INTSF
'Heron scraped his [yam] (till) it was really clean.
Yes, he scraped it perfectly clean.' [AF.LMG.Heron.09]

This is a typical case of switch-subject SVC. As per principles of recursion [§3.6], the resulting macroverb (*siv mētmēt* 'scrape clean') is itself modified by the postverb *'örma'* 'well' – in turn modified by its own intensifier postverb *wal*.

The meaning of the construction remains resultative even in the rare case when V_1 is not an impact verb per se, but a stative verb – e.g. *'ör* 'have, hold':

[45] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003271#S75*.

(54) *Pol* *ge=pu'*, *malsav* ⟨*m=**'ör*** ***qäläñ***⟩ *ti*.
ball STAT=sit cloth PFT=hold disappear 3SG
'The ball is lying there, and the cloth hides it.'
[lit. 'holds it out of sight'] [LM20180821ISS4:95]

Causatives in Lemerig also fall in this switch-subject type of VCP. In these constructions, V_1 is the generic causative verb *ta* 'do, make'; as a transitive verb, *ta* can also mean 'affect (s.o., s.th.) in a given way'. Thus, consider (55) with the SVC *ta sese'* {'make + (be) bad'}[46] → 'damage':

(55) *N=lenī* ⟨*m=**ta*** ***se~se'***⟩ *n=töa'* *lē=qek* *mu-mëm*.
ART=wind PFT=do RES~(be.)bad ART=thatch LOC=house POSS-1EX:PL
'The wind has damaged the thatch on our house.' [AF.LMG.q.Wud.55]

Likewise, to 'prepare s.th.' is literally 'make ready', based on *ta* + *'örma'* 'ready' [§4.4.2.1]:

(56) *Tär* ⟨***ta~ta*** ***'örma'***⟩ *n=gengen* *lowo*.
3PL IPFV~do (be.)ready ART=meal big
'They are preparing a major feast.' [AF.LMG.q10.d04]

All these examples conform to the argument formula of Type 3a. Note that such monoclausal causatives are only possible when V_2 is semantically stative; a causative controlling a dynamic action – as in *I made him jump* – would normally take the form of a biclausal construction, usually involving the verb *ta* and the complementiser *wë* [see §2.3].

Our corpus has a wealth of resultative constructions for expressing cut-and-break actions – see (1) and (5) in §2.3. V_1 is systematically a transitive action verb, such as *'ār* 'chop', *qäs* 'snap', *'ev* 'cut' or *ser* 'tear'; as for V_2, it is semantically resultative, e.g. *le'* 'broken crosswise', *wor* '[split] apart lengthwise', *m̄ö'* 'broken, shattered', *kirm̄ö'* 'broken'. If we take into consideration cognate forms in neighbouring languages, we can clearly see that these constructions, at least etymologically, all used to be resultative SVCs of Type 3a: e.g. *le'* [lɛʔ] reflects an ambitransitive etymon **late*, reflected in the Araki labile verb *lar̄e* 'to break s.th.; to break [intr.]' (François 2002:146). In their dictionary of Mota, Codrington & Palmer (1896:46) list *late* as a transitive verb 'to break, snap' and also as a postverb 'in broken bits'. That said, several of these second elements of resultative compounds, in modern Lemerig, have now ceased to be verbs, as they specialised in the postverbal slot [§3.2]: thus *le'* is now a postverb [see (12)], as well as *wor* and *kirm̄ö'*.[47] The only form that is still a verb is *m̄ö'* 'be broken'.

Finally, certain clauses are ambiguous between Type 2a and 3a, i.e. about the nature of V_2's underlying subject. Consider, for example, serial verbs expressing an event of caused motion (cf. Schnell 2022). In (57), V_1 is a bivalent verb of manipulation (*rev* 'pull'), followed by a monovalent V_2 encoding the path of the motion [see §4.1.1]:

[46] When V_2 is monosyllabic (e.g. *se'* 'bad'), it must be reduplicated when it is semantically resultative. This is a property of Lemerig as well as its neighbours (François 2015b:839, Krauße 2021:283-285).

[47] It is not always easy to know whether a lexeme that typically only occurs in postverbal position, such as *le'* or *wor* in Lemerig, also has the (theoretical) ability to occur in the main predicate position (see Krauße 2021:293-294). For example, both *lēt* and *wor* had been analysed as transitive verbs in Vurës by Malau (2016:116), but direct elicitation has revealed that only *wor* can marginally be used as a verb on its own, while *lēt* cannot (Krauße et al. 2019, Krauße 2021:294).

(57) *N=ok mō-r, tär ⟨**rev** **qēl** row⟩ lē=naw e.*
ART=canoe POSS-3PL 3PL pull go.down DIR:out LOC=sea DEF
'As for their canoes, they *dragged them down* all the way out to the sea.'
[AF.LMG.Qet.87] [48]

In such cases, one may wonder what is the underlying subject of *qēl* 'go down'. One may propose that this is a same-subject SVC (Type 2a): '[the men] dragged the canoes, and [the men] were also going down.' Alternatively, one may suggest that the path verb *qēl* ignores the motion of the agent and instead describes the motion of the theme or patient (in this case, the canoes). In the latter case, (57) would be a switch-subject resultative SVC, of Type 3a. This interpretation is favoured when the path is followed by the patient but not by the agent:

(58) *N=sāv nē ⟨n=**le~le** **kal**⟩ n=nānār e?*
ART=what DEM2 AO:3SG= ITER~take go.up ART=k.o.tree DEF
'What is it that keeps *putting* the tree back *up*?' [AF.LMG.Qet.64] [49]

The better reading here is {s.o. takes tree + tree goes up},[50] which corresponds well to the formula of Type 3a. The combination *le kal* 'raise s.th.', incidentally, can also take up figurative meanings:

(59) *Kiriwö' këmëm ta~ta kēl wë ⟨**le** **kal** kēl⟩ n-vāvāv 'a Lēmērig.*
today 1EX:PL ITER~do REVER COMP take go.up REVER ART=speech ORIG (place)
'These days, we're trying to resurrect [liter. bring back up] the Lemerig language.'
[LM20180821ISS7:41]

4.3.2 TYPE 3B: RESULTATIVES INVOLVING INTRANSITIVES

In §4.1 and 4.2, we discussed SVCs in Lemerig in which both verbs share their underlying subject. In the previous section [§4.3.1], we showed that the verbal components of an SVC do not necessarily share their underlying subject. We now turn to a rare case where no arguments are shared between the verbs, as both of them are monovalent. Consider example (60), which uses the same verbs as (37) in §4.1, except this time the SVC takes an object:

(60) *Në ⟨k=**'är** **'ēnēnē**⟩ n='ārpē-k 'i .*
1SG AO:1SG=stand (be.)straight ART=body-1SG HORT
'Let me stand up and straighten my body.'
[liter. 'Let me *stand* my body *straight*.'] [AF.LMG.EG2-05a]

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[48] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003271#S87*.

[49] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003271#S64*.

[50] While the verb *qēl* in (57) clearly means 'go down', the form *kal* shows more distance between its uses as V_1 vs. V_2. As V_2, *kal* means 'go up' (hence 'upwards'), as in (58); but when used as V_1, it rather encodes the crossing of a threshold (*kal pa'* 'enter', *kal lu* 'exit') – see (46). Indeed, the original meaning of its etymon *galo (François 2005a:495), namely 'crawl, climb', was ambiguous in terms of direction. In other terms, *kal* is a borderline case, where one could propose to analyse V_1 and V_2, synchronically, as two distinct lexemes: a verb *kal* 'crawl, cross threshold', vs. a postverb *kal* with a clear vertical gloss 'upwards'. For the purpose of this study, we treat them as the same verbal word.

Whereas *'är 'ēnēnē* in (37) was an intransitive same-subject SVC (the tree was 'standing straight'), the bivalent pattern in (60) forces a reading as a switch-subject resultative: my standing up (*'är*) makes my body straight (*'ēnēnē*). The main difference with other resultatives we saw in §4.3.1 is that the first verb V_1 in (60) is not bivalent, but monovalent. In other terms, the pattern of this construction corresponds to a different formula:

[XI] Argument formula of **Type 3b**: **x-**V_1 **+ y-**V_2 → **x-[**V_1V_2**]-y**

This is admittedly a very rare type of SVC, both in our Lemerig corpus and cross-linguistically.[51] Indeed, it is an unusual case where a serial pattern involves no formal sharing of the arguments between the two verbs: each verb is intransitive, yet the overall SVC is transitive. What brings the resultative meaning to the overall construction is neither V_1 nor V_2, but their combination into a bivalent V_1V_2 construction that is interpreted as a cause-effect sequence.

Although such resultative constructions are cross-linguistically rare, they are also attested in Lemerig's neighbours, such as Mwotlap (François 2006:231) and Vurës (Krauße 2021: 284, Krauße *et al*. f/c, Malau 2016: 566). Examples in those languages include such meanings as {wind ‹blow$_{INTR}$ fly› cards} 'The wind blew the cards away', or {I ‹sit be.broken› chair} 'I broke the chair by sitting on it.' Our corpus of Lemerig only contains the one example (60), but we are positive that a larger corpus, especially one targeting resultative constructions, would reveal more such examples.

4.4 Type 4: Event-argument serialisation

4.4.1 PROTOTYPICAL CASES

The final SVC pattern to be examined can be illustrated by the following example:

(61) *Täru mārа, mārа, ⟨**mārа lowo**⟩.*
3DU laugh laugh laugh (be.)big
'They were laughing, laughing, *laughing hard*.' [liter. 'laughing big'] [LM20180821ISS2:55]

This SVC combines a monovalent verb V_1 *mārа* 'laugh' with another monovalent V_2 (or adjective) *lowo* '(be) big'. In principle, we have already seen combinations of two monovalent verbs – as in Type 1 (same-subject) and Type 3b (switch-subject). However, example (61) fits neither of these two types because the underlying argument of *lowo* '(be) big' is not the subject of V_1: it is the action itself, i.e. the laughing,. That is, V_2 describes the manner in which V_1 is carried out: {laugh *big*} = 'laugh hard'. This type of syntactic structure has been labelled

[51] This construction has also been reported for other languages, with varying terminology, e.g. "exceptional case-marking resultatives" (Wechsler 2015:291), "intransitive resultatives" (Carrier & Randall 1992:173-174), and "low-agency causative serialisation" (François 2006:235). Krauße (2021: 122) explains that, while an intransitive verb standardly subcategorises for one argument in the lexicon, the same verb placed in the PROCESS/MANNER position of such a construction receives an "augmented argument structure" due to the presence of the RESULT.

"adverbial serialization" (Bradshaw 1993: 152), "event-argument serialization" (Dixon & Aikhenvald 2006: 18-20, cf. François 2006: 235), or simply "manner SVC" (Malau 2016:576).[52]

We propose to use a convention "E" to refer to the *event* depicted by the first verb and its arguments. Then we can describe Type 4a, exemplified in (60), using the following formula:

[XII] Argument formula of **Type 4a** (with monovalent V_1):

x-V_1 **+ E-**V_2 → **x-[**V_1V_2**]**

Note that this pattern does not involve any change in valency, contrary to the resultatives of Type 3b: the argument structure of V_1 is inherited by the macroverb, and not affected by the second predicate V_2. If the first verb is bivalent, then this property will also be inherited by the macroverb, as shown by (62):

(62) *Māˈā-n* *n=ʻāwān* ⟨*ge=**ʻet*** ***marmar***⟩ *n=savne-kiri*.
eye-CSTR ART=other STAT=see (be.)strong ART=thing-INDEF
'The other guy is staring at something.'
[liter. 'The other's eyes are *watching strong* something'] [LM20180821ISS2:32]

Here we have two NP arguments: the subject (the person watching) and the object (the thing being watched). Obviously, the predicate *marmar* '(be) strong' applies to neither of them: what is 'strong' here, figuratively, is the watching itself, i.e. the manner of the look. In a way parallel with *laugh big* above, V_2 describes the manner of V_1 {see strong s.th.} = 'look strongly at s.th.' → 'stare at s.th.'. We can thus define Type 4b – this time with a bivalent structure as in example (62) – in this way:

[XIII] Argument formula of **Type 4b** (with bivalent V_1):

x-V_1**-y + E-**V_2 → **x-[**V_1V_2**]-y**

Other examples of Type 4b were cited in §2.3, e.g. (3) *mān marmar näk* {affect strong you} 'it will affect you strongly', and (4) *ʻör marmar n=lañsi ēr* {hold strong end-of-tree} 'firmly hold the tree branch'. In principle, many verbs or adjectives can take the V_2 slot in an event-argument serial pattern, provided the resulting sentence becomes interpretable.

4.4.2 THREE SPECIAL VERBS

As we've seen repeatedly, some verbs are evidently on the verge of grammaticalizing into postverbs; among them, we can cite three which belong to Type 4.

4.4.2.1 'örma' *'be ready, be apt' → 'well'*

First, *ʻörma'* 'be ready, be apt', can be found in a resultative SVC of Type 3a, as we saw in (56) *ta ʻörma'* {make + be.ready} = 'prepare s.th.'. But the same word is also commonly found postverbally, under a Type 4 pattern, to indicate that the action V_1 is done 'aptly', i.e. 'well'. We saw this pattern in (30) combining {know + be.apt } = 'know s.th. *well'*, and in (53) {scrape + clean + be.apt } = 'scrape s.th. *perfectly* clean'.

[52] Other descriptors have been proposed in the literature. This includes the ill-defined "ambient serialization" (Crowley 2002: 41); and the ambiguous label "verbal subject serialization" (Bradshaw 1993: 153).

The verb *'örma'* (from an etymon *taurimate 'be ready; prepare') has become the default way to render the sense '(do) well, correctly'. This shift is only reflected by Lemerig *'örma'* [ʔørmaʔ], and by its Löyöp cognate *jöymat* [ʧøjmat] (François 2011:178).

4.4.2.2 qē' *'be over'* → *'finish; before; all, entirely'*

Another common verb found in Type 4 SVCs is *qē'* 'finish [intr.], be over'. It still exists as a main verb:

(63) *Kaka pän e ⟨m=**qē'**⟩ ēgēn.*
story ASSOC DEF PFT=finish now
'This is how the story ends.' [AF.LMG.Rock.73] [53]

When used in postverbal position, *qē'* encodes the end of the event expressed by V_1. In §3.1, we had example (9) *'ār qē' n=ok* {chop finish canoe} 'be done making your canoes', in which the underlying argument of *qē'* 'be over' is neither the subject nor the object, but the very action expressed by V_1 *'ār* 'chop'. The postverbal use of *qē'* generally encodes the completive aspect 'finish V' or 'be done with V':

(64) *Ti ⟨m=**sursur** **qē'**⟩ n=nes, ti n=weswes.*
3SG PFT=sing finish ART=song 3SG PFT=whistle
'As he *finished singing* the song, he started whistling.'

It is common for *qē'* to appear on the first clause in a sequence of two, such as (64), to encode the temporal sequence of two events: { X *finish*, Y } 'after doing X, Y happened'. In a habitual or irrealis context, this has given rise to a construction that is quite common in North Vanuatu, which François (2003: 278–300), describing Mwotlap, labeled "prioritive". A twofold sentence { X *finish, then* Y } is the most idiomatic way to render such English wordings as 'X comes *before* Y', or 'Y comes *after* X':

(65) *'Ōw'ōw, 'āñsār ⟨**gen~gen** 'örma' **qē'**⟩, mak sun ga.*
in.past person INTR~eat well finish/PRIOR DILAT drink kava
'In the olden days, people would drink kava *after dinner*.'
[liter. 'People first *finished eating*, and only then did they drink kava.'] [AF.LMG.EG2-7a]

Through its implication of completeness, the same verb *qē'* has also grammaticalised into an exhaustive quantifier 'all'. With a plural subject as in (66), *qē'* can take a distributive meaning 'all of them'; if the subject is singular as in (67) or (68), it will translate 'all of it, entirely':[54]

(66) *N=ok mōgō-r nē ⟨m=**rër** **qē'**⟩.*
ART=canoe POSS-3PL DEM2 PFT=sink finish/all
'*All of their canoes* sank [to the bottom of the sea].' [AF.LMG.Qet.090] [55]

[53] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003278#S73*.

[54] We find the same grammaticalisation path in Vurës (Malau 2016:581-586).

[55] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003271#S90*.

(67) *N=qä'ä-n* *e* ⟨***wënwën*** ***qē'***⟩ *mi* *n=wes* *rār.*
ART=head-3SG DEF be.full finish/all with ART=flower Erythrina
'His head was *entirely* covered in red flowers.' [AF.LMG.Rock.38] [56]

(68) *Ti* *n=rën̄* *e,* *ekē* ⟨*m=**'āk~'āk*** ***rërën̄*** ***qē'***⟩.
3SG AO:3SG=hear TOP place PFT=DUR~crouch quiet finish/all
'He listened: the *whole* place was quiet.' [AF.LMG.Qet.188] [57]

This quantifier *qē'* may modify the clause subject (as in *They all sank*) or its object (*he broke them all*). It is compatible with stative predicates (*I know them all*) as well as dynamic ones (*I picked them all*).

The same verb *qē'* has gone through yet other grammaticalisation stages, including outside the verb phrase. Based on its exhaustive meaning 'completely', it has become a nominal quantifier 'all' that combines with plural pronouns – e.g. *gät qē'* 'all of us'. And based on its completive meaning shown in (64), *qē'* has turned into a sequential coordinator 'then'. Both uses are illustrated in (69):

(69) ***Qē'***, *gät* ***qē'*** ⟨*lik*⟩ *n=qāñris.*
then 1IN:PL **all** unwrap ART=baked.food
'And then, all of us will unwrap the baked food.' [AF.LMG.q10.d21]

4.4.2.3 qal *'hit, reach'* → *intensifier of negation*

Finally, a more abstract case of grammaticalisation involves the verb *qal* 'touch, reach, make contact'. Example (70) shows its use in a Type 2c (same-subject) SVC {slap touch}:

(70) *Ti* ⟨*m=**wos*** ***qal***⟩ *meg'āv,* *ti* *m=pu'* *sur* *kēl.*
3SG PFT=slap touch door 3SG PFT=sit down REVER
'He knocked on the door, and then sat down again.' [LM20180821ISS3:62]

The same verb *qal* has another postverbal use, as a reinforcement of the negation *'ä*:

(71) *Kimi* *m=le* *n=ok* *muk,* *kimi* ⟨*m=vërën̄* ***qal*** *në* *'ä*⟩*?*
2PL PFT=take ART=canoe 1SG.POSS 2PL PFT=ask INTSF 1SG **NEG**
'Y'all took my canoe, and you didn't *even* ask me?' [AF.LMG.Qet.147] [58]

This usage can be tentatively understood as a Type 4 SVC: {you NEG ask "*touch*" me} = 'you didn't ask me, not even a little' – that is, 'you never *reached* (the point of) asking me'. This is consistent with the use of *qal* 'touch, make contact' as a reinforcer of negation in neighbouring Mwotlap (François 2023: 236). In fact, Lemerig *qal* shows signs of grammaticalising even further into the negation, as in a case of Jespersen's cycle.[59] In our corpus, *qal* is present

[56] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003278#S38*.

[57] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003271#S188*.

[58] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003271#S147*.

[59] In fact, Lemerig arguably reflects two instances of Jespersen's cycle. The first one, which it shares with its neighbours (François f/c *b*), saw a former partitive **tea* become a second part of negation in the form of *'ä* [ʔæ] – as shown in (30b) with *ē=* … *'ä* (NEG$_1$=… NEG$_2$). The second cycle is now seeing this NEG$_2$ morpheme *'ä* – the only obligatory element of negation – in turn, be reinforced with *qal*.

in 22% of negative clauses (i.e. 10 out of 45); and the sequence *qal* + *'ä* [k͡pʷal + ʔæ] <hit/INTSF NEG> has coalesced into a single word *qäl'ä* [k͡pʷælʔæ] as an alternative marker of negation:[60]

(72) *Ti* ⟨*mōl* ***qäl'ä***⟩, *pa* *m='är* *pa'*.
3SG return NEG:(INTSF) but PFT=stand inwards
'He did not leave the place, and instead went into hiding.' [AF.LMG.Qet.62] [61]

Admittedly, the semantic link between the verbal meaning of *qal* 'touch, reach' and this new negation is tenuous. But it can be safely explained by the mechanics of grammaticalisation from an erstwhile serial verb construction in Lemerig – and particularly by the general tendency for verbs in V_2 position to take up new meanings, and follow different (sometimes unpredictable) paths of grammaticalisation.

4.5 Summary

By examining the syntactic rules of argument pooling, we have identified a total of eight subtypes of SVCs in Lemerig. These types are recapitulated in Table 4.

Table 4 – The eight subtypes of SVCs in Lemerig, based on argument-pooling

Type	V_1	V_2	**[V_1V_2]**	**Function and use**
Type 1	x-V_1	x-V_2	x-[V_1V_2]	posture, direction, descriptive
Type 2a	x-V_1-y	x-V_2	x-[V_1V_2]-y	(*rare*) motion
Type 2b	x-V_1	x-V_2-y	x-[V_1V_2]-y	valency increase, applicative-like
Type 2c	x-V_1-y	x-V_2-y	x-[V_1V_2]-y	(*rare*) telicity
Type 3a	x-V_1-y	y-V_2	x-[V_1V_2]-y	switch-subject resultatives, applied motion
Type 3b	x-V_1	y-V_2	x-[V_1V_2]-y	(*rare*) low-agency resultatives
Type 4a	x-V_1	E-V_2	x-[V_1V_2]	event-argument serialisation, adverb-like
Type 4b	x-V_1-y	E-V_2	x-[V_1V_2]-y	event-argument serialisation, adverb-like

Lemerig is here representative of the other languages of the Banks islands, where these eight subtypes of SVCs have also been observed (François 2004a). In fact, François (2004a) also identified three more patterns in Mwotlap, corresponding to a rare configuration, namely the case when V_1 introduces an object that does not make it into the final formula. This is the case in examples (73) and (74), respectively from Mwotlap and Vurës:

(73) *Kē* ⟨*ma-**vap*** ***lolmeyen***⟩ *nēk*. [Mwotlap]
3SG PFT-say be.aware 2SG
'She said [it] to let you know.' [liter. she said you aware] (François 2004a:126)

[60] The vowel harmony found in *qäl'ä* [k͡pʷælʔæ] is evidence that the sequence *qal* + *'ä* [k͡pʷal + ʔæ] has undergone univerbation, and become a single phonological word.

[61] Link to corpus: *https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003271#S62*.

(74) *Nēr a bor-seg nē,* ***qaq ti~tisē*** *nē, …* [Vurës]
3PL NSG:AO laugh-APPL 3SG say RES~(be.)bad 3SG
'They laughed at him, *said bad things about* him…'
[liter. 'they said him bad'] (Malau 2016:576)

Such a configuration can be represented using the formula { x-V_1-y + z-V_2 → x-[V_1V_2]-z }. This pattern is already rare in the well-documented languages Mwotlap and Vurës, and it could only be identified thanks to the large size of these corpora. This suggests that a more sizeable corpus in Lemerig could have also produced two or three extra subtypes of SVC – albeit much rarer ones. That said, the list of eight templates listed in Table 4 is already quite rich, especially considering the limited size of our data and the moribund status of the language [§2.2]. This is testament to the wealth of serialising constructions in this part of the Oceanic family.

5 Synthesis: non-compositional semantics

We propose a final recapitulation about two types of semantic change, which have in common the loss of compositional semantics. In the case of grammaticalisation [§5.1], the verb in V_2 position takes on a specialised meaning, distinct from its usual sense as a predicate on its own; it becomes a grammatical device (a "G-verb"), which in principle can combine with any possible lexical verb (the "L-verb").

In the case of (co-)lexicalisation [§5.2], the two verbs arguably remain in the lexical domain, but their combination takes on a global non-compositional meaning that cannot be entirely inferred from the meaning of its components.

5.1 Grammaticalisation

In general, verbal complex predicates of Lemerig are semantically compositional, as the meaning of their components carries over to the serial construction quite transparently. This is the case, for example, in resultative constructions: thus (52) *lāñ ma'* 'strike s.o. dead', or (53) *siv mētmēt* 'scrape s.th. clean', keep the lexical semantics of their components intact.

In many cases, though, V_2 takes on a different meaning as compared to its use as a main verb: e.g. *kēl* 'go back, return' has broadened its meaning to become a general reversive or iterative particle '[do] back, again'; *'ö'* 'hold (in one's hands)' has grammaticalised into the equivalent of an applicative with a comitative meaning. Many cases could be cited of verbs taking up a grammatical function, sometimes to the point of specialising in the postverbal function, and of losing its connection with its verbal counterpart. For lack of space, we will not detail all cases of grammaticalisation encountered, let alone present new ones; Table 5 presents a summary of the cases already discussed.[62]

[62] Four of these grammaticalisation paths belong to the list of possible paths highlighted by the ComPLETE project (Vanhove et al. 2021), namely: {return → ITERATIVE}; {hold → INSTRUMENTAL}; {see → CONATIVE}; {finish → COMPLETIVE}.

Table 5 – Some cases of grammaticalisation from SVCs in Lemerig

form	gloss as V	gloss as V_2 or postverb	see ex.	§
kēl	'return'	reversive: 'back, again'	(39–42)	4.1.2
		reflexive: 'oneself'	(43)	4.2.1
was	'reach'	allative applicative: '[all the way] to, until'	(44–45)	4.2.2
'ör / 'ö'	'hold'	+comitative applicative: 'with, about…'	(7), (10), (46–47)	4.2.2
'et	'see'	verificative: 'check'	(50)	4.2.3
		+conative: 'try'	(51)	4.2.3
lowo	'big'	intensifier: 'very'	(61)	4.4.1
'örma'	'ready, apt'	adverbial: '[do] well'	(30), (53)	4.4.2
qē'	'be over'	+completive: 'finish doing'	(64)	4.4.2
		prioritive: 'first do X (then Y)'	(65)	4.4.2
		quantifier: 'all, entirely'	(66–68)	4.4.2
qal	'hit'	intensifier of negation: '[not] even'	(71)	4.4.2

Note that Table 5 only lists words that are still attested as verbs in contemporary Lemerig, so that their position in the V_2 slot can still be seen as a form of verb serialisation. If a verb has grammaticalised but is now restricted to the V_2 slot, then it has ceased being a verb and has become a postverb: this leads to a different configuration, which we discussed in §3.2.

5.2 Lexicalisation

Sometimes, the loss of semantic compositionality is not due to the grammaticalisation of the second component of an SVC, but rather due to a semantic process of co-lexicalisation. That is, as a V_1V_2 macroverb becomes entrenched in discourse, it ends up behaving as a single word – not just syntactically, but also semantically; and as it gains semantic autonomy from its components, its global meaning increases in opacity. This is how, for example, English has a phrasal verb *give up* 'relinquish, desist' which has lost any transparency with respect to its internal components.

Lexicalised SVCs of Lemerig form a continuum between the more transparent to the more opaque semantics. Table 6 cites a few examples of co-lexicalised combinations attested in our corpus, in no particular order. [63]

Table 6 – Cases of co-lexicalised SVCs in Lemerig

form	V_1	V_2	$[V_1V_2]$	see ex.
'et marmar	see, look	(be) strong	stare at	(62)
row pu'	dash	sit	[bird, canoe] land	(8)
row 'āk	dash	crouch	jump over s.th.	

[63] Three of these lexicalisation paths belong to the list of possible paths highlighted by the ComPLETE project (Vanhove et al. 2021), namely: {go hold → carry}; {think find → remember}; {talk play → joke}.

form	V_1	V_2	$[V_1V_2]$	see ex.
le kal	take	go up	raise ‹s.th., s.o.›; promote; resurrect	(58–59)
van ʻöʼ	go	hold	carry ‹s.th.›, walk with	(22)
tët ʻesgöʼ	think	find	remember ‹s.th.›	(49)
tët kēl	think	return	remember ‹s.th.›	
tektek oror	talk	play	joke	
kaka solsol	chat	flow	be a chatterbox	
ta seseʼ	do	(be) bad	damage ‹s.th.›, destroy	(55)
ta magarsän	do	(be) sad	be mean to ‹s.o.›, hurt, offend, ill-treat	
ʻāk rërën̄	crouch	(be) quiet	stay silent	(68)
ʻāk paʼ	crouch	(be) inward	hide	
sōvōl rën̄	wash	(be) holy	[TR] baptise ‹s.o.›; [INTR] be Christian	
gengen miʻir	eat	sleep	close one's eyes, blink	
var gogon	step on	(be) sacred	sacrifice a pig by stepping on it on the threshold so as to purify a new house	

6 Conclusion

Cross-linguistically, verbal complex predicates (VCPs) are known to fulfil a number of semantic functions, as shown in other chapters of this volume. Some encode verbal aspect or modality, others encode posture, direction, associated motion, or manner of action. Among all these possible functions, several are well represented in the VCPs of Lemerig.

One function, namely *prior motion*, stands apart from others, as it is the only one to be encoded by a PREDICATE SERIALISATION CONSTRUCTION (PSC) [see §3.3], involving a string of separate verb phrases:

- ➢ prior motion: e.g. (19) ʻ⟨come⟩ ⟨shake hands⟩ʼ

All other functions are encoded by another syntactic type, which can globally be captured with the umbrella term SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTION (SVC). SVCs exhibit a tighter juncture than PSCs because their components are strictly contiguous, within the predicate's nucleus. The two components of an SVC are so inseparable that they form a single *macroverb*, which behaves syntactically like a single verb.

The present study has found that Lemerig uses this macroverb strategy to encode a broad array of semantic functions:

- ➢ associated posture: e.g. (34) 'sit write' → 'sit writing'
- ➢ manner & direction of motion: e.g. (36) 'run go.down' → 'run down'
- ➢ caused motion: e.g. (57) 'pull go.down' → 'pull down'
- ➢ caused accompanied motion: e.g. (47) 'return hold' → 'bring back ‹s.th.›'
- ➢ valence-increasing applicative: e.g. (7) 'talk hold ‹topic›' → 'talk about'
- ➢ iterative & reversive: e.g. (40) 'vanish return' → 'vanish again'

- ➢ reflexive action: e.g. (43) 'kill return' → 'kill oneself'
- ➢ phasal aspect: e.g. (64) 'sing finish' → 'after singing'
- ➢ quantification: e.g. (66) 'sink finish' → 'all sink'
- ➢ causative & resultative: e.g. (53) 'scrape clean' → 'clean s.th. by scraping'
- ➢ conative & verificative: e.g. (50) 'hear see' → 'check by listening'
- ➢ manner of action: e.g. (4) 'hold strong' → 'hold firmly'
- ➢ intensification of predicate: e.g. (61) 'laugh big' → 'laugh hard'
- ➢ intensification of negation: e.g. (71) 'not ask *touch*' → 'not even ask'

When these functions involve a form of grammaticalisation, the "G-verb" (grammaticalised verb) always corresponds to V_2. In fact, this already abundant list could be enriched even more if we adopted a diachronic perspective and took into account the patterns that originate in former serial verbs – see Table 1 in §3.2. Indeed, verb serialisation in Lemerig, while still being productive for many verbs in the contemporary language, shows a tendency for its second component to specialise in the position of a modifier, thereby losing its erstwhile verbhood and becoming something else, which we call "postverb".

This is how Lemerig, like other languages of North Vanuatu, managed to develop a whole array of new lexical items, from what were initially serial verbs. All these observations, both synchronic and diachronic, confirm the dynamism and vivacity of verbal complex predicates in this part of the Oceanic family, and their central role in the life and renewal of their grammars.

Abbreviations

1EX	first person exclusive	NEG	negative
1IN	first person inclusive	NEG.POT	negative potential, 'cannot'
ABS	absolutive	NMZ	nominaliser
AO	aorist	ORIG	originative prefix
APPL	applicative	PERS	personal article
ART	article	PFT	perfect
ASSOC	associative	POSS	possessive marker
ATC	argument-taking construction	POT	potential
COMP	complementiser	PRIOR	prioritive
CONA	conative	PSC	predicate serialisation construction
CSTR	construct suffix	PVC	postverbal construction
DEF	definite	REL	relativiser
DILAT	dilatory aspect	RES	resultative
DIR	directional	RESTR	restrictive, 'just'
DEM2	demonstrative, addressee-centered	REVER	reversive, 'back'
DU	dual	STAT	stative aspect
EXIST	existential predicator	SUB	subordinator
FOOD	possessive classifier for food	SVC	serial verb construction
HITH	'hither', ventive directional	TAM	tense, aspect, mood
HORT	hortative	TAMP	tense, aspect, mood, polarity
HUM	number marker for humans	THITH	'thither', itive directional
IAM	iamitive aspect (≈'already')	TOP	topic marker
INTSF	intensifier	VC	verb complex

IPFV	imperfective	VCP	verbal complex predicate
ITER	iterative	VERIF	verificative
LOC	locative		

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