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Serial verb constructions and verbal adverbs

This chapter presents a first inventory of Mundabli serial verb constructions (in the following referred to as SVCs). It also treats verbal adverbs,¹ which, like verbs, form part of the verbal core but are considered adverbials.

Serial verb constructions are split up into asymmetrical and symmetrical SVCs. The bulk of SVCs in Mundabli are asymmetrical but symmetrical SVCs are also attested. An integral part of my analysis are so-called covers. My use of the term ‘cover’ is adopted from Lovegren (2013: footnote 3, 215). It describes any verb which forms part of a serial verb construction. The term ‘major cover’ thus refers to the ‘major verb’ of an asymmetrical SVC, i.e. the verb from a semantically unrestricted class which determines the semantic core of the asymmetrical SVC, and ‘minor cover’ refers to the verb from a semantically restricted class which modifies the major cover. Thus a ‘cover’ in this sense is simply a verb which forms part of a serial verb construction. An asymmetrical SVC consists of one major cover and one or more minor covers. The major cover comes from a semantically unrestricted class and determines the semantics of the whole construction. The minor cover comes from a semantically restricted class. It semantically modifies the major cover. Minor covers have a fixed place with respect to the major cover. Depending on whether they precede or follow the major cover, they may be referred to as right- or left-modifying covers. With one exception, minor covers in Mundabli are right-modifying. Symmetrical SVCs consist of two or more verbs from a semantically unrestricted class. Both together make up the semantics of the whole symmetric SVC. While the order of verbs in symmetrical SVCs is iconic,

¹Kießling (2011: 241) refers to these verbal adverbs as ‘hybrid adverbials’.
the order in asymmetrical SVCs may also be counter-iconic. While asymmetrical SVCs indicate simultaneity of event-components, symmetrical SVCs rather tend to express sequentiality. For detailed definitions, see Aikhenvald (2006: 21-22) and Kießling (2011: 30-36).

Verbal adverbs are also treated here because they form part of the verbal core and resemble verbs in this respect. It is very likely that they are historically derived from minor coverbs in asymmetrical SVCs. They generally occur at the end of the verbal core, and in one case at the beginning - with nothing (except another hybrid adverbial) separating the two. Grammatically they differ from verbs in at least two respects: first, they cannot occur on their own, and second they usually do not fit into any of the three verb tone classes, although there are unclear cases. Kießling (2011: 241) suggests a number of other tests for verbal adverbs. The application of these tests to Mundabli would surely be an interesting future project, but practical restrictions prevent their application in the current study.

The remainder of this chapter contains a description of asymmetrical SVCs (§9.1) and symmetrical SVCs (§9.2), a description of the expression of grammatical categories in SVCs (§9.3.2) and a description of verbal adverbs (§9.4). Within the SVC sections SVCs are organized according to their semantic function. Asymmetrical SVCs are listed by the relevant coverb. In the examples in this chapter, relevant serial verb constructions are enclosed in square brackets. Within these SVCs, verbs of interest (to be specified in the relevant section) are underlined.

9.1 Asymmetrical SVCs

Asymmetrical serial verb constructions consist of one verb from a relatively large, open, or otherwise unrestricted class and one or more verbs from a semantically or grammatically restricted (or closed) class. Thus, an asymmetrical SVC may contain several minor coverbs. Their order is discussed in the relevant sections. However, the current description focusses mainly on asymmetrical SVCs with two verbs.

In Mundabli, the verb from the restricted class, i.e. the minor coverb, generally follows the verb from the unrestricted class, i.e. the major coverb, except for the causative construction whose unusual order may be due to its recent origin in a bi-clausal construction. Thus, minor coverbs are generally right-modifying. Semantic categories expressed by asymmetrical SVCs in Mundabli are motion (§9.1.1), aspectuality or aspect-related meanings (§9.1.2), valency (§9.1.3) and manner (§9.1.4).

2Kießling (2011) presents a detailed description and analysis of serial verb constructions in Isu (West-Ring), a closely related language spoken in the close vicinity of Mundabli. This chapter profits a lot from this work, as the structures of the two languages are extremely similar and of course, Kießling (2011) treats the topic at a depth which cannot be achieved in a general descriptive grammar.
9.1.1 Motion

One of the semantic fields expressed by asymmetrical SVCs in Mundabli is motion. As Aikhenvald (2006: 22) points out, this semantic field, which she refers to as “direction and orientation”, “is extremely common in most productively serializing languages”. Motion is understood to include deictic orientation (§9.1.1.1) and path (§9.1.1.2). Manner of motion is not usually expressed by coverbs in Mundabli because, on the one hand, many motion verbs conflate motion and manner and, on the other hand, manner is commonly expressed by clause-final manner adverbs like ā mò̅~mò̅ in (279). See §10.1 for more on manner adverbs.

(279) gbó ŋgī à wé mī ā mò̅~mò̅ cl3/7a.body cl3;1sg.poss p2 pain(c) 1sg advlz one~red

My body was hurting me very much.

9.1.1.1 Deictic orientation

The motion verbs tʃū ‘come’ and gān ‘go’ are used as right-modifying coverbs and express spatial deixis, i.e. movement to or away from the deictic center. In this function, they co-occur with path verbs like ‘go up’, ‘go down’, ‘return’, etc., with verbs expressing a transfer of custody, such as ‘take’, ‘give’, ‘sell’ etc., and with speech verbs like ‘say’, ‘ask’, ‘call’, etc. in the function of a major coverb.

The verb tʃū ‘come’ encodes movement towards the deictic center when it is used as a right-modifying coverb in an asymmetrical SVC, as e.g. in (280)-(282). The right-modifying coverb is usually pronounced jű, starting with a fricative rather than an affricate. This pronunciation is only attested in the coverb and not when ‘come’ is used as a main verb. However, when pronounced carefully, the minor coverb may also be pronounced tʃū. Otherwise, the form of the verb is the same, whether it is used as minor coverb or as independent verb.

(280) after, à mī [tān jű] yán ŋg5m after 2sg consec cut(b) come(b) cl3/7a.leave cl1/2.plantain

‘After that, you collect plantain leaves.’
n = lyā ná f-án, n = dā wū w5 yē 1SG = go_to_bush(a).IPFV as PROX=here 1SG=FL.NEG hear(b) NEG COMP bēn fō [mù jū] kpē tsyē w-ēn
cl2pl p1 take(a) come(b) cl1.father.2poss cl1-2pl.poss
w-ś wū-kwē w-ś yē bēn lā nī ṭō tʃīn
cl3-det cl3-home cl3-det comp 2pl do(a) cl7.thing certain there mī in

As I am going to the bush, I don't want to hear that you have taken your father's traditional pot in order to do something inside.'

wū [kē tʃū], wū dzē nf là yē
cl1 return(c) come(b) cl1 say(b) cl1.mother.3sg/pl.poss dat comp

'She returned and said to her mother:'

In (280), the use of the minor coverb 'come' implies that the banana leaves are cut off in order to be kept rather than dropped or thrown away. In (281), 'come' is used as minor coverb to convey the meaning 'bring' rather than 'take (away)', and in (282), the child returns into the house (to the deictic center) after having briefly gone outside behind the house to look for her sister.

An example of the use of tʃū 'come' as single core verb is (283). Here, the verb 'come' surfaces in its imperfective form.

(283) təlā mwōm dzē hāyi, dzē gbān ngī là yē
T. M. say(b) interj say(b) cl1.in-law cl1.sg.poss dat comp
n = tō tʃū 1sg=FOC come(b).IPFV

'[...] Tela Mwom said: Tell my in-law that I am coming!'

The use of the right-modifying coverb gān 'go' conveys direction of movement away from the deictic center, as, e.g. in (284) - (286).

(284) [kwō gān] tō mī
enter(c) go(a) there in

'Go in there!'

(285) dyā [yā gān] tʃīn, wū sé ā mō mō
D. climb(c) go(a) there cl1 be_hot(c) advlz one red

'Dya goes up there, he is really hot.'

3'Dya' is the short form for 'Dieudonné'.
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(286)  우리나 [bí gān] gbɔ̄ kʊ́ng
   CL1 exit(b) go(a) CL3.house house_backside.LOC

‘She went outside behind the house.’

The use of the right-modifying coverb ‘go’ in (284)-(286) shows that the subject in each of these examples moves away from the deictic center.

Examples of ‘go’ as a main verb are found in (287) and (288).

(287)  addChild w-ɔ̄,  우리나라 gān gbɔ̄ kʊ́ng
   CL1.child CL1-DIR exit(b) CL1 go(a) CL3.house behind_house.LOC

‘The child went out. She went behind the house.’

(288)  yɛ̄ comp gān, kwó kō mì
cmplg(a) enter(c) kɒ̋ CL7/8.forest in

‘[It said]: go into the forest!’

The verbs in (288) are interrupted by a pause and are therefore interpreted as independent verbs rather than parts of an SVC.

The right-modifying coverbs ‘come’ and ‘go’ may also be used when the major coverb is a verb of speech, like e.g. ‘call’ or ‘say’ in (289) and (290). These examples illustrate very well how discourse participants are assigned to the deictic center or not. Each of these examples contains two asymmetrical SVCs, each of which has a different subject, the first forming part of the deictic center while the second does not. Accordingly, in both examples, the right-modifying coverb of the first asymmetrical SVC is ‘go’, and that of the second is ‘come’.

(289)  à [bọ́ŋ gān] kpé (é),  우리나라 [dzé]
cmplg(a).IPFV go(a).IPFV CL1.woman INTERJ CL1 say(b).IPFV
   tʃù́ wá lá yɛ̄ (o)
cmplg(a).IPFV 2SG.PP DAT CMPL INTERJ

‘You call a woman, [and] she will tell you that [...]’

(290)  bì mì [dzé gān] bɔ̀ lā, yɛ́ ním nǐ  à
   1PL consec speak(b) go(a) CL2PP DAT CMPL sit(a) IMP.PL CMPL
   mò kwě́ (e),  bà [dzé lû]
cmplg(a) CL1.man CL3/7a.home_village INTERJ CL2 speak(b) come(b).IPFV
   bì lá yɛ́, nêm kwě́ à
   1PL.PP DAT CMPL CL2.husbands CL3/7a.home_village NEG
   fyá tì w5 bì
give(b).IPFV surprisingly NEG 1PL

‘We are telling them: Stay and get married to a local man! They are telling us: The local men do not give us [anything].’
The deictic center in (289) is the addressee. The addressee’s call “goes” out to a woman, while her answer “comes” back to the addressee. In (290), the use of the deictic coverbs establishes the speaker and those he refers to by the first person plural pronoun bì as the deictic center.

The verbs ‘come’ and ‘go’ are also found in initial position in SVCs, such as in (291) and (292). One logical option would be that ‘come’ and ‘go’ are variable minor coverbs which may be either right- or left-modifying. However, this is unlikely, because minor coverbs in Mundabi are generally right-modifying. And indeed, when these verbs occur at the left edge of the verbal core, they do not semantically modify the other verbs within the SVC like minor coverbs in asymmetrical SVCs do, and like ‘come’ and ‘go’ do when they are at the right edge of the verbal core. Instead, the SVCs in this case have a sequential or purposive reading, which suggests that we are dealing with symmetrical serial verb constructions. Thus, the movement verb ‘go’, in this case, represents the initial coverb of a symmetric serial verb construction (see §9.2) rather than a left-modifying coverb in an asymmetrical SVC.

(291) yê [gân tsê] mî å ntsêm mû-ŋ-gê~ŋ-gê ê å 
      comp go(a) search(a) 1SG COM CL6-soil CL6-N-be_red~red 2SG
      mî [tʃû fê] ndâ lá
      consec come(b) give(b) 1SG.DAT DAT

      ‘[She said]: go and search for some red soil for me, and then you come and give [it] to me!’

(292) bê [gân mú jû] kpê
      CL2 go(a) take(a) come(b) CL3.pot

      ‘They went to take the pot.’

Example (291) contains two SVCs. One starts with ‘go’, and the other with ‘come’. Both can have a sequential or purposive reading. In (292) the verb-core initial verb ‘go’ co-occurs within one SVC with the verb-core final right-modifying coverb ‘come’. According to the current analysis, this SVC consists of an asymmetrical SVC ‘take - come’ which is nested on it a larger symmetrical SVC. This analysis is supported by the fact that the verb-core initial verb ‘go’ co-occurs within one SVC with the verb-core final right-modifying coverb ‘come’. This supports the current analysis of verb core-initial deictic motion verbs as major coverbs of symmetrical SVCs rather than left-modifying minor coverbs of asymmetrical SVCs, because, having a deictic function, ‘come’ and ‘go’, which are antonyms, cannot co-occur as minor coverbs within the same asymmetrical SVC. For more on symmetrical SVCs, see §9.2.

9.1.1.2 Path

Path is encoded by asymmetrical SVCs employing motion verbs as right-modifying coverbs. Types of path expressed by asymmetrical SVCs are vertical di-
rection, goal-bounded path and source-bounded path. Path verbs are often clustered, i.e. several path verbs co-occur as minor coverbs in an asymmetrical SVC. The order of these clusters is fixed (at least to a certain extent). Path coverbs always occur in the following order: GOAL - SOURCE - VERTICAL, as can be seen in (307).

**Vertical Direction** Vertical direction is encoded by the right-modifying coverbs yā ‘ascend’ ((293)-(294)) and ṣi ‘descend’ ((295)-(297)).

(293) à mū [wū bī yā] mū 2SG CONSEC drain(c) exit(b) go_up(c) CL6

‘You then take it [the corn] out and drain it […]’

(294) kā mū gé à [tū bī bī yā] fō cond CL2 settle(b) 2SG scoop(b) pass(b) exit(b) go_up(c) CL3.head w-ṣ CL3-DAT

‘When it has settled, you remove the head.’

(295) wān w-ṣ [tsī bī jī] dō w-ṣ CL1.child CL1-DAT spit(b) exit(b) go_down(a) CL3.bean(s) CL3-DAT wū dzē CL1 PP mouth.LOC

‘The child spit the bean out of her mouth.’

(296) wū [gi jī] tē kō gbō CL1 put(b) go_down(a) CL7/8.walking_stick CL7;3SG.POSS CL3.house sē house_front.LOC

‘Then she put her traveling stick down in front of the house.’

(297) kā wū [kpā jī] gū w-ṣ tōŋ, when CL1 light(a) go_down(a) CL3/7.fire CL3-DAT CL1/2.fireplace nī wū [tēn bī jī] fī-ŋī CL1.mother CL1 CL1.POSS drip(c) exit(b) go_down(a) CL6.water sē CL3/7 attic

‘When she lit the fire in the fire place, her mother let a little bit of water drip down from the attic.’

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4The verbs yā ‘ascend’ and ṣi ‘descend’ are glossed in the examples as ‘go_up’ and ‘go_down’, respectively.
The coverbs encode the vertical direction of the action described by the main verb. The extent to which the encoding of vertical direction is obligatory is still unclear. The path coverbs yə́ ‘ascend’ and ʃi᷆ ‘descend’ are often preceded by a goal or source bounded coverb such as bi‘exit’ or kwó ‘enter’, as in (293), (294) and (295).

Examples of yə́ ‘ascend’ and ʃi᷆ ‘go_down’ as main verbs are found in (298) and (299), respectively.

(298) à dī yá Ḗ dʒā b-én mī  
2SG f1 go_up(c) LOC cl8a.bridge cl8a-DEM.PROX in  
‘You will go up on this bridge.’

(299) Dyā sé yě, kā wū kān dō niŋ ng3  
D. be_hot(c) COMP cond cl1 hold(c) cl7.thing upon  
n₁ kā jī  
cl1.mother.3poss f₂ descend(a)  
‘Dyā is very determined. If he continues like that, his mother will come down.’

The minor coverb ʃi᷆ ‘descend’ may also co-occur with non-movement verbs, such as the major coverbs ‘ask’, ‘show’ and ‘call’ in examples (300)-(302).

(300) nī [bū jī] tī wū là, yē mī  
cl1/2.mother ask(b) go_down(a) surprisingly cl1PP dat comp 1SG wān, nwom w-ā dī tī nā (o)  
cl1.child cl1.husband cl1-2sg.poss be(b) surprisingly where  
‘Her mother will ask her: My child, where is your husband?’

(301) n=dī [tsā jī] dʒī dè nō wān  
1SG = f1 show(a) go_down(a) cl3.road cl9.place subord cl1.child w-ā dī f-ō  
cl1-2sg.poss be(b) prox-rel  
‘I will show you the way to where your child is.’

(302) wū [gān b5ŋ jī] dzāŋ tēlā mwom  
cl1- go(a) call(a) go_down(a) again T. M.  
‘She went again to call Tela Mwom.’

What exactly the coverb contributes to the overall meaning is unclear. In (300) and (301), ʃi᷆ may be translatable as something like ‘reveal’. In (302), ʃi᷆ is used either because she is calling down to Tela Mwom₅ or because she is calling him to come down from where he is.

₅In the given context, ‘hot’ means something along the lines of ‘eager, determined’.
₆Tela Mwom is in the bush, which is usually lower than the village, as villages are often situated on hilltops.

Theverbkwó‘enter’denotesmovementintoacontainerandactsastheantonymofbf‘exit’.AsminorcoverbinasymmetricalSVCs,kwó‘enter’additsmeaningof‘movementintoahollowobject’tothemeaningofthecore-verb,asin(305),(303)and(304).

(303) wān kpé w-5 wù kà dī w-5 cl1.child cl1.woman cl1-det cl1 p3 be(b) cl1-rel bwé–bwé wù kà môm w-5 byân, wù mū cl1.toddler—red cl1 p3 suck(b) cl1-rel cl3/7a.breast cl1 take(a) dī w-5, wù [bāŋ kwō] wù dzé cl3.beans cl3-det cl1 lock(b) enter(c) cl1 pp cl7.mouth

‘Thebabygirl,whowasnursing,tookthebeanandput[it]intohermouth.’

(304) kà à dʒyē kpē mū à mī mū jù cond 2sg cook(a) complete(a/c?) cl6 2sg consec take(a) come(b) nǒkā mū-nkɔ̀n mō à mī [nōŋ cl6.corn beer cl6-strong corn beer cl6-det 2sg consec add(a?) kwō j[il] tʃīn ngɔ̀ enter(c) go_down(a) there upon

‘Whenyouhavecompletedcooking,youthentakethestrongcornbeerandyoumixitinthere.’

(305) tsə̄m b-5 [tʃú kwō] gbá, tsū cl7/8.python cl8-det come(b) enter(c) house.loc hit(b) kpē w-5 àŋá tsū wù àŋá tsù wù àŋá, cl1.woman cl1-det like that hit(b) cl1 like that hit(b) cl1 like that lyfèm wù, kù wù wrap_around(b) cl1 tie(a) cl1

‘Thepythonscameintothehouse,theybeatthewomanlikethat,beatherlikethat,wrappedaroundherandtiether.’

AllattestedSVCswiththeminorcoverbkwó‘enter’takealocativeobject,i.e.a locativephraseconsistingofanounplusapositposition,orthe locativeformofanoun,asin(305),justliketheindependentverb.Anexampleoftheindependentuseofkwó‘enter’isin(306).

(306) wù kwō gbá cl1 enter(c) house.loc

‘Sheenteredthehouse.’
The verb kɛ́ ‘return’ denotes movement back to a place which was visited earlier. It is used as a minor coverb in an asymmetrical SVC when movement back to a certain location is involved, as in (307) and may also be used when an event or action is repeated, as in (308).\footnote{While a repeated action or event may be marked by the minor coverb kɛ́ ‘return’, it is more commonly expressed by the hybrid adverbial dzɔ́ŋá ‘again’; see §9.4.1.4.}  

(307) ká mū bì sī yī-ndē or yī-kpōn, à  
COND cl.6 germinate(b) cl.9/10.day cl.10-four or cl.10-five 2SG  
mū [mū kɛ́ bī yā] mū, â mī gwō  
CONSEC take(a) return(c) exit(b) go_up(c) cl.6 2SG CONSEC grind(a)  

‘After germinating for four or five days, you then take it out again and grind [it].’  

(308) bō̋ yīŋ yā gbɔ̋, bō̋ [yīŋ kɛ̄ yā]  
cl.2 build(c) go_up(c) cl.3.house cl.2 build(c) return(c) go_up(c)  
t-5 tʃi tɔ́  
dist-there up dist-det  

‘They build the house upwards. They build and go up again, up there.’  

In example (308), the speaker explains how, in Europe, houses have several floors. In this case, tʃi tɔ́ ‘up there’ refers to Europe.  

The verb ‘return’ is attested as major coverb, as e.g. in (309) and as independent verb in elicited sentences.  

(309) wù [kɛ̀ tʃū], wù dzé nī lā yē  
cl.1 return(c) come(b) cl.1 say(b) mother.3SG/PL.Poss DAT COMP  

‘She returned and told her mother: …’  

In (309), kɛ̀ heads an asymmetric verb construction. The girl, who had left the house and gone behind it, returns into the house, and thus into the deictic center. This explains the use of the minor coverb tʃū.  

**Source-bounded path**  
Source-bounded path coverbs incorporate a reference to the initial point of a motion. The source-bounded path coverbs attested in Mundabli are bī ‘exit’ and tɔ̋ ‘away, off’.  

The verb bī ‘exit’ denotes movement out of a container. It is commonly used as path-specifying coverb, as e.g. in (310)-(313).  

(310) wān w5 [tsī bī jī] d5 w-5  
cl.1.child cl.1-det spit(b) exit(b) go_down(a) cl.3.bean(s) cl.3-det  
wú dɔ̀  
cl.1.pp cl.7.mouth  

‘The child spit out the bean from her mouth.’
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(311) 

\[
\text{dɔ̄ } \text{cl}\_3.\text{beans } \text{fall(a) exit(b) go\_down(a) cl}\_3\text{-one}
\]

‘One of the beans fell down.’

(312) 

\[
kə́ \text{when } \text{wù } \text{cl}\_1 \text{kpə̄ } \text{light(a) go\_down(a) cl}\_3\text{-7a.fire cl}\_1\_2\text{.fireplace}
\]

\[
\text{nù } \text{wù } [ \text{tén } \text{bǐ } \text{fì} ] \text{fi-ngì cl}\_1\text{.mother cl}\_1\text{;3sg.\_poss drip(b) go\_down(a) cl}\_6\text{-water}
\]

\[
\text{sè cl}\_3\_7a.\text{attic}
\]

‘When she lit the fire in the fireplace, her mother let a little bit of water drop down from the attic.’

(313) 

\[
kà mū bī sī yì-ǹdē or yī-kpān \text{COND cl}\_6\text{.germinate(b).COND cl}\_9\_10\_day cl\_10\_four or cl\_10\_five}
\]

\[
ā mī [mū kē bī yā] mū ā mī \text{2sg.\_consec take(a) return(c) exit(b) go\_up(c) cl}\_6\text{.2sg.\_consec}
\]

\[
gwō grind(a)
\]

‘After germinating for four or five days, you then remove it and grind.’

In all these examples, \text{bī} is understood in its literal sense as movement out of a container. Note also that, in all these examples, ‘exit’ co-occurs with a vertical coverb (see 9.1.1.2).

The coverb \text{bī} ‘exit’ can also be used in a figurative sense, as in (314) and (315).

(314) 

\[
kà wù [nī bī] wū ngš tʃīn, dē nū wù \text{COND cl}\_1\text{.shake(a) exit(b) cl}\_1\_pp upon there cl}\_9\text{.place subord cl}\_1\text{.}
\]

\[
kà di f-š, kpé w-š gbā, gbā pō be(b) prox-rel cl\_1\text{.woman cl}\_1\text{-det house.loc cl}\_3\_7a\text{.body}
\]

\[
wū sè, gbā wū yē cl\_3\text{;3sg.\_poss be\_hot(c) cl}\_3\_7a\text{.body cl}\_3\text{;3sg.\_poss start(a)}
\]

\[
n-se Inf\text{-be.hot(c)}
\]

‘When he shook his body where he was, the woman in the house felt hot, she started feeling hot.’ (lit.:...the woman in the house, her body was hot, her body started being hot.)
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(315) ἀνά wù [fǒ bì gān] ἀνά, kpé w-5
like_that cl1 p3 tell(a) exit(b) go(a) like_that cl1.woman cl1-det
kpǐ mē n-kpī-n
die(b) only inf-die(b)-inf

‘Immediately when she was reporting like that, the woman died on
the spot.’

In (314), bī is used together with the major coverb bì ‘shake’. The exact
function of bī here is unclear. In (315), where bī co-occurs with the major
coverb fo̅ ‘tell’, it probably means something like ‘reveal’.

An example of bī ‘exit’ as an independent verb is found in (316)

(316) w-5 wān bī, wù gān mù jū
cl1-det cl1.child exit(b) cl1 go(a) take(a) come(b)
kpū bō gbā
cl3/7a.wooden_pot 3pl.poss house.loc

‘Each child went out and brought a wooden pot from the house.’

The verb tɔ̋ which means ‘kick’ when used as an independent verb, func-
tions as a sort of centrifugal marker when used as a right-modifying coverb
in an asymmetrical SVC. In this case, it is translatable as something along the
lines of ‘away, off’, see e.g. (317) and (318).

(317) wù bōn tɛ̄ k-ɔ́, wù [y5 tɔ̋]
cl1 pick(b) cl7.walking_stick cl7-det cl1 throw(a) away(b)

‘Then she picked up the stick and threw [it] away [from herself].’

(318) yɛ̀ wù kwô gbā, wù dā bō kɔ̀ [yā tɔ̋]
comp cl1 enter(c) house.loc cl1 see(a) impers p3 sweep(a) away(b)
gbā wū
c13.house c13;3sg.poss

‘When she was about to enter the house, she saw [that] someone had
swept her house.’

In (317), the centrifugal meaning is straightforward. In (318), the coverb
illustrates the dirt being swept away. It seems that some kind of movement
away from the body is implied. The same coverb tɔ̋ is commonly used in a non-
literal sense, meaning something like ‘cease to exist’ or ‘be(come) useless’, as
in (319) and (320), respectively.
Serial verb constructions and verbal adverbs

(319) wù dzé āy, n=dī yó tjín sé, n=gān
   cl1 say(b) interj 1 SG = f1 go_up(c) there cl3/7a attic 1 SG = go(a)
dā nín̥ ki [lā nīm tō]
   see(a) cl7 thing cl7 make(a).IPFV stop_burning(c).IPFV away(b).IPFV
k-š gū w-š
   cl7 REL cl3/7a fire cl3 DET

‘She said: Shiish! I will go up into the attic and find out myself what is putting out the fire.’ (lit.: ‘[...] the thing which is putting out the fire.’)

In (319), the coverb tō accompanies the major verb nīm ‘stop burning’; in (320), it implies that the things referred to will be useless once they have been spoiled. The function of tō ‘kick, away’ resembles that of fī ‘pass’, which is often translatable as ‘disappear’ or ‘cease to exist’ (see below). I cannot provide a spontaneous example of the independent use of tō ‘kick’, but it is attested in elicitation.

Center-bound path Center-bound path coverbs integrate a reference point along their path which is neither its beginning nor its end (Kießling 2011: 150). Center-bound path coverbs in Mundabli are fī ‘pass’, tsō ‘surpass’ (but is only attested in combination with fī) and dān ‘cross’.

The semantics of the verb fī ‘pass’ are somewhat blurred when the verb is used as a minor coverb; see (329). The coverb can often be translated as ‘disappear’ or ‘cease to exist’, as in (321) and (322).

(321) ḕ nsilā mē wān mē [lē fī]
   loc cl1/2 afternoon 1 SG cl1 child consec get_lost(a) pass(b)

‘And in the afternoon, my child went missing.’

(322) sī yi-mwō ánā mbē bō-tō [bī fī]
   cl9/10 day cl9 one like that cl2 people cl2 three exit(b) pass(b) gān]
   go(a)

‘On one day, three people pass away.’
In (321), the use of \( \text{fɨ} \) implies that the child is gone. The same holds for (322). The same coverb is also used in a figurative sense, implying that something is ‘lost’, i.e. that it is either gone or useless beyond repair, as in (323) and (324).

\( \text{(323)} \)
\[ \text{mò nō̂ ŋ = kà mū w-ś wān wū} \]
\[ \text{cl1.man subord 1SG = P3 marry(a) cl1 REL cl1.child cl1.cl1.Poss} \]
\[ \text{kà [fēl \( \text{fɨ} \)]} \]
\[ \text{P3 be_blind(a?) pass(b)} \]

‘The man whose daughter I married was blind.’

\( \text{(324)} \)
\[ \text{ndʒɔmyīn (nō̂) wū kà jē b-ś yē wū yī kà} \]
\[ \text{cl8.food subord cl1 P3 want(a) cl8 REL comp cl1 eat(b) P3} \]
\[ \text{bō \( \text{fɨ} \)]} \]
\[ \text{be(come)_bad(a) pass(b)} \]

‘The food which he wanted to eat was spoiled.’

The minor coverb \( \text{fɨ} \) is also used to express comparative, as in (325) and (326).

\( \text{(325)} \)
\[ \text{bī dzé gān bō lā yē, [tō \( \text{fɨ} \)] ā} \]
\[ \text{1L speak(b) go(a) cl2 PP DAT comp be smart(b) pass(b) com} \]
\[ \text{yū y-ā (ē)} \]
\[ \text{cl9/10 buttock cl9-2SG.Poss interj} \]

‘We always tell them that they should be more careful with their sex-life.’

\( \text{(326)} \)
\[ \text{pītà dzé yē wū ā fyá wū fɨ-mbī} \]
\[ \text{P. say(b) comp cl1 NEG give(b).IPFV NEG cl19 palm_wine} \]
\[ \text{f-ś mī lā, yē fɨ [sīŋ \( \text{fɨ} \)]} \]
\[ \text{cl19 DET 1SG.PP DAT comp cl19 be small(a) pass(b)} \]

‘Peter said that he is not giving me that bit of wine, that it is too little.’

The verb \( \text{tsā} \) ‘surpass’ is only attested together with \( \text{fɨ} \), which suggests that \( \text{tsā \ fɨ} \) is a fixed expression rather than a combination of verbal adverb and verb. In combination with the coverb \( \text{fɨ} \) ‘pass’, \( \text{tsā} \) expresses comparative semantics, see e.g. (327).

\( \text{(327)} \)
\[ \text{gb5 nŋī [gā tsā \( \text{fɨ} \) gb5} \]
\[ \text{cl3.house cl3;1SG.Poss be fat(b) surpass(b) pass(b) cl3.house} \]
\[ \text{w-ā} \]
\[ \text{cl3-2SG.Poss DAT} \]

‘My house is bigger than yours.’
Serial verb constructions and verbal adverbs

(328) wù [yám tsō fī]
c11 sing(c) surpass(b) pass(b)

°‘She sings most [of all].’

An example for the independent use of fī ‘pass’ is found in (329).

(329) ŋ=tʃyé đè nō wù fī f-ò
1SG=know(c) c19.place subord c11 pass(b) prox-rel

‘I know the place which she had passed [through].’

The right-modifying minor coverb dān ‘cross’ may specify the direction of a movement verb, as in (330).

(330) wù fā â [ŋ-wē dān]
c11 be_occupied(b) com inf-smuggle(c) cross(a)

°‘He is crossing secretly.’

Like fī ‘pass’, the coverb dān ‘cross’ may also express comparative semantics (331).

(331) kpī tʃăm y-ò f-ò â [lī dān]
c19/10.death Tsham c110-det prox-det p2 be_strong(a) cross(a) bī, hēy exit(b) interj

‘Death in Tsham is really strong, hey!’

An elicited example of the independent use of dān ‘cross’ is found in (332).

(332) mō w-ò fā â n-dān mব̄ŋ ṭ
c11.person c11-det be_occupied(b) com inf-cross(a) c11/2.river loc
d5 mi c18a.bridge in

°‘The man is crossing the river via the bridge.’

9.1.2 Aspectuality or aspect-related

Asymmetrical serial verb constructions in Mundabli may also encode aspectuality or aspect-related meanings, which is cross-linguistically common for asymmetrical SVCs (Aikhenvald 2006: 23). Among the meanings expressed by asymmetrical SVCs are continuative (§9.1.2.1), completive (§9.1.2.2) and persistive (§9.1.2.3). Just like in other languages, posture verbs (‘stay’, ‘sit’) and verbs of termination (‘finish’) surface as coverbs in the relevant constructions (Aikhenvald 2006: 23).
9.1.2.1 dő ‘stay, remain’

When it is used as a right-modifying coverb in an ASVC, the verb dő ‘stay, remain’ conveys continuative semantics, meaning roughly ‘to keep on doing something’, as in (333) (repeated here from (299)) and (334).

(333) dyá sé yê, ká wù [kán dő] niŋŋ ng5
D. be_hot(c) COMP COND CL1 hold(c) stay(b) CL1.7.thing upon
nî ká jî
CL1.mother.3POSS 2 descend(a)

‘Dya is very determined. If he keeps on like this, his mother will come down.’.

(334) m= [bi yá dő] njén sütée tʃîn njén, kê
1SG=exit(b) go_up(c) stay(b) now so_much there now even
n=ká yá bî bɔ t-5 wû t-5
1SG=p3 go_up(c) exit(b) FRUST DIST-there CL1? DIST-DET

‘I've gotten up and stayed here for so long today, I did not even reach up there.’

Examples of dő ‘stay’ as a main verb are found in (335) and (336).

(335) wān w-5 mî dô a w5m
CL1.child CL1-DET CONSEC stay(b) ADVLZ alive?

‘The child stayed alive.’

(336) dô kî-dzâŋ
stay(b) ADVLZ-good(b)

‘Stay well!’

The phrase in (336) is a greeting often used upon departure.

9.1.2.2 mè ‘finish’

The verb mè ‘finish’, when used as a right-modifying coverb, expresses complete aspect, as in (337)-(340). As Aikhenvald: 23 points out, this is cross-linguistically common for coverbs with similar semantics (Aikhenvald 2006: 23).

(337) yê n= [ŋw5m mè] nâm b-5
COMP 1SG=stir(b) finish(a) CL8.fufu CL8-DET

‘[Tell her] that I’ve finished stirring the fufu!’
Serial verb constructions and verbal adverbs

(338) bɔ̋ yí d5 w-ɔ́, bɔ̋ yí bɔ̋ yí bɔ̋ yí bɔ̋ cl2 eat(b) cl3.det cl2 eat(b) cl2 eat(b) cl2 eat(b) cl2 yí, bɔ̋ [yí mɛ́] eat(b) cl2 eat(b) finish(a

‘They ate the beans. They ate and ate and ate until they had finished.’

(339) ká à [wɔ̄ŋ mɛ́], kó m=mù, mĩ n=tsɔ̀ cond 2sg squish(a) finish(a) cond 1sg =drink(b) 1sg 1sg =show(a) dë nɔ̀ wàin w-ɔ́ kà fī f-ɔ́ place subord cl1.child cl1-det f3 pass(b) prox-rel

‘After you have finished squishing, after I have drunk, I will show you where your child has gone.’

(340) yɛ́ gbìñ dī [kó yí mɛ́] bɛ́n comp cl9.leopard f1 catch(b) eat(b) finish(a) 2pl

‘[...] that the leopard will catch and eat all of you.’

The use of this coverb implies that the action described by the main verb is not carried on, i.e. it is either completed or interrupted. The verb mɛ́ ‘finish’ is also attested as an intransitive main verb.

9.1.2.3 nǐm ‘sit’

The right-modifying coverb nǐm ‘sit’ when used as a main verb, conveys persistent meaning, i.e. it shows that an action has been ongoing for a while and is still ongoing at the time of reference, as e.g. in (341) and (342).

(341) wù [kʊ̄ nǐm mɛ́] n-kò cl1 cry(a) sit(a) only inf-cry(a

‘She was still only crying.’

(342) à [læ̀ nǐm] mān 2sg do(a).ipfv sit(a).ipfv what

‘What are you still doing [here]?’

Examples of nǐm as a main verb are (343) and (344).

(343) bɔ̋ nǐm sūtēee, bɔ̋ tį́ nzwɛ́n nswɛ́n 3pl sit(a) extensively 3pl come(b) now cl2.friends

‘They stayed [together] for a long time, they now have become friends.’
9.1. Asymmetrical SVCs

(344) à mĩ [nim jî] bã dè nũ bũ 2sg consec sit(a) go_down(a) exactly cl9.place subord impers kpã f-ð gũ, ā fi-ngũ wã kũn light_fire(a) prox-rel cl3/7.fire com cl19-water 2sg.pp hands.loc

‘Then (you will) sit down exactly where they make fire, with a bit of water in your hand.’

While in example (343), nim is the only verb, in (344), it forms the major verb of an asymmetrical SVC.

9.1.3 Valency

9.1.3.1 Causative SVCs with lə ‘do, make’

The only attested verb of causation in causative SVCs is lə ‘do, make’, which means that the initial coverb of a causative SVCs is extremely restricted. The second coverb in a causative SVC with lə ‘make’ is always intransitive; see e.g. (345)-(347). Causation of transitive verbs is expressed by multi-clausal constructions; see (350).

(345) wù [lã bwān] mĩ yẽ why cl1 make(a) be_wounded(a) 1sg quot.q

‘Why has he injured me?’

(346) kwẽ b-ẽn nã t-án sê cl7/8.rat cl8-dem.prox boast(a) dist-here cl3/7a.attic t-ányi, n = dîf [lã kpĩ mɛ] kwẽ dist-this_way 1sg = f1 make(b) die(b) finish(a) cl7/8.rat b-ẽn t-án sê õ cl8-dem.prox dist-here cl3/7a.attic emph

‘These rats which are showing off in this attic - I will kill all of them!’

(347) ngĩ m-ð [lã nim tɔ] gũ cl6.water cl6-det make(a) stop_burning(c) away(c) cl3.fire w-ð yã cl3-det interj

‘The water will put out the fire.’

The verb lə ‘do, make’ in causative asymmetrical SVCs represents the only attested case of a left-modifying coverb.

The verb ‘do, make’ is also attested as an independent main verb; see e.g. (348), which contains the imperfective form of the verb.
Serial verb constructions and verbal adverbs

(348) kpé w-ën, à kɔ̂ lè mān
   cl1.woman cl1-dem.prox 2sg hab do(a).ipfv what

‘Woman, what are you doing?’

As already pointed out, causation may also be expressed by a multi-clause construction involving the verb lə̀ ‘make’ in the first clause, see e.g. (349) and (350).

(349) wān w-ën, dǐ wà nṑ à lɔ̀ w-5 nó mī
   cl1.child cl1-dem.prox be(b) 2sg subord 2sg do(a) cl1-rel as 1sg
   wān w-5 lè f-ān gbɔ̀
   cl1.child cl1-det get_lost(a).ipfv prox-here cl13.house
   kūŋ
   backside_of_house.loc

‘Child, you are the one who made my child get lost behind this house.’

(350) mī wān kà lɔ̀ mī n=tsū wù
   1sg cl1.child p3 make(a) 1sg 1sg = beat(b) cl13sg

‘My child, made me beat her.’

In (349), cause and effect clauses are linked by the connective nṑ which translates roughly as ‘as’. In (350), cause and effect clauses are simply juxtaposed to each other. In the latter example, a multi-clause construction is the only possible solution because the effect verb tsū is transitive and causative SVCs only allow intransitive second verbs. However, the use of a multi-clause construction is also possible when the second verb is intransitive.

9.1.4 Manner

Manner may be expressed by clause-final manner adverbs (see §10.1) or by manner SVCs. Manner SVCs involve minor coverbs which describe the way in which the action referred to by the main verb is performed. However, adverbs are much more common. Only a very restricted inventory of manners can be expressed by manner SVCs. These are described in the current section.

9.1.4.1 dzì ‘travel; aimlessly’

The use of the right-modifying coverb dzì ‘travel’ implies that something is done aimlessly, as in (351)-(353).

(351) bi bó gān bɔ̀ lɔ̀, yɛ̀ bɛn [læ̀ dzì]
   1pl ask(b) go(a) cl2.pp dat comp 2pl do(a).ipfv walk_around(b).ipfv
   tí mān
   surprisingly what

‘We are asking them: What are you doing [aimlessly]?’
9.1. Asymmetrical SVCs

(352) bɔ̋ fò̋ tʃú̋ bí lá yē bɔ̋ [tsè cl2 tell(a).IPFV come(b).IPFV 1PL. PP DAT COMP cl2 search(a)
dzī gān] kpō̋ walk_around(b) go(a) cl3/7a.money

‘They are telling us that they are searching around for money.’

(353) Pē̋ kō sé gān mò w-5 yē̋ Petr us p3;HAB insult(c).IPFV go(a).IPFV cl1.man cl1-DET COMP mè mò w-5 kō nām tʃyé w5 nā wù NCS.QUOT.Q cl1.man cl1-DET HAB work(a) know(c) NEG as cl1 [tān dzī] tsū̋ yē̋ buy(b) travel(b) cl7/8.banana QUOT.Q

‘Petr us was insulting the man [asking] whether the man doesn’t know how to work as he [aimlessly] buys banana?’

In all these examples, the coverb dzī adds a meaning of aimlessness to the meaning of the major verb. The verb dzī ‘travel’ is also frequently used as main verb, as in (354).

(354) bɔ̋ dzî̋ mě műntù mĩ műntù mĩ̋ cl2 travel(b).IPFV only cl7/8.car in cl7/8.car in

‘They only ever travel by car.’

9.1.4.2 băn ‘be clean; be white; shine; clearly’

The verb băn, which may mean ‘shine’, ‘be white’ or ‘be clean’ when used as a main verb, means as much as ‘clearly, really’ when used as right-modifying coverb in an asymmetrical SVC; see e.g. (355). and (356). It can also have evidential meaning, as in (356).

(355) n=[gān dɔ̋ băn] niŋ kī læ nǐm 1SG = go(a) see(a) be_clean(b) cl7.thing cl7 do(a).IPFV exit(c)
tō k-ŋ gū w-5 away(b) cl7-REL cl3/7.fire cl3-DET

‘I will go to see clearly what is putting out this my fire.’

(356) yē n=[niŋ băn] yē n=dɔ̋ wū lá COMP 1SG = want(c) be_clean(b) COMP 1SG = see(a) cl1PP DAT

‘[She said]: I really want to see him.’

The verb băn ‘clean; white’ is also used as a main verb, as e.g. in (357).
Serial verb constructions and verbal adverbs

(357) dʒǔ nō bɔ̋ kə̀ kpɨ̄ kpɨ̄ lǎ kpɨ̄ y-ɔ̄ tō k-ɔ́ ngɔ᷆ kə̀ kā nō bɔ̋ kpɨ̄ lǎ kpɨ̄ y-ɔ̄ tō k-ɔ́ ngɔ᷆ kə̀ kā nō bɔ̋ kpɨ̄ lǎ kpɨ̄ y-ɔ̄ tō k-ɔ́

(358) yɛ̄ gbɨ̀ŋ dɨ̌ [kɔ́ yí mɛ́] bɛ̄n, [...]

‘The goat which was killed on that day was completely white.’

9.2 Symmetrical SVCs

Following Aikhenvald (2006: 22), a serial verb construction is classified as a symmetrical serial verb construction (or symmetrical SVC) if all its components come from unrestricted classes. Unlike in asymmetrical SVCs, the order of components in symmetrical SVCs tends to be iconic, reflecting the temporal sequence of subevents. As Aikhenvald points out, symmetrical serial verb constructions are not ‘headed’ in the way asymmetrical ones are: all their components have equal status in that none of them determines the semantic or syntactic properties of the construction as a whole. A symmetrical SVC may contain an embedded asymmetrical SVC, as in (358), (359) or (360). Note that, in this case, the symmetrical SVC, strictly speaking, contains verbs from a restricted class, namely the minor coverbs in the embedded asymmetric SVCs. In Mundabli, symmetrical SVCs are rare as compared to asymmetrical SVCs. Only sequential events are expressed by symmetrical SVCs (§9.2.1). Fixed expressions which have the structure of symmetrical SVCs are described in §9.2.2.

Boundaries of symmetrical SVCs and embedded asymmetrical SVCs in the examples in this section are marked by square brackets. In asymmetrical SVCs, the major coverb is underlined.

9.2.1 Sequential events

Symmetrical serial verb constructions in Mundabli generally encode sequential events, i.e. they refer to a sequence of actions; see e.g. (358)-(360). In some cases, such as in (358), they may also have a purpose reading.

(358) yɛ̄ gbɨ̀ŋ dɨ̌ [kɔ́ yí mɛ́] bɛ̄n, [...]

‘...that the leopard will catch and eat all of you, [...]’
9.2. Symmetrical SVCs

The symmetrical SVCs in (358) and (359) consist of major coverbs (kõ ‘catch’ and tɛ̌m ‘shoot’, respectively)8 followed by asymmetrical SVCs with right-modifying coverbs (yí mé ‘eat - finish’ and kwé jũ ‘return home from the bush - come’, respectively). In (360), the asymmetrical SVC kwé jũ ‘return home from the bush - come’, also with a right-modifying coverb, precedes the second major coverb dâ ‘see’.

9.2.2 Fixed expressions

This section deals with fixed expressions which have their origin in lexicalized symmetrical serial verb constructions. The verbs that make up these SVCs frequently co-occur. I am aware that it is problematic to assume that these are all symmetric SVCs. When one of the verbs does not occur on its own, it is hard to determine whether the whole SVC is symmetrical or not. I classify them here as symmetric SVCs because none of the verbs they consist of belongs to a closed class; however, the criteria which distinguish asymmetric from symmetric SVCs are somewhat problematic. The fixed expressions are listed in (361)-(364). In the headings they are provided without tone.

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8In this paragraph, verbs are given with the tone patterns they bear in the relevant examples.
(361) nɨmkɔm ‘wait’:

Pē dzé yē bī [nîm kîm] āyān, yē mò
Petrus say(b) COMP 1.PL sit(a) wait(?) like_that COMP 1.PL.person
nām, dʒ̊ibrì jè wū tāŋ tsú
CL9.animal Gabriel want(a) CL1 buy(b) CL7/8.banana

‘Pe said that we should wait, that animal man, Gabriel, wants to buy banana.’

(362) fʊŋ mu ‘help’:

hē, yē gbām [fʊŋ mʊ̃] mî
INTERJ COMP CL7.God ?? take(a) 1SG.NPBV

‘Hey! God has helped me.’

(363) bi ya ‘get’:

bī ā [bī yā] ntōntō yē bī l5
1.PL 2.PL exit(b) go_up(c) CL1/2.morning COMP 1.PL go_to_bush(a)
fwēn
clear(b)

‘We got up in the morning in order to go to the bush and clear [the field].’

(364) bɔŋwu ‘pray’:

kā n̄=kā kān kpō ā wū-dʒwē first nîn
COND 1SG=COND have(c) CL3.money ADVLZ CL3.much first CL7.thing
n̄=kā lā k-5 kř gů yē ƞ̄=kā [bʊŋ wʊ̃]
1SG=f2 do(a) CL7-rel CL7 be(b) COMP 1SG=f2 call(a) hear(b)
gbām
CL7a.God

‘If I had a lot of money, the first thing I would do, I would pray to God.’

Fixed expressions derived from SVCs may contain verbs which are not attested on their own, such as kōm in (361) and fʊŋ in (362). However, it may also be the case that all verbs within a fixed expression are attested on their own, as in (363) and (364). In any case, the meaning of a fixed expression cannot be readily derived from the meaning of their parts. The meaning of bi ya in (363), for example, is ‘get up’, not just ‘go out upwards’.
9.3 Expression of grammatical categories in SVCs

While some grammatical categories are only expressed once for the entire SVC, others are marked on each verb individually. Some categories also involve a combination of both.

9.3.1 Tone and mood in SVCs

Under certain circumstances, verbs which occur in non-initial position within a sequence of verbs may undergo sandhi phenomena. In particular, this is the case for imperative Class A verbs. For a detailed description of tone sandhi in imperatives, see §3.2.2.4. Declarative verbs are not subject to tone sandhi - at least not perfective verbs in the present/immediate past tense (p0). Other tenses and imperfective verbs have not been checked for tone sandhi. The tone pattern of perfective verbs in p0 declaratives is not altered when they occur within a sequence of verbs (see §8.5.1.8 for an overview of perfective verb tone patterns). Only phonetic effects can be observed, which are caused by adjacent tones and phrase boundaries (low tone spread is described in §3.4.2 and phrase-final vs. non-final tone patterns are described in §3.2.2.2). Due to a process referred to as low tone spread, perfective Class B verbs, which bear a superhigh tone in their canonical form, bear an arising tone when they are preceded by a low tone subject or by a Class A verb. In the case of Class A verbs, their position influences their tonal realization.

9.3.2 Perfective/imperfective aspect marking in SVCs

Verbs within an SVC may be perfective or imperfective. Perfective verbs, which represent the unmarked case, take the canonical stem form and are not explicitly marked in the gloss. In the unmarked case, all verbs within an SVC are in the perfective, as in (365). In imperfective aspect SVCs, the imperfective is marked on all verbs within SVC by specific tonal patterns, as in (366), and often by ablaut as well, as in the second verb in sequence in (366). For more on tone changes and ablaut in imperfective verbs, see §3.2.2.3 and §3.3.5, respectively.

(365) wù [tsē dī] wān wū bɔ̀
   cl1 search(a) see(a) cl1.3sg.poss frust
   ‘She did not find her child.’

(366) wù kā [tsē dyā] bò tsū b-ɔ̀
   cl1 p3.3sg.hab search(a).ipfv see(a).ipfv frust cl7/8.banana cl8-det
   ‘He was searching for the bananas but couldn’t find them.’
It is unclear whether aspect may also switch from imperfective to perfective (or the other way around) within an SVC, as reported for Isu (Kießling 2011: 77-79).

### 9.3.3 Tense and polarity in SVCs

Tense is marked by a preverbal segmental tense marker (§8.2.1) and by specific verb tone patterns (§8.5.1.1). In the case of SVCs, a preverbal segmental tense marker precedes the complete verbal core, as in (367), and all verbs within the SVC take the appropriate tone pattern. Verbs within an SVC cannot take different tense markers.

(367) yɛ̄ gbɨ̀ŋ dɪ kɔ́ yí mɛ́ bɛ̄n, [...]  
\textit{COMP CL.9.leopard f1 catch(b) eat(b) finish(a) 2pl.}  
‘...that the leopard will catch and eat all of you, [...]’

Polarity is marked by the discontinuative marker \(\tilde{a}...\ wɔ̄\), which embraces the verbal core. In the case of serial verb constructions, the marker \(\tilde{a}\) precedes the initial element of the verbal core, which may be either the first verb of the sequence or a verb-core-initial adverbial. The marker \(wɔ̄\) follows the verbal core. To the best of my knowledge, verbs within SVCs cannot be individually marked for polarity. Thus, all verbs within an SVC take the same polarity value.

(368) tɒ̋m \(\tilde{a}\) bì-lō fán \(\tilde{a}\) bɔ́m mŨ  
\textit{CL7/8.palm_village ADVLZ CL8-all here NEG agree(c).IPFV take(a).IPFV}  
\(wɔ̄\) mĩ kẽ kĩ-mō  
\textit{NEG 1SG.NPVb even CL7-one}  
‘None of the villages here agree with me – not a single one.’

### 9.3.4 Nominalization in SVCs

When SVCs are nominalized, only the first verb in the sequence takes a segmental marker. SVCs in infinitive constructions and in the ability construction are treated in §9.3.4.1 and §9.3.4.2.

### 9.3.4.1 Infinitive constructions involving SVCs

When an SVC occurs in the infinitive, as e.g. in the progressive construction\(^9\) in (369), the segmental infinitive marker is affixed to the first verb of the sequence. All verbs within the SVC take the tone patterns characteristic for infinitives; see Table 8.9 in §8.4.1 for an overview of infinitive verb tone patterns.

\(^9\)For more on progressive constructions, see §8.4.1.3.
9.4. Verbal adverbs

Verbal adverbs form part of the verbal core, as in (371), as opposed to manner adverbs (see §10.1) and adverbial clauses, which are generally found at the end of an utterance. The verbal adverb mɛ̀ ‘only’ in (371) occurs at the right edge of the verbal core, preceding the post-core negative marker wɔ̄. In (371), the proximate future (f1) marker dɨ̋ and the pre-core negative marker ą are fused. The inner brackets mark the boundaries of the verbal core, the outer brackets mark those of the verbal complex.

(371) n = [dā [yī mɛ̀] wɔ̄] nām
1SG = F1,NEG eat(b) only NEG CL8.fufu

“I will not only eat fufu.”

Table 9.1 contains a non-exhaustive list of verbal adverbs. While the great majority occur at the right edge of the verbal core, I also found one verbal adverb which occurs in core-initial position. First the verb-core-final verbal adverbs are treated (§9.4.1), and then the verb-core-initial adverb sɛ́n (§9.4.2).

In analogy with Kießling’s (2011) analysis of what he refers to as ‘hybrid adverbials’ in Isu (West-Ring), I assume that at least part of the verbal adverbs have their origin in the minor coverbs which they have developed out of

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(369) wù fā ā [n-kyɛ̄ kwō ʃ]jì
cl1.pvb be_occupied(b) com INF-look(c) enter(c) go_down(a)
nìŋ wù lɛ k-ş kì
cl7.thing cl1.pvb make(a).ipfv cl7-det cl7.npvb

‘It [the owl] was looking down on what he [the child] was doing.’

9.3.4.2 Ability constructions involving SVCs

In the ability construction (see §8.4.2), the first verb of a verb sequence also hosts the nominalizing prefix characteristic of the ability construction, as in (370). All verbs of the sequence bear the tone pattern characteristic for nominalized verbs in ability constructions.

(370) mọ kpā ŋgì lɔ̄ nì fì,
_cs.quot cl1.wife cl1;1sg.poss go_to_bush(a) leave(a) pass(b)
mọ ā n = dĩ wɔ̄ [kɔ̃-gān mū] ā mì ndʒɛ̀n
_cs.quot NEG 1SG = be(b) NEG ABIL-go(a) take(a) advlz 1SG alone

‘[I said]: my wife has gone to the bush, [I said] that I cannot go and take [the corn] on my own.’

9.4 Verbal adverbs

Verbal adverbs form part of the verbal core, as in (371), as opposed to manner adverbs (see §10.1) and adverbial clauses, which are generally found at the end of an utterance. The verbal adverb mɛ̀ ‘only’ in (371) occurs at the right edge of the verbal core, preceding the post-core negative marker wɔ̄. In (371), the proximate future (f1) marker dɨ̋ and the pre-core negative marker ą are fused. The inner brackets mark the boundaries of the verbal core, the outer brackets mark those of the verbal complex.

(371) n = [dā [yī mɛ̀] wɔ̄] nām
1SG = F1,NEG eat(b) only NEG CL8.fufu

*I will not only eat fufu.*
Serial verb constructions and verbal adverbs

Table 9.1: Verbal adverbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>simplex (perfective)</th>
<th>position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tī ‘surprisingly’</td>
<td>core-final</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fúbɔ̌, bɔ̌ ‘also’</td>
<td>core-final</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mɛ̌ ‘only’</td>
<td>core-final</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dzɔ̋ŋa̋, dzɔ̄ŋ ‘again’</td>
<td>core-final</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bá ‘exactly’</td>
<td>core-final</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tá ‘only’</td>
<td>core-final</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sɛ́n ‘then, subsequently’</td>
<td>core-initial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Through grammaticalization. However, this assumption is highly speculative with regard to Mundabli.\textsuperscript{11}

In order for a verb-like word which forms part of a complex verbal core to be assigned to the group of verbal adverbs rather than being analyzed as coverb in an asymmetrical SVC, it must meet at least one of the following two criteria:\textsuperscript{12} The first criterion concerns the tonal pattern of the verb. While verb stems inflect tonally, depending on their tense/mood/aspect, adverbials do not exhibit comparable tone changes. The second criterion is syntactic independence, i.e. the ability to occur without another verb. Unlike adverbials, verbs can stand alone, as the main and only verb of a clause.

I have chosen to apply two criteria rather than just one, because neither criterion suffices on its own. Although they are analyzed as verbs, I have no evidence that some of the coverbs listed in the previous sections are attested as independent main verbs. On the other hand, coverbs of tone class C do not inflect tonally and thus do not pass the test for tonal inflection. The distinction between coverbs and verbal adverbs is not always clear-cut. More detailed research would probably result in a more fine-grained distinction, although a fuzzy boundary between the two is likely to remain (see Kießling (2011: 241) for a comparable situation in the Ring languages).

The remainder of this section describes verb-core-final (§9.4.1) and verb-core-initial adverbials (§9.4.2).

### 9.4.1 Verb-core-final verbal adverbs

As Table 9.1 shows, the majority of verbal adverbs occur in verb-core final position. The current section treats the listed verb-core final verbal adverbs in turn. They are listed by form and semantics.

\textsuperscript{11} For a detailed account of the origin of verbal adverbs or ‘hybrid adverbials’ in Isu, which this assumption is based on, see Kießling (2011: 241).

\textsuperscript{12} An additional criterion for verbal status may be the existence of perfective forms involving ablaut as described in §8.1.3. However, for the current study, the two listed criteria should be sufficient.
9.4. Verbal adverbs

9.4.1.1 tì ‘surprisingly’

While the verbal adverb tì bears a high tone and is thus tonally not distinguishable from a verb of the tonal class c, tì does not exist as an independent verb and is therefore analyzed as an adverbial. In all attested examples, i.e. (372)-(375), tì occurs at the end of the verbal core. In (375), it further precedes the postverbal negation marker wɔ̄. The adverb tì is used to express astonishment or counter-expectancy.

(372) mɨ̄ wān [gàn fí tì] nā, mɨ̄ wān [gàn fí tì] nā
1sg cl1.child go(a) pass(b) surprisingly where 1sg cl1.child go(a) fí tì pass(b) surprisingly where

‘Where is my child going? Where is my child going?’

(373) bĩ bũ ɡān wū ɬā, yē nǐ, ɬ à [gwān fí tì] mān yē
1pl ask(b) go(a) cl1pp dat comp cl1/2.mother 2sg be_sick(a) tì surprisingly what QUOT.

‘We ask her: mother, why are you ill?’

(374) bĩ bũ ɡān bō ɬā, yē bēn [lā dží]
1pl ask(b) go(a) cl2pp dat comp 2pl do(a).ipfv walk_around(b).ipfv tì surprisingly what

‘We are asking them: What are you doing [aimlessly]?’

(375) bɔ̀ dzé jù bĩ lā yē, nwām
cl2 speak(b) come(b).ipfv 1pl.pp dat comp cl2.husbands
kwē ā [fyá tì] wɔ̄ bĩ
cl3/7a.home_village neg give(b).ipfv surprisingly neg 1pl

‘They are telling us: The local men do not give us [anything].’

9.4.1.2 fúbɔ̀, bɔ̀ ‘also’

The adverb fúbɔ̀ (see (376)-(378)) translates as ‘also’. It has a tone pattern which does not fit in with any of the verb tone classes. Its tone pattern never changes either, unlike those of verbs of Class a and b. This and the fact that it is not attested as an independent verb support its status as an adverb.
Serial verb constructions and verbal adverbs

(376) lʊ̀ŋ b-صاد yí 9/10.suffering that bɨ́ (e), bɨ́
\text{CL8\_suffering CL8\_that eat(b).IPFV sit(a) surprisingly CL8 INTERJ CL8}
\text{[yí̤ fúbɔ̌] bɨ́ (o)}
eat(b).IPFV also 1\text{PL\_INTERJ}

‘Suffering is eating them up and it is also eating us up.’\footnote{13}

(377) à kyɛ́ wān nɛ́ yū
twodet(e),
\text{2SG look(c) CL1\_child CL1/2\_mother;2SG.POSS CL9/10\_buttock INTERJ}
mɔ̀ dzō [kyɛ́ fúbɔ̌] à yū
\text{CL1\_person CL1\_other look(c) also 2SG.PP CL9/10\_buttock}

‘If you look at your siblings buttocks, somebody will also look at your buttocks.’ (meaning: “If you talk against your brother or your sister, somebody will also talk against you.”)

(378) tɔ́ kə̀ dɨ̄ tɨ́ wū kò [kwɛ́ fúbɔ̌],
\text{there p̣3 be(b) CL1\_father CL1\_POSS P1 return_from_bush(c) also}
tɨ́ wū [tʃú tsú bɔ̌] wān w-صاد
\text{CL1\_father CL1\_POSS come(b) beat(b) also CL1\_child CL1\_DET}

‘When her father had also returned from the bush, her father came and also beat the child.’

The first syllable of the adverbial may be dropped so that the adverb is shortened to bɔ̌, see e.g. (378).

9.4.1.3 mɛ́ ‘only’

The adverb mɛ́ translates into English as ‘only’ or ‘just’. Although it is segmentally identical with the verb mɛ́ ‘finish’, I do not think that the two are related. Whereas the verb mɛ́ ‘finish’ exhibits the characteristic tonal inflections of a Class A verb, the adverb mɛ́ ‘only’ always retains the same tone pattern. Furthermore, mɛ́ ‘only’ is not attested as main verb. Therefore, it is analyzed as an adverb.

(379) bɔ̌ [dzí mɛ́] mʊ̅ntù mĩ mʊⁿtù mĩ
\text{CL2 travel(b).IPFV only CL7/8\_car in CL7/8\_car in}

‘They only ever travel by car.’

(380) à [mũ mũ mɛ́] ngĩ
\text{2SG take(a) drink(b) only CL6\_water}

‘You should only drink water.’

\footnote{13}{The Class 8 pronoun is used to refer to groups of people in an abusive way.}
9.4. Verbal adverbs

(381) \[ n = [\text{dō mē}] \text{ Pē kə kwō gbō áná mwāŋ} \]
\[ 1SG = \text{see(a) only Petrus pə enter(c) house.loc like that ideo} \]

‘I just saw Pe entering into the house’

9.4.1.4 dzōŋa̋~dzōŋ ‘again’

The adverb dzōŋa̋~dzōŋ (see (382)-(384)) marks repetition of an action that has been carried out earlier and can be translated into English as ‘again’. It does not fulfill the test for syntactic independence as it always co-occurs with another verb. It also always has the same tone pattern, which consists of a superhigh tone on both syllables (rather than a high tone, like a Class c verb). Therefore, it clearly qualifies as an adverb rather than a verb.

(382) \[ wū [gān bōŋ jī dzōŋa̋ tēlā mwōm] \]
\[ \text{cl1 go(a) call(a) go.down(a) again Tela Mwom} \]

‘She went to call Tela Mwom again.’

(383) \[ bō [gān mú jū dzōŋa̋ kpē] \]
\[ \text{cl2 go(a) take(a) come(b) again cl3.pot} \]

‘They went again to take a pot.’

(384) \[ dō w-ō̃ [jū fi dzōŋa̋] \]
\[ \text{cl3.beans cl3-det fill/be_full(c) pass(b) again} \]

‘The beans were again more than the pot.’

Note that this adverb has an alternative monosyllabic form dzōŋ, which bears a mid tone, instead of a superhigh tone like the bisyllabic form; see (385)-(386).

(385) \[ â jā [dzē dzōŋ] \]
\[ 2SG PROHIB say(b) again \]

‘Don’t say [that] again!’

(386) \[ di̋ ki̋-mān nō à [yē kē dzōŋ] k-ō kī \]
\[ \text{be(b) cl7-what subord 2SG start(a) return(c) again cl7-rel cl7 loc} \]
\[ \text{t-ān mī dist-here in} \]

‘What is it that you are starting again in here?’

It is still unclear what exactly determines the choice between the bisyllabic and the monosyllabic form of the adverbial and why the tonal patterns of the two are different.
9.4.1.5  bā ‘exactly’

The adverb bā (see (387)-(389)) roughly translates into English as ‘exactly’. It always bears a superhigh tone, whereas verbs of Class c always bear a high tone. Verbs of other classes change their tonal pattern. Furthermore, bā never stands alone but always accompanies a verb. In all examples, it occurs at the end of the verbal core.

(387)  à mǐ  [nim jī  bā]  dè  nō  bā
   2SG CONSEC sit(a) go_down(a) exactly CL9.place SUBORD IMPERS
   kpā  f-á  gū,  ā  fi-ngī  wā
   light_fire(a) PROX-REL CL3/7a.fire COM CL19-CL6.water 2SG.PP
   kān
   hands.LOC

   ‘Then (you will) sit down exactly where they make fire, with a bit of water in your hand.’

(388)  kpē  w-ēn,  [dī  bā]  mān ā mwē  k-ā
   CL1.woman CL1-DEM.PROX be(b) exactly what 2SG be_sad(a) CL7-REL
   tō  á  bi-tō  yē
   CL7/8.day ADVLZ CL8-all QUOT.Q

   ‘Woman, why are you sad every day?’ (literally: This woman, what exactly is it that you grieve everyday?)

(389)  n=tō  kà mū  jī,  m=[bī  yō  bā]
   1SG =VER.FOC P3 take(a) come(b) 1SG =exit(b) go_up(c) exactly
   tī,  n=tū  yō  ngī  m-ā
   on_top 1SG =scoop(b) go_up(c) CL19.water CL19-DET
   sūŋ
   CL9/10.calabash in

   ‘I then brought, I got up, really up, I carried up the water in a bowl.’

9.4.1.6  tá ‘really’

The adverbial tá roughly translates as ‘really’. It bears a high tone just like a Class c verb. However, it cannot occur without another verb, which gives reason to believe that it has adverbial status. Examples for the use of tá are found in (390) and (391).

(390)  běn nēn  láŋ  because  běn nǐŋ  yē  běn [yī  tá]
   2PL maybe be_happy(c) because 2PL want(c) COMP 2PL eat(b) really
   ā  běn  ndʒēŋ
   ADVLZ 2PL.PP alone

   ‘Maybe you guys are happy because you just want to eat alone.’
9.4. Verbal adverbs

(391) bì mí ním fânī́ (ē), bì dzé ním tì́ më́
1pl consec sit(a) here? int(ej) 1pl speak(b) sit(a) surprisingly only
yḗ, lū̀ŋ bò́ [dī́ tā́ më́] yëfn là́, bì kwó́
comp cl8. suffering cl8-det be(b) really only Y. dat cl8 enter(c)
fúbó bì́ ǹg3
also 1pl.pp upon

‘And we are sitting here, saying that only Yain is suffering, but the
suffering has also attacked some of us.’

In (390), tā́ stands at the right edge of the verbal core, while in (391), it is
followed by the verbal adverb më́ ‘only’.

9.4.2 The verb core-initial adverb sên ‘then’

My data contain only one verbal adverb which stands at the beginning rather
than at the end of the verbal core, namely sên ‘then’ (see (392)-(394)). The
adverbial sên translates into English as ‘then, subsequently’. It always bears
a high tone and, on first glance, it would appear to be a verb of tone class c.
However, it cannot stand on its own without a subsequent verb and is therefore
analyzed as an adverb.

(392) n = [sên bọ́] mā́ à, dī́ nǐ́ŋ dóm à ńa plan
1sg = then ask(b) cs.quot q, be(b) cl7. thing some 2sg p1 plan
ḗ quot.q

‘I then asked [him]: Is it something that you planned?’

(393) m-mù-n nṓ māńfrè kà mú́ fì́ bì́ w-5
inf-take(a)-inf subord M. p3 take(a) pass(b) exit(b) cl1-rel
tʃūm w-5 jwḗn, dā́ à ntű̀n [sên tʃū́ kā] pë́
cl3/7a. axe cl3-det now D. com N. then come(b) hold(c) P.
jwḗn
now

‘Just as Manfred took out the axe now, Dan of Ntung then came and
held Pe, now.’

(394) w-5 time nṓ kpā́ ǹgī́ [sên tʃū́
cl1-dem cl1.2. time subord cl1. wife cl1.1sg. poss then come(b)
kā́ kān kwṓ mḗ] mā́ ǹwḗn ǹā́
catch(b) hold(c) enter(c) only 1sg heart/middle.loc now like_that

‘That was the time that my wife came and held me in the middle now,
like this.’