

# **Word Order Anomaly in Tigrinya Serial Verb Constructions and Its Implications to Anti-symmetric Syntax**

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This research focuses on how Serial Verb Constructions (SVCs) in Tigrinya, an Ethio-Semitic language spoken in Ethiopia and Eritrea, can be analyzed and fit into the universal claims of complex constructions. SVC is a topic in an ongoing debate for whether such a construction is simply acquired or available via principles of the language faculty. Typologically and from areal linguistics point of view, there is also a belief that such a construction only exist in specific linguistic areas, such as West Africa and South East Asia (Ameka 2003; Baker and Stewart 2002). This research argues against the later claim by asserting that Tigrinya, a language of East Africa, has SVCs. It also in turn poses a dilemma on word-order parametrization, as SVCs in Tigrinya are not the direct mirror image of those of head-initial languages. Accordingly, I hypothesise that, even though Tigrinya is believed to be a right-headed language (Bender 1976, Tesfay 2002), SVCs in Tigrinya are best analyzed as left-headed –like those of head-initial SV languages (e.g. Yoruba, a language of Nigeria and Sranan, a language of Suriname) using the Anti-symmetric Theory (Kayne 1994).

This research contributes to the ongoing discussion of serialization and Antisymmetry on the one hand and to a better understanding of SVCs cross-linguistically on the other. It will also add insights to our limited knowledge of this language and expand the empirical base for building a theory of SVCs.