CHAPTER-IV

Serial Verb Construction in Nepali

4.0 Introduction

Serial Verb Constructions (SVC) are generally defined as a chain of verbs or verb phrases which behaves as a single predicate within a clause. Aikhenvald and Dixon (2006:1) observed that SVCs are found mainly in Creole languages, in the languages of West Africa, South-East Asia, Amazonia, Oceania and New Guinea. Serial verb constructions are mono clausal and there should not be any syntactic dependency marker on their components. There is an ongoing debate among linguists to agree on a uniform definition of serial verbs for all possible world languages. All the definitions discussed in this section contributes to understand AN serial verb construction. The defining condition for a serial verb construction is always challenged by linguist because the patterning of every language differs uniquely from each other. But in order to label a construction as serial verb, if it is fulfilling its purpose of unifying different events under one larger event then it may be considered.

Durie (1997:291) defines serial verb constructions as an instance of "a single serial verb complex describes what is conceptualized as a single event: this is reportedly reported to be a clear intuition of native speakers, and can be demonstrated through semantic analysis."

Serial verb construction comes under the general category of Multi Verb Construction (MVC). Noufal (2016:1) defines that construction with verb phrases which contain an adjacent arrangement of two or more verbs in what appears to be simple sentences are attested in different language across the world. The term generally used to refer this type of constructions is multi verb construction (MVC).

Noufal (2016:1) has also summarized Sebba's (1987) ideas about the serial verb construction as shown below:

(i)   Single predication with multiple verb

(ii)   Subject sharing

(iii)   Same TAM and Polarity values.

This chapter discusses the characteristics and properties of serial verbs in AN variety. In the following sections the occurrence of **-i** marker in serial verb construction is discussed. We assume the **-i** to be a non-finite marker. In this chapter, the role of negation, causative, passives are discussed in relation to the Nepali serial verb.

4.1 Serial Verbs in Nepali

In Nepali serial verb construction, multiple predicates occur together in a sequential event order. The serial verbs in Nepali are strongly bounded sequence of related events represented in a chain of multiple verbs. In (146) we have given an example of SN serial verb construction where we see the marker **-era** occurs with the verbs.

(146) mɑ   a-era   pɑka-era   bɑna-era   kʰa-era   ghɑr   gɑ-j-e

       I   come-NF   cook-NF   make-NF   eat-NF   home   go-PST-1P.SG

Lit: 'I coming, cooking, preparing, eating and went home.'

        "I came (and then) cooked (and then) prepared (and then) ate (and then) went home."

In the standard Nepali variety, we see the **-era** marker occurs with the multiple verbs in a SVC. Most likely the **-era** marker functions as a non-finite marker in Standard variety and we have also seen the **-era** functions as a non-finite marker in §3.4.1 (example 111). Now, we have example (147), where the **-i** marker occurs in a SVC instead of the marker **-era.**

(147) mɑ   a-i   pɑka-i   bɑna-i   ]kʰa-i   ghɑr   gɑ-j-e

       I   come-NF   cook-NF   make-NF   eat-NF   home   go-PST-1P.SG

Lit: 'I coming, cooking, preparing, eating and went home.'

        "I came (and then) cooked (and then) prepared (and then) ate (and then) went home."

The example in (147), where we have the **-i** marker is colloquially used by the Nepali speakers. In formal context they use constructions like (146) where we have the **-era** marker.[i] However, in AN, the speakers predominantly use the **-i** marker in a SVC construction as shown in (147). The possible reason for this may be the influence of

Assamese, a dominant language on AN (see example 40). Post (2004:381) has shown serial verbs in Assamese, where the non-finite marker **-i** occurs with the verb. In chapter 3 (example 89, 91) we have shown the **-i** and **-era** markers that occur in compound verb construction.

In this chapter my primary focus will be on establishing the status of **-i** in AN. I shall not work on **-era** type constructions, as it is outside the scope of my study. Moreover, there are limited literature available in the standard Nepali with regards to SVCs. In the subsequent sections, I shall primarily focus on the **-i** marker as shown in (147), to investigate its status via empirical evidences.

In the following § 4.2, we have discussed that the **-i** marker is a non-finite marker in SVC. The test of negation in § 4.3 gives empirical evidence to claim that the **-i** marker is a non-finite marker in SVC and conjunctive particle in CV. We have provided some more examples in (148-149).

(148) u   school   bɑdɑ   a-i   bhat   kʰa-i   kʰel-nɑ   gɑ-j-o

    he   school   from   come-NF   rice   eat-NF   play-INF   go-PST-3P.SG

Lit: 'He coming from school, rice eating, and went to play.'

    "He came from school (and then) ate rice (and then) went to play."

(149) rima-le   nuwa-i   dho-i   chul   bat-i   puja

    rima-ERG   bath-NF   wash-NF   hair   comb-NF   worship

    gɑr-i   sut-ch-in

    do-NF   sleep-PRES-3P.SG.F

Lit: 'Rima bathing, washing, combing hair, worshiping and sleeps.'

    "Rima bathes (and then) washes (and then) combs hair (and then) worships (and then) sleeps."

In case of SVCs as shown in the above examples (147-149) we have seen that the **-i** marker, which is a non-finite marker is attached with multiple verbs except the final verb. An interesting feature of Nepali SVC is seen in example (148) which shows that SVC can

have a NP as a constituent of the clause in the construction. In the above given examples, we have multiple verbs with the same subject. The multiple verbs are in a simultaneous as well as sequential sub event order. Examples (147-149) shows a broader picture of the subtle sub-eventualities that would not get noticed because of the entire broader event. The broad event in (147) is 'went home' but because of the serialization we get to know about the other sub-events like 'cook, make, eat'. Every verb of a SVC is a lexically full verb which means they can also behave as a main verb in other constructions. Another important aspect of Nepali SVC is that; all the verbs share the common subject *ma* 'I' in (147), *u* 'he 'in (148) and *rima* in (149). This is a main characteristics of SVC that the subject should be same and shared by all the constituent verbs in a SVC.

Let us see example (147-149) here as (147a-149a) to understand each of the components of the SVC in details.

(147a) ma [a-i [pɑka-i [bɑna-i [kʰa-i [ghɑr gɑ-j-e]

     I come-NF cook-NF make-NF eat-NF home go-PST-1P.SG

Lit: 'I coming, cooking, preparing, eating and went home.'

     "I came (and then) cooked (and then) made (and then) ate (and then) went home."

(148a) u [school bɑdɑ a-i [bhat kʰa-i [kʰel-nɑ gɑ-j-o]

     he school from come-NF rice eat-NF play-INF go-PST-3P.SG

     "He came from school (and then) ate rice (and then) went to play."

(149a) rima-le [nuwa-i [dho-i [chul bat-i [puja

     rima-ERG bath-NF wash-NF hair comb-NF worship

     gɑr-i [sut-ch-in]

     do-NF sleep-PRES-3P.SG.F

     "Rima baths (and then) washes (and then) combs hair (and then) worships (and then) sleeps."

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From the example (147a-149a) we can conclude with the following observations:

(i)   The subject *ma* 'I' of the non-finite clauses are dropped obligatorily and only the subject of the finite clause is retained.

(ii)   Core arguments within the verb phrase (VP) are retained. For example, the object NP *bhat* 'rice' in (147a) which is a core argument and in accusative case. It bears the thematic role of a theme.

(iii)   Oblique arguments within the VP are also retained. For example, the PP *school bada* 'from school' is an oblique argument having the ablative case.

There is a debate amongst the linguists regarding the uniform definition of serial verb construction applicable for all the world languages. Aikhenvald and Dixon (2006:1) argues that a serial verb construction is a sequence of verbs as one predicate but there cannot be any overt marker of coordination, subordination or any syntactic dependency. But linguist like Shibatani (2009) has a different say on this definition. Shibatani (2009:258) shows examples from languages like Japanese where he argued that in a SVC overt linker is possible. Post (2004) has discussed serial verbs in Assamese, an Indo-Aryan language. He has also shown the non-finite marker **–i** occurring in the serial verb construction. Interestingly in Nepali and Assamese the **–i** is a non-finite marker. Post (2004: 379) discussed Givon's idea about the diachronic development of serial verbs from clause-integration while discussing Assamese serial verb construction. Therefore, we can assume that these sequential verbs in the form of clausal embedding are acceptable serial verb constructions. Jayaseelan (2004:67) discussed Malayalam serial verb construction where he has stated that the string of verbs can be extended up to the speaker's endurance and ingenuity.

Now before moving into further discussion on SVC, first it is important to discuss the occurrence of **'i'** marker. In the coming section we have discussed this **'i'** marker in details.

4.2 The Non-finite marker in Nepali Clauses

In the above examples (147-149), we have seen that the **-i** marker is attached with the multiple verbs in the chain and it is a non-finite marker. In Nepali, the [–Finite] category includes Infinitival, Non-finite, Nominalizer and durative construction. In Chapter 2, § 2.3

we have looked into the non-finite clauses in Nepali. The examples (60, 62,63,64) are repeated here as (150-152)

Infinitival Clause

(150) mɑi-le u-lai   bɑzar   za-nu   bhɑn-j-e

       I-ERG   he-ACC   market   go-INF   tell-PST-1P.SG

       "I told him to go to the market."

Nominalized Clause

(151) timi   a-eko-ma   ramro lag-j-o

       you   come-NF-LOC   good   feel-PST-1P.SG

       "It feels good that you have come"

Relative Clause

(152) timro   cheu-ma   bɑs-i   rakh-eko   keto   mero   sijano

       you.GEN   near-LOC   sit-NF   stay-NF   boy   my   younger

       bhai   ho

       brother   be.PRES

       "The boy sitting near you is my younger brother."

Durative Clause

(153) mɑ sut-i   rakh-da   chor   ghɑr-ma   pɑs-j-o

       I   sleep-NF   keep-DUR   thief   house-LOC   enter-PST.3P.SG

       "The thief enters the house when I was sleeping."

In (152) and (153) we can see that the non-finite **-i** occurs in a relativized clause as **bɑs-i** 'sit', durative clause as **sut-i** 'sleep'. Now let us see two other examples:

(154)   rameri   pɑrh-i   lekh-i   thulo   manche   hun-u

             good.ADV   study-NMZ   write-NMZ   big   person   be-2P

             "You study properly and be a big person."

(155)   u   pɑrh-ai   lekh-ai   lerɑ   bjasta   hun-ch-ɑ

             he   study-NMZ   write-NMZ   take   busy   be-PRES-3P.SG.M

             "He is busy with his studies."

In example (154) we see the non-finite **-i** occurs in a derived nominal category. The non-finite **-i** marker in (154) derives a nominal category from a verbal category. Here we have a reduplicated noun taking the non-finite **-i**. In example (155) we have **-ai** that comes with a derived nominal as a postposition which is an oblique argument. Therefore, from (154-155) we can conclude that the **-i** marker occurs when it is a core argument and in case of oblique argument we have the -**ai** marker.

In serial verb construction there are many sub events occurring within one main event and therefore, we cannot say that the **–i** marker here functions as a conjunctive particle. Therefore, we will consider the **–i** marker as polysemous in AN as it occurs as a conjunctive particle in compound verbs as discussed in Chapter 3, and as a non-finite marker depending on the construction types.

4.3 Test of Negation

In chapter 3 while discussing v+i - v compounds with the light verb *de* 'give' and *li* 'take', we have labelled the **–i** marker as conjunctive particle. In this chapter the **-i** marker is labelled as a non-finite marker. The test of negation provides the empirical evidence to prove that the **-i** marker in SVC is a non-finite marker. The basic argument for this difference can be also observed while dropping any verb from the chain of SVC. In a CV it is not possible to drop either the main verb or the light verb, but we can delete any of the constituent verb from a SVC.

The negative marker **-nɑ** gets attached to a verb in form of a suffix, as well as a prefix. Let us see an example of a SVC having a negation marker within it.

(156a) mɑ   a-i   pɑka-i   bɑna-i   kʰa-i   ghɑr   gɑ-j-e

        i   come-NF   cook-NF   make-NF   eat-NF   home   go-PST-1P.SG

        "I came (and then) cooked (and then) made (and then) eat (and then) went home."

(b)   mɑ   a-i   pɑka-i   bɑna-i   nɑ-kʰa-i   ghɑr   gɑ-j-e

       i   come-NF   cook-NF   make-NF   NEG-eat-NF   home   go-PST-1P.SG

       "I came (and then) cooked (and then) made (and then) eat (and then) went home."

In the above given example (156b), the negative marker **nɑ-** occurs before the constituent verb *kha* 'eat'. It can occur with every verb of a AN SVC in order to negate it. But there is an interesting condition for negating a AN SVC. Let us look into the example (157):

(157) mɑ   a-i   pɑka-i   bɑna-i   nɑ-kʰa-i   ghɑr   gɑ-inɑ

      I   come-NF   cook-NF   make-NF   NEG-eat-NF   home   go-PST.NEG.1P.SG

      "I came (and then) cooked (and then) made (and then) did not eat (and then) did not go home."

From the examples shown in the preceding sections of this chapter, we notice that each and every verb of a SVC is competent enough to occur as a main verb in simple sentences. They are fully lexical verbs which in a SVC construction, form a string of verbs to indicate a unified action. Although the negative marker can occur with each and every verb of a SVC, the order to negate the entire SVC as a unit, the negative marker should suffix to the final verb. The verbs of SVCs are grammatically marked once for the entire construction. The subject, tense and agreement are marked once or similar for all the verbs in the chain, depending on the final verb of the SVC.

The negative marker can be prefixed with any of the constituent verb except the final verb which carries the tense and agreement features. The negative marker can only be suffixed in case of a final verb of the SVC. So, we can say that;

(a) Negative marker precedes every constituent verbs of a SVC except the final verb in Nepali.

(b) Negative marker follows the final verb of a SVC in Nepali.

(c) This order can't be reversed.

From the test of negation, we have observed that the verbs taking the non-finite **-i** has the negative **-nɑ** prefixed to them and the main verb which carries TAM and agreement feature has the negative **nɑ-** as a suffix. This indicates that [+finite] verbs can have the negative marker as a suffix and [-finite] verbs of the verbal string can have the negative marker as a prefix in AN. Therefore, this test of negation provides empirical evidence to claim that the **-i** marker is a non-finite marker in SVC.

4.4 Features of Nepali SVC

In this section we have discussed tense, modal verbs, intervening elements, causatives and passivizes with relation to Nepali serial verb construction.

4.4.1 Tense in SVC

 From example (158), we see that the final verb of the serial verb construction *rakh* 'keep' takes the tense and agreement features. So we can say that the final verb of a SVC inflects tense marker in AN.

| (158) | sɑdei | bijanɑ | ama-le | ubb-i | bato | tirɑ |
| | every | morning | mother-ERG | stand-NF | road | direction |

heir-i   rakh-ch-in

look-CNJP   keep-PRES-3P. F

"Every morning mother stands and looks towards the road continuously."

In example (158), there are three verbs in the sentence; i.e. *ubbi* 'stand', *heiri* 'look' and *rakhchin* 'keep'. But the sentence is only talking about two events as the last two verbs together expresses one single meaning and is a compound verb within the SVC. Although the three verbs are coded as two verbs, the final verb functions as grammatical information bearer of the SVC.

4.4.2 Modal Verbs and Nepali SVC

(159) timi   nach-i   ga-i   khel-i   ghɑr   za-nu   pɑr-ch-ɑ

     you   dance-NF   sing-NF   play-NF   home   go-INF   must-PRES-2P

     "You must dance (and then) sing (and then) play (and then) go to home."

(160) mɑ   a-i   pɑka-i   kha-i   ghumnɑ   za-nɑ   sɑk-chu

     i   come- NF   cook- NF   eat-NF   roam   go-INF   can-PRES.1P.SG

     "I can come (and then) cook (and then) eat (and then) go to roam."

If we break the series of the verbs in (159) we can see the following constructions.

(159a) timi   nach-nu   pɑr-ch-ɑ

     you   dance-INF   must-PRES-2P

Lit: 'You to dance must.'

     "You must dance."

(b)   timi   gau-nu   pɑr-ch-ɑ

     you   sing-INF   must-PRES-2P

Lit: 'You to sing must.'

     "You must sing."

(c)   timi   khel-nu   pɑr-ch-ɑ

     you   play-INF   must-PRES-2P

Lit: 'You to play must.'

     "You must play."

The chain of the verbs in a SVC is possible only with the non-finite marker **–i** in Nepali. The final verb of the SVC is a modal verb which carries the tense and agreement features. From (159-160) we see the verb that occurs before the modal, takes the infinitival marker **–nu**. Examples (159a,159b.159c) shows a structure like **[you must [dance [sing [play [go**

home] where the final goal of the agent is to go home after completing all the said events. The modal verb *par* 'must' is dropped for all the verbs in the chain in (159) and used once for the entire construction in the final position of the SVC.

4.4.3 Constituents in Nepali SVC

In a AN SVC, an oblique argument can occur between the chain of verbs. Let us consider the previously discussed example (158) here as (161) from § 4.4.1 and see the elements that occurs in a SVC.

(161)　　sɑdei　　bijanɑ　　ama-le　　　　ubb-i　　　　bato　　tirɑ

　　　　every　　morning　mother-ERG　　stand-NF　　road　　direction

　　　　heir-i　　rakh-ch-in

　　　　look-NF　　keep-PRES-3P. F

　　　　"Every morning mother stands and looks in the road."

In the example (161), we can see that there is an oblique argument that occurs in between the verbs. *bato tira* 'road direction' is the oblique argument occurring in between the verbs *ubbi* 'stand' and *heiri* 'look' in a SVC. Sometimes, the k-word *kina* 'why' in Nepali can also occur in a SVC.

(162a)　sɑdei　bijanɑ　　　ama-le　　　kinɑ　ubbi　　bato　tirɑ

　　　　every　morning　　　mother-ERG　why　stand-NF　road　direction

　　　　heiri　rakh-ch-in ?

　　　　look-NF　keep-PRES-3P. F

　　　　"Why every morning mother stands and looks in the road?"

(b)　sɑdei　bijanɑ　　　ama-le　　　ubbi　　bato　tirɑ　　kinɑ

　　　every　morning　　　mother-ERG　stand-NF　road　direction　why

　　　heiri　rakh-ch-in ?

　　　look-NF　keep-PRES-3P. F

"Why every morning mother stands and looks in the road?"

(c) kinɑ   sɑdei bijanɑ   ama-le   ubbi   bato   tirɑ

why   every morning   mother-ERG stand-NF   road   direction

heiri   rakh-ch-in ?

look-NF   keep-PRES-3P. F

"Why every morning mother stands and looks in the road?"

In SVC, the K-word occurs with any of the constituent verb as all the verbs are competent enough to occur as an independent verb in other constructions. In (162c) we see the k-word *kina* 'why' occurs in a sentence initial position in a SVC.

4.4.4 Causatives in Nepali SVC

Let us look into causative construction in Nepali serial verb construction and see what happens in such construction.

(163a) sita-le   college   bɑdɑ   a-i   nuwa-i

sita-ERG   college   from   come-NF   bath-NF

pɑka-i   kh-a-j-in

cook-NF   eat-CAUS-PST-3P.SG.F

"Sita came from college, (and then) bathed (and then) cooked (and then) ate."

(b) sita-le   college   bɑdɑ   a-i   nuwa-i   pɑka-i

sita-ERG   college   from   come-NF bath-NF   cook-NF

mɑ-lai   kh-ua-j-in

I-DAT   eat-CAUS-PST-3P.SG.F

"Sita came from college, (and then) bathed (and then) cooked (and then) fed me."

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The example (163b) shows the occurrence of causative marker in a serial verb construction. In AN SVC, the final verb takes the causative marker. The final verb of the SVC *kha* 'eat' in (163b) carries the morphological causative marker **-ua**. In (163b) the valency of the construction is increased from (163a). The NP *ma* 'I' is the result of causativizing the verb *kha* 'eat' from (163a) because causatives are valency increasing operations.

4.4.5 Passives in Nepali SVC

In (164a-164c) we have examples of passive construction in AN SVC.

(164a) razu-le   jo   kalam   chor-i   lag-i

raju-ERG   this   pen   steal-NF   take-NF

bhanch-i   phek-j-o

break-NF   throw-PST-3P.SG.M

"Raju stole (and then) took (and then) broke (and then) throw this pen".

(b)   jo   kalam   chor-i   lag-i   bhanch-i   phek-i-j-o

this   pen   steal-NF   take-NF   break-NF   throw-PASS-PST-3P

"This pen was stolen (and then) taken (and then) broken (and then) thrown."

(c)   jo   kalam   razu   bada   chor-i   lag-i

this   pen   raju   ABL   steal-NF   take-NF

bhanch-i   phek-i-j-o

break-NF   throw-PASS-PST-3P

"This pen was stolen (and then) taken (and then) broken (and then) thrown by

Raju."

In Nepali, when we passivize a SVC all the verbs in a string remains together. There seems no change in the multiple verbs. All the verb behaves as a single unit without any

intervention. In (164b) we see the subject *raju-le* is dropped and in (164c) it is present. In Nepali it possible to have both the constructions. In Chapter 3, §3.4.2 (examples 117a-117b) we have already shown that AN passive construction can have structures like (164b and 164c). In (164c) the agent *Raju* is not dropped in passive construction but the ergative marker **-le** is dropped in the sentence. The ablative case marker **bɑdɑ** occurs in the passive construction (164c) which indicates *raju bada* as an oblique argument.

4.4.6 Non Contiguous SVC

In this type of SVC, the constituent verb appears as a sequence of closely related verbs. We have shown such construction in the examples (167-168)

(167) dhrubɑ-le   masu   pɑka-i   kha-j-o

　　　 dhruba-ERG   chicken   cook-NF   eat-PST.3P.SG.M

　　　 "Dhruba cooked (and) ate the chicken."

(168) sɑbɑn-le   kɑpda   dho-i   suka-j-o

　　　 saban-ERG   clothes   wash-NF   dry-PST-3P.SG.M

　　　 "Saban washed the clothes (and) dried."

In the examples (167-168), the constituent verb cook-eat and wash-dry are closely related events and such verbs together also forms serial verb construction in Nepali.

4.5 The Semantics of Nepali SVC

All the multiple verbs of a serial verb construction contribute some meaning to complete the meaning of a construction. The role of these multi verbs is also to express the manner, situation, condition etc. of the final verb. These verbs in a string along with the final verb completes the meaning of such construction.

(169) mɑi-le   a-i   pɑka-i   tɑta-i   masu   kha-j-e

　　　 I-ERG   come-NF   cook-NF   warm-NF   meat   eat-PST-1P.SG

　　　 "I came (and then) cooked (and then) warmed (and then) ate meat."

(170)   kale-le   bholi   bijanɑ   uth-i   kei   kha-i   nuwa-i

          kale-ERG   tomorrow   morning   wake-NF   something   eat-NF   bath-NF

          town   zan-ch-ɑ

          town   go-PRES-3P.SG.M

"Tomorrow Kale will wake up in the morning (and then) eat something (and then) bath (and then) go to town."

In the above given example, all the verbs in a chain are expressing the manner, condition along with the final verb to complete the semantics of the Nepali SVC. There cannot be any grammatical inflections attached with these multiple verbs except the final verb. If we attach any grammatical inflection with these chain of verbs, then such construction will not be considered as a SVC. All the verbs will then indicate separate meanings which will violate the condition of single predication with multiple verb and sharing same TAM values for being a SVC.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed the two types of AN SVCs and their properties. The **–i** marker is polysemous in AN. In a SVC this **-i** marker is a non-finite marker. From the discussed sections it seems that the multiple verbs in a string along with the final verb completes the semantics by contributing something to the construction. The final verb in a SVC also takes all the necessary grammatical information. Testing many other features like passivization, causativization, and intervention of other elements in serial verb construction provides the basic understanding about the verbal features in AN and leaves a trace for further theoretical investigation regarding the position of **-i** marker.

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[i] Dr N.Niroula (PC), Dr C.Sarma (PC) also informed the usage of -i in AN and -era in formal written variety.