



**SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS  
IN BWE KAREN**

**KIRSTIE SWANSON**

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Title: Serial verb constructions in Bwe Karen  
Researcher: Kirstie Swanson  
Degree: Master of Arts in Linguistics  
Advisor: Ken Manson, Ph.D.  
Approval Date: 7 November 2011  
Institution: Payap University, Chiang Mai, Thailand

The members of the thesis examination committee:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Committee Chair  
(Professor Saranya Saretamalya, Ph.D.)
  
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Committee Member  
(Ken Manson, Ph.D.)
  
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Committee Member  
(Assistant Professor Thomas Tehan, Ph.D.)

The members of the Committee approve this master's thesis

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this thesis is to provide an analysis of multi-verb structures in Bwe to determine if they are serial verb constructions, as defined by Aikhenvald (2006), and to categorize serial verb constructions according to Aikhenvald's typology. In order to accomplish this task, the basic word order, noun phrase structure, and verb phrase structures are briefly analyzed. Multi-verb structures can then be separated from other constituents and analyzed according to Aikhenvald's theory of the definition of serial verb constructions and their cross-linguistic typology. Multi-verb structures in Bwe are found to fit with Aikhenvald's definition of serial verb constructions. Following this proof, the serial verb constructions are typologically analyzed according to the parameters Aikhenvald recommends for languages containing serial verb constructions, and are found to be primarily contiguous, containing both symmetric and asymmetric constructions, typically being composed of individual words, and carrying single marking for aspect, modality, and polarity. Finally, a discussion of the validity of analyzing serial verbs in Bwe with regards to the transitivity of the individual verbs is provided, in which it is argued that discourse anaphora in the language makes it impossible for this corpus, and likely invalid overall, to measure the verbs via their transitivity.

Aikhenvald's proposed definition for SVCs is found to be quite useful in determining the SVCs in Bwe. The typology was also found to be beneficial in describing the types of SVCs in Bwe.

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ผู้วิจัย:	เคอส์ตีร์ สวานสัน
ปริญญา:	ศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต (ภาษาศาสตร์)
อาจารย์ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์หลัก:	ดร. เคนเนท แมนสัน
วันที่อนุมัติผลงาน:	7 พฤศจิกายน 2554
สถาบันการศึกษา:	มหาวิทยาลัยพายัพ จังหวัดเชียงใหม่ ประเทศไทย
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## บทคัดย่อ

วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ในการตรวจวิเคราะห์โครงสร้างพหุกริยาในภาษากะเหรี่ยงบเวว่า จัดเป็นหน่วยสร้างกริยาเรียงตามคำจำกัดความของ Aikhenvald (2006) หรือไม่ โดยเริ่มจากการวิเคราะห์การเรียงลำดับคำแบบพื้นฐาน โครงสร้างนามวลี และโครงสร้างกริยาวลีพอสั่งเขป ข้อมูลจากการวิเคราะห์ดังกล่าวช่วยในการแยกโครงสร้างพหุกริยาออกจากหน่วยประกอบอื่น ๆ เพื่อที่จะนำไปวิเคราะห์ตามคำจำกัดความหน่วยสร้างกริยาเรียงของ Aikhenvald และตามแนวแบบลักษณ์ภาษาได้ จากการตรวจวิเคราะห์พบว่า โครงสร้างพหุกริยาในภาษากะเหรี่ยงบเวเป็นไปตามคำจำกัดความของ Aikhenvald การวิเคราะห์ในงานวิจัยนี้จึงใช้แนวแบบลักษณ์ภาษาตามเกณฑ์ที่ Aikhenvald เสนอไว้ ผลการวิเคราะห์พบว่าหน่วยสร้างกริยาเรียงเป็นหน่วยสร้างที่มีความใกล้ชิด มีทั้งหน่วยสร้างที่สมมาตรและไม่สมมาตร มักประกอบด้วยคำที่เป็นคำเดียว และแต่ละหน่วยสร้างมีการบ่งการณลักษณะ มาลา และการแสดงความบอกเล่าหรือปฏิเสธได้หนึ่งประเภทเท่านั้น ในแง่ของความเที่ยงตรงในการวิเคราะห์กริยาเรียงในภาษากะเหรี่ยงบเวเมื่อพิจารณาว่ากริยานั้นต้องการกรรมหรือไม่ พบว่าคำอ้างอิงระดับบริจเฉททำให้เป็นไปไม่ได้ที่จะใช้คลังข้อมูลนี้ในการวิเคราะห์กริยาตามการมี/ไม่มีกรรมของกริยาเหล่านั้น

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

ADJ	adjective
ADV	adverb
ADV.Elab	elaborate adverb
AuxV	auxiliary verb
C	consonant
CLF	classifier
COMPL	completive
COND	conditional
CVS	complex verb serialization
DECL	declarative
DEM	demonstrative
EXCL	exclamation
IMPat	impatience
INTER	interrogative
INTNS	intensifier
IRR	irrealis
LOC	locative
MEP	macro event property
N	noun
N.Elab	elaborate noun
NEG	negator
NLZR	nominalizer
NP	noun phrase
NUM	number
P	particle
PERF	perfect
Pf	particle final
pl	plural

Pnf	particle non-final
PP	prepositional phrase
PRHB	prohibited
PRN	pronoun
PROB	probability
QNTY	quantity
RECIP	reciprocal
REL	relativizer
Rel.C.	relative clause
s	singular
SVC	serial verb construction
SVO	subject verb object
T	tone
V	verb
V.Elab	elaborate verb
VOC	vocative
1	first person pronoun
1PL	first person plural pronoun
1S	first person singular pronoun
2	second person pronoun
2P	second person plural pronoun
3	third person pronoun

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Overview

The purpose of this thesis is to describe the serial verb construction in Bwe via Aikhenvald's (2006) cross-linguistic typology. A greater understanding of the grammar of Bwe is useful in promoting documentation, preservation, literacy, and translation work in this language. Analyzing the typology of the serial verb construction (henceforth SVC) in Bwe helps place it within the greater scope of linguistic typology and the world's languages. This description will also be informative in regards to historical comparative research: it will describe additional characteristics by which Bwe could be compared with other Karen languages, thereby informing the linguistic family relationships between the Karen languages and aiding in reconstructing Proto-Karen.

This introduction will provide a brief overview of the history of the Karen people and the specific speaker that provided this corpus. The classification of Bwe within the Sino-Tibetan languages will be noted, the details of the corpus will be given, and the phonology, as described by Henderson, will be briefly reviewed. A summary of relevant research to this analysis will be provided, the methodology for the analysis of the serial verb constructions in Bwe using Aikhenvald's typology will be given, and an overview of the thesis will be presented.

### 1.2 History

The Karen peoples in Myanmar live in many small communities which are scattered throughout the country. The largest concentrations of Karen people are living in Shan State, Kayah State, Karen State, Pegu Division, Yangon Division, Taninthayi Division, Mon State, and Irrawaddy Division. The Bwe population is located mainly in Kayah State in the Thanduanggyi Township, where there are at least forty-one villages, and in Karen State (Lewis 2009).

The origins of the Karen people have not been determined, so it is not certain when they migrated into Myanmar, although Luce (1985) suggests they arrived in the 8<sup>th</sup>



century. Most of what is known about the Karen people has been passed down through oral tradition and legends, which tend to point to a migration into Myanmar from Tibet. There is also some evidence in the historical traditions that points to a unified Karen group before coming to Myanmar and then various divisions into separate villages and speech communities (Saw Lar Baa 2001:5).

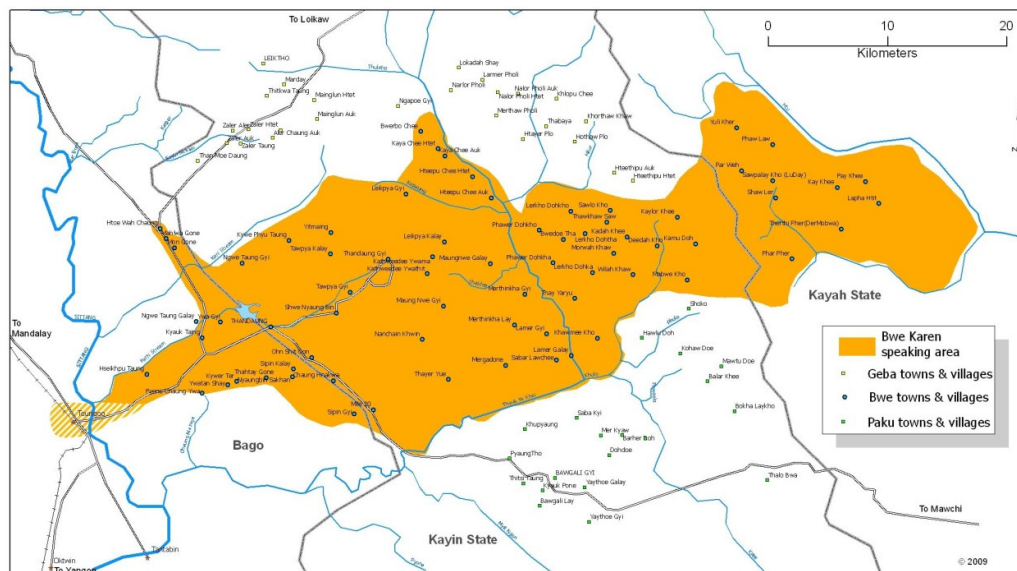
The Karen people that live in the Thanduanggyi Township of Kayah state, which includes Bwe as well as other varieties, have all indicated an interest in preserving their languages. The language groups in that area use Sgaw as their lingua franca (Saw Lar Baa 2001:12).

For the country of Myanmar, Burmese is the national lingua franca. The national schools are taught in Burmese, and it is also the medium of the mass media. If students are to receive higher learning than primary school, they must become fluent in Burmese. However, the attitude of people who live in villages is different than the attitude of those who live in the cities. Generally, the people in villages do not place a high value on formal education, whereas people in cities feel the need to have some high school or college level education (Saw Lar Baa 2001:8). The tendency of villagers not to seek higher education is actually a benefit to the vitality of their language. Consequently, many Karen languages are quite strong because they have not borrowed many features from the Burmese language. Among those Karen languages whose speakers are Baptist Christians, Sgaw is used as the lingua franca. There is more likelihood of a Karen language adopting lexical items and grammatical patterns from Sgaw than from Burmese (Saw Lar Baa 2001:9). Sgaw or Burmese is used as the language of worship in the Bwe Baptist and Seventh Day Adventist churches. Even in villages where only Bwe and Burmese might be heard outside of the church, when the people go to church they use a Sgaw Bible and hear the message in Sgaw, despite their own admission that they feel that they don't understand Sgaw very well (Saw Lar Baa 2001:12).

The Bwe people have primary schools in their villages, and most are taught by Burmese teachers who translate the Burmese lesson plan into Bwe. The Bwe people feel that their lexicon is fuller and more descriptive than Sgaw. The people speaking Bwe want their language to be passed on to their children (Saw Lar Baa 2001:12).

The data for this thesis is from Henderson (1997) who collected texts and lexicography data from a Bwe speaker who traveled to London in 1952 to work as her language researcher on a dictionary and phonology of Bwe. Saw Po Kin, the language researcher, was born in the Tawbyagyi Village of Thanduanggyi Township

in the Toungoo district of Kayah State. Saw Po Kin was born in 1924, and he died in 1992 (Henderson 1997:II, viii, 92). The present analysis of Bwe serial verb constructions is based on one speaker's dialect. However, Henderson's personal experience in Saw Po Kin's village in 1954 led her to believe that his dialect was representative of the larger Bwe community (Henderson 1997:II, x).



**Figure 1: Bwe villages (Ujlakyova 2010)**

Population figures vary. Lewis (2009) gives a population count from 1983 of 15,700, whereas Bradley (1997:47) estimated 20,000 speakers, though he felt that the number was highly underestimated and there could be as many as double that number of speakers.

### 1.3 Classification

The Karen language family is part of the Sino-Tibetan family. It is under the Tibeto-Burman branch with its sister branch being Burmic (Bradley 1997:47). The classification of the Karen languages within the Karen branch has been an issue of some debate, and the current classification is based primarily on geography rather than on lexical, phonological, grammatical, or even historical linguistic research (Manson 2010). The most recent research indicates that Bwe is closest to Geba and then to Kayah (Bradley 1997; Kauffman 1993; Manson 2011). The following language family tree uses the name Blimaw for Bwe at the lowest level.

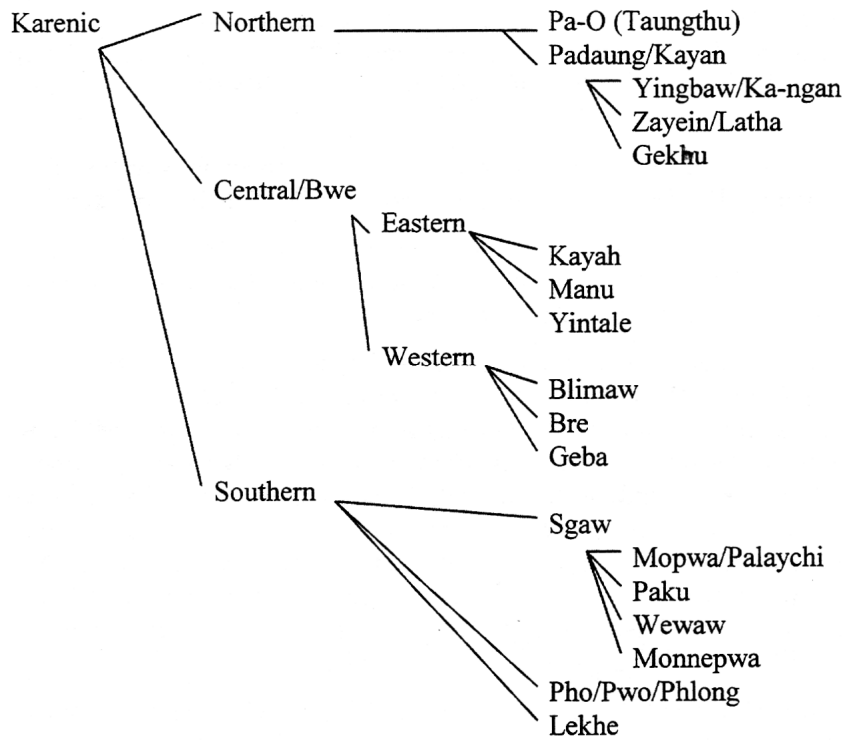


Figure 2: Karen language family tree (Bradley 1997)

## 1.4 Corpus

The corpus for this thesis is composed of 17 Bwe texts, approximately 22,000 words, provided by Saw Po Kin, published as Henderson (1997). The texts cover a wide range of genres: five texts are artificially constructed around cultural topics and take the form of dialogues or monologues, two of the texts are lectures, two texts are colloquial monologues and emotional in nature, two texts are formal monologues, two are first person narratives, three texts are traditional stories, and the final text is a traditional song.

## 1.5 Phonology

The information for this brief phonological overview of Bwe comes from the work done by Eugenie Henderson (1997:II, viii-xviii). The scope of this thesis does not allow for its own phonological review, though, as stated in Henderson's introduction, more work could be done in this area. Other phonological analyses of Bwe have been completed by Saw Lar Baa (2001) and Sudrutai (2003).

## 1.6 Syllable

There are stressed and unstressed syllables in Bwe. The unstressed syllables are of the type that Henderson described as “a major syllable preceded by a minor syllable” (1997:II, xi). The unstressed syllables do not contrast in tone or vowel, though the vowel shows some variation depending on if it is an independent morpheme, which is pronounced as *a*, or a dependent morpheme, in which case the vowel of the unstressed syllable may become like the vowel in the stressed syllable.

Independent morpheme

- 1) *a = le*  
place  
'place'
- 2) *gəli*  
air  
'air'

The structure of the stressed syllable is C(C)V + T. There are only monophthongs in Bwe. There are toneless suffixes and sentence final particles that also occur in Bwe.

### 1.6.1 Consonants

There are 27 consonants in Bwe. All consonants can occur syllable initial in clusters with /w/, except for /ph/, /t/, and /d/. There are also consonant clusters with /r/ and /l/. The consonants /p/, /ph/, /b/, /k/, /kh/, and /g/ can be initial in a cluster with /r/ or /l/, and /r/ can also create clusters with /t/, /d/, and /θ/. A chart of the consonants is given in Table 1: Bwe consonants (Henderson 1997:II, ix).

**Table 1: Bwe consonants (Henderson 1997:II, ix)**

		Bilabial	Interdental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosives:	voiced	b		d	j [j]	g	
	voiceless un aspirated	p		t	c	k	
	voiceless aspirated	ph [p <sup>h</sup> ]		th [t <sup>h</sup> ]	ch [c <sup>h</sup> ]	kh [k <sup>h</sup> ]	
	glottalized	ɸ		ɖ			
Nasals		m		n			
Palato-alveolar affricates:	voiced				j		
	voiceless				c		
	voiceless aspirated				ch		
Fricatives			θ		ʃ	x	h
Approximants		w		l, r	y [j]	ʀ	
glottalized semivowels		ʷ [ʔw]			ʷ [ʔj]		

### 1.6.2 Vowels

There are 9 vowels in Bwe. There are no diphthongs or triphthongs. Table 2 lists the vowels:

**Table 2: Bwe vowels (Henderson 1997: II, x)**

	Front unrounded	Central	Back Rounded
Closed	i		u
	ɪ		ʊ
	e		o
	ɛ		ɔ
Open		a	

### 1.6.3 Tones

There are three tones in Bwe: high level, mid level, and low level. They are marked in the texts as shown in the following examples.

High Tone

- 3) *θómú*  
alive  
'alive'

Mid Tone

- 4) *mɪ*  
fire  
'fire'

Low Tone

- 5) *l̀̀k̀̀ho*  
earth  
'earth'

## 1.7 Literature Review

An areal feature of languages from Mainland Southeast Asia is the ability to string multiple verbs together without morphological subordination or coordination. In the following sections I will discuss the current research on Bwe and Geba grammar, followed by an overview of the literature on serial verb constructions as an analytical tool to deal with multi-verb constructions.

### 1.7.1 Bwe grammar

At this time a grammar of Bwe has not been published. Henderson's (1997) short phonological analysis, and her published texts and dictionary provide an excellent starting point for the grammatical analysis of this language. Additional phonological and sociolinguistic research has been done by Saw Lar Baa in which he found that the Bwe community feels a need and desire for additional linguistic work in their community (2001:12).

As stated above, the closest Karen language to Bwe is Geba. Hsar Shee (2008) completed a basic grammar of Geba. Her analysis found that the basic verb phrase in

Geba had directional “helping verbs” and auxiliaries. Serial verb constructions are mentioned briefly in her description. She describes them as a prolific feature of Geba which has at least two verb roots that are not overtly subordinated or coordinated (Hsar Shee 2008:152). Hsar Shee analyzed many of the SVCs in her data as compounds. There are three types of SVC described in her grammar: simultaneous, sequential, and 'want' (Hsar Shee 2008:153). Simultaneous SVCs are composed of a verb of motion followed by another verb. Sequential SVCs are those which have two action verbs side by side. The ordering of the verbs indicates that the actions happened iconically in the SVCs. In the 'want' SVC category, the verb 'want' is said to be an auxiliary verb that never occurs alone as the main verb in a clause. Aside from this brief description, the characteristics of SVCs in Geba are not categorized.

Hsar Shee's conclusion about the verb phrase in Geba is that it can be composed of an optional auxiliary followed by the main verb; an optional directional and additional auxiliaries and adverbs can come after the main verb (Hsar Shee 2008:160). The role SVCs play in the verb phrase of Geba is not mentioned as part of her conclusion.

### **1.7.2 Serial Verb Constructions (SVC)**

The opinions and discussions about what constitutes a serial verb construction, are various and often opaque. In the following sections I will give an overview of some of the most recent cross-linguistic research in this syntactic and semantic area, as well as summarize how this topic was handled by researchers of Karen languages.

### **1.7.3 Cross-linguistic SVC discussions**

In an effort to make this research of Bwe valid and comparable between languages, the following section provides an overview of the current attempts to describe and categorize serial verbs in the broader context of the world's languages.

#### **1.7.3.1 Dixon**

According to Dixon (2006:339-344), a serial verb construction is any combination of two or more verbs used in a clause that describes one single action, or sub-events of some larger action. The criteria for determining if two verbs are a serial construction is that they must not show any coordination or subordination marking from one to the other; each verb could stand alone as the sole verb in the clause; they must have the same tense, aspect, modality, and polarity; and they share at least one argument.

It is noted by Dixon that certain types of constructions are often allowed to interrupt SVCs, so contiguous and non-contiguous possibilities exist when analyzing for SVCs in a language.

There are two major kinds of SVCs: symmetrical and asymmetrical (Dixon 2006:342-344). Symmetrical SVCs have no head verb and all the verbs in the construction come from an unrestricted verb category within the language, and, therefore, carry the same weight. Asymmetrical SVCs have major and minor members and can be shown to have one of the verbs as the head.

While Dixon's definition of serial verb constructions gives a good place to start in determining if there are serial verbs in Bwe, it does not provide any typological comparative features that would assist in classifying the language.

### **1.7.3.2 Aikhenvald**

Aikhenvald's (2006:1) and Dixon's definitions of SVCs are nearly identical: more than one verb; not showing any marking of subordination or coordination; carrying the same tense, aspect, modality, and polarity; and being able to stand alone in a clause. Furthermore, Aikhenvald proposes categories for SCVs based on several parameters: symmetry, contiguity, wordhood, and marking of tense, aspect, modality, and polarity (Aikhenvald 2006:3).

In addition to the details Dixon identified for symmetrical and asymmetrical SVCs, Aikhenvald adds that one or more of the verbs in an asymmetrical SVC must be from a restricted grammar class, like motion or posture (2006:3). She also provides some descriptions of cross-linguistic categories for asymmetrical SVCs based on their semantics and transitivity: 1) direction and orientation; 2) aspect, extent, and change of state; 3) secondary concept serialization 4) serialization of compliment clause taking verbs 5) valency-increasing and argument adding, 6) valency-decreasing 7) comparative and superlative, and 8) event argument (Aikhenvald 2006:22-28). Symmetrical SVCs are divided into four possible categories based on their semantics: sequence, cause-effect, manner, and synonyms (Aikhenvald 2006:28-30).

In addition to the above categorization, Aikhenvald proposes a second typology for SVCs which do not share the subject/agent argument. These SVCs can be divided into the following four categories: Switch-function, Cumulative, Event-Argument,



and Resultative (2006:15). Each of these categories describes the ways in which the arguments of the clause are related to the two verbs.

Switch-function SVCs are defined by the object of the first verb being the subject of the second verb. There are five subcategories of the Switch-function SVC, however, three of them are rare. The two main subcategories of Switch-function SVCs are as follows: Cause-effect SVCs, in which the second verb describes the effect of the first verb and are usually symmetrical; and Causative SVCs which are typically asymmetrical and use a causation verb as the first verb and a lexical verb as the second. The rare categories of Switch-function SVCs are Simultaneous Experiencer, and Switch-function Consecutive, which are both symmetrical, and Complement Clause Serialization, which is asymmetrical (Aikhenvald 2006:15-18).

Cumulative SVCs are called such because both the subject and the object arguments of the first verb are the subject of the second verb. Event-Argument SVCs, in contrast, have no shared argument, only a shared event. Resultative SVC also have no shared arguments, but instead of referring to a shared event, the second verb refers to an effect of the first verb on one of the arguments (Aikhenvald 2006:18-19).

### **1.7.3.3 Bohnemeyer**

In the attempt to come up with a more universal definition for what makes serial constructions, not only SVCs but any construction that breaks down larger events into smaller sections within discourse, Bohnemeyer et. al (2007) proposes a feature called a macro-event property, or MEP. The MEP is whatever grammatical construction the language uses to bind the subevents into one whole event. Therefore, when determining if an SVC exists in a language, the adverbials of time, tense, and temporal clauses are the important indicators that put the separate verb events into one macro event (Bohnemeyer 2007:497).

Bohnemeyer (2007:502) recognizes that there is no universal 'event phrase' marker in languages. He also recognizes that the MEP is only used to describe the syntactical manifestation of a semantic construction not the semantic construction itself (Bohnemeyer 2007:502). This, intentionally, leaves a lot of flexibility in how serial constructions are identified and marked in a language.

#### **1.7.3.4 Bisang**

The critique that Bisang (2009) offers of Aikhenvald and Dixon points out that neither of them have really nailed down any feature of verb serialization that can be used cross-linguistically. While Aikhenvald and Dixon are looking for a middle ground between verbs that share arguments and those that are merely sharing an event, they do not provide a consistent semantic link between the categories that they propose. Bisang concludes that Bohnemeyer's MEP may be the only feature that is useable cross-linguistically to identify an SVC, despite the fact that it is nearly too broad to be useful, and that the field of verb serialization is still primarily one in which each researcher must define SVC for their own language rather than following an over-arching definition that works between languages (2009:805, 811).

#### **1.7.3.5 Enfield's Multi-Verb Constructions in Lao**

Enfield (2007:339) felt that the term serial verb construction was too narrow to use in describing the strings of verbs in Lao. He chose the term 'multi-verb phrases/constructions'. Enfield also observed that there was often a clear internal, hierarchical structure to the verb constructions in Lao. While he didn't find any morphological marking of subordination on these multi-verb phrases, he still noted that certain verbs modified, or were more closely linked, than other verbs in the same constructions (2007:483).

The times that Enfield (2007:381) did identify verb serialization in Lao were specific to constructions requiring three arguments. In these circumstances, Lao often chooses to use a strategy of two verbs non-contiguously, to 'share the load' of the required arguments (Enfield 2007:381). In this way, Enfield's chose to define the serial verb construction specifically for Lao and not in a cross-linguistically applicable theory.

#### **1.7.4 SVCs in the Karen language family**

The following two researchers have dealt with defining and categorizing serial verbs in languages within the Karen language family in a more depth than the survey provided by Hsar Shee (2008). As such, their decisions for analysis of these specific languages are invaluable in developing this analysis of the serial verbs in Bwe. Their findings are summarized here.

#### **1.7.4.1 Solnit and Kayah Li**

Solnit's (1997, 2006) research in Kayah Li led him to define two main types of SVC: nuclear serialization and core serialization. The main difference between the two categories is based on whether the verbs are contiguous or non-contiguous. The first, nuclear serialization, usually had three or more verbs that can be analyzed syntactically as a single compound verb; they share tense, aspect, modality, and polarity, and they are semantically transparent. The second, core serial verbs, are typically binary. They share polarity with the polarity marked on the first verb, they share arguments, especially the subject, and they are relatively uncommon in Kayah Li.

#### **1.7.4.2 Manson and Kayan**

In Manson's (2010) analysis of Kayan, he uses two categories defined by van Staden and Reesink (2008) to propose seven categories for the analysis of the serial verbs in Kayan. Van Staden and Reesink's definition of serial verbs is quite broad, restricting the serial verb category only by insisting that there are two or more verbs, and that they occur in the same clause without obvious subordination (Manson 2010:325). Complex Verb Serialization (CVS) is one of van Staden and Reesink's types of serial verb constructions. Manson further breaks this category down into types of CVS for Kayan as follows: phase, modal, direction, manner, causation, motion, and cause-effect (Manson 2010:329). Phase serial verbs focus on one part of an event, whereas modal CVSs are concerned with the attitude of the speaker. A direction CVS is a verb plus a directional. Manner serial verbs are made up of a verb followed by an adjective that is clearly modifying the first verb. In a motion CVS, the first verb is a motion and the second verb is some action that happens after the motion. Causative CVSs are a causative verb followed by another verb or adjective. Cause-Effect serializations are a verb that results in the adjective. A sequence CVS is any two verbs that are sub-events of a culturally recognized whole event (Manson 2010:327-339).

The second category proposed by van Staden and Reesink (2008:22-27) that Manson used to analyze Kayan is Co-dependent serialization. Co-dependent serialization is characterized by non-contiguous verbs where one of the shared arguments occurs between the verbs (Manson 2010:327).

### 1.7.5 Discussion

The only features used by all of the above researchers in their definition of serial verbs are that there are two or more verbs in the same clause with no obvious subordination or coordination. Most researchers also mention a kind of shared event and common tense, aspect, modality, and polarity.

Dixon, Aikhenvald, and Bohnermeyer all deal with the subevent of a larger macro event as a defining feature of a serial verb. Bisang goes so far as to say that the macro event property proposed by Bohnermeyer might be the only feature that is valid as a cross-linguistic criteria for defining a serial verb. He felt that many of the criteria used by Aikhenvald to categorize SVCs were iconic reflections of the single event property in the serial verb construction.

There is some significant overlap between Manson's subcategories of Complex Verb Serialization (CVS) and Aikhenvald's SVC categories. Cause-Effect CVSs and Cause-Effect SVCs are similar. The main difference between the two is that Aikhenvald requires that Cause-Effect SVCs have the object of the first verb acting as the subject of the second verb. This is particularly in contrast to Manson claiming that the second verb in Cause-Effect CVSs would be an adjective and making no mention of the argument sharing features of a CVS. Manson and Aikhenvald both recognize a causative category defining it as a causative verb followed by any other verb. Manson's Sequence CVSs and Aikhenvald's Event-Argument SVCs appear to be quite similar, though Manson states that the two verbs are part of a culturally shared larger event, while Aikhenvald only recognizes that the two verbs share no arguments, only the event. Perhaps the main difference between Mason and Aikhenvald is the focus of their categories. While Aikhenvald is very focused on which arguments are shared, and how they are shared between the verbs, Manson is concerned with the semantic categories that the verbs in the SVC fall into.

Enfield's avoidance of the term SVC in his analysis of Lao appears to be misplaced. None of the definitions of SVCs deny an internal hierarchy of verbs in the construction; they only require that the hierarchy be semantically implicit rather than grammatically explicit. Most of the above researchers use the serial verbs that obviously have a semantic hierarchy as one of the categorical axes, calling them asymmetrical SVCs.

Aikhenvald's typology provides the clearest definition of an SVC as well as categories by which to analyze the SVCs in a language. Single-eventedness is addressed by her definition and typology, and though Bisang felt that some of

Aikhenvald's categories could be combined under the heading of the macro-event property, the features that she proposes are still useful in comparing SVCs cross-linguistically. Aikhenvald's primary categorization of SVCs is primarily based on their semantic features, similar to Manson, and the secondary categorization of non-subject sharing SVCs is based on transitivity.

## **1.8 Methodology**

For the purposes of analyzing this corpus of data for serial verb constructions, I will use Aikhenvald's (2006) typology. Aikhenvald's definition of a serial verb construction provides five parameters by which a language can be determined to have or not have serial verb constructions: syntactically monoclausal, syntactic independence of the verbs in regards to their relationship to each other, all the verbs representing a single semantic event, shared operators (i.e. tense, aspect, modality, and polarity), and proof of lexically independent distribution of each of the verbs that are part of the SVC (Aikhenvald 2006:1).

In addition, I will use Aikhenvald's four typological categories to further classify the types of serial verbs in Bwe. First, I will divide the serial verb constructions into two major categories: symmetrical and asymmetrical. The difference between these two types of constructions is in the composition of the SVC being from open or closed class verb categories. The verbs in the closed categories must meet the criteria stated above, especially the ability to stand alone as the only verb in a clause, to be qualified as a SVC. There are several semantic classes of verbs that would be considered closed class, such as direction, manner, and location. All other verbs are open class, and when they occur together in a SVC they constitute symmetrical SVCs.

Second, there is a further division of contiguous versus non-contiguous syntactic ordering within an SVC. Aikhenvald (2006:50) states that if a language does have SVCs it is most likely to have contiguous SVCs. The only criteria for separating contiguous from non-contiguous SVCs is to determine if verbs that are not directly adjacent to each other are in the same clause. It is also necessary to show that verbs which are syntactically next to each other are part of the same clause, as syntactic nearness does not necessarily equate semantic nearness. This will be done by using a broad description of other syntactic structures in Bwe, such as noun phrases and verb phrases, which will help differentiate what the structure of a clause is in Bwe and how it is syntactically marked. Clause final particles will also be useful in

determining the clause breaks for a speaker of Bwe, and consequently, whether or not the verbs in a clause are considered to be monoclausal or multiclausal.

Third, the wordhood of verbs in the serial verb construction can be used as a typological tool. In the case of this data, what constitutes a word has been defined by Henderson (1997:vol II) when she created her dictionary and is not questioned in the present analysis.

Fourth, a language can be categorized by whether the SVC takes concordant operator marking, or if it is a language that marks the SVC once and that operation is in effect for every verb in the SVC. This typological feature will be described for Bwe.

Aikhenvald also proposes additional categories for SVCs based on transitivity and how the arguments of the clause are shared by the SVC. These categories will be discussed and problematized in the light of the present data.

## **1.9 Objectives**

The following thesis has two primary objectives: first, to determine that there are serial verb constructions in Bwe, and second, to categorize them according to Aikhenvald's typology.

A secondary objective, in order to support the primary objectives, is to briefly describe the primary syntactic features in Bwe in order to correctly identify the structures that meet Aikhenvald's criteria for serial verb constructions.

## **1.10 Thesis Overview**

The following chapters will provide a broad analysis of Bwe. Chapter one has introduced the language, the specific textual data used for this thesis, and the literature related to this study. Chapter two will outline the basic features of the noun phrase and sentence final particles. The basic features of the verb phrase will be described in chapter three as a foundation for the analysis of serial verb constructions via Aikhenvald's typology in chapter four. Chapter five will provide the conclusion and suggestions for further research.

## **1.11 Summary**

The above chapter provided an overview of the Karen people and an introduction to the speaker who provided the data for this corpus. Next it noted the current

typological placement of Bwe in the Karen language family, provided a numerical overview of the corpus used for this analysis, and reviewed the phonology described by Henderson.

After that, literature overview was provided with research related to Bwe and Geba, and serial verb constructions. This research was compared and discussed.

Aikhenvald's typology was chosen as the primary tool of analysis for this corpus, and the criteria by which it would be applied was set forth. Finally, an overview of the chapters presented in this thesis was given.

## Chapter 2

# Selected Aspects of Bwe Syntax

### 2.1 Introduction

The following chapter provides an overview of some basic syntactic structures in Bwe. Identification of the ordering within the noun phrase, the structure of the simple clause, and the patterning of the operators in Bwe is necessary in order to identify the constituents of a clause and to separate them from serial verb constructions in Bwe. This chapter will begin with a look at typology and the basic word order, continue through noun phrases, and end with a description of illocutionary force particles.

### 2.2 Bwe Word Structure

Bwe words are typically monosyllabic. However, Bwe is quite prolific in its creation of elaborate lexical items, four syllables long with rhyming or repetition of sounds with the pattern ABAC or ABCB. Other than these forms there are very few bisyllabic or compound words.

### 2.3 Word Order and Clause Types

Clauses in Bwe have a general SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) word order. However, this characterization can be misleading in many cases because the sentence structure follows more of a semantic topic-comment structure than a strict SVO word order. Because of this tendency, the subject is often dropped from the sentence or it is referred to by a relational clitic rather than by direct argument. It is possible, and even common, for the verb to be initial in a clause. The following examples show intransitive, transitive, and the topic-comment tendencies of Bwe.



## 2.4 Intransitive Clauses

The intransitive clause in Bwe is formed with the actor noun phrase followed by the verb. Example (6) shows the noun phrase ‘his wife’ *jə = mɛ bwɛ nu* acting as the actor, and ‘cry’ *ha* as the intransitive verb.

- 6) *jə = mɛ bwɛ nu ha*  
N CLF Pnf V  
3 = wife person NU cry  
‘His wife wept’ (Tugleba.122)

### 2.4.1 Transitive Clauses

Transitive clauses in Bwe are formed with the actor noun phrase followed by the verb and then the theme or patient noun phrase. In example (7), ‘their parents’ *jə mɔcəpa* is the actor, ‘love’ *bɛlɔ* is the transitive verb, and ‘them’ *cɛ* is the patient required by the verb.

- 7) *jə mɔcəpa bɛlɔ cɛ*,  
*jə = mɔ-cə = pa bɛlɔ cɛ*  
N-N V PRN  
3 = mother-3 = father love 3  
‘Their parents loved them’ (Tugleba.009)

Example (8) shows ‘people’ *bəya* as the actor, ‘beat’ *bo* as the transitive verb, and ‘thorny.creeper’ *klɪ* as the patient.

- 8) *phɛ bəya bo klɪ ə = khɛ nu*  
P N V N CLF Pnf  
when person beat thorny.creeper season NU  
‘During the season that people beat the thorny creeper,’ (Basket.213)

### 2.4.2 Ditransitive Clauses

Ditransitive clauses are those that have an actor and a verb that requires two arguments. The semantic categories for the arguments are usually patient and theme. Example (9) shows the actor ‘2s’ *nə =* followed by the verb ‘relate’ *dʒsa* which requires the patient ‘1s’ *ye* and the theme ‘basket’ *wùdówùku*.

- 9) *nə = dʒfa ye wùdówùku əwɪəké thé nu bε thó*  
 V PRN N.Elab N.Elab V Pnf V AuxV  
 relate 1S basket all.about weave NU enough PERF  
 ‘You have told me enough about basket weaving.’ (Basket.138)

In example (10), the ditransitive verb ‘give’ *í* requires the actor ‘good air’ *gəli dó ə wɪ* *cɔ nu*, the patient ‘1pl’ *kε* and the result which is the nominalized verb ‘health’ *dεɟʃɔma*.

- 10) *gəli dó ə = wɪ cɔ nu í kε dεɟʃɔma*  
 N P V CLF Pnf V PRN N  
 air REL 3=good some NU give 1PL health  
 ‘Good air promotes good health.’ (Air.022)

### 2.4.3 Omitted Arguments

Bwe syntax is flexible to some degree because it follows more of a semantic structure than a strict syntactic ordering. This allows the language to drop the topic and start utterances verb initial if the topic is known from context. This tendency toward discourse anaphora causes difficulty in trying to identify the valency of any verb in Bwe. The arguments for that verb are often not explicitly stated, but understood from context. The effects of this feature will be discussed in greater detail in section 0.

The tendency for discourse anaphora is shown in example (11). The speaker has pointed out a strange animal in previous utterances and is now telling their audience where that animal is located. This follows the topic-comment structure by not requiring that old information, the topic, be repeated.

- 11) *ɔ dó θo ə = dɔga bɔ ə = kháchi nu*  
 V LOC N V CLF N Pnf  
 EXIST LOC tree 3=great long 3=near NU  
 ‘It is over there near the big tree,’ (Rhinoceros.014)

### 2.5 Noun Phrase

The basic structure of the noun phrase is head initial, though possessive structures place the possessor before the head noun. Table 3 illustrates the maximum noun phrase structure.

**Table 3: Noun Phrase Structure**

Head	Modifier	Quantifier/Number	Classifier	Deixis
NP	Rel. C. Adj. PP NP	QNTY/NUM	CLF	DEM

Any combination of the above elements is possible, though the numeral must occur with the classifier as shown in example (12). The classifier can occur without a number to highlight various properties of the noun, as in example (13). There can be multiple modifiers of the noun in the relative clause or the prepositional phrase. This is exemplified with the relational clitic *a* acting as a subordinator in example (12) where ‘orphan two person’ *a = phowε kί bwε* is subordinated to ‘siblings’ *buwε*, and the coordinated phrase ‘female one person and male one person’ *a = bòmú dā bwε lé a = bòkhó dā bwε* subordinated to ‘person related siblings orphan two person’ *bāya a = θέ buwε a = phowε kί bwε*.

12) *bāya a = θέ buwε a = phowε kί bwε*  
 N V N N NUM CLF  
 person 3 = related siblings 3 = orphan two person

*a = bòmú dā bwε lé a = bòkhó dā bwε*  
 N NUM CLF Pnf N NUM CLF  
 3 = female one person and 3 = male one person  
 ‘two orphans, a sister and a brother’ (Pukkeh.001, .002)

13) *bāya a = phowε kί bwε yo*  
 N N NUM CLF DEM  
 person 3 = orphan two person this

*a = bòkhópho bwε nu a = mi*  
 N CLF Pnf N  
 3 = boy person NU name  
 ‘of these two orphans the orphan boy’s name’ (Phukeh.014)

The quantity word can occur before or after the head noun depending on the speakers intended scope, either phrase or clause level respectively, for the quantifier.

The preferred structure appears to be phrase level, following the head noun, as in example (14). Example (15) shows the structure for the clause level quantifier.

- 14) *dε cǎlégwì ɔ pwé mopa cɔ nu ə-cu bú l*  
 N QNTY V ADV N CLF NU N LOC Pf  
 thing all EXIST entirely parents some that 3-arm in DECL  
 ‘Everything rests entirely in the hands of the parents.’ (Marriage.024)

- 15) *gǎyé dɛphodɛwɛ dó ə=hɛ dó khó kho*  
 QNTY N.Elabor P V LOC N N  
 all animal REL 3=walk LOC hill.land top  
 ‘All the beasts that go on land’ (Air.006)

There are examples showing that adverbial noun phrases can be formed with a number and classifier or a numeral classifier phrase plus a demonstrative. This structure is particularly common for time adverbials.

- 16) *tə pla xá*  
 NUM CLF ADV  
 one time same  
 ‘at the same time’ (Air.011)

- 17) *ɔ nu tə pla nu*  
 V Pnf NUM CLF DEM  
 EXIST NU one time that  
 ‘at that time’ (Pukkeh.161, 197)

It is also possible to put a certain descriptive noun phrase in apposition to a pronoun in order to further define the group of people the pronoun is including. In example (18), ‘Karen’ *bəyapho cɔ yo* is juxtaposed with ‘we’ *kə* to provide emphasis and clarification about who exactly is included in the statement about to be made.

- 18) *kɛ bəyapho cɔ yo kə=ɛchíɛbwɛ*  
 PRN N CLF DEM V.Elabor  
 1PL Karen some this 1PL=hospitable  
 ‘We Karen, we are hospitable’ (Pukkeh.069)

### 2.5.1 The Noun

A noun is semantically characterized as being a relatively time stable element (Payne 1997:52). In Bwe, nouns can be simple one word constructions, compound constructions, nominalized verbs, and nominalized classifiers. They can also be used to modify other nouns.

- 19) *kəbɔ́ θəne*  
N N  
ship station  
'the jetty' (Journey.002)

Verbs can be nominalized and used as the head noun in a clause with *dɛ*.

- 20) *gə dɛ khabɛyàbɛ*  
PRN P V.Elaboration  
1PL NLZR suffer  
'our suffering' (Pukheh.023)

Verbs can be used to modify head nouns with the relational clitic *ə=*; however, it is not required for stative verbs, as shown in examples (21) and (22).

- 21) *kəbɔ́ ə=do be nu*  
N REL=V CLF Pnf  
ship REL=big flat NU  
'the ship which is big' (Journey.008)

- 22) *kəbɔ́ do be nu*  
N V CLF Pnf  
ship big flat NU  
'the big ship' (Journey.011)

### 2.5.2 Gender Marking

Bwe shows no evidence of marking gender or other classes as a grammatical feature on verbs or nouns. There is only natural gender on family relationship terms.

### 2.5.2.1 Kinship Terms

The kinship terms in this data set are listed below.

*phí* – grandmother

*phú* - grandfather

*likhwa* – grandson

*wé* – older sibling

*bu* – younger sibling

*mo* – mother

*pa* - father

*phomu* – daughter

*phokho* – son

*mé* – wife

*wa* - husband

It is worth mentioning that there is no gender distinction in sibling relationships, only age distinction. All other family relationships appear to have the gender inherent in lexical item itself. There may be some feminine and masculine compounding with ‘child’ *pho* on ‘daughter’ and ‘son’ respectively.

In most cases, these relationship terms require a pronoun possessor or the relationship clitic *a*. The possessor or relationship clitic is not used when the relationship term is used in proper names, as is typical for ‘grandmother’ *phí*, ‘grandfather’ *phú*, and ‘father’ *pa*. A typical example of this is shown in example (23).

- 23) *dó* *khrijà* *phí*                    *a=hi*            *nu*  
LOC Name N                            N                Pnf  
LOC Krija grandmother 3=home NU  
‘at Krija’s grandmother’s home’ (Myself.217)

The relationship terms can all occur without possession marking if the person speaking is the possessor of the relationship. The first person singular pronoun is not required in these circumstances. This pattern is exemplified in (24).

24) *o, θa θáé*  
 VOC N V  
 Oh heart know

*nε lé phú dʒfa gà nε nε ni.*  
 PRN Pnf N V V PRN PRN P  
 2S and grandfather relate must 2S 2S ASSERT

‘Oh, grandfather knows, and if you want to know, I’ll tell you.’  
 (Conversation.012)

The relationship markers for ‘wife’ *mé* and ‘husband’ *wa* pattern as regular nouns. They do not require any special possessors or relationship marking.

### 2.5.2.2 Pronouns

Pronouns in Bwe show a three-way distinction in person, a two-way distinction in number and a distinction between bound (indicated by ‘=’) and free. Pronouns do not differentiate based on gender or status. There are three possible options for the first person plural and the third person singular. The third option is phonologically created by changing the stop from voiceless to voiced. The difference between the voiced and voiceless is related to the phonological context: the voiced form is used before a voiced consonant and the voiceless form before a voiceless consonant.

**Table 4: Bwe Pronouns**

	1	2	3
s	<i>yε yə=</i>	<i>nε nə=</i>	<i>cε cə=/jə=</i>
pl	<i>kε kə=/gə=</i>	<i>θí</i>	

The grammatical distinction for the different forms of the pronoun is relatively clear for the singular forms. The distribution of the first person plural *kε* and the other first person plural options, *gə* and *kə*, is reflective of either a free or bound morpheme. The schwa vowel in the bound pronouns tends to assimilate to the vowel in the root word.

Bwe makes no distinction between the third person singular and the third person plural. The following examples show the third person pronoun used in singular (25) and plural (26) contexts.

25) *phúxe ca θo b́s ge lé cə=dɔ b́o yo*  
 N V N CLF V Pnf V ADV DEM  
 Pukkeh see tree long go.back and 3=order thus this  
 ‘Pukkeh watched the tree fall and **he** said this’ (Pukkeh.115)

26) *cə=ɔbof́bo lé cə=dɔ phúxe b́o yo*  
 V.Elabor Pnf V N ADV DEM  
 3=call.meeting and 3=order Pukkeh thus this  
 ‘**they** called a meeting and **they** told Pukkeh this,’ (Pukkeh.095)

Indefinite pronouns in Bwe are created via a repetition of the number classifier phrase as shown in example (27).

27) *də mi də mi*  
 NUM CLF NUM CLF  
 one thing one thing  
 ‘anything’ (Journey.020)

Reflexive pronouns are created by adding the word ‘self’ *ne* after the pronoun, as in example (28). The third person inanimate pronoun is created with the relationship clitic *ə* and ‘self’ *ne*, as shown in example (29).

28) *dú mi jə=hvdá la jə= ne*  
 P V V V PRN  
 when BE 3=pledge descend 3=self  
 ‘when they had pledged themselves’ (Pukkeh.172)

29) *kəb́s tə be nu catha we*  
 N NUM CLF Pnf V V  
 ship one flat NU start bustle

*ə=ne yàkhɔ yàkhɔ dɔ lɔ*  
 PRN ADV ADV Pf Pf  
 self back.forth back.forth thus DECL

‘The boat itself began to roll from side to side.’ (Journey.129)



### 2.5.3 Locational Prepositions

There are two primary locational prepositions in Bwe: *dó* and *chí*. Both of these prepositions mark subordinated noun phrases or relative clauses. The preposition *dó* is extremely broad and therefore carries almost no specific semantic content.

- 30) *cə= bε ge tha gé pwá pwá dó m̀k̀ho l*  
 PRN AuxV V V ADV ADV ADV LOC N Pf  
 3 should go.back rise again quickly quickly LOC sky DECL

‘She really must return to heaven at once.’ (Pukkeh.177)

- 31) *jə= tha dó əkhí*  
 V LOC N  
 3 = rise LOC top

‘She climbed to the top.’ (Pukkeh.179)

The locational preposition *chí* carries the semantic meaning ‘toward’.

- 32) *phúxe ca*  
 N V  
 Pukkeh see

*chí jə=wé bwe nu əm̀̀dom̀̀ká tə̀̀widə́í nɔ*  
 LOC N CLF Pnf N.Elab V.Elab P  
 toward 3=o.sibling person NU face not.pleased NEG

‘Pukkeh looked at his sister and saw on her face that she was not pleased.’ (Pukkeh.067)

There are several additional locational adpositions in Bwe. The particle *bé* is a phrase final particle occurring before the demonstrative and giving the semantic meaning of ‘while, when, during the time that’ to the prepositional phrase marked with *dó*. It can be combined with the question particle *lè* to mean ‘where’. It is also used in constructions with only the demonstrative to indicate ‘here’ and ‘there’. When *bé* is in a subordinated construction, it is usually the locational preposition *dó* that is the subordinator. This pattern is exemplified in (33) and (34).

33) *bəya mɛdɛ pho dɔ́ kəbɔ́ θəne bɛ́ nu*  
 N V N LOC N N LOC Pnf  
 person work child LOC ship station LOC NU

*də là nu mi bəya sudan pho l.*  
 NUM CLF Pnf V N Name N Pf  
 one several NU BE person Sudan child DECL

‘The labourers on the jetty were Sudanese.’ (Journey.076)

34) *gə=mí thv θódrɔ́ cɛ*  
 P V ADV PRN  
 1PL=if measure side.by.side 3

*lé dɛbwɪdɛfɛ́ dɔ́ london bɛ́ yo nu,*  
 Pnf N.Elab LOC Name LOC DEM Pnf  
 with prices LOC London LOC this NU

‘If we compared them with the prices here in London.’ (Journey.083)

Another locational preposition used in Bwe is *có*. It carries a semantic meaning of ‘there’ and usually occurs with a verb of movement like ‘go’ *le*.

35) *kəbɔ́ dɔ́ bɛ nu catha le nù có pale bú l.*  
 N V CLF Pnf V V V LOC N LOC Pf  
 ship big flat NU start go enter LOC sea in DECL

‘The big ship began to move toward the sea.’ (Journey.011)

36) *lé kə=dɔ́ tha mɔ́toká có bristol l.*  
 Pnf V V N LOC Name Pf  
 and 1PL=ride rise car LOC Bristol DECL

‘and we took a taxi to Bristol.’ (Journey.149)

The final locational preposition, *ba*, appears to have many elements that would lend themselves to an adverbial of time clause. It carries a semantic meaning of ‘other side’ but is used in clauses where the ‘other side’ being spoken of is in reference to a particular time of day or an event that takes a certain amount of time.

37) *ləmu chi khle ba yé narı də khó*  
 N V V LOC NUM CLF NUM CLF  
 sun overhead shoot other.side five hour one half

*kəbó hε tha gəđó dó port sudan l.*  
 N V V ADV LOC Name Name Pf  
 ship walk rise again LOC Port Sudan DECL

‘The boat started to leave Port Sudan again at half past five in the evening.’ (Journey.086)

38) *baya fı ε ba ε wá*  
 N V V LOC V AuxV  
 person rummage search other.side search COMPL

*gə = dephodeli nu*  
 N.Elab Pnf  
 1PL = possessions NU

‘When the person had finished searching our possessions,’ (Journey.147)

## 2.5.4 Numerals and Quantifiers

Like other Karen languages, Bwe has two number systems: a decimal system and a pair system. In the decimal system, numbers one through ten have unique forms. The numbers from eleven to nineteen are made with ten and one etc., twenty through ninety being two and ten etc., and the numbers in between following a pattern of two and ten and one etc.

**Table 5: Bwe Numerals**

-	‘zero’		<i>yé</i>	‘five’
<i>də/ tə</i>	‘one’		<i>xú</i>	‘six’
<i>kí</i>	‘two’		<i>nwé</i>	‘seven’
<i>θó/ θó</i>	‘three’		<i>xɔ</i>	‘eight’
<i>lú/ lwí</i>	‘four’		<i>khwi</i>	‘nine’

<i>ʃí</i>	‘ten’	<i>ʃí lú θu</i>	‘eighteen’	-	‘sixty’
<i>ʃí tə</i>	‘eleven’	<i>ʃí lú θu</i>	‘nineteen’	<i>nwé ʃí</i>	‘seventy’
		<i>də</i>			
<i>ʃí kí</i>	‘twelve’	<i>kí ʃí</i>	‘twenty’	-	‘eighty’
<i>ʃí θó</i>	‘thirteen’	<i>kí ʃí yé</i>	‘twenty-five’	-	‘ninety’
<i>ʃí lú</i>	‘fourteen’	<i>kí ʃí xú</i>	‘twenty-six’	<i>gəye ɔ</i>	‘hundreds’
<i>ʃí yé</i>	‘fifteen’	<i>θó ʃí yé</i>	‘thirty-five’	<i>də gəye yé</i>	‘one hundred fifty’
				<i>ʃí</i>	
<i>ʃí θó θu</i>	‘sixteen’	<i>lú ʃí</i>	‘forty’	<i>də gəthó</i>	‘one thousand’
-	‘seventeen’	<i>yé ʃí</i>	‘fifty’	<i>də gəthó</i>	‘one thousand
				<i>khwí gəye</i>	nine hundred
				<i>lú ʃí yé</i>	forty-five’

In the texts, the pair system is preferred in story-telling. For example, the number ‘six’ has its own unique form, *xú*. However, when it is used as part of an approximate number or when telling someone’s age, it is preferred to use ‘three pair’ *θó θu* to indicate ‘six’ rather than the unique number for ‘six’.

39) *gə = hε*    *tha*   *dó*    *port*    *said*    *ɔ*  
V            V    LOC   Name   Name   V  
1PL = walk   rise   LOC   Port   Said   EXIST

*yé*    *θé*    *θó*    *θu*    *nu*,  
NUM   CLF   NUM   CLF   Pnf  
five   day   three   pair   NU

‘Five or six days after leaving Port Said,’ (Journey.120)

- 40) *yə=ɔ ə=de θó fí θó θu bá l*  
 V N NUM NUM NUM CLF Pf Pf  
 1S=EXIST year three ten three pair COMPL DECL  
 'I am thirty-six years old.' (Interview.004)

It should also be noted that there is a slight change of vowel when 'six' is being indicated in the 'three pair' form. The common form of 'three' is *θó* and *θó* is only found in these elaborate number constructions, though the common form is also used for the elaborate constructions.

In addition to 'six' being communicated in this elaborate system, this corpus provides evidence of 'seven' (41), 'eight' (42), 'sixteen' (43), 'eighteen' (43), and 'nineteen' (44) being stated this way as well. It is possible that 'nine' and 'seventeen' also have the possibility of being communicated via the elaborate number system; however, there are no examples of it in these texts. The possibility also exists that any number having 'six', 'seven', 'eight', or 'nine' in the number could be expressed using this system. It seems equally likely that all of these numbers could be expressed using their common forms instead of 'three pairs' or 'four pairs'. It is a reasonable hypothesis that the elaborate form of these numbers is a tool used to indicate prominence. Elaborate numbers are used most often for communicating the age of a person, though they are also used to indicate the number of grains of rice, how many elephants a person has, numbering of days, and the date of a child's birth.

- 41) *nə=mí mɛ hú θó θu də mé nɔ*  
 P V N NUM CLF NUM CLF P  
 2S=if make h.rice three pair one round NEG  
 'If you put just seven grains it will be plenty!' (Pukheh.082)

- 42) *yə=gəfá ɔ ədó lwí θu l*  
 N V CLF NUM CLF Pf  
 1S=elephant EXIST animal four pair DECL  
 'I have eight elephants.' (Interview.032)

43) *ə̀bò mú dɛ ɔ fí θɔ́ θu,*  
 N Pv V NUM NUM CLF  
 female if EXIST ten three pair

*lé ə̀bò khó dɛ ɔ fí lwí θu, kí fí nu,*  
 Pnf N Pv V NUM NUM CLF NUM NUM Pnf  
 with male if EXIST ten four pair two ten NU

*cə = calecakle ja l.*  
 V.Elaborate V Pf  
 3 = marry able DECL

‘A girl may marry when she is sixteen years old, and a boy when he is eighteen or twenty.’ (Marriage.007)

44) *gə = phomu ə = do na mɔ́ nika ɔ́ phle*  
 N V VOC Name V  
 1PL = daughter 3 = big Ms. Monica born

*dó mu θó ni, màfa fí lwí θu də́ θé,*  
 LOC N NUM CLF Name NUM NUM CLF NUM CLF  
 LOC day three day March ten four pair one day

‘Our elder daughter, Naw Monica, was born on Wednesday, the 19<sup>th</sup> of March,’ (Myself.246)

The phonological variation with the number ‘three’, as seen in example (41), is present in the elaborate construction for ‘seven’, as it was for ‘six’. It appears to be in free variation rather than having any significant semantic or grammatical difference because of the phonological change.

## 2.5.5 Classifiers

Numeral classifiers are words which categorize the noun based on properties which are considered to be salient (Aikhenvald 2000:2). The classifier in Bwe can be a noun phrase and a classifier with no number, or a classifier and any quantifier word or number. Numbers and quantifiers cannot co-occur.



First and second person pronouns are also used to indicate possession. In these cases, the possessive pronoun is cliticized as shown in examples (49) and (50).

49) *yə = gəlb*  
N  
1S = granary  
'my granary' (HillCulti.031)

50) *nə = thɔ*  
N  
2S = pig  
'your pig' (HillCulti.042)

## 2.6 Operators

A description of the operators are included as an aspect of Bwe syntax because they are used as markers of the clause. These particles will be useful in determining the clause breaks, the boundaries for the verb phrase, and what is part of the serial verb construction.

### 2.6.1 Illocutionary force

Illocutionary force is a broad term used to indicate the speaker's attitude toward their utterance (Bussman 1996:537). There are three types of illocutionary force marked by particles in Bwe: declarative, assertive, and interrogative.

#### 2.6.1.1 Declarative

Sentences marked with a declarative particle are those that are primarily intended to provide information. Declarative sentences are considered to be the base form of sentences in a language, against which all other structures are compared (Bussman 1996:227).

In Bwe, declarative illocutionary force is indicated in two ways: a clause final particle that marks the main clause, and a dependent clause marker. These strategies are used with the large majority of declarative utterances and they are the last particles when they occur with other particles, though when the dependent clause marker occurs with the clause final marker, the clause final marker is ultimate.



The declarative clause final particle *lɔ* typically occurs as the only clause final marker (51), but there are examples of the declarative clause final marker with the negative (52), irrealis (53), exclamation (54), and completive (55) clause final particles. This particle is an utterance marker at the discourse level. It does not mark any other clause type except for completed main clauses.

51) *lé gə=dɛ khɔwe do thé də mí lɔ.*  
 Pnf N N Pf QNTY NUM CLF Pf  
 and 1PL=thing sin thus so.much one numerous DECL  
 ‘and our sins are numerous.’ (Prayer.018)

52) *lākho əkho yo dɛ ɔ θámú də ja*  
 N N DEM N V V ADV V  
 earth top this thing EXIST alive NEG able

*də mi də mi nɔ lɔ.*  
 NUM CLF NUM CLF P Pf  
 one thing one thing NEG DECL  
 ‘Nothing could live on the earth.’ (Air.004)

53) *jə=khó na go na hɛ phlɔmí gà*  
 AuxV V V V V ADV V  
 3=IRR command drive.away command walk aside must

*bé lɔ*  
 Pf Pf  
 IRR DECL  
 ‘he will drive you away’ (Tug.064)

54) *lé phó gəró ɔ ku də gá əkhwəcé*  
 Pnf N N V ADV NUM CLF N.Elab  
 and flower compound EXIST together/also one a.lot reason

*nu kə=ca ce mə jɔ l.*  
 Pnf V PRN V Pf Pf  
 NU 1PL=see 3 pleasant EXCL DECL

‘and they had flower-gardens, and so we enjoyed looking at them.’  
 (Myself.070)

55) *i θawì ye ó bá l*  
 EXCL V PRN ADV Pf Pf  
 yes famished 1S very COMPL DECL

‘Yes, I am feeling very hungry.’ (Interview.034)

The particle *nu* acts as dependent clause marker, occurring at the end of subordinated clauses and before the final particle *l*. The structure *nu l* is a calque from the Sgaw Bible which is used in Protestant Bwe churches.

56) *mí jú ɔ wá ce nu,*  
 P V V V PRN Pnf  
 if enough drink finished 3 NU

*jə=khó fólò pwəcé cə=é l*  
 AuxV V ADV N Pf  
 3=IRR play certainly 3=own DECL

‘When he’s had enough, he’ll play happily by himself.’ (Baby.019)

57) *wá bəya la pwi ce dú əplemùpleplə nu l*  
 V N V V PRN P V.Elab Pnf Pf  
 finished person descend beat 3 when crush NU DECL

‘they beat them until they are reduced to pulp.’ (Baskets.208)

### 2.6.1.2 Assertive

The assertive particle in Bwe carries a semantic overtone of trying to convince the hearer over to the speaker’s opinion; to agree with or act upon the claim of the

speaker. There are two ways for the Bwe speaker to mark an utterance for assertion: a clause final particle and a post-verbal particle.

The assertive clause final particle *ni* rarely occurs with other clause final particles. It usually occurs with the same distribution as the declarative particle. This particle can also occur after the topic as well. Examples (58) and (59) exemplify the most common manifestations of this assertive particle.

58) *gə = hε      mɛθu              a      pwə́é      chí*  
 V                  V                          V      ADV      N  
 1PL=walk drain                  eat      certainly water

*dó    l̀̀phol̀̀jɔ              cɔ    nu    əbú    ni.*  
 LOC N.Elab              CLF Pnf LOC P  
 LOC small.streams some NU in    ASSERT

‘We do dry up the water in the smaller streams.’ (Baskets.160)

59) *gəli                  nu    ni                  dε    də    mi    d́ó*  
 N                      Pnf P                  N      NUM CLF P  
 air                    NU ASSERT thing one thing for

*kə = tə              ábwɪ    bε                  nɔ*  
 ADV                  V      V                  P  
 1PL=NEG buy should NEG

‘Air is something we do not have to pay for,’ (Air.001)

The post-verbal particle of assertion *θé* does not necessarily occur with the clause final particle of assertion *ni*. It is used to mark assertion on the verb, whereas *ni* is used to mark assertion on the clause as a whole. About half of the examples in this corpus show the post-verbal particle of assertion *θé* occurring with the clause final particle *ni*, as in example (60) and about half with only the verbal particle, as in example (61).

60) *dε*                      *ə = cəbla*              *wè*  
 N                              V                              Pf  
 thing                        3 = hang                      IMPat

*dó*   *hidu*              *əɔ*    *bé*    *nu*    *mé*    *nu*  
 LOC N                N        LOC    DEM    CLF    Pnf  
 LOC housepost    upper    LOC    that    round    NU

*mɪ*    **θÉ**              *wùdo*   *pho*    *tə*    *kɪ*    *nɪ*  
 V    P                N        V        NUM    CLF    P  
 BE    ASSERT    basket    small    one    little    ASSERT

‘That one on the post over there is a little “wudo”.’ (Basket.057)

61) *yə = mɛl̀*    **θÉ**              *cε*    *dó*    *wè*  
 V                      P                      PRN    Pf    Pf  
 1S = request    ASSERT    3S    thus    IMPat  
 ‘I told them so quite plainly.’ (MrLazy.023)

### 2.6.1.3 Interrogative

The interrogatives in these texts are as follows:

**Table 6: Interrogatives**

who	<i>bwá</i>
what	<i>má</i>
why	<i>βemánɔ</i>
where	<i>βé lè</i> (literally, ‘LOC INTER’)
when	<i>dú</i> (P) <i>kha</i> (Pnf) <i>kó</i> (ADV) <i>phé</i> (P)
how many	<i>bwé</i> (years, animals, long, baskets) <i>bó</i> (people)

The four examples of ‘when’ listed above are not seen in question from anywhere in the texts. They are primarily used in adverbial of time phrases. Interrogatives do not show syntactic movement caused by the question word.

Interrogative question particles are the most common way to create polar questions in languages, aside from intonation (Payne 1997:389). In Bwe there are five different interrogative clause final particles that mark an utterance as a question. Of those five interrogative particles, only one marks a polar question.

### 2.6.1.3.1 Polar interrogative

The question particle *a* can be used in three ways. First, and most common, it is used to mark yes/no questions. There is no evidence in this text of variation in the syntax to mark a yes/no question, only the addition of the question particle *a*.

- 62) *nə=phú*            *ɔ*        *dó* *hi*        *a*  
       N                    V        LOC N        P  
       2S = grandfather EXIST LOC home INTER  
       ‘Is your grandfather at home?’ (HillCulti.001)

The second way that this interrogative particle is used is to mark either/or questions, as a subtype of yes/no questions. In this case, the particle is located after each of the two clauses that are being contrasted.

- 63) *θí*    *pwa*    *phá*        *dó*    *hi*        *əkáχɪ*    *a*  
       PRN V     N        LOC N     N        P  
       2P    build granary LOC home vicinity INTER

*mí də*    *mɪ nɔ*    *dó*    *huklébú*    *lɔ*        *a*  
       P    ADV V    P     LOC N        ADV P  
       if NEG BE NEG LOC farm     only INTER

‘Do you build your granaries in the village or in the fields?’  
 (Conversation.122)

Finally, this interrogative particle can be used to mark conditional clauses.

64) *nə = mí də ge nɔ nu a,*  
 P ADV V P Pnf P  
 2S = if NEG go.back NEG NU COND

*yə = khó fe θí nɛ lé θóbá lɔ*  
 AuxV V V PRN Pnf N Pf  
 1S = IRR pound die 2S with spear DECL

‘If you don’t leave at once, I shall kill you with my spear.’ (Tugleba.103, 104)

65) *kə = dé mɛ θí ní cɛ nu a*  
 P V V AuxV PRN Pnf P  
 1PL = if make die able.to 3 NU COND

*gə = ní bɛ əθochí lɔ*  
 V AuxV N Pf  
 1PL = get should gall.bladder DECL

‘If we kill it, we can get it’s gallbladder.’ (Rhinoceros.053)

### 2.6.1.3.2 Content question interrogative particles

There are three interrogative particles in Bwe that occur in content questions. Two of these particles are quite common, *lè* and *nɔ*. The particle *nɔ* is nearly always present in sentences that have the question words ‘what/which’ *má*, ‘who’ *bwá*, ‘how many’ *bó*, and ‘how many’ *bwé* as shown in examples (66) through (69).

66) *dɛ ladùlafá mi nu mi má nɔ.*  
 N V.Elabor CLF Pnf V N Pf  
 thing strange thing NU BE **what** **INTER**

‘What is this strange thing?’ (Rhinoceros.039)

67) *dɛ dɛ yo əkhó mɛ klɪ mi bwá nɔ*  
 N N DEM AuxV V N V N Pf  
 thing year this 3 = IRR make thorny.creeper BE **who** **INTER**

‘Who is responsible for the poisoning this year?’ (Basket.187)

68) *wùdo də mé də mé nu na ní b̀̀*  
 N NUM CLF NUM CLF Pnf V AuxV Pnf  
 basket one round one round NU hold able.to just

*b̀u bó ta nɔ*  
 N QNTY CLF Pf  
 p.rice **how.many** basket **INTER**

‘How many measures of paddy will each “wudo” hold?’ (Basket.050)

69) *nə=ɔ bwé de bá nɔ*  
 V QNTY N Pf Pf  
 2S=EXIST **how.many** year COMPL **INTER**

‘How old are you?’ (Interview.003)

The interrogative particle *l̀̀*, in contrast, does not require a question word to be in the preceding clause. The semantics of the particle itself carries the meaning of ‘how’. This particle is also commonly associated with locative phrases. When there is a locative phrase preceding this particle, it carries the meaning ‘where’. This particle also occurs in questions of time with ‘when’ *kɔ́*.

70) *nə=leca làkho nu nə=ca ce əbú l̀̀.*  
 V N Pnf PRN PRN N Pf  
 2S=go.select earth NU 2S=see 3 thus **INTER**

‘When you go and select land, how do you do it?’ (Conversation.039)

71) *de de yo bəya thé b́́ l̀̀*  
 P N DEM N V LOC Pf  
 LOC year this person clear.land LOC **INTER**

‘This year, where are the people clearing the land for sowing?’  
 (HillCulti.003)

72) *nə=khó le gédɔ́ kɔ́ l̀̀*  
 AuxV V ADV ADV Pf  
 2S=IRR go again when **INTER**

‘When will you be going again?’ (Interview.041)

The last interrogative particle that is connected to question words is *nɛ*. There are only five examples of this question particle in this data set. This particle only occurs in questions with ‘what’ in them.

- 73) *dɛ əladùlafá ɔ má bɔ yo də mi nɛ.*  
 N V.Elab V N ADV DEM NUM CLF Pf  
 thing strange EXIST what thus this one thing INTER  
 ‘How does a strange thing like this come to be here?’ (Rhinceros.003)

### 2.6.1.3.3 Tag Questions

Certain interrogative particles can be combined to form other interrogative structures. The interrogative particles *nɔ* and *a* can be put together to form tag questions.

- 74) *ɔ nu mi dákú tə bɛ, nɔ a.*  
 V Pnf V N NUM CLF Pf P  
 EXIST NU BE winnowing.tray one flat INTER INTER  
 ‘That is a “daku”, isn’t it?’ (Baskets.118)

There is also a modal interrogative particle *nó* that can occur in polar questions and can add an element of surprise. According to Henderson’s dictionary, this word may be a shortened form of *nəhó*, which has a gloss of ‘certainly or really’ (1997, vol II:263, 267).

- 75) *mi a θáθáɛ, nó a*  
 N V ADV.Elabor Pf P  
 fire eat properly INTER INTER  
 ‘The fire burned everything up, right?’ (HillCulti.010)

### 2.6.1.3.4 Question particle reduplication

It is also possible for the interrogative particle to be reduplicated. There are examples of reduplication for the polar particle *nɔ* (76) and ‘where’ *bé lè* (77) for emphasis.



76) *nə=le b̀ d́ ch́b́úch́ígì lé nə=pua b̀*  
 V P LOC N Pnf V P  
 2S=go just LOC stream and 2S=catch.food just

*dphodà pho tə b́ b́ nə nə nə*  
 N V NUM CLF CLF P P P  
 fish small one long long INTER INTER INTER

‘Why don’t you go to the river and catch some fish?’ (MrLazy.006)

77) *əkhwəcé nu, yə=he b́ l̀ b́ l̀ wá wá,*  
 N.Elab Pnf V LOC Pf LOC Pf V V  
 reason NU 1S=walk LOC INTER LOC INTER finished finished  
 ‘For this reason, **wherever** I end up,’ (Myself.024)

## 2.6.2 Irrealis

Irrealis markers indicate that the speaker is projecting a possible future. As with most illocutionary force markers in Bwe, there are two ways to mark for irrealis: a phrase final particle *b́* and a pre-verbal particle *g̀*.

The phrase final irrealis marker usually occurs clause finally with the auxiliary verb occurring in the previous clause (78). However, it can also occur in adverb of time phrases without the pre-verbal particle (79).

78) *θ́rídokha d́ nu g̀ yà θ́ l̀ ce b́.*  
 N CLF DEM AuxV V V Vv PRN P  
 rhinoceros animal that PROB step.on die finished 3S IRR

‘The rhinoceros might trample them to death.’ (rhinoceros.047)

79) *o kɔ məhɔ bé*  
 VOC ADV N Pf  
 Oh when morning IRR

*cɔ ko dɔ jə phí dɔ*  
 VOC V V PRN N P  
 Mr. lazy order 3 grandmother thus

“Oh well, maybe tomorrow.” Mr. Lazy told his grandmother.’  
 (MrLazy.032)

### 2.6.3 Modal

The modal particles in Bwe are those that are used to emphasize and identify the speaker’s feelings about the event. There are five categories of modal particles exemplified in this data set: reproach, doubt, mirative, exclamation, impatience, and disappointment.

The particles of reproach *mɪ* and doubt *mɔ* occur clause finally and do not occur with any of the other modal clause final particles. Examples (80) and (81) show typical examples of these particles.

80) *dɛ əbú palú pho tə be nu mɪ*  
 N ADV N V NUM CLF Pnf Pf  
 thing thus basket small one flat NU REPROACH

*kə=í khálɔ nɛ wá nɪ*  
 V ADV PRN AuxV P  
 1PL=give vain 2S COMPL ASSERT

‘A small thing like a “palu”, we’ll let you have it for nothing.’  
 (Baskets.031, .032)

81) *bəya thé bɛ gà cɛ kí bwɛ θó bwɛ mɔ.*  
 N V V V PRN NUM CLF NUM CLF P  
 person weave should must 3 two person three person doubt

‘It should have to take two or three people to weave it.’ (Baskets.081)

There are three mirative particles in Bwe that are responsible for marking exclamation or surprise. The exclamatory particle *dɔ́* is clause final, as examples (82) and (83) show.

82) *ɔ́ dǐ dɔ́ nɛ nu dɔ́*  
 V ADV Pf PRN Pnf Pf  
 EXIST still EXCL 2S NU EXCL

‘You’re still here!!’ (Anger.003)

83) *jə=hɛ bɔ́ ja thó dɔ́*  
 V V V AuxV Pf  
 3=walk crawl able PERF EXCL

‘He has just learnt to walk’ (Baby.002)

The two verbal particles of surprise occur in interrogative clauses. Both occur after the verb and often after any adverbs that are modifying the verb phrase. The particles have slightly different semantic meanings: *cádɔ́* indicates surprise with wonder, whereas *bádɔ́* is used for surprise with insistence. It might also be noted that these particles of surprise are compounds with the exclamatory particle. Examples (84) and (85) show typical occurrences of each particle.

84) *dɛ ə=ɔ́ dɔ́ jəgle kho də là nu*  
 N V LOC N N NUM CLF Pnf  
 thing 3=EXIST LOC rafter top one several NU

*mɪ cádɔ́ má nɔ́*  
 V P N Pf  
 BE surprise what INTER

‘What are those things up in the rafters?’ (Basket.058)

85) *θí cále bádɔ́ pédópéfa əbú lè*  
 PRN V P N.Elav ADV Pf  
 2P look.for surprise money thus INTER

‘How do you earn money?’ (Conversation.135)

The particle indicating impatience *wè* is typically used clause finally as in (86) and (87).

86) *kə=βε leca θá làkho wè*  
 AuxV V ADV N Pf  
 1PL=should go.select truly earth IMPat  
 ‘But of course we have to select the plot.’ (Conversation.020)

87) *də ə=cəkwa wè əne dó thára əlβ mé nu dʒ.*  
 NUM V P PRN LOC N N CLF Pnf Pf  
 one 3=hang IMPat self LOC wall upper round NU EXCL  
 ‘The one hanging on the wall.’ (Baskets.088)

The corpus only provides four examples of the particle indicating disappointment *có*. All of the examples occur in one text. The observations made here about this particle are tentative at best. Three of the four examples occur after the verb phrase, and half of the examples are clause final and in an interrogative clause. Example (88) shows an interrogative clause with the particle of disappointment occurring after the verb.

88) *mɪ jə=le có* *le*  
 V V ILL.F Pf  
 BE 3=go disappointment INTER  
 ‘Where did she go?’(Anger.011)

## 2.7 Summary

The above chapter provides an overview of the typological features of Bwe. The word order, clause types, and noun phrases of Bwe are described and exemplified in its syntactic forms, and the operators are identified.

The purpose of providing this information is to better understand the arguments of the verbs so that the serial verb construction can be appropriately analyzed and described using Aikhenvald’s methodology. Noun phrases provide the arguments for verb phrases, and their structures and constituency should be understood before attempting to recognize the syntactic and semantic processes of the serial verb construction.

## Chapter 3

# The Verb Phase

### 3.1 Introduction

The basic structure of a verb phrase is particularly important to this analysis. This set of texts suggests that SVCs are far more common than other verbal constructions in Bwe; however, a brief look at simple verb phrases with identification of aspect, modality, and polarity will help differentiate between SVCs and other multi-word verb phrases. This chapter will identify verbal auxiliaries of aspect and modality, note the reduplicative and elaborate tendencies of Bwe, as well as identify several other particles of verbal modification that will be helpful for determining what is part of the SVC. Typical verb negation will also be described. This is not a comprehensive analysis of all the verb structures in Bwe, but intended to be useful in determining what meets the criteria of being a SVC and what does not.

### 3.2 Verb classes

The categorization of serial verb constructions in Bwe according to Aikhenvald's criteria of symmetry is dependent upon identification of open and closed class verb categories. The determination of what makes a verb open or closed class is based upon their distribution in the languages and informed by their semantics.

#### 3.2.1 Open class verbs

An open class verb is one that has little to distribution restrictions. It follows the main semantic patterns in the language. Semantically, an open class verb will have very few restrictions on what kinds of constructions are possible, and those restrictions are only limited to common human experience and the creativity of the speaker.

#### 3.2.2 Closed class verbs

Closed class verbs have different distribution in the language from open class verbs. The distribution of a closed class verb can usually be described as a semantic

category, and they can be used in the noun phrase as modification without syntactic subordination. In Bwe, there are three main semantic categories of closed class verbs: stative, direction and orientation, and manner.

### 3.2.2.1 Proof of the verbhood of close classed verbs

One of the main ways to test a word to see if it patterns as a verb is to see if they can be negated in the same way that main verbs can be negated. The following example shows a stative verb being negated with the same syntactic pattern as most main verbs; namely, being preceded by the negator and having the negative clause final particle at the end of each clause. The verbal status is strengthened by the fact that there are no other verbs in this clause (89).

89)	<i>lápó</i>	<i>də</i>	<i>ʃu</i>	<i>ku</i>	<i>nɔ</i>	<i>lɔ</i>
	N	ADV	V	ADV	P	Pf
	waves	NEG	strong	together/also	NEG	DECL
	‘the waves were also not strong. (Journey.031)					

The main difference between closed class verbs and open class verbs in Bwe is that they can occur as subordinated to a noun with or without a subordinator, whereas open class verbs in Bwe must be subordinated to the noun to modify it. Example (90) shows a stative verb ‘big’ *dó* modifying the noun with the subordinating clitic *ə*, and in example (91) we can see the same stative verb modifying the noun without a subordinator. Similarly, (92) shows a direction verb modifying a noun with no subordinator, and (93) provides an example of a phrase with a manner verb and a stative verb acting adjectival with no subordination..

90)	<i>əbú</i>	<i>wùdo</i>	<i>ə = dó</i>	<i>ə = ʃi</i>	<i>ɔ</i>	<i>əkhó</i>	<i>nu</i>
	ADV	N	V	V	V	P	Pnf
	thus	wudo	3 = big	3 = little	EXIST	according.to	NU

<i>náθo</i>	<i>ə = dó</i>	<i>ə = ʃi</i>	<i>ku</i>	<i>lɔ</i>
N	V	V	ADV	Pf
natho	3 = big	3 = little	together/also	DECL

‘So, there are “wudos” that are big and small, just like there are “nathos” that are big and small.’ (Basket.093)

91) *mí*            *mɪ*    *l̩*        ***dɔ***    *cɔ*    *nu*  
 P                V        N        V        CLF   Pnf  
 if                BE        stream big    some NU

*gə=me*        *láθi*    *cɛ*    *də*    *ja*    *ɛ*        *no*  
 V                V        PRN ADV V        ADV    P  
 1PL=make drain 3        NEG able INTNS NEG

‘If it is a big stream, we cannot drain it.’ (Basket.161)

92) *jə=lɔ*        *ba*        *áθáwù* *bəya*    *lé*        *gwe*    ***tha***    *hi*        *lɔ*.  
 V                ADV    V        N        Pnf    N        V        N        Pf  
 3=reach across snatch person with horn rise home DECL

‘They try to steal the horn from the person who blew it.’ (Marriage.168)

93) *də*    *bu*    *dó*    *wɛ*    ***bɛ***        *gəli*    ***wɪ***  
 NUM CLF P        N        V        N        V  
 one place REL rain correct air good

‘the place where the rain is just right and the air is clean’ (Myself.020)

Example (94) is a typical example of a main verb being used to modify a noun with a subordinator

94) *cubáphocubáɟɛ* *dó*    ***ə=wi***    *dó*    *mɔ̀kho*    *tə*        *cɔ*        *nu*  
 N.Elabor            P        V        LOC N        NUM CLF Pnf  
 birds                REL 3=fly LOC sky        one    some that

‘birds that fly in the sky’ (Air.008)

It should also be noted here that the manner verbs in Bwe should not be confused with the manner category of symmetric verbs proposed by Aikhenvald. Despite having the same name, the semantic manner verbs are part of the asymmetric category of event argument. Manner verbs in Bwe are a closed class, and therefore asymmetric. Manner as a semantic feature of an asymmetric category is further discussed in 4.4.2.3, and additional information about the symmetric counterpart of manner as a SVC category can be found in 4.4.1.3.

### 3.3 Aspect

Aspect markers place an utterance in time and context, with special emphasis on the boundaries of the event (Sasse 2006:535). There are two aspects marked in the Bwe verb phrase: completive and perfective.

#### 3.3.1 Completive

The completive is an aspect that emphasizes the end phase of the event indicates its accomplishment, or completeness (Sasse 2006:535). The completive aspect auxiliary *wá* in Bwe can occur in two places. Most commonly it occurs as the final element of the verb phrase; however, it can also occur clause finally as part of a subordinated clause or the main clause.

- 95) *kə = a      wá      gə = ʃε*  
V            AuxV    N  
1PL = eat    COMPL    1PL = food  
'We finished eating our food.' (Journey.153)

- 96) *yə = wɛ̀bá                      də      wá,*  
V                                    N        P  
1S = sweep/winnow    thing    COMPL

- yə = cu    bε            chí      wá*  
V        V            N        P  
1S = pull    undergo    water    COMPL  
'I swept, then I mopped' (Myself.133)

#### 3.3.2 Perfect

The perfect marker *thó* emphasizes the beginning and ending point of the event (Sasse 2006:535). The perfect auxiliary in Bwe, according to this data set, always occurs as the final syllable in the verb phrase. It, like the completive, may also occur clause finally. It is interesting to note that it may not occur in the clause final position if it is not also in the verb phrase, whereas the completive may only occur clause finally and not in the verb phrase.



97) *bəya do thó dó huklébú*  
 N V AuxV LOC N  
 person reach PERF LOC farm

‘They have now arrived at the farm.’ (HillCulti.041)

98) *jə=le khu thó kl tə cə thó*  
 V V AuxV N NUM CLF P  
 3=go dibble PERF thorny.creeper one some PERF

‘They have already gone to dig the poison roots.’ (Baskets.189)

### 3.4 Modality

Modality is the marking of verbs along the axes of possibility and necessity (Auwera and Plungian 1998:80). There are four possible domains of modality:

- 1) participant internal, which is what someone feels they need to do to function at their best;
- 2) participant external, a state of affairs that is possible to endure out of necessity;
- 3) deontic, when a person of authority has enabled or commanded something;
- 4) and epistemic, which is the likelihood that the speaker gives to the possibility that something has occurred (Auwera and Plungian 1998:80).

There are five modal auxiliaries in Bwe that exemplify three of the above categories: one participant external, two deontic, and two epistemic.

#### 3.4.1 Participant External

The first examples of modal verbs found in Bwe are participant external, or indicative of ability. There are three different verbs for indicating ability in Bwe: one main verb, one specialized verb, and one auxiliary verb. The main verb *ja*, shown in example (99) has the same distribution as an open class verb. The specialized verb *kε* occurs almost exclusively with the directional ‘rise’ *tha*. There are only four examples of *kε* occurring in this data set without being immediately followed by ‘rise’ *tha*. The typical use of *kε* is exemplified below in example (100). Finally, the auxiliary of ability, ‘can’ *ní*, is marked as the auxiliary because it is always verb phrase final and it never occurs as the only verb in a clause, as shown in example (101).

99) *nə=u*      *cε*    *ja*                      *nə=ʃi*  
 V              PRN V                      V  
 2S = carry 3      able                      2S = sling.over.shoulder

*cε*    *ja*    *kʊ*                      *lɔ*  
 PRN V    ADV                      Pf  
 3      able together/also DECL

‘You can carry it over your shoulder, also.’ (Basket.092)

100) *gə=le-gə=ge*                      *gú*    *ni*    *ni*      *əbú*    *nu*  
 V    NUM CLF CLF    ADV Pnf  
 1PL = go-1PL = go.back every day day    thus NU

*tə*    *kε*    *tha*    *ε*                      *nɔ*  
 ADV V    V    ADV    P  
 NEG able rise INTNS NEG

‘We aren’t able to go and come back every day,’ (Conversation.111)

101) *cə=ca*    *ní*              *dó*    *ə=θomɔθawɪ*  
 V              AuxV    LOC V.Elab  
 3 = see able.to LOC 3 = good.natured

‘He is able to look for someone who is good natured.’ (Marriage.040)

### 3.4.2 Deontic

The deontic category of auxiliary modality is a subcategory of participant external; it indicates that there is a force, usually an authority figure, that compels the action (Auwera and Plungian 1998:81). There are two deontic modal verbs in Bwe: ‘should’ *bε* and ‘must’ *gà*.

#### 3.4.2.1 ‘Should’ *bε*

The modal auxiliary verb ‘should’ *bε* in Bwe is most often found first or last in the verb phrase. This corpus shows an even number of examples where ‘should’ *bε* is primary in the verb phrase (102), and where it is final (103).

102) *bəya dóbeyabε cε bəya bε fʒne jə=lè*  
 N V.Elabor PRN N AuxV V N  
 person respect 3 person should hear 3 = voice  
 ‘People respect him and should listen to what he says.’  
 (Conversation.046)

103) *yə=í bε hi əkhε də fʒdè xú guineas*  
 V AuxV N N NUM V NUM N  
 1S = give should home price one rest six guineas  
 ‘I had to pay six guineas a week.’ (Myself.275)

### 3.4.2.2 ‘Must’ *gà*

The modal verb ‘must’ *gà* most often occurs finally in the verb phrase (104). When it occurs in the same verb phrase as ‘should’ *bε*, ‘should’ *bε* comes first in the verb phrase and ‘must’ *gà* comes last (105). It is also possible to have ‘should’ *bε* and ‘must’ *gà* both occur verb phrase finally, as in example (106), and in these cases, ‘should’ *bε* also precedes ‘must’ *gà*. There are also a few examples of ‘must’ *gà* occurring as the first word in a verb phrase (107).

104) *huklébú mí ɔ bu lé*  
 N P V V Pnf  
 farm if EXIST near and

*kə=pwa gâ cε dó hi əkáchɪ*  
 V V PRN LOC N N  
 1PL = build must 3 LOC home vicinity  
 ‘If the fields are near, we must build them near our home’  
 (Conversation.123)

105) *kə=bε megoagè gâ ε bo yo l*  
 AuxV V V ADV ADV DEM Pf  
 1PL = should work.very.hard must INTNS thus this DECL  
 ‘we must work hard for our living’ (Conversation.142)

106) *bəya thé ɓɛ gà cɛ kí bwe θó bwe mɔ*  
 N V V V PRN NUM CLF NUM CLF Pf  
 person weave should must 3 two person three person doubt

‘It must take two or three people to do it.’ (Baskets.081)

107) *də khlú bəya gà dǐ huklébú nɔ nu*  
 ADV V N V V N P Pnf  
 NEG in.time.for person must scoop.up farm NEG NU

‘Before we can start cultivating,’ (Conversation.018)

### 3.4.3 Epistemic

Epistemic modals represent a continuum of confidence and probability that can be indicated by the speaker (Auwera and Plungian 1998:81). Both of the auxiliary markers of epistemic modality in Bwe indicate that the speaker feels there is a strong likelihood that the event will occur. The most common epistemic auxiliary *khó* indicates irrealis. It always occurs before the main verb in the verb phrase. The typical use of the irrealis marker is exemplified in (108) and (109).

108) *nə = mí ko θómuθóna nu*  
 P V V.Elab Pnf  
 2S = if lazy weed NU

*nə = huklébú khó lawa lɔ*  
 N AuxV V Pf  
 2S = farm IRR overgrown DECL

‘If you are lazy about weeding, your field will get overgrown by weeds.’  
 (HillCulti.026)

109) *yə = khó fe θí nɛ lé θáá lɔ*  
 PRN AuxV V V PRN Pnf N Pf  
 1S IRR pound die 2S with spear DECL

‘I will kill you with my spear.’ (Tugleba.104)

The second marker of epistemic modality *gà* indicates probability. The modal of probability *gà*, as shown here, has great phonetic similarity to the irrealis marker *khó*. Syntactically, they are mutually exclusive; however, the auxiliary of probability

is able to occur with the irrealis final particle *bé* for emphasis. This corpus shows no examples of the irrealis marker *khó* occurring with the irrealis final particle *bé*.

Examples (110) and (111) show the auxiliary of probability *gð* occurring alone with the verb phrase and also with the irrealis final particle *bé*, respectively.

110) *yáθυ gə = gð mə bð dε əbú ə = bε nə = θa*  
 Pnf AuxV V P N ADV V V  
 so.that 1PL=PROB make just thing thus 3=happen 2S=want  
 ‘So that we might do as You want.’ (Prayer.021)

111) *jə = gð ha ní θí gð bé*  
 AuxV V AuxV PRN AuxV Pf  
 3=PROB cry able.to 2P PROB IRR  
 ‘He will probably cry if you do (that).’ (Baby.010)

### 3.5 Elaborate Verbs

A distinguishing areal feature of mainland southeast Asia is the propensity for elaborate phrases (Enfield 2005). This pattern acts in all of the syntactic categories, but for the purposes of this thesis, I will exemplify the elaborate verbs. Elaborate verbs are usually four syllables long, with a pattern of ABAC or ABCB. It is quite normal, but not necessary, for two of the four syllables to be the same word and for the other two syllables to be synonyms (Enfield 2005). This is usually the case for creative elaborate verbs that have not been lexicalized. Lexicalized elaborate verbs have the four syllable structure, but they appear to have lost some or all of the semantic meaning of the original parts. More research should be done on elaborate verbs in Bwe to determine the historic roots of each of the parts of lexicalized elaborate verbs. It may be possible to see the continuum shift for creative elaborate verbs, either toward lexicalization or away from it. An example of an elaborate verb where each of the individual parts is still identifiable as its own lexeme is provided in example (112) with the gloss ‘should order should push’. An elaborate verb that has been lexicalized to the point of no longer being able to identify the lexical meanings of the individual syllable is also given in example (112) with the gloss ‘behave.properly’.

112)	<i>bwejo</i>	<i>cɔ</i>	<i>nu</i>	<i>bedɔbeʃa</i>
	bwejo	cɔ	nu	bɛ-dɔ-bɛ-ʃa
	N	CLF	Pnf	V
	go-between	some	NU	should-order-should-push

<i>ladilafe</i>	<i>úfu</i>	<i>delidebwi</i>	<i>lɔ</i>
ladilafe	úfu	delidebwi	lɔ
V.Elab	ADV	N.Elab	Pf
behave.properly	first	cost	DECL

‘The arbitrators must first settle the matter of costs.’ (Marriage.050)

### 3.6 Additional Verbal Markers

In addition to the tense, aspect, and modality markers on the verb phrase, there are also other particles that show semantic relationship between the verbs and their arguments.

#### 3.6.1 Causatives

The causative is a semantic marker that indicates the actor causing the action of the patient. Syntactically, it has the effect of increasing the valency of the verb (Payne 1997:241). There are several ways for marking the causative in Bwe. One of the ways is a verbal auxiliary *bá* that comes before the main verb in the verb phrase as shown in the following example.

113)	<i>cə = dɔ</i>	<i>wá</i>	<i>cubá</i>	<i>pho</i>	<i>là</i>	<i>nu</i>	<i>əbú</i>	<i>nu</i>
	V	AuxV	N	V	CLF	Pnf	ADV	Pnf
	3 = order	COMPL	bird	small	several	NU	thus	NU

<i>cə = bá</i>	<i>plɛ</i>	<i>ləwà</i>
P	V	PRN
3 = CAUSE	free	3.other

‘When he was finished talking the birds he set them free’ (MrLazy.015)

Other causative structures will be discussed in section 4.3.1 as part of the analysis of serial verb constructions.

### 3.6.2 Applicative

The applicative marker is used syntactically to allow a peripheral argument to become a core argument, typically proven by showing the difference between an argument added by using a prepositional phrase, as opposed to an argument that is required, as part of a transitive or ditransitive verb (Peterson 2007:1) The applicative form *í* in Bwe can occur before other verb phrase final auxiliaries, but for most of the data in this corpus it occurs verb phrase final.

- 114) *gəli u í cε dəyúthóphé lɔ*  
N V AuxV PRN ADV Pf  
air blow APL 3 always DECL  
'The air always blows them.' (Air.031)

In example (114) the argument that is promoted is '3' *cε* due to the fact that 'blow' *u* is an intransitive verb. Admittedly, the data for proving that this verbal marker is promoting any arguments is weak at best. There is no minimal pair of verbs without the applicative and verbs with the applicative that would prove that this marker is promoting any arguments. However, a survey of the data in the corpus lends itself to the hypothesis that this auxiliary verb is, indeed promoting arguments, as in (114). The applicative certainly leaves much room for further research in regards to the possible grammaticalization of this verb from its main form 'give' *í* to the applicative.

### 3.7 Negation

The primary form of negation in Bwe is accomplished with a negator *tə/də* before the verb and a negation clause final illocutionary force particle *nɔ*. The common pattern for this is shown in example (115).

- 115) *bəya tə áhu ε nɔ*  
N ADV V ADV P  
person NEG steal INTNS NEG  
'People don't steal.' (HillCulti.057)

The following example shows negation when there is a list of verbs. The main verb 'order' *dɔ* is negated using the main verbal negator *tə*. Though only the verb 'order' *dɔ* is negated in this clause, the illocutionary force particle of negation is placed at

the end of the clause, not after the negated verb. This structure is shown in example (116).

116) *cə=tə*    *dɔ*    *jə=je*    *bu*,  
 ADV    V    V    N  
 3=NEG order 3=pound p.rice

*da chí*,    *phádǎpháje*    *nɔ*  
 V    N    V.Elab    P  
 set water cook.a.meal NEG

‘She didn’t say she would pound the rice, fetch the water, or cook a meal.’ (Anger.024)

### 3.8 Summary

The above chapter identifies open and closed class verb categories. Auxiliary verbs of completive and perfect aspect, and deontic and irrealis modals are described. The typical patterns of elaborate verb structures in Bwe were also exemplified. Examples of causatives and applicatives as well as typical clausal negation were presented.

This chapter, though not an exhaustive treatment of verbs in Bwe, provides a baseline for determining main verbs versus auxiliary verbs in the verb phrase. It also shows the patterns for the structures of negatives and identifies what is considered an open and closed class verb. These descriptions will be useful in analyzing and categorizing serial verb constructions in the following chapter.



## Chapter 4

# Serial Verb Constructions

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter analyzes serial verb constructions (SVC) in Bwe via Aikhenvald's typological criteria. According to the definition proposed by Aikhenvald, it is determined that Bwe does have SVCs. Following the proof of serial verb constructions, a typological categorization of the SVCs is organized along several parameters: symmetrical versus asymmetrical, contiguous versus non-contiguous, one word versus several words, and single versus concordant marking. A second analysis proposed by Aikhenvald in regards to the individual verb's valency is then discussed and problematized according to this corpus and the observed SVC patterning in Bwe.

### 4.2 Identification of SVC in Bwe

Aikhenvald's definition of serial verb constructions is as follows:

A serial verb construction (SVC) is a sequence of verbs which act together as a single predicate, without any overt marker of coordination, subordination, or syntactic dependency of any other sort. Serial verb constructions describe what is conceptualized as a single event. They are monoclausal; their intonational properties are the same as those of a monoverbal clause, and they have just one tense, aspect, and polarity value. SVCs may also share core and other arguments. Each component of a SVC must be able to occur on its own. (Aikhenvald 2006:1)

Within this definition there are five parameters by which multi-verb constructions can be analyzed to see if they fit within the category of an SVC:

- 1) two or more verbs in one clause,
- 2) syntactic independence of the verbs in their relationship to each other,
- 3) all verbs representing a single event,
- 4) shared operators: tense, aspect, modality and polarity,
- 5) and lexical independence.

In the following sections examples of serial verb constructions in Bwe with each of these properties will be exemplified.

#### 4.2.1 Multiple Verbs with Monoclausivity

Aikhenvald proposes three tests for determining the monoclausivity of multi-verb constructions in a possible serializing language. First, a monoclausal construction will function in the same way at discourse level of a text; the verbs together must meet the predicate requirement of a clause. Secondly, only one subordinator is needed for the entire SVC. Finally, serial verbs are typically translated into single verbs in languages which do not serialize (Aikhenvald 2006:4).

As discussed in chapter 2, there are two main syntactic indicators of clause breaks in Bwe. First, and perhaps easiest to identify, are clause final particles. Second, subordination markers, such as prepositions, nominalizers, coordinators, and relativizers, indicate a new clause. These indicators will be used to determine if verbs are in one or separate clauses.

In order for the criteria of the monoclausivity of a SVC to be met, a single multi-verb construction must exemplify all three of the conditions listed above: functioning the same as a single predicate, single verb translation, and single subordinator. Examples (117) through (119) will be used to prove the monoclausivity of SVCs in Bwe throughout the discussion of the first and third criteria. The second criterion will be exemplified in section 4.2.1.2 because it will show a multi-verb construction being subordinated as a whole construction, rather than as its parts, in a grammatical minimal pair.

117) *bəya*    ***ɓé*** *la*        *deadeɔ*    *dó*    *ə̀bòmú*    *əhi*  
           N        V    V        N.Elab    LOC N        N  
           person put descend food.drink LOC female home

‘They serve the food and drink at the bride’s house.’ (Marriage.108)

118) *ə = hɛ*    ***je***        *dəpho*  
           V        V        N  
           3 = walk pound fish

‘They beat the fish’ (Basket.227)

- 119) *jə=mɛ ní a bɛ*  
 V V V V  
 3=make get eat correct  
 ‘He was successful.’ (Tugleba.019)

#### 4.2.1.1 Single Predicate

To show the similarity between the single verb predicate and the multi-verb construction, example (118) will be compared with examples (120) and (121). Example (120) shows a simple clause using only the verb ‘walk’ *hɛ*, and (121) shows an example with the verb ‘pound’ *ʃe*. Thus, each verb can be used as the single predicate in a clause.

- 120) *jə=hɛ kʊ bəya əle*  
 V ADV N N  
 3S=walk together/also person place  
 ‘He walked in the same place as those people” (Pukheh.144)

- 121) *bəya khó ʃe klɪ nu l*  
 N AuxV V N P Pf  
 person IRR pound thorny.creeper NU DECL  
 ‘people will pound the thorny creeper.’ (Basket.200)

Despite having separate meanings, the verbs in (118) are acting as a single predicate and fulfilling the requirements of a single clause.

#### 4.2.1.2 Single subordinator

The second test of multi-verb phrases, to determine if they are serial verb constructions according to the monoclausivity criterion, is if they are subordinated as a whole construction. In example (122), we have a multi-verb construction that matches all the other monoclausal requirements: 1) it is the only verb in its clause, and 2) each of the multi-verb constructions can be translated into English as one verb, ‘studied’ *mɛ lú* and ‘learned’ *mɛ lú bɛ* respectively.

122) *yə = mɛ lú dó əbòkhó cɔ́*  
 V V LOC N N  
 1S = make imitate LOC male school

*lé jə = mɛ lú bɛ gəlɔ́wá é*  
 Pnf V V V N N  
 and 3 = make imitate undergo British own

'I **studied** at the boys' school and I **learned** English.' (Myself.092)

Example (123) shows the same serial verb construction, 'make imitate' *mɛ lú*, which acted as the main verb in (122), being nominalised by *dɛ*. The parts of this SVC are not nominalized separately and this shows that they have cohesion as part of a single verbal construction.

123) *bɛ cále dɛ θəbuθáðé, dɛ mɛ lú*  
 AuxV V P V.Elabor P V V  
 should look.for NLZR worship NLZR make imitate

*cɛ cáchí dɛ θábù mu mɛ lé dɛ ʃlòʃlú*  
 N V N V N V Pnf N N.Elabor  
 writing holy thing sing day make and thing play

*nu gə = ní bɛ dɛ mɛ lú θáóθəe lɔ*  
 Pnf V V P V V ADV.Elabor Pf  
 NU 1PL = get undergo NLZR make imitate properly DECL

'We were properly given instruction in worship studies, Bible, and music and sports.' (Myself.123)

### 4.2.1.3 Single verb translation

Though this particular feature may have some issues, as Aikhenvald notes, it is a clue to the possible serialization of verbs in a language (2006:4). English is not a language that serializes verbs; consequently it can work as a test for translating Bwe multi-verb constructions to see if they are, indeed, one verb. As it can be seen above, the verbs in example (117) are translated as 'serve', in example (118) the English word 'beat' provides the closest translation of 'walk pound' *hɛ ʃe*, and the third example (119) is rendered 'successful'. This criterion is met by a test of the English translation of Bwe.

### **4.2.2 Syntactic Independence**

The syntactic independence of the verbs in a serial verb construction is referring to the fact that the verbs do not have any syntactically overt coordination or subordination markings. The proof for this feature is primarily dependent upon subject and object marking on the verbs. Bwe does not have any case, person, number, or any other type of marking on the verb, and therefore does not show any type of subordination on any of the verbs in its multi-verb constructions.

### **4.2.3 Single Event**

The single event status of a serial verb construction is one that is difficult to define because it changes depending on the cultural semantic constructs of a language (Aikhenvald 2006:10). Consequently, what might be a regular cultural event or series of events in one language might not be semantically or experientially related at all in another language community. Since a native speaker's intuition would be needed to determine whether a series of verbs represents a cultural single event, and often native speaker intuition is not available for analysis of multi-verb constructions, Aikhenvald proposes a continuum for SVCs in the category of representing a single event: encoding of one event as defined by a native speaker with multiple verbs, multiple subevents which are obviously semantically and culturally linked, or multiple subevents that could be conceptualized as linked because of their natural iconic manifestation (Aikhenvald 2006:12). In the case of a multi-verb construction falling into the category of a semantically loose set of subevents, other syntactic and semantic features of the language should be used to determine if the verbs are actually acting as one predicate or if they are a sequence of clauses (Aikhenvald 2006:12).

There is also the case of semantically subordinated SVCs, where one of the verbs is from a closed class and acts more like a grammatical or descriptive feature, most commonly for adding adjectival or directional information, rather than acting as a subevent of a macro event (Aikhenvald 2006:12). In these cases, the closed class verb could be said to have grammatical, resultative, or descriptive properties rather than event properties.

The corpus that is the focus of the current analysis poses at least one problem in identifying single event status of the multi-verb constructions. Due to the fact that it is largely semantic criteria, rather than analytical, that determines the single event status of the verbs, and the speaker who provided the data for this corpus is no

longer available to clarify or provide insight into a native speaker's intuition about the verbs in his narratives, inference must be used with the narratives to determine if the events discussed are culturally single events or not. Most of the analysis of the multi-verb constructions in Bwe will depend upon basic human experience to determine if the events are able to be conceived as subevents of a main event.

The following example is taken from a description of a tribal custom of blocking waterways and poisoning the water so that the fish die and are easy to harvest. The context of this narrative as a whole provides a culturally specific set of events within which individual verbs are assumed to be representing subevents.

124) *dε*            *go*        *khé*    *nu*    *θί*        *də*  
           N            V            CLF    Pnf    PRN        ADV  
           thing        hot        season NU    2P        NEG

*mε*            *láθi*    *a*        *ku*     *chí*        *əbú*  
           V            V        V        V        N            ADV  
           make        drain eat    fall    water    thus

*gə=mε*        *a*        *dəpho* *dó*     *lədólədə* *cə*    *nu*    *nə*    *a*  
           V            V        N        Pf        N.Elab    CLF    Pnf    P        P  
           1PL=make eat    fish    EXCL    plains    some    NU    NEG    INTER

'In the dry season, don't they catch fish by draining the stream as we do in the plains?' (Baskets.158)

125) *dəpho* *cə*                    *nu*    *tha*    *pəlo*    *dó*    *chí*    *kho*  
           N        CLF                            Pnf    V        V        LOC    N        N  
           fish    some                            NU    rise    float    LOC    water    top

*lé*    *gə=lv*            *pυ*    *kó*    *cε*  
           Pnf    V                            V        ADV    PRN  
           and    1PL=chase    catch    when    3

'So they float on the surface of the water and we can just pick them up.'  
 (Baskets.174)

- 126) *jə=le khu thó kl tə cɔ thó*  
 V V AuxV N NUM CLF AuxV  
 3=go dibble PERF thorny.creeper one some PERF  
 ‘They have already gone to dig the poison roots.’ (Baskets.189)

Bwe also has examples of multi-verb constructions that can be conceptualized as subevents of a single event based on shared human experience. Examples (127) through (129) provide evidence of this.

- 127) *kə=kəbɔ le nù bε kɔ dɔ kəbɔ θəne lɔ*  
 N V V V ADV LOC N N Pf  
 1PL=ship go enter undergo when LOC ship station DECL  
 ‘Our boat was allowed to enter the harbour.’ (Journey.057)

- 128) *dɔ tha go gé jə=dɛnuchí*  
 V V V ADV N  
 set rise hot again 3=milk  
 ‘Put his milk on to warm up’ (Baby.016)

- 129) *bəya tə cɔ nu bε le bwɪabwɪɔ*  
 N NUM CLF Pnf V V V.Elabor  
 person one some NU should go buy.food

*dɔ dɔ alawe lɔ*  
 LOC N QNTY Pf  
 LOC village other DECL

‘The people had to go elsewhere to buy food.’ (Pukkeh.013)

Semantically subordinated multi-verb constructions can also be seen in Bwe, specifically those which are providing information about the manner in which things are done, their adjectival characteristics, and their location or direction. These constructions are part of one event; the event which is delineated by the open class verb in the construction and modified by the closed class verb. Examples of these constructions are provided in (130) through (132).

130) *dó gamugakhó nu*  
 LOC N.Elab Pnf  
 LOC hills NU

*ɔ é tə kɪ bəya calecakle gəle lɔ*  
 N N NUM CLF N V.Elab V Pf  
 place own one little person marry fast DECL

‘In the hills people generally marry young.’ (Marriage.002)

131) *lákhó bε yε lé dāpho də là yo*  
 V V PRN Pnf N NUM CLF DEM  
 appear undergo 1S with fish one several this

*əphekú tə ɔ nɔ, lé*  
 N ADV V P Pnf  
 skin NEG EXIST NEG and

*cə=əphólɪ plí θəlɔ dɔ lɔ*  
 V V ADV Pf Pf  
 3= appear smooth very.slippery thus DECL

‘These fish looked so slippery that it seemed to me they had no scales.’  
 (Journey.045)

132) *jə=wé bwe nu phɪ tha hú də mà nu*  
 N CLF Pnf V V N NUM CLF DEM  
 3= o.sibling person NU take rise silver one 4.annas that

‘His sister got out the four anna piece.’ (Pukheh.016)

#### 4.2.4 Shared Operators

The feature of sharing operators as a measure of serial verb constructions insures that the members of an SVC are not acting, or considered to be acting, on their own, and supports the inference that the construction is seen by the speaker as a single predicate within the clause (Aikhenvald 2006:8). The only operator that can be an exception to this feature and still fit the definition of a SVC is the negator. Negation can occur on the SVC as a whole, or on an individual verb within the SVC without indicating that the SVC is in separate clauses (Aikhenvald 2006:8).



Bwe shows evidence of the modal and illocutionary force operators, *khó* and *lè* respectively, affecting the whole clause, as in examples (133) and (134).

133) *jə=khó gəya tha nɛ lé da ʃi θəba*  
 AuxV V V PRN Pnf N V N  
 3=IRR threaten rise 2S with knife sling.over.shoulder spear  
 ‘He **will threaten** you with a sword and a spear.’ (Tugleba.063)

134) *nəphonəli cɔ nu le lə bó lɛ.*  
 N.Elab CLF P V V ADV P  
 2S.children some NU **go finished** thus INTER  
 ‘Have your children **left?**’ (Conversation.005)

However, when it comes to the negator *tə/də... nɔ* in Bwe, both of the scenarios Aikhenvald proposes exist: the serial verb constructions in Bwe can be negated as a whole or have the individual parts of the construction negated without putting the individual verbs in separate clauses, as shown in examples (135) and (136).

135) *jə=mí də na hɛ bɛ mí ye nɔ*  
 P ADV V V V ADV PRN P  
 3=if NEG command walk undergo away 1S NEG  
 ‘If they do **not drive** me out,’ (Tugleba.075)

136) *má wɛ mí də ju nɔ nu,*  
 Pnf N V ADV V P Pnf  
 if rain ripe NEG fall NEG NU

*nə=thɔ də ja dí ɛ nɔ*  
 V ADV V ADV ADV P  
 2S=sow NEG able still INTNS NEG

‘If the rain doesn’t fall, you still can’t sow.’ (Conversation.094)

#### 4.2.5 Lexical Independence

The final criterion for determining if a language has SVCs is whether or not each of the verbs in the construction can stand alone in a clause. The purpose of this test is two-fold. The first purpose is to separate markers of tense, aspect, modality, illocutionary force, and polarity from main verbs. Secondly, specifically for closed

class verbs as defined in section 3.2.2, the goal is to prove that they are still functionally able to meet the clause requirements of a verb. Aikhenvald states that closed class verbs are the most likely to grammaticalize into function words alone (2006:33). For them to still qualify as part of a serial verb construction, they need to have the ability to function alone in a clause.

In an effort to give an example of proof of the lexical independence of verbs in Bwe, examples (137) through (149) will provide an overview based on the semantic categories, from both open and closed verb classes, as follows: directional, manner, stative, and movement. The serial verbs that contain these directional, manner, stative, and movement verbs will also be shown for ease of comparison.

#### 4.2.5.1 Directional

Directional verbs are a closed class. Their syntactic distribution sets them apart from other verbs as discussed in 3.2.2. Examples (137) and (138) contrast the use of ‘rise’ *tha* as a single predicate and an SVC, and examples (139) and (140) provide an example of ‘descend’ *la*.

137) *jə=tha dɔ ə=khí*  
 V LOC N  
 3 = rise LOC top  
 ‘She rose to the top.’ (Pukheh.179)

138) *dàpho cɔ nu tha pəlɔ dɔ chí kho*  
 N CLF Pnf V V LOC N N  
 fish some NU rise float LOC water top  
 ‘Some fish rise to the top of the water’ (Basket.174)

139) *dəhɪdɛba cɔ nu bəya da la*  
 N.Elabor CLF Pnf N N V  
 meat some NU person knife descend

*cɛ θɔ cɔ lɔ*  
 PRN NUM CLF Pf  
 3 three portion DECL

‘The meat is divided into three portions.’ (Marriage.095)

140) *baya bɛ la deadeɔ dɔ ɔ=bòmú ɔ=hi*  
 N V V N.Elabor LOC N N  
 person put descend food.drink LOC female home

‘They serve the food and drink at the bride’s house.’ (Marriage.108)

#### 4.2.5.2 Manner

To illustrate that manner verbs can also stand as single predicates in a clause, and to contrast that with their occurrence in SVCs, ‘correct’ *bɛ* and ‘loose’ *glèglà* in examples (141) through (144) are provided.

141) *ɔ é tɔ kɪ bɛ baya ɔ=θa lɔ*  
 N N NUM CLF V N N Pf  
 place own one little correct person heart DECL

‘In most cases people are satisfied.’ (Conversation.049)

142) *jɔ= mɛ ní a bɛ*  
 PRN V V V V  
 3 make get eat correct

‘He was successful.’ (Tugleba.019)

143) *le ʃ nu glèglà máké ɔ=cé*  
 N CLF Pnf V ADV N  
 cart vehicle NU loose much reason

‘The cart shook so badly that...’ (Myself.081)

144) *ɖɪ glèglà yɛ*  
 V V PRN  
 cut loose 1S

‘Cut me loose’ (Pukkeh.040)

#### 4.2.5.3 Stative

The ability of stative verbs to function as a single predicate in a clause is provided with the verb ‘good’ *wɪ* in example (145). It can be compared with its use in an SVC in example (146).

145) *tə cɔ cɔ wɪ pwəɛ́,*  
 NUM CLF CLF V ADV  
 one some some good certainly

*tə cɔ cɔ də wɪ nɔ l*  
 NUM CLF CLF ADV V P Pf  
 one some some NEG good NEG DECL

‘Some of these were attractive to look at and some were not.’  
 (Journey.082)

146) *cə= kətrikətru ʒphɔ̀lì wɪ ó l*  
 PRN V.Elabor V V ADV ILL.F  
 3 glitter show good very DECL  
 ‘it glittered and looked very lovely.’ (Journey.015)

#### 4.2.5.4 Movement

Movement verbs can be the only argument in a clause, or be combined into a SVC, as shown by the verbs ‘walk’ *hɛ* and ‘jump’ *phu* in examples (147) through (150).

147) *yə= hɛ ʃlòʃlú dɔ dɛ ə=le tə ɓlu bu*  
 PRN V N.Elabor LOC N N NUM CLF LOC  
 1S walk play LOC thing place one cupful in  
 ‘I paid visits to a number of places.’ (Myself.287)

148) *ə hɛ fe dāpho*  
 Pro V V N  
 3 walk pound fish  
 ‘They beat the fish’ (Basket.227)

149) *jə= gɔ̀ phu θəne gɔ̀ bé*  
 PRN AuxV V ADV AuxV Pf  
 3 PROB jump wake.up PROB IRR  
 ‘He might wake up suddenly.’ (Baby.013)

150) *kə    phu   phlé   pwəé*  
 PRN V    V    ADV  
 1PL jump escape certainly  
 ‘We definitely escaped’ (Myself.205)

#### 4.2.6 Summary

Aikhenvald’s definition of serial verb construction as being multiple verbs in one clause, being syntactically independent, sharing a single event, having shared operators, and being lexically independent have been exemplified for Bwe. While the criteria as delineated here have been sufficiently met, there are still some problems with Aikhenvald’s definition in regards to Bwe. As mentioned above, the feature of being a single event proves problematic in cases, such as Bwe, where a native speaker is not available to question about the event status of a multi-verb construction. Even with a native speaker, semantic testing is notoriously ambiguous.

Also, the translation test to prove or disprove the monoclausivity of a multi-verb construction is highly suspect. This test relies on the ability to semantically represent an event using two or more verbs in a serializing language that would be only one verb in a non-serializing language. Consequently, the assumption is that the meaning for the serialized verbs is the same as the non-serialized verb; a semantic leap it may be too simplistic to make. This test remains suspicious without fully exploring the semantic meaning of the serial verb construction as compared to the non-serial verb. It may be applicable at a very surface level of meaning, but it lacks the ability to be compared too deeply.

Despite these two ambiguous semantic criteria, Bwe does exemplify structures that fit with the other monoclausivity criteria, as well as easily showing syntactic independence, shared operators, and lexical independence. As best as is possible with this corpus, culturally relevant events have been shown to use SVCs, and examples of verbs that are able to be conceptualized as a sequence via shared human experience are provided. It can be concluded, based on this evidence, that Bwe does meet the criteria for having serial verb constructions as defined by Aikhenvald (2006:1).

The following sections will categorize the SVCs in Bwe according to criteria that are relevant to the features of SVCs according to Aikhenvald.

### 4.3 Contiguity

According to Aikhenvald's definition of contiguity, a contiguous SVC does not allow any other constituent to be syntactically placed between two verbs in the construction, while a non-contiguous SVC does allow insertion of arguments or other structures between the verbs (Aikhenvald 2006:37). In the following two sections Bwe will be analyzed according to its propensity for contiguous and non-contiguous SVCs.

#### 4.3.1 Contiguous vs. non-contiguous

Most of the SVCs in this Bwe corpus are contiguous. Contiguity appears to be the preferred structure for the creation of SVCs. In the cases where SVCs are not contiguous, it is typically an adverb (151) or a negator (152) that is separating the verbs rather than an argument or some other constituent.

- 151) *phu phlɔmí kɛ ɡali chí dəθrɛ pho*  
V ADV V N QNTY N V  
take aside able air only moment small  
'If there were no air for just one short moment.' (Air.010)

- 152) *má wɛ mí də ju nɔ nu,*  
Pnf N V ADV V P Pnf  
if rain ripe NEG fall NEG NU

- nə= thɔ də ja dí ɛ nɔ*  
PRN V ADV V ADV ADV P  
2S sow NEG able still INTNS NEG  
'If the rain doesn't fall, you still can't sow.' (Conversation.094)

There are a small number of verbs that often occur in a non-contiguous structure. The Bwe verb 'order' *dɔ*, when it is used in a reported speech, usually has the recipient noun in between 'order' *dɔ* and the verb or verbs indicating what the recipient was told. This occurs with no clause final particles, subordination, or coordination, after the recipient noun, and in these cases the verb 'order' *dɔ* is part of a non-contiguous SVC. This is exemplified in (153).

153) *dɔ* *ce* *a* *mɛ* *dadú* *θɛ* *mɛ*  
 V PRN V Pf N N Pf  
 order 3 eat PRHB Indian.trumpet fruit PRHB

‘(She) told him not to eat the trumpet flower fruit.’ (Tugleba.028)

‘Order’ *dɔ* also occurs in contiguous SVCs (154) and as a single verb (155) in a clause.

154) *baya* *əθabwɛ* *dɛ* *dɔ* *mɛ* *lé*  
 N V V V V Pnf  
 person mature ask order make and

*mɛ* *ku* *cə=ká* *dɔ* *ʃafú* *mɛ* *ce* *mɛ*  
 V ADV N V ADV Pf PRN Pf  
 make together/also 3=behind order against PRHB 3 PRHB

‘When your elders tell you to do something, obey them, and don’t answer back!’ (Pukheh.087)

155) *əbú* *dələdɔ* *klɔ* *ko* *dɔ* *ce* *nu* *jə=mɛ* *ku*  
 ADV N V N V PRN Pnf V ADV  
 thus monk bare head order 3 NU 3=make together/also

‘thus they did as the priest instructed them’ (Tugleba.350)

Causatives, which are homophonous with the main verb ‘give’ *í*, also tend to occur in non-contiguous forms as shown by example (156).

156) *cə=í* *ləwà* *dɔ* *le* *lɔ*  
 V PRN V N Pf  
 3=CAUSE 3.other ride cart DECL

‘He told us to get in the cart.’ (Myself.079)

Finally, the verb ‘BE’ *mu* can also occur non-contiguously, as example (157).

- 157) *dú mu cə = u ɓɛ kɛ kha*  
 P V V V PRN Pnf  
 when BE 3=blow should 1PL when  
 ‘When it should blow on us.’ (Air.020)

There are also cases of elaborate verbs where part of the elaborate construction is a noun meeting the argument requirement for the verb in the elaborate structure. In these cases, the syntactic patterning of the elaborate construction as a whole is verbal in nature and is treated as such in the clause structure. Consequently, these elaborate verbs may be considered non-contiguous SVCs from the perspective that the parts of the elaborate construction contains words that pattern as nouns when they occur on their own, but they are contiguous from the perspective that the elaborate construction as a whole is a semantic and syntactic verb.

- 158) *cə = ɔhiɔphá*  
*cə = ɔ-hi-ɔ-phá*  
 V  
 3 = EXIST-home-EXIST-granary  
 ‘She sits at home’ (Anger.041)
- 159) *jə = khɔ mechiɔmelê ne*  
*jə = khɔ me-chí-me-lê ne*  
 AuxV V PRN  
 3 = IRR make-toward-make-from 2S  
 ‘He will turn against you.’ (Tugleba.062)
- 160) *ɓɛphoɓɛwa nu*  
*ɓɛ-pho-ɓɛ-wa nu*  
 V Pnf  
 undergo-child-undergo-husband NU  
 ‘able to marry’ (Tugleba.014)



### **4.3.2 Summary**

Aikhenvald's definition of categorizing contiguity in SVCs has the component of allowability of constituents interrupting the verbs. Bwe does allow adverbs and negators to be inserted into the SVCs, as well as three main verbs that allow arguments to interrupt the contiguity of the SVC, and elaborate structures that include nouns but are semantic and syntactic verbs. Although the most common SVC pattern is contiguous, non-contiguous SVCs are possible in Bwe.

Aikhenvald states that there are four possibilities for the interaction of wordhood and SVCs: non-contiguous multi-word, contiguous multi-word, contiguous one-word, and the final possibility which has not yet been found in an actual language non-contiguous one-word (2006:39). In the section above I have argued for treating elaborate verbal constructions as a single word verb, however, in elaborate constructions with nouns and verbs that are syntactically verbs, we may find the closest example to the non-contiguous one-word structure that Aikhenvald proposes could exist.

## **4.4 Symmetry**

The symmetry of an SVC is reliant upon the semantic categorization of the SVC. The distinction of the asymmetric SVC from symmetric is one of semantic headedness (Aikhenvald 2006:21). Asymmetric SVCs have the main event described by an unrestricted, or open class verb, while the second verb is from a restricted, or closed, class and modifies the event described by the open class verb. The open class verb is the head of the SVC both semantically, because it defines the event and the semantic category of the arguments, and syntactically, because the number of arguments is determined by that verb (Aikhenvald 2006:22).

Symmetric SVCs are composed of at least two open class verbs that sequence via actions in time. The verbs of symmetric SVCs are equal in semantics and syntax, each describing a subevent of the main event indicated by the SVC as a whole (Aikhenvald 2006:22).

### **4.4.1 Symmetrical SVCs**

The following sections provide an analysis of Bwe SVCs according to the four categories of symmetric SVCs that are proposed in Aikhenvald's typology: sequence of actions, cause-effect, manner, and synonyms. The SVC patterning in Bwe shows examples of each of these categories.

#### 4.4.1.1 Sequence of Actions

Sequence SVCs reflect subevents as they would occur as part of a larger event, events that occur at the same time, or events that are alternating (Aikhenvald 2006:28). Example (162) is based on shared human experience of what would be possible in a sequence of events, and example (162) shows an SVC describing simultaneous events of ‘go’ and ‘look.for’ with the third verb ‘eat’ being the purpose for the searching described by the other two verbs.

161) *jə=ge do dó hi jə=mé bwe nu*  
 V V LOC N N CLF Pnf  
 3=go.back reach LOC home 3=wife person NU

*phá í cə=a khlije əhu*  
 V AuxV V N N  
 cook APL 3=eat tortoise flesh

‘When he got home, his wife cooked the tortoise flesh for him,’  
 (Tugleba.027)

162) *mu de ni nu, thuglebá le cále a háθu*  
 N N CLF Pnf N V V V N  
 day thing day NU Tugleba go look.for eat curry

*dó jəbð klé*  
 LOC N P  
 LOC jungle among

‘Now one day, when Tugleba went to gather vegetables in the forest,’  
 (Tugleba.025)

Alternating events in Bwe are often expressed using elaborate verbal expressions, as shown in example (163).

163) *jumulakhé*    *θédé*    *rò*    *nu*  
 N                    NUM    CLF    Pnf  
 rainy.season    whole    season    NU

*kə=βε*            *glamuglana, θάόμουθάόνα,*  
 AuxV            V.Elab            V.Elab  
 1PL=should    weed                weed

*dú*    *bu*    *míthadola*  
*dú*    *bu*    *mí-tha-do-la*  
 P    N    V  
 when    p.rice    ripe-rise-reach-descend

*dó*    *bəya*    *kelòulò*                                    *bu*    *nu*    *lɔ*  
*dó*    *bəya*    *kε-lò-u-lò*                                    *bu*    *nu*    *lɔ*  
 LOC    person    reap-finished-carry-finished    p.rice    NU    DECL  
 LOC    N            V    N            Pnf    Pf

‘Throughout the whole rainy season we have to keep on weeding till the paddy is ripe, and carry on until everything is harvested and carried to the granaries.’ (Conversation.108)

#### 4.4.1.2 Cause-effect SVCs

Cause-effect SCVs are usually in order of the cause followed by the effect (Aikhenvald 2006:29). In example (164) the cause of clearing the land has the result of the parents being able to eat.

164) *jənocəpa*    *gù*                    *a*    *huklé*    *bu*  
 N                    V                    V    N            LOC  
 3.parents    clear.land    eat    hill.field    in

‘Their parents farmed in the hills to eat.’ (Tugleba.011)

### 4.4.1.3 Manner SVCs

Manner SVCs are, in some respects, in between symmetrical and asymmetrical SVCs; both verbs are open class; however, one verb describes how the other was accomplished, and in that way there is a semantic headedness to the manner SVCs. The verbs in this construction are not iconically ordered, but instead grammatical rules dictate their syntactic placement (Aikhenvald 2006:30).

In Bwe, manner SVCs are often stative verbs and would likely belong to an asymmetrical closed class better than symmetrical, as in example (165). However, there are examples in this corpus of two open class verbs in a manner SVC, as shown in example (166).

- 165) *mɪ gà ε yə= khó θí gəle bé tə kɪ nu lɔ*  
 V V ADV PRN AuxVV V Pf NUM CLF Pnf Pf  
 BE must INTNS 1S IRR die fast IRR one little NU DECL  
 ‘Perhaps I will die a little sooner, that’s all.’ (Pukkeh.052)

- 166) *phíbiyɔ hɛ ble dó huklébú*  
 N V V LOC N  
 Pibiyaw walk jump LOC farm  
 ‘Pibiyaw jumped all over the clearing,’ (Pukkeh.125)

### 4.4.1.4 Synonyms

Productively serializing languages have SVCs with synonyms or near-synonyms in the same construction (Aikhenvald 2006:30). These constructions are used to indicate repetition, duration, or intensification, and they are not iconic. Elaborate expressions with verbs are mentioned by Aikhenvald in this section as examples of repetition for stylistic, religious, or poetic purposes (2006:30). Bwe shows evidence of both SVCs with synonyms (167) and (168), and elaborate verbal constructions with near synonyms (169).

- 167) *mɛ dídá káklé mɛ cɛ mɛ*  
 V V V Pf PRN Pf  
 make obstruct obstruct PRHB 3 PRHB  
 ‘Don’t get in his way!’ (Baby.008)

- 168) *mo chí la θágwe la jòmujòʃe*  
 N N V V V V.Elaboration  
 mother water descend stream.down descend flow.down  
 ‘My tears are falling like the rain!’ (Tugleba.117)
- 169) *gə = θogoθagè*  
*gə = θo-go-θa-gè*  
 N-V-N-V  
 1PL = mind-hot-heart-burn  
 ‘we are angry’ (Anger.039)

#### 4.4.2 Asymmetric SVCs

There are eight categories of asymmetric SVCs proposed by Aikhenvald: direction and orientation, aspect, secondary concept serialization, serialization of complement clause taking verbs, increasing valency and specifying arguments, reducing valency, comparatives and superlatives, and event arguments.

The validity of using valency as a tool for categorization of SVCs in Bwe is questionable, and will be discussed in section 4.7. Consequently, for the purposes of exemplifying asymmetrical SVCs in Bwe, the categories of serialization of complement clause taking verbs, increasing valency and specifying arguments, and reducing valency will not be used.

In addition, secondary concept serialization is referring to a verb which ‘cannot occur on its own without an additional verb to modify (Aikhenvald 2006:25)’. This category, according to my analysis so far, falls outside the definition of SVC in that it violates the requirement that the verb be able to stand alone in a clause. In addition, analysis of the examples of secondary concepts that Aikhenvald proposes, it appears that Bwe prefers to indicate these concepts with illocutionary force or aspect markers. This category is thus disqualified for this analysis of asymmetrical SVCs in Bwe.

The category of comparatives and superlatives will also not be used due to the fact that Bwe marks these structures with particles rather than SVCs.

#### 4.4.2.1 Direction and Orientation

In SVCs with direction and orientation closed class verbs, the location or the path of the event is identified by the modifying verb (Aikhenvald 2006:22). Bwe uses this strategy for serializing verbs prolifically as show in examples (170) and (171).

170) *bàθε le nù kv*  
 N V V ADV  
 bullet go enter together/also

*dó yə=nékú ə=təɾi khó nu ədəglekho*  
 LOC N V CLF Pnf N  
 LOC 1S=ear 3=left-hand half NU above  
 ‘A bullet went in above my left ear,’ (Myself.183)

171) *cə=βε ple la dε θáwà əcé l*  
 AuxV V V P V N Pf  
 3=should pay.fine descend NLZR ashamed reason DECL  
 ‘He must pay the other damages for the shame caused.’ (Marriage.079)

#### 4.4.2.2 Aspect

In the case of asymmetric SVCs of aspect, the semantics of aspect are typically communicated via a verb of motion or posture (Aikhenvald 2006:23). Examples (172) and (173), respectively, show the main verbs ‘finished’ *lò* and ‘able’ *ja* marking aspect and modality in SVCs. There are alternate strategies in Bwe for marking the completive aspect (section 3.1.1.1) and ability modality (section 3.1.2.1) in Bwe; however, those aspect and modal particles do not have to be used with the main verbs.

172) *baya bð lò bu tə pla xá*  
 N V V N NUM CLF CLF  
 person beat finished p.rice one time same  
 ‘As soon as threshing is over,’ (Baskets.072)

- 173) *yə = dɔʃa ja pwə́é ni*  
 V V ADV P  
 1S = relate able certainly ASSERT  
 ‘Certainly I can tell you.’ (Conversation.083)

#### 4.4.2.3 Event Argument

Event-argument SVCs are the asymmetrical counterpart to symmetrical manner SVCs. The closed class verb provides modification to the open class verb event (Aikhenvald 2006:27). It is usually stative verbs that fill this role for event-argument SVCs (Aikhenvald 2006:27).

The stative verbs in Bwe can modify an open class verb as in example (174). However, it is far more common for the stative verbs to be the main verb in the example, as shown in (175), followed by a directional. They also tend to be used more for modification of nouns, or to be nominalized themselves rather than to modify other verbs.

- 174) *θɛ wɪ gəbɔ́*  
 V V P  
 fruit good so.much.that  
 ‘bore so much good fruit’ (Pukheh.129)

- 175) *yə = ma tha gé θáóθəɛ dɔ lɔ*  
 V V ADV ADV.Elaboration Pf Pf  
 1S = be.strong rise again properly thus DECL  
 ‘I was healthy again.’ (Myself.190)

#### 4.5 Wordhood

The wordhood of serial verb constructions has a continuum of possibilities. The construction can be made up of several words that stand alone grammatically and phonologically, or words that are only grammatically independent, or words that are only phonologically independent (Aikhenvald 2006:37-38). The phonological independence of the words in this corpus was determined by Henderson (1997: vol II). Her analysis is not being questioned in this thesis. However, in isolating languages like Bwe, it is common to see phonologically independent SVCs that are also grammatically independent.

The verbs composing SVCs in Bwe are grammatically independent words; they can function as the primary predicate in a clause. However, there are also examples of verbs that are treated, syntactically, as one word. Bwe, as with other Southeast Asian languages, uses an elaborate expression strategy. Though each part of an elaborate expression can typically be an independent word in the language, when they are put in the elaborate expression pattern they are treated as one word. This is true in the elaborate expressions that are made entirely of verbs and elaborate expressions that pattern as verbs though they may include phonological words from other grammatical categories.

Elaborate expressions are productive and used as a rhetorical device in storytelling. Many of them have also become lexicalized. Several elaborate expressions are exemplified in (176) through (178).

176)	<i>phwèpɔwè</i>	<i>mɛ</i>	<i>cɛ</i>	<i>mɛ</i>
	<i>phɪ-wè-pɔ-wè</i>	<i>mɛ</i>	<i>cɛ</i>	<i>mɛ</i>
	V	Pf	PRN	Pf
	take-touch-catch-touch	PRHB	3	PRHB
	'Don't pull him about!' (Baby.007)			

The elaborate verb in example (177) is composed of syllables which still retain their meaning as separate words: literally, 'die' *θí*, 'carry' *ya*, 'die' *θí*, and 'big' *dó*, but the combined meaning of the verbs has been lexicalized.

177)	<i>gə = phwa</i>	<i>θíyaθído</i>
	V	V.Elaborate
	1PL = be.poor	desperate
	'We are desperately poor,' (Anger.029)	

The final example of elaborate constructions is partially lexicalized. We know that the verb 'cook' *phá* is repeated and the noun 'meal' *ʃɛ* is also included, but the meaning of the syllable *dí* is no longer used as an independent word in Bwe, though it can be traced in Kayan with the meaning 'cooked rice'.



178) *ə̀bòmú* *pho* *bwε* *nu* *ɔ* *dó* *hi,* *je* *bu,*  
 N N CLF Pnf V LOC N V N  
 female child person NU EXIST LOC home pound p.rice

*ḍa chí,* ***phádípháε*** *ḍo* *l*  
 V N V.Elaboration Pf Pf  
 set water cook.a.meal thus DECL

‘the girl stayed home to husk the rice, draw water and cook the meals.’  
 (Tugleba.013)

## 4.6 Operators

One of the axes of typological distinction in serial verb constructions concerns whether the operators are concordantly marked on every verb or only marked once for the entire serial verb construction (Aikhenvald 2006:4). The following section discusses and exemplifies how the operators of tense, aspect, mode, and polarity are marked on Bwe SVCs.

### 4.6.1 Aspect and Modality

Aspect and modality are marked once for the entire structure in Bwe. There are no examples of concordant marking in this corpus, which is consistent with what we would expect from the isolating nature of Bwe. The marking of the SVC follows the pattern of a singular verb in that it occurs in the same location, usually coming before the SVC in the case of irrealis (179), or following the SVC, as in the case of aspectual markers (180). Modal markers can occur at the beginning, end, or beginning and end of the SVC (181).

179) *tə pla xá dɛ ɔ θámú*  
 NUM CLF CLF N V V  
 one time same thing EXIST alive

*đó lằkho əkho tə cɔ nu*  
 LOC N N NUM CLF Pnf  
 LOC earth top one some NU

*əθa gə hɛ tha lò lɔ*  
 N AuxV V V V Pf  
 heart IRR walk rise finished DECL

‘All at once, everything living on earth would die.’ (Air.011)

180) *gə hɛ tha wá*  
 PRN V V AuxV  
 1PL walk rise COMPL

*đó wetaku yé θé də θé əhɔ nu*  
 LOC Name NUM CLF NUM CLF N Pnf  
 LOC Rangoon five day one day morning NU

‘One morning five days after leaving Rangoon,’ (Journey.038)

181) *cə=ɓɛ le cáɛ ɓɛ đó đó alawe lɔ*  
 AuxV V V AuxV LOC N QNTY Pf  
 3= should go look.for should LOC village other DECL

‘They have to go and look for one in other villages.’ (Marriage.030)

The illocutionary force particles also occur in the same syntactic location with an SVC as they do in a single verb construction as seen in examples (182) and (183).

182) *dɛ khafɛkhapwé mɔ đó ʃɛ cəđɔ̃ tə kɪ*  
 P V.Elaborate V V ADV P NUM CLF  
 NLZR celebrate pleasant big more.than surprise one little

‘A little surprisingly, the celebrations are even more enjoyable.’

(Marriage.144)

- 183) *jə=he bə ja thó dɔ*  
 V V V AuxV Pf  
 3 = walk crawl able PERF EXCL  
 ‘He has just learned to walk.’ (Baby.002)

#### 4.6.2 Polarity

Negation of Bwe SVCs can include all the verbs in the construction, or it can be on one of the individual verbs inside of the SVC. This characteristic of being able to negate one of the verbs inside the structure may seem to go against the overall definition of SVCs provided by Aikhenvald; however, she does note that the marking of polarity on SVCs in a language is on a continuum and there are other languages in which the scope of the negator leaves room for ambiguity (2006:9). The possibility of ambiguity exists for Bwe in regards to the negator if the illocution is isolated from its context. However, it is not ambiguous if the text is understood as a whole.

The syntactic patterning of negation on a contiguous SVC is like that of a single verb in most cases. There are cases of negation of a verb in the middle of a contiguous SVC, as seen in example (184), and as exemplified above in section 4.3.1.

- 184) *gə=mu əbùjépho lé gə=he də gəle nɔ əkhwəcɛ nu*  
 V N Pnf V ADV V P N.Elab Pnf  
 1PL=BE baby and 1PL=walk NEG fast NEG reason NU  
 ‘We were babies and we couldn’t walk fast.’ (Myself.061)

In non-contiguous SVCs it is far more common to have the scope of the negator include only the second verb. There are no examples of non-contiguous SVCs with the scope of the SVC including verbs other than the second verb unless the negator is marked on the other verbs as well.

- 185) *cə=dɔ dɛ tə bu də mi də mi nɔ*  
 V N ADV V NUM CLF NUM CLF P  
 3 = order thing NEG dare one thing one thing NEG  
 ‘He did not dare say anything.’ (Pukheh.122)

## 4.7 Discussion of categorization by argument sharing

Aikhenvald's final categorization of SVC relies upon determining the transitivity of each of the verbs in the SVC and, consequently, which arguments they share (2006:14). The following section discusses the issue of verb transitivity for this corpus.

### 4.7.1 Difficulties with transitivity

One of the main difficulties with analyzing SVCs in Bwe by their shared arguments is determining transitivity, or the number of arguments a single verb requires. Bwe tends more toward a topic-comment structure than it does to a syntactically strict subject-verb-object structure; therefore, the degree of transitivity tends to be fluid. There are more occurrences of discourse anaphora. There is a strong likelihood that arguments will be syntactically dropped, especially if the topic has already been introduced and remains the same, which makes determining transitivity extremely difficult for the analysis of Bwe. To illustrate this fact, the verb 'make' *mε* will be used as an example.

The verb 'make' *mε* occurs as the main verb in a syntactically transitive clauses, as shown in example (186).

186)	<i>gə = mε</i>	<i>jó</i>	<i>lè</i>	<i>lè</i>	<i>ləwà</i>	<i>bó</i>	<i>yo</i>
	V	ADV	P	P	PRN	ADV	DEM
	1PL = make	assistance	RECIP	RECIP	each.other	thus	this

*yàkhəyàkho* *dó* *lɔ*  
ADV.Elaboration Pf Pf  
to&fro thus DECL

'We help each other: giving and getting assistance.' (Conversation.130)

It also occurs as the main verb in ditransitive causative clauses, as example (187) shows.

187)	<i>gə = mɛ</i>	<i>b̀̀</i>	<i>gə = ne</i>	<i>ə̀̀</i>
	V	Pnf	PRN	ADV
	1PL = make	just	1PL = self	thus

<i>bəya</i>	<i>ə̀̀wə̀̀pə̀̀hoyə̀̀pə̀̀</i>	<i>nu</i>	<i>ẁ̀</i>
N	N.Elab	Pnf	Pf
person	poor	NU	IMPat
‘We alone make ourselves poor people.’			

The corpus does not provide enough data to determine if the transitive manifestation of ‘make’ *mɛ* or the ditransitive causative construction is typical. Consequently, it is not possible to tell what the transitivity of ‘make’ *mɛ* is, or how much that transitivity is a contributing factor to the SVCs containing this verb, either lending its valency, increasing the valency of the other verbs, or possibly even decreasing the valency.

Example (188) shows ‘make’ *mɛ* as an intransitive verb with an asymmetrical directional verb and a locational oblique. The previous examples of ‘make’ *mɛ* alone may lead to considering a hypothesis that the transitivity of this verb has been decreased due to the directional. This hypothesis would need to be verified with data specifically created to test the transitivity of ‘make’ *mɛ* in asymmetric SVC, directional constructions.

188)	<i>ywa</i>	<i>ḃə</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>dó</i>	<i>l̀̀kho</i>	<i>ə̀̀kho</i>
	N	V	V	LOC	N	N
	God	make	descend	LOC	earth	top
‘God made on earth’ (Air.005)						

Symmetrical SVCs with ‘make’ *mε* tend to be transitive in nature, as example (189) shows.

- 189) *jə = mε hε ké bu*  
 V V V N  
 3 = make walk bad p.rice  
 ‘they destroy the paddy rice.’ (Conversation.061)

#### 4.7.2 Further discussion of the validity of transitivity

As briefly exemplified above, the transitivity of the individual verbs in the SVC is nearly impossible to determine. One of the reasons for this is that it is more common for the verbs in Bwe to be serialized rather than using as a single argument in a clause. Based on the data available in this corpus, it is not possible to identify the valency possibilities for all of the verbs, or even to show examples of minimal pairs.

Another argument for transitivity being an unsuitable measure of SVCs in Bwe is that the verbs that are seen as traditionally valency increasing, namely causatives, benefactives, and instrumentals, point to these verbs losing their valency increasing properties when they are in a serial verb construction. Examples (170) and (171), respectively, show the benefactive verb ‘give’ *í* acting as ditransitive when it is the main verb alone in a clause, but acting as syntactically transitive in a directional SVC.

- 190) *phíbiyǎ í cε dadú tǎ be*  
 N V PRN N NUM CLF  
 Pibiyaw give 3 machete one flat  
 ‘Pibiyaw gave him a dah,’ (Pukheh.110)

191)	<i>kə = ca</i>	<i>í</i>	<i>ku</i>	<i>gà</i>		
	V	V	V	V		
	1PL = see	give	fall	must		
	<i>gə = limólikhwa</i>	<i>ə = jì</i>	<i>ə = jε</i>	<i>cɔ</i>	<i>nu</i>	
	N.Elaboration	V	V	CLF	P	
	1PL = grandchildren	3 = little	3 = immature	some	NU	
	<i>tə</i>	<i>kr</i>	<i>dó</i>	<i>lɔ</i>	<i>wá</i>	<i>ni,</i>
	NUM	CLF	Pf	ADV	P	Pf
	one	little	thus	only	finished	ASSERT

‘We must look after our grandchildren, little things like that.’  
(Baskets.013)

Contiguous SVCs in Bwe are all syntactically intransitive or transitive, with no examples in this data set of ditransitive SVCs.

In Aikhenvald’s analysis of SVCs, she proposes that the valency sharing characteristic of non-subject sharing SVCs is an appropriate categorization axis. Aikhenvald states that most SVCs in any given language are subject sharing, though she does not propose any further categorization for what she claims as a prototypical feature of SVCs in most languages (2006:14). Instead she proposes four major categories for non-subject sharing SVCs: switch-function, cumulative subject, event-argument, and resultative. Within the category of switch-function SVCs, she delineates 5 subcategories: cause-effect, causative, simultaneous experiencer, switch-function consecutive, and complement clause (Aikhenvald 2006:15).

Attempting to categorize Bwe SVCs according to their valency led to a discovery that the majority of the constructions that would fall into these valency defined categories had the common feature of being asymmetric; though even their asymmetry was determined more by the semantics of the secondary verb in the construction rather than by the syntactic valency of the verbs involved. This is due to the fact that discourse anaphora allows arguments to be syntactically dropped. In regards to the symmetric SVCs in Bwe, as stated above, for most of the verbs it is impossible to know what the valency would be alone rather than in the SVC. Again, the semantic categories that Aikhenvald suggests are typical of each argument sharing type of SVC could be used to separate these constructions, but once those

semantic groups have been determined, it is impossible to determine if it matches with the valency categorizations Aikhenvald proposes.

In conclusion, for the present analysis of Bwe, analyzing the SVCs in regards to their valency was often impossible, or exactly overlapping with the semantic categorization of the SVCs that was presented when dealing with symmetric and asymmetric types of SVCs. As a point of further research, a study of the valency of the individual verbs in Bwe could be undertaken and perhaps at that time a categorization of the SVCs in respect to the individual verb's valency could be completed. However, the data gathered for such a study would have to be highly controlled and perhaps even contrived, rather than natural. The validity of undertaking such a study is questionable.

#### **4.8 Summary**

The above chapter has used Aikhenvald's definition of a serial verb construction to analyze multi-verb constructions in Bwe. It was determined that Bwe does have SVCs. The Bwe SVCs are able to be categorized according to the parameters of contiguity, symmetry, wordhood, and the concordance of its operators.

In addition to describing and categorizing Bwe's SVCs via Aikhenvald's typology, a discussion of the problems of using valency as a secondary axis of categorization was presented. It was determined that valency was not a valid criteria by which to categorize the SVCs of this corpus due to the inability to determine an individual verb's valency and the propensity of Bwe to use a more semantic, topic-comment structure, and therefore discourse anaphora, rather than strict syntax.



## Chapter 5

# Conclusion

### 5.1 Introduction

In the following chapter the research reported above is summarized, comments are made on methodology, scope and limitation is stated, and suggestions for areas of further research are made.

### 5.2 Summary

The Bwe language in the Karen branch of Tibeto-Burman languages is a language that has had very little research accomplished. The language community has expressed interest in having their language documented and in enacting literacy efforts. This research may also have benefits for the continuing efforts to historically reconstruct Proto-Karen, especially in regards to the serial verb constructions in these languages.

This thesis was based off of a corpus of seventeen texts taken from Henderson's dictionary (1997:vol II, viii-xviii). A review of the relevant research concerning the particular grammatical feature of serial verbs revealed that Aikhenvald's typology provided a cross-linguistic basis by which a language could be determined to have serial verbs, and several axes by which the types of serial verbs could be identified. The analysis of serial verbs in Bwe uses this framework for the multi-verb constructions.

In order to determine the constituents of the clauses in Bwe, the primary structure of Bwe clauses, noun phrases and particles was briefly described. The simple verb phrase was also described along with the aspect and modality markers, as well as a brief description of negation on the verb. These chapters were provided as background to better understand and separate the phrases, clauses, and auxiliary verbs from the main verbs in Bwe, so that the multi-verb constructions could be clearly seen and analyzed.

Aikhenvald's typology was applied to the multi-verb constructions in Bwe. It was shown that the six criteria for serial verb constructions were met by the multi-verb

constructions in Bwe. Bwe was then categorized as being a primarily contiguous SVC language, with only adverbs and negators being able to come between the verbs in most SVCs, and with only three verbs that show any consistent non-contiguity. It was also shown that all four of the categories of symmetrical SVCs can be exemplified in Bwe, whereas only three of the proposed eight categories of asymmetrical SVCs occur in this data. The three categories which were based on valency were not used due to the propensity for discourse anaphora in Bwe. There were also two categories, comparatives and superlatives, not used because Bwe expresses the concepts of comparative and superlatives with particles rather than serialization of verbs. The wordhood of the SVCs in Bwe was addressed as an issue primarily relying upon Henderson's dictionary, though elaborate constructions were set forth as a possible single word SVC in Bwe. The SVCs were also determined to have single marking for aspect, modality, and polarity, though the negator can occur in the middle of the SVC and only negate one of the verbs rather than the entire SVC.

Finally, the issue of categorizing non subject sharing SVCs via their transitivity was discussed. Aikhenvald proposes this as a secondary categorization for SVCs, However, there are several reasons that this categorization is invalid for this corpus. First, the primary form of expressing verbs in Bwe is via the SVC. This results in very few examples of single verbs comparatively. Second, even with the verbs that do occur as the only predicate in the clause, there is no consensus as to the transitivity. There are examples of the verbs being transitive in one case and intransitive in another case. Finally, and most importantly, Bwe uses discourse anaphora. Therefore the arguments of a verb, serial or not, will not necessarily be overtly stated in the clause. This feature makes it impossible to analyze the transitivity of the clause.

### **5.3 Comments on methodology**

In terms of linguistic theory, this research has found that Aikhenvald's approach provides useful criteria on how to determine if a language has serial verb constructions. Areas that could use refinement would include using translation as a test of monoclausivity, and further definition of how to determine a single event.

Aikhenvald's categories of classification along the lines of contiguity, symmetry, wordhood, and operator marking provide excellent high level cross-linguistic comparison features. However, her focus on valency of a single verb in a language may be invalid in topic-comment languages, such as Bwe. Other features of

categorization for types of SVCs could be developed in order to make the cross-linguistic comparison on the axis of SVCs more detailed.

## **5.4 Scope and Limitations**

The primary goal of this thesis was to analyze Bwe for serial verb constructions. As such it provides only a basic description of other grammatical features of the language as they relate to serial verb constructions.

This thesis is also not meant to compare Bwe to other Karen languages; however, it is attempting to use a common theoretical tool in order to make the comparison of SVCs in Bwe to SVCs in other Karen languages possible.

It is also important to note that the corpus used for this data was published in 1997 and, obviously gathered prior to that. Consequently, it may not reflect Bwe as it is spoken today. However, this historical snapshot of Bwe can provide a starting point for a more current analysis into the language and even a comparative tool for seeing the types of change in this language.

## **5.5 Areas for further research**

One of the primary areas for further research in this language would be in the area of grammaticalization. The present analysis has taken a rather static view of the verbs in Bwe: if the verb could occur on its own as the only predicate in a clause, it was considered a main verb and therefore qualified for the label of serial verb construction. However, research has noted that verbs in asymmetrical SVCs tend to grammaticalize. It would be interesting to see an analysis of the grammaticalization cline for the asymmetrical verbs in Bwe, especially directionals, which could be done with this corpus.

Another possible area for research might be the change of the main verb 'give' *í* which is homophonous with the causative and the applicative in this corpus. This verb is far enough along on the grammaticalization cline to be analyzed with these three different functions for the purposes of this corpus. Further analysis could be done on this verb.

The transitivity of the single verbs in Bwe could be studied in an effort to determine how the individual transitivity effects the transitivity of the SVC as a whole. However, as I have stated above, the propensity for Bwe to drop arguments in

discourse would make the data necessary for a transitivity analysis highly contrived, so the validity of this kind of study would need to be carefully considered.

One of the main limitations of this corpus is its age. Another possible research idea would be to compare the data in this corpus with a more recent version of Bwe, phonologically, lexically, and grammatically. New data could shed some light on how robust the language is over time in order to further inform the sociolinguistic data gathered by Saw Lar Baa (2001).

There is certainly room for more analysis of the noun phrase, particles, aspect, modality, and verbs in Bwe. The above thesis has given an overview, but deeper analysis of the syntactical and semantic structures of this language could prove informative and useful.

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## RESUME

Name: Kirstie Swanson  
Date of Birth: 27 June 1981  
Place of Birth: United States of America  
Institutions Attended: 2008 Interdisciplinary Studies in Linguistics Illinois State  
University  
  
2011 MA in Linguistics Payap University