


On the rise: The expansion of Serial Verb Constructions in Tariana

Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald 

Jawun Research Centre, Central Queensland University, Australia
E-mail: a.aikhenvald@cqu.edu.au

Abstract

The emergence and the expansion of serial verbs can be affected by language contact. This paper focuses on a case study from Tariana, a highly endangered Arawak language spoken in the multilingual Vaupés River Basin Linguistic Area in Brazilian Amazonia. Tariana has numerous types of asymmetrical and symmetrical serial verbs highly frequent in discourse of all genres. Two kinds of serial verbs are on the rise. A construction involving a prefixed form *-siwa* with an emphatic, reciprocal, sociative, and reflexive meaning is developing into a serial verb construction. The motivation for this development lies in intensive language contact with the unrelated Tukano, now the major language in use by the extant speakers of Tariana, where reflexive and reciprocal meanings are expressed through serial verbs. The integration of recapitulating verb sequences with the verb *-ni* ‘do, make’ into the system of serial verbs is indirectly linked to the impact of Tucano where the verb meaning ‘do, make’ is used as a recapitulating device in bridging linkage. The development of recapitulating serial verbs in Tariana can be partly seen as an independent innovation, and as an outcome of language-internal pressure to create further serial verbs, expanding and extending the productive and much-deployed mechanism in the language.

Keywords: Serial verbs; symmetrical serial verbs; asymmetrical serial verbs; reflexive; reciprocal; emphatic; Tariana; language contact

1. Serial verbs in language history: a preamble

Serial verb constructions offer a concise mechanism for expressing grammatical and lexical meanings and representing various facets of an event. Languages with productive serialization will have an array of serial verbs, with a multiplicity of meanings. New serial verbs may evolve, based on reinterpretation of sequences of verbs and verb-like forms. Serial verb constructions of all kinds are among those features which are likely to spread from one language to the next in a linguistic area and in varied one-to-one contact situations (see Aikhenvald 2021a:208-13, for further details and references). And the productivity of serial verbs can be enhanced by the on-going impact of language contact, and result in their expansion. Alternatively, a language may lose serial verbs and undergo de-serialization under

the impact of a more prestigious and powerful neighbour which lacks serialization (see, for instance, Hajek 2006 on Tetun Dili, and further references in Aikhenvald 2021a:2016-17).

Tariana, an Arawak language from north-west Amazonia, boasts a rich array of serial verb constructions, only partly shared with its genetic relatives. A longitudinal study of this predominantly oral language over a few decades allows us to trace the expansion of serial verbs. Just one newly emergent structure matches a serial verb in Tukano, a dominant and unrelated language. This is what this paper is about. We start with some background information on the language.

2. The Tariana language: a backdrop

Tariana is an endangered Arawak language spoken in two villages in north-western Amazonia (Brazil). Once a powerful group with substantial dialectal variation, it is now reduced to about 70 speakers of the Wamiarikune dialect scattered across two villages (Santa Rosa and Periquitos), the mission centre of Iauaretê, and São Gabriel da Cacheoera, the capital of the Federal territory of the Upper Rio Negro. Another dialect, called Kumandene, is spoken on the Iuari River off the Rio Negro; it is also endangered and has been restructured under the influence of the closely related Hohôdene Baniwa (Aikhenvald 2021b). The discussion here centres on the Wamiarikune dialect (unless indicated otherwise).

Tariana is the only Arawak language spoken within the multilingual Vaupés River Basin linguistic area. The traditional area was characterised by language-based exogamy between speakers of Tariana and those belonging to the East Tukanoan subgroup (including Tukano, Piratapuya, Wanano and Desano): one could only marry someone who belongs to a different language group (inherited through one's father) and thus has a right to be called a competent speaker of the language (more in Aikhenvald 2010). Every speaker of Tariana used to be fully proficient in at least one language of the unrelated East Tukanoan family (including Tukano, Wanano, Desano and Piratapuya). There is a cultural inhibition against 'language mixing', viewed in terms of loan forms, especially from Tukano or any other East Tukanoan language. This means that there are very few borrowed forms.

A careful linguistic investigation reveals that numerous structural patterns in Tariana are shared with East Tukanoan languages, rather than with other Arawak languages. Tariana has been restructured under the impact of language contact. There is a fair amount of materials available on closely related North Arawak languages (especially the Baniwa-Kurripako dialect continuum and Piapoco). This is what allows us to distinguish genetically inherited patterns from those developed as a consequence of contact-induced change.

Throughout the history of the Vaupés area in Brazil in the 20th century, Tukano (the majority East Tukanoan language) has been gradually gaining dominance at the cost of other East Tukanoan languages and Tariana. At present, Tariana is spoken less and less in day-to-day life. In the 1990s and early 2000s, older and traditional speakers used Tariana with their children. Now that most of them are gone, the majority of ethnic Tariana speak Tukano at home most of the time (some also speak Portuguese). There are notable differences between 'Traditional Tariana' (now almost gone; documented by the author in the 1990s – early 2000s) and 'Innovative Tariana', currently spoken by those born from 1950 onwards. The

Innovative Tariana bears a stronger impact of Tukano — the major indigenous language in the Brazilian Vaupés.¹

In terms of its typological profile, Tariana is agglutinating with some fusion, and predominantly suffixing. The same set of person-marking prefixes — shared with other Arawak languages — marks the subject of transitive verbs (A) and of active intransitive verbs (S_a), arguments of postpositions, and the possessor of obligatorily possessed nouns (Aikhenvald 2020b contains an outline of the morphology of Arawak languages). Unlike most related languages, Tariana employs case markers for grammatical relations (developed under the impact of East Tukanoan languages).

Serial verb constructions are a feature of all the languages within the multilingual Vaupés River Basin Linguistic area (see Aikhenvald 2010; 2015:79-82; 2021a:209-11, and references there). Tariana shares productive contiguous multi-word serialization with genetically related languages outside the area. As a result of East Tukanoan influence, Tariana employs serial verbs in many more functions than any of its linguistic relatives. Numerous further functions are emerging: this is what we turn to now.

3. Serial verbs in Tariana: their properties

A prominent feature of Tariana is highly frequent multi-word serial verb constructions of various types. Over 80% of clauses in the corpus contain serial verbs. Serial verb constructions in Tariana have all the properties of monoverbal clauses (as defined in Aikhenvald 2021a: 178-84, see also a brief summary in Dixon 2006):

- (i) Their components act together as a single predicate, without any marking of coordination, subordination, or any kind of syntactic dependency.
- (ii) A serial verb will have a single value for tense, aspect, mood, modality, evidentiality, polarity, and illocutionary force.
- (iii) Serial verbs share subject marking, and the tense-evidentiality, aspect, mood, modality, and polarity values, in addition to shared marking of syntactic function including subordinating markers and nominalisers.
- (iv) Each component of a serial verb construction can be used on their own as a predicate of an independent clause.

As we see in the examples throughout this paper, person markers are repeated on each component of a serial verb which take prefixes (a feature of transitive and active intransitive verbs, but not of stative verbs). Other categories are marked once per construction. If a serial verb is negated, the marker of negative polarity (prefix *ma-* and suffix *-kade*) typically occurs on the first component of the SVC and has scope over the whole construction. Components of an SVC cannot be questioned or repeated separately, without questioning or repeating the whole construction. In the attested data, serial verbs can consist of up to seven components. They can be easily distinguished from multiclausal sequences of verbs by their prosodic properties. Serial verbs, no matter how long, are pronounced as one intonation unit, with no pause between the components.

¹ This study is based on immersion fieldwork with the Tariana (starting from 1991). The corpus consists of about 40 hours of recordings of various narrative genres and conversations, and is being constantly augmented by interactions with speakers over Facebook and Whatsapp (in the form of sound files). Examples are given in practical orthography.

The components of an SVC are strictly contiguous: no constituent can intervene between them (see Aikhenvald 2003:423-448; 2006:183-4 for further evidence of monoclausality of serial verbs in the language, including false starts and speech repair). The order of components is fixed for each semantic type of serial verb construction.

As is typical for a language with productive verb serialisation, Tariana has an array of asymmetrical and symmetrical serial verbs. Asymmetrical serial verbs consist of a minor verb from a closed class and a major verb from an open class. They express direction and orientation, aspect, and also valency increase. Symmetrical serial verbs consist of several verbs each from a large open class. They typically denote a sequence of subactions, cause-effect, or manner in which the action is performed, and are prone to lexicalization (for a further elaboration of the notions of asymmetrical and symmetrical serial verbs the reader is directed to Aikhenvald 2021a:55-91 and 2018, as well as references there). In Tariana, as in many other languages, serial verb constructions are a means of representing events — including motion events, speech events, causation, and actions linked together. Within a motion event, 'source', arrival at an endpoint or a goal, and passing of an intermediate route are usually specified and integrated within one multi-word serial verb construction. One verb will not be enough for a motion event to make sense (similar to many other languages with serial verbs: see numerous examples in Aikhenvald 2021a:178-84).

An example of a typical serial verb construction is in (1). Here and passim the component verbs are given in parentheses after the translation.

- (1) *duha Kumatharo du-mara-pida duka*
 she Kumatharo 3sgf-move.dowstream-PRES.REP 3sgf+arrive
du-sita
 3sgf-finish
 “She, Kumatharo, has arrived downstream” (lit. move.downstream arrive finish)

The serial verb construction consists of three verbs — ‘move downstream’, ‘arrive’, and ‘finish’ — each marked with the third person feminine singular prefix *du-* (reflecting the same subject shared by all the components). Tense fused with evidentiality is marked once per construction, with the morpheme *-pida* ‘present reported’. The first two components, ‘move downstream’ and ‘arrive’, describe the motion event and its endpoint. The verb ‘arrive’ (which contains the feminine prefix *du-* fused with the root, referring to the female subject Kumatharo) can be considered the major verb, with the directional verb ‘move downstream’ used as a minor verb specifying direction of movement. The third minor component, ‘finish’, provides complete aspectual specification to the whole serial verb.

Asymmetrical serial verb constructions in Tariana cover a variety of semantic types. Two of these show unusual features — and can be considered instances of serial verbs in the marking. What looks like a sociative serial verb construction is the topic of §4. In §5, we turn to the recapitulating serial verb construction.

4. Sociative serial verb construction: a problem

To express sociative meaning ‘be together (with someone)’ or ‘do (something) together (with someone)’, Tariana employs a sequence of the obligatorily prefixed form *-siwa* followed by a transitive or an active intransitive verb (which has to take personal prefixes: see also Aikhenvald 2003:437, 2006:188). As would be the case for any serial verb in the language,

the two forms bear the same person marker. The order of components is usually fixed, and no other constituent can be inserted between them. An example of a sociative serial verb construction, with the meaning ‘do together’, is in (2).

- (2) *na-siwa* *neka-pidana*
 3pl-do.together 3pl+laugh-REM.P.REP
 “They laughed all together” (do.together laugh)

The sociative construction is developing reciprocal meanings. In Traditional Tariana reciprocals used to be consistently expressed with the verb derivation technique (see Dixon 2012:138-95), using the suffix *-kaka* (which could also have sociative meaning: Aikhenvald 2010:234-5; 2007b). Innovative speakers tend to use the construction with *-siwa* to express reciprocal meanings, especially with inherently reciprocal verbs, e.g. *na-siwa na-korota* (3pl-do.together 3pl-greet/meet.by.appointment) ‘they greeted each other, met by appointment’, or *na-siwa na-keta* (3pl-do.together 3pl-meet.by.chance) ‘they met by chance’. A further example of *-siwa* in its reciprocal meaning is in (3).

- (3) *wa-siwa* *wa-waku*
 1pl-do.together/to.each.other 1pl-distribute
 “Let’s distribute (clothing) among each other!” (or: among ourselves to each other)

A construction with *-siwa* may contain a singular subject. It then has an emphatic, or ‘autoreflexive’, meaning ‘by oneself, through one’s own doing’. In this meaning, it can be used with an intransitive verb, as in (4).

- (4) *pi-siwa* *pi-yami-mhade*
 2sg-do.together/do.by.yourself 2sg-die-FUT
 “You will die through your own doing/by yourself”

The form *-siwa* in its emphatic, or ‘autoreflexive’, meaning can occur with an S = A ambitransitive verb, as in (5) — a common expression meaning ‘do as you wish’, with an implication that any potentially adverse consequences will be your own fault.

- (5) *pi-siwa* *pi-yeka*
 2sg-do.together/do.by.oneself 2sg-know
 “Know by yourself (or for yourself)!”

An example of *-siwa* in its emphatic meaning with a transitive verb is in (6).

- (6) *nu-siwa* *nu-inu-de* *du-na*
 1sg-do.together/do.by.oneself 1sg-kill-FUT.CERT 3sgf-OBJ
 “I will kill her myself”

A morphological reciprocal and a sociative construction can occur together (especially so in traditional narratives), if multiple participants, doing things together and to each other, are involved. An example is in (7). The first sentence contains a symmetrical serial verb construction ‘greet hear’ with an idiomatic meaning ‘ask’ (an example of a lexicalised symmetrical serial verb, along the lines of Aikhenvald 2021a: 82-3).

- (7) *na-siwa-kaka* *na-sata* *nhema-pidana*
 3pl-do.together-REC 3pl-greet 3pl+hear-REM.P.REP
kwana *kwana* *kwana*
 who who who
 “They (the birds) asked each other all together: ‘Who (was it who brought the toad in the sky), who, who?’” (lit. do.together greet hear)

In Traditional Tariana, the same verbal suffix *-kaka* used to express reciprocal and reflexive, just like in other Arawak languages of the area (see, for instance, Aikhenvald 2007a; this polysemy is typical for many languages of the world, as shown by Dixon 2012:138-95 and also Nedialkov 2007). In the Innovative language, the form *-siwa* ‘be together’ is consistently employed with a reflexive meaning.

An example is in (8), a way of describing the recent instances of suicide in the Tariana communities. An alternative interpretation of *-siwa* in (8) could be that of an emphatic ‘by oneself’ (consistent with (4)-(6)).

- (8) *dhunuru* *du-siwa* *du-tutu-pidaka*
 3sgf+throat 3sgf-do.together/REFL 3sgf-tie-REC.P.REP
 “She strangled herself” (lit. she tied her throat herself)

Another way of describing a suicide was (9), with *-siwa* in an emphatic meaning, ‘do by oneself’, with an intransitive verb ‘die’.

- (9) *du-siwa* *du-ñami-pidaka*
 3sgf-do.together/do.by.oneself 3sgf-die-REC.P.REP
 “She committed suicide” (lit. she died by herself)

The first ever suicide among the Tariana was reported in 2000. All the examples describing such trends (e.g. (8) and (9)) come from innovative speakers. Example (4), from a story by a Traditional speaker, does not have any implication of suicide: the addressee is said to die because of breaching a taboo, through her own doing.

The sociative form has also been attested in the Kumandene dialect of Tariana with the same range of meanings as described above. The following example, (10), illustrates the reflexive meaning of the form. A young Kumandene woman described her husband’s suicide using *-tsiwa* (the cognate of *-siwa*).

- (10) *nu-sa-niži-mikui-ži* *li-tutua-ka-nhi*
 1sg-spouse-masc.sg-NOM.PAST-masc.sg 3masc.sg-tie-DECL-PAST
li-nuru *li-kama-kapi*
 3masc.sg-neck 3masc.sg-be.drunk-AFTER
iraka-ši *hĩkali li-nua-ka* *li-tsiwa*
 drink-NOM due.to 3masc.sg-kill-DECL 3masc.sg-do.together/REFL
 “My late husband tied his neck after he got drunk, because of the drink he killed himself”

The two dialects of Tariana — Wamiarikune and Kumandene — have been separated for several decades (see Aikhenvald 2021b). The reflexive use of erstwhile sociative constructions across the Tariana dialects may be considered an instance of what Sapir

(1921:171-2) referred to as ‘parallelism in drift’: related languages ‘will pass through the same or strikingly similar phases’, even if ‘long disconnected’.

At the first glance the sequence of *-siwa* and the following verb, or a serial verb construction, form a bona fide SVC. The sequences *-siwa* + prefixed verb or a serial verb construction are pronounced without an intonation break nor a pause. The same subject marker, tense, aspect, evidentiality, modality, and mood are shared by all the components. However, the following four factors make sequences with *-siwa* stand apart from other serial verbs.

First, each component of a serial verb construction should have a capacity to occur on its own. The form *-siwa* never does.

Secondly, the order of components in serial verb constructions is always fixed. We have just seen that the form *-siwa* occurs preposed to the lexical verb. However, in two percent of example sentences in the corpus the order can be reversed, without change in meaning. An example is in (11), from a story told by an innovative speaker. The form *-siwa* conveys an emphatic meaning, ‘by oneself’.

- (11) *pa:-da* *dihmeta-pidana* *di-siwa*
 one-CL:ROUND 3sgnf+think-REM.P.REP 3sgnf-do.together/by.oneself
 “The next day he was thinking by himself...”

In (12), from a story by a Traditional speaker dealing with the mythological history of the Tariana (*Yawi*, literally, jaguars), the form *-siwa* in its sociative meaning ‘together’ is postposed to the verb *-sape* ‘speak’.

- (12) *Yawi-nhe* *na-sape-pidana* *na-siwa-kaka*
 Yawi-FOC.A/S 3pl-speak-REM.P.REP 3pl-do.together-REC
diha-dapana-se
 ART.masc.sg-CL:HOUSE-LOC
 “The Yawi were talking together to each other in that (house)”

Thirdly, in just a few instances another constituent can intervene between *-siwa* and the following verb. An example is in (13). This is the title of a traditional story about a quarrel between two sons of the mythical character Kui (known as Kuwai in the Baniwa-Kurripako tradition) who attempted to maim each other. The object NP, ‘penis’ (lit. vertical object for swiving) intervenes between *-siwa* and the verb ‘cut’.

- (13) *Kui inipe* *na-siwa-kaka* *na-nhi-na* *na-pisa-mi*
 Kui children 3pl-do.together-REC 3pl-swive-CL:VERT 3pl-cut-NOM
 “Kui children’s cutting off of each other’s penises”

This is markedly different from all other serial verb constructions which are always strictly contiguous.

Fourthly, the construction with *-siwa* is negated differently from bona fide serial verbs. We can recall, from §3, that the negator in serial verbs goes onto the first component — as shown in (14a). In constructions involving *-siwa*, it is the second component that takes the negator: *-siwa* can never occur with the negator. This is what we see in (14b).

- (14) a. *Ma-ka-kade di-yeka-pidana*
 NEG-see-NEG 3sgnf-know/be.able-REM.P.REP
 “He could not discern (what was ahead of him)” (lit. see know)
- b. *di-siwa ma-nu-kade-pidana diha*
 3sgnf-do.together NEG-know/be.able-NEG-REM.P.REP he
 “He didn’t come on his own”

In terms of its word class, *-siwa* appears to be verb-like. This form takes the verbal cross-referencing and does not have any of the properties of a noun (which would include occurrence in a noun phrase, being able to be modified, or requiring a classifier: see Aikhenvald 2003). However, very occasionally *-siwa* can occur with the instrumental case marker, which is used on nouns, adjectives, and members of several closed classes, but not on verbs. An example, from a WhatsApp message by an innovative speaker, is in (15).

- (15) *aĩ nu-dalipa na-mara naka-naka*
 here 1sg-at.one’s.place 3pl-move.downstream 3pl+arrive-PRES.VIS
feria na-ni-ka-pida [pause] na-siwa-ne
 holiday 3pl-do-DECL-PRES.REP 3pl-do.together-INST
 “They have arrived downstream (lit. go/come.downstream arrive) here at my place, they are reportedly having a holiday, together”

The case-marked form *na-siwa-ne* (3pl-do.together-INST) is separated from the verb ‘they do’ with a pause, as an afterthought. A similar example is in (16), from another WhatsApp message. The form *nu-siwa-ne* (1sg-do.together-INST) can be interpreted as having an emphatic meaning, ‘by myself’, or a reflexive meaning, ‘for myself’. It is postposed to the serial verb ‘be.sorry/upset’-‘do’.

- (16) *ne-nuku kwe-mhade nu-ni nu-kawita nu-a nuha*
 then-TOP.NON.A/S how-FUT 1sg-do 1sg-pay 1sg-go I
kawalikupeda nu-ni-mha nu-siwa-ne
 be.sorry/upset 1sg-do-PRES.NONVIS 1sg-do.together-INST
 “Then how am I going to pay? I am sorry by myself (or: for myself)”

These four features point toward an ambiguous status of constructions with *-siwa*. First, they can hardly be considered bona fide serial verbs. And secondly, *-siwa* appears to have at least one nominal property: it cannot be negated and it can take a case marker.

Cognates in related languages shed some light on the origin of the form. In Piapoco, a closely related Arawak language, the cognate form *-siwa* or *-Ōíwa* is a quality intensifier ‘real, genuine’ which can occur with nouns, as shown in (17a-b). In contrast to Tariana, the Piapoco form is a bound morpheme (a suffix).

- (17) a. *wenàiwica-síwa*
 people-INTENSIFIER
 “real people (i.e. Piapoco people)”
- b. *capìi-siwa*
 house-INTENSIFIER
 “a genuine house” (Klumpp 1990: 84)

The same form can occur as an intensifier on time words and locationals, e.g. *táwicha-síwa* (tomorrow-INTENSIFIER) ‘tomorrow for sure’, *décu-ise-síwa* (far-from-INTENSIFIER) ‘from really far away’ (Klumpp 1990:176; similar examples from Piapoco are in Reinoso Galindo 2002:112, 183). The same form can occur on verbs with an intensifying meaning, as in (18).

- (18) *pi-iká-Ōíwa-ta*
 2sg-look-CAUS-INTENSIFIER-RESTRICTIVE
 “Look/observe (the birds) really well” (Reinoso Galindo 2002:180)²

The synchronic status of the prefixed form *-síwa* in Tariana is ambiguous. This is reflected in (a) the non-prototypical features of the serial-like constructions with sociative, reciprocal, and reflexive meanings in which it occurs in, and (b) in a few non-verbal nominal-like features of the form. The suggested semantic development of *-síwa*, from an intensifier to a sociative, reciprocal and reflexive marker, is summarised in (19).

- (19) intensifier → emphatic marker ‘self’ → reflexive/reciprocal/sociative

The development from an intensifier to an emphatic, or autoreflexive, marker is a typical development (attested in numerous languages of the world). An emphatic marker is a frequent source of a reflexive. A polysemy of reflexive and reciprocal is another frequently attested feature, which Tariana shares with its genetic relatives, from the Arawak family (a brief snapshot is in Aikhenvald 2007a). The development from reciprocal to sociative is another relatively common typological feature (more on this in Dixon 2012:138-95 and Nedialkov 2007). That is, the suggested path can be considered typologically plausible.

Both the emphatic meaning ‘self’ and the sociative/reciprocal meaning complex are attested in Tariana. The reflexive meaning is a recent innovation by innovative speakers, across the extant dialects of the Tariana language. The erstwhile intensifier — the morpheme *-síwa* which takes the same personal prefixes as verbs — is on its way towards being integrated into the complex of serial verb constructions. Synchronically, sociative/reciprocal/reflexive serial verbs in Tariana can be considered an aberrant type, in that they stand apart from other serial verb constructions. This is an instance of expansion of serial verbs as a grammatical technique: a verb-like element is being drawn into the serial verb system, and a new type of serial verbs is on the rise.

Cross-linguistically, reciprocal, reflexive, and sociative serial verb constructions are not common (see examples in Aikhenvald 2021a:66-7). The integration of a polysemous emphatic, reflexive, reciprocal, and sociative marker into the system of serial verbs in Tariana adds another exotic flavour to what we see in this language. None of the other Arawak languages, no matter how closely related to Tariana, have any serial verbs of the sort. As mentioned above, reflexive and reciprocal meanings across the family are expressed with verbal suffixes.

² The Baniwa of Içana form *-lhiwa* ‘for, for one’s sake’ is, in all likelihood, cognate to Tariana *-síwa* and Piapoco *-síwa/-Ōíwa* (cf. Ramirez 2001:215, example (308)); more examples are required. A further possible cognate is a bound root *-chuwa* ‘really, so (emphatic)’ in Yucuna, another closely related Arawak language spoken in Colombia (Schauer et al. 2005:38).

The motivation for the development of a serial verb-like strategy to express reciprocal and sociative meanings lies in language contact. Tukanó — the main contact language for Tariana, used on a day-to-day basis by most extant speakers — employs the serial verb strategy to express reciprocal meanings. Reflexive meanings are expressed with a pronoun *basi* ‘self’. The multi-word contiguous reciprocal serial verb construction consists of the reciprocal verb *a'mé* ‘do together back and forth, do to each other’ as V_1 followed by a lexical verb. In (20), the reciprocal verb is *kě'e* ‘fight’ (Ramirez 1997, vol II:6).

- (20) *wi'mará* *a'me* *kě'e-rã'* *wee-má*
 children do.to.each.other fight-NOM.ANIM.PL do-3pl.PRES.VIS
 “Children are fighting with each other”

Other examples include *a'mé doté* (do.to.each.other hit) ‘hit each other’, *a'mé tu'ti* (do.to.each.other argue) ‘argue with each other’, *a'mé wěhe* (do.to.each.other kill) ‘kill each other, fight’, etc. The structure of the serial verb-like constructions in Tariana is a mirror image of their Tukanó ‘prototype’. In all likelihood, the ‘original’ bound form *-siwa* underwent reinterpretation into a verb-like element in a serial verb-like structure as a result of structural accommodation to the Tukanó serial verb strategy, to express sociative and reciprocal meanings. The development of a reflexive meaning is a recent independent innovation in younger people’s Tariana (possibly, under the influence of the national language of Brazil, Portuguese, where the reflexive and the reciprocal meanings are expressed in the same way).

5. Recapitulating serial verb construction: an emergent type

Recapitulating serial verb constructions in Tariana are cross-linguistically unusual: this type has hardly been attested in other languages. A recapitulating serial verb construction is asymmetrical. It consists of a verb from an open class (or another serial verb construction) followed by the verb *-ni* ‘do, make’, summarising the action of the preceding verb and focusing on it (similar to the action-focusing functions of serial verbs in some West African languages, including Kana: Ikoro 1995:316; Aikhenvald 2021a:176-8). The components have the same set of subject prefixes; all the clausal categories have the same value, and the order of components is fixed. The sequence is strictly contiguous. A typical example, from a story about the traditional Offering Feast, told by the oldest speaker of the language (in 1999), is in (21).

- (21) *nha* *na-siměta* *na-ni-pidana*
 they 3pl-rejoice.at.ritual.discourse 3pl-do-REM.P.REP
 “They reportedly did rejoice at ritual discourse” (lit. rejoice.at.ritual.discourse do)

The serial verb ‘rejoice.at.ritual.discourse do’ is the predicate of a dependent clause (marked with the sequential enclitic *-ka*). The serial verb is pronounced as one intonation group, with no pause between components.

Recapitulating serial verb constructions stand apart from others in two ways. First, the summarising verb *-ni* ‘do, make’ could be separated from the preceding verb with a short pause. This is shown in (22), from a story by a traditional speaker recorded in 1999. An intonation rise on the last syllable of the serial verb construction ‘sit wait’ preceding the pause is typical of an end of a clause. The presence of the pause indicates that the sequence of verbs including *-ni* does not have the typical intonational properties of a serial verb construction.

- (22) *yuwapiku nu-hwa nu-wapa [pause] nu-ni-na*
 long.time 1sg-sit 1sg-wait 1sg-do-REM.P.VIS
 “I waited for a long time [pause] I did”

The sequence of verbs involving *-ni* ‘do’ in (23) also contains a short pause before *-ni* (atypical for a bona fide serial verb). The object, ‘him’, is repeated twice — once before the serial verb construction ‘act.brusquely hug’, and once after the verb *-ni*. Object and beneficiary sharing is an obligatory feature of serial verbs in Tariana. That the object is repeated twice points towards the fact that *-ni* has *di-na* ‘him, to him’ as its own object — further undermining the interpretation of the verb sequence containing *-ni* as a serial verb construction.

- (23) *di-na du-ña du-suwa [pause]*
 3sgnf-OBJ 3sgf-act.brusquely 3sgf-hug
du-ni-pidana di-na
 3sgf-do-REM.P.REP 3sgnf-OBJ
 “She hugged him brusquely (act brusquely hug), she did (to) him”

Secondly, a recapitulating serial verb with *-ni* ‘do’ is negated differently from other serial verbs. Similar to serial-like sociative constructions with *-siwa* (§4), the negator occurs on the last component, the verb *-ni* (see also Aikhenvald 2003:402-3). An example is in (24).

- (24) *i:na nu-ma nu-a [pause] ma-ni-kade-ka*
 woman:PL 1sg-look 1sg-go NEG-do-NEG-REC.P.VIS
 “I have not been going looking for women” (lit. seek go not-do)

In (24), the summarising *-ni* ‘do’ is preceded by an asymmetrical serial verb construction, ‘seek go’. The negated verb is preceded by a pause.

In the corpus of conversations (collected, with Innovative speakers, since 2000), the verb-verb sequences with *-ni* ‘do’ in recapitulating function are pronounced without any pause between components, as befits a standard serial verb construction in the language. An example is in (25).

- (25) *kale kiaku di-dieta di-ni-naka*
 wind strong 3sgnf-blow 3sgnf-do-PRES.VIS
 “Wind is blowing strongly” (blow do)

The pause before *-ni* is also regularly absent when the construction is negated, as shown in (26). The negator occurs on the second component, as in the traditional language.

- (26) *nu-mayẽ ma-ni-kasu nhua pi-na*
 1sg-forget NEG-do-NEG.FUT I 2sg-OBJ
 “I won’t forget you” (forget do)

In terms of its phonological make up, the verb sequence involving summarising *-ni* ‘do, make’ is now consistently displaying the behaviour of a serial verb construction. This is another example of a verb sequence with each component marked for the same subject being integrated into the system of serial verbs. The newly evolved summarising serial verb construction is typologically uncommon.

The verb *-ni* ‘do, make’ has numerous functions in Tariana. Within asymmetrical valency-increasing serial verb constructions it marks benefactive. In biclausal periphrastic causative constructions, *-ni* marks indirect causative, ‘make someone do something’. It is also used in content questions expressing reason and purpose. This is what we saw in the first sentence in (16) where ‘how am I going to pay?’ translates literally as ‘How will I do I will pay?’ The verb *-ni* ‘do, make’ can replace any A/Sa verb (that is, an active verb) if the speaker cannot quite remember the exact lexeme, or chooses to avoid using the same verb. All these meanings of the verb ‘do’ are shared with those of the Tukano equivalent, *we'e*.³

The Tariana verb *ni-* is also employed in summary linkage. A ‘summary’ construction consists of the verb *-ni* ‘do’ (and, optionally, the adverb *kayu*) which agrees in person/number/gender with the last verb of the preceding sentence. This is a way of summarising and backgrounding the action of the preceding sentence, and going on to something linked to this. An example is in (27).

- (27) *diha walipere nawiki-ya-dapana-se di-a,*
 he star people-POSS-CL:HOUSE-LOC 3sgnf-go,
di-ni ne-se alia-pidana
 3sgnf-do there-LOC be-REM.P.REP
 “He went to the star people’s house, he did (thus), there he stayed”

Summary linkage involving the verb ‘do’ is a prominent feature of Tukano and a few other East Tukanoan languages (e.g. Wanano) (see also Aikhenvald 2010: 160-1). Compare (28), from Tucano, and (27), from Tariana. In both instances, the verb ‘do’ serves a summarising function. These examples are taken from very similar stories in both languages.

- (28) *kĩ ñocoa masa ya-wi'i-pĩ wa'a we'e*
 he star people POSS-CL:HOUSE-LOC go do
to-pĩ ni-pĩ
 there-LOC be-REM.P.REP.3sgnf
 “He went to the star people’s house, he did (thus), there he stayed”

None of these meanings are attested for verbs meaning ‘do, make’ in other Arawak languages (such as Baniwa-Kurripako *-dzekata* and Piapoco *-manica*). The etymology of *-ni* is not known (as there are no cognates in related languages).⁴ The range of meanings of *-ni* ‘do, make’ in Tariana corresponds to the range of meanings of Tukano *we'e* ‘do, make’, reflecting the impact of contact-induced change (further details of the impact of Tukano on the patterns of use of the verb *-ni* in Tariana, see Aikhenvald 2019). Multiple factors appear to be behind the emergence of recapitulating serial verbs in Tariana (so far not documented in Tukano or other Tukanoan languages). Contact-induced change is at play, since the use of the verb ‘do, make’ in its summarising function has been acquired via Tukanoan influence in the first place. At the same time, the deployment of the summary verb ‘do, make’ within an emergent serial verb construction within Tariana is the outcome of a language-internal process, indicative of an aggressive expansion of serialization.

³ The second sentence in (16), *kawalikupeda nu-ni-* (be.sorry/upset 1sg-do-) also contains a calque from Tukano *bihâ-we(ti)* (sad-do-AFFIX) ‘be sad’ (Ramirez 1997, vol. II:22). A traditional speaker would have used *kawalikupeda* ‘be sorry/upset’ without ‘do’.

⁴ I suspect that this verb could be an assimilated loan from Tucano *nii* ‘say, be’. A number of bound forms in Tariana come from Tucano and a few other East Tucanoan languages, as camouflaged borrowings: they are no longer easily recognisable as foreign; these ‘invisible’ loans were addressed in Aikhenvald (2012).

6. To conclude

Verb serialization — a productive technique in Tariana — is on the rise. A construction involving a prefixed form *-siwa* with an emphatic and sociative meaning is developing into a serial verb construction. The motivation for this development lies in intensive language contact with the unrelated Tukano, now the major language in use by the extant speakers of Tariana. The effects of language contact are often particularly strong, if a dominant language is in the process of ousting an endangered one spoken by a minority. This accounts for the integration of *-siwa* constructions into the system of serial verbs. An obsolescent language 'retreating, contracting, as it gradually falls into disuse' (Dixon 1991: 199) is often overwhelmed with an influx of patterns and forms from the dominant language. The Tariana tend to avoid excessive code-switching with Tukano. However, more and more calques from Tukano are making their way into the language. As a consequence, Tariana is becoming more and more 'aberrant' (in the sense of Grace 1990) if compared to its Arawak relatives.

The integration of verb sequences containing the verb *-ni* 'do, make' into the system of serial verbs has a complex motivation. The development of summarising and recapitulating functions of this verb can be linked to an impact of language contact with Tukano. The integration of the summary verb into the system of serial verbs is an internally motivated innovation. We are faced with a combination of externally and internally motivated change, and language-internal pressure to create further serial verbs out of verb sequences, expanding and extending the productive and much-deployed mechanism in the language.

Abbreviations

1, 2, 3 first, second, third person; A transitive subject; ART article; CAUS causative; CL classifier; DECL declarative; FOC.A/S focused A/S; FUT future; FUT.CERT certain future; INST instrumental; LOC locative; masc masculine; NEG negator; NEG.FUT negative future; NOM nominaliser; NOM.ANIM.PL nominaliser animate plural; NOM.PAST nominal past; O object; OBJ object case; PAST past tense; pl plural; POSS possessive marker; PRES.REP present reported; PRES.NONVIS present nonvisual; PRES.VIS present visual; REC reciprocal; REC.P.REP recent past reported; REC.P.VIS remote past visual; REFL reflexive; REM.P.REP remote past reported; REM.P.VIS remote past visual; S intransitive subject; sg singular; sgf singular feminine; sgnf singular nonfeminine; SVC serial verb construction; TOP.NON.A/S topical non-subject; VERT -vertical

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Alexander Andrason, R. M. W. Dixon, Christoph Holz, and the anonymous reviewers for their critical comments and to Brigitta Flick for proof-reading. Special thanks go to all my Tariana family, and especially my closest relatives Jovino, Olívia, and José Brito, for teaching me their remarkable language.

References

Aikhenvald, A. Y. 2003. *A Grammar of Tariana, from North-West Amazonia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Aikhenvald, A. Y. 2006. Serial verb constructions in Tariana. In Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald, A. and R. M. W. Dixon (eds.) *Serial Verb Constructions: A Cross-linguistic Typology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 178-201. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198791263.003.0010>

Aikhenvald, A. Y. 2007a. Reciprocals and reflexives in North-Arawak languages of the Upper Rio Negro (Warekena of Xié, Bare, Baniwa of Içana). In Vladimir P. Nedjalkov (ed.) *Reciprocal Constructions*. Volume 2. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. pp. 845-855.

Aikhenvald, A. Y. 2007b. Reciprocal and associative in Tariana: their genetic and areal properties. In Vladimir P. Nedjalkov (ed.) *Reciprocal Constructions*. Volume 3. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. pp. 1351-1366.

Aikhenvald, A. Y. 2010. *Language Contact in Amazonia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Aikhenvald, A. Y. 2012. Invisible loans: how to borrow a bound form. In Lars Johanson and Martine Robbeets (eds.) *Copies versus Cognates in Bound Morphology*. Leiden: Brill. pp. 167-185. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004230477_009

Aikhenvald, A. Y. 2015. *The Languages of the Amazon*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Aikhenvald, A. Y. 2018. Serial verbs. In Mark Aronoff (ed.) *Oxford Bibliographies in Linguistics*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Aikhenvald, A. Y. 2019. Bridging constructions in Tariana. *International Journal of American Linguistics* 85: 455-496. <https://doi.org/10.1086/704563>

Aikhenvald, A. Y. 2020a. Language change in language obsolescence. In Richard D. Janda, Brian Joseph and Barnara S. Vance (eds.) *The Handbook of Historical Linguistics*. London: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. pp. 447-467. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118732168.ch21>

Aikhenvald, A. Y. 2020b. Morphology of Arawak languages. In Francesca Masini (ed.) *Oxford Research Encyclopedia Online*. New York: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199384655.013.628>

Aikhenvald, A. Y. 2021a. *Serial Verbs*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Aikhenvald, A. Y. 2021b. Blended grammar: Kumandene Tariana of north-west Amazonia. *Italian Journal of Linguistics* 34: 79-110.

Dixon, R. M. W. 1991. A changing language situation: the decline of Dyirbal, 1963-1989. *Language in Society* 20: 183-200. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0047404500016262>

Dixon, R. M. W. 2006. Serial verb constructions: conspectus and coda. In Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald and R. M. W. Dixon (eds.) *Serial Verb Constructions: A Cross-linguistic Typology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 338-350. <https://doi.org/10.1515/lingty-2017-0008>

Dixon, R. M. W. 2012. *Basic Linguistic Theory*. Volume 3. Further Grammatical topics. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Grace, G. W. 1990. The “aberrant” (vs. “exemplary”) Melanesian languages. In Philip Baldi (ed.) *Linguistic Change and Reconstruction Methodology*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. pp. 155-173. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110886092.155>
- Hajek, J. 2006. Serial verbs in Tetun Dili. In Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald and R. M. W. Dixon (eds.) *Serial Verb Constructions: A Cross-linguistic Typology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 239-253. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022226708005203>
- Ikoro, S. 1995. *The Kana Language*. Leiden: Research School CNWS.
- Klumpp, D. 1990. *Piapoco Grammar*. Colombia: SIL.
- Nedjalkov, V. P. 2007. Overview of the Research. Definitions of terms, framework, and related issues. In Vladimir P. Nedjalkov (ed.) *Reciprocal Constructions*. Volume 3. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. pp. 3-114. <https://doi.org/10.1075/tsl.71.06ned>
- Ramirez, H. 1997. *A fala Tukano dos Yepâ-masa. Tomo I. Gramática. Tomo II. Dicionário*. Manaus: Inspeção Salesiana Missionária da Amazônia CEDEM.
- Ramirez, H. 2001. *Uma gramática do Baniwa do Içana*. Manaus: UFAM.
- Reinoso Galindo, A. E. 2002. *Gramática de la lengua piapoco*. Santafé de Bogotá: Ministerio de cultura.
- Sapir, E. 1921. *Language*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.
- Schauer, S., J. Schauer, E. Yucuna and W. Yucuna. 2005. *Meke kemakánaka puráka'aloji. Wapura'akó chu, eyá kariwana chú. Diccionario bilingüe Yukuna-Español, Español-Yukuna*. Bogotá: Editorial Fundación para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Marginados.