

# The V+V construction in Singaporean English<sup>\*</sup>

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The V+V construction in Singaporean English displays properties which are different from the serial verb constructions (SVCs) in British and American English like *go buy newspaper*. This construction of Singaporean English has often been referred to as a serial verb construction such as by Platt, Weber & Ho (1984) and subsequently Ritchie (1986), Ho & Platt (1993) and Bao (2010) who referred to the work of Platt, Weber & Ho (1984). However, these researchers did not provide clear definitions or strong arguments for why the V+V construction belongs to SVCs. This paper presents a quantitative research using the Corpus of Web-based Global English. A survey on the acceptability of the V+V construction was also conducted. Checking this construction against the properties of SVCs proposed by Aikhenvald (2006) shows that not all the V+V constructions are prototypical members of SVCs. It is likely that both “standard English” and Chinese had influence on the formation of this construction in Singaporean English. There are structures in “standard” English which are superficially similar to SVCs and there are SVCs in Chinese. Speakers of Singaporean English might have applied the structures from “standard” English to a larger range of verbs, tenses, aspects and numbers of subject than in British English.

## 1. Introduction

Singaporean English, also known as Singlish, is spoken in informal settings in Singapore (Bao 2010). This variety of English has many interesting features. One of them is the V+V construction without any markers of coordination or subordination between the two consecutive verbs. An example of this construction is *we went eat sushi and went back to the hotel* taken from the Corpus of Web-based Global English. The construction of two verb phrases one following the other has been given the umbrella term serial verb construction (SVC). There have been many definitions given for SVCs. Many of the definitions are very general.

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<sup>\*</sup> This article is based on a research project that began with a term paper for a course at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I wish to thank the anonymous reviewer who commented on an earlier version of this paper for the detailed and helpful comments. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Daniel Ross for his invaluable advice, detailed comments on earlier versions of the paper and encouragement.

Those that are more specific cannot be applied across languages. The V+V construction in Singaporean English is considered an SVC by other researchers such as Ho & Platt (1993:18) and Bao (2010). However, they did not question what an SVC is and did not provide arguments for that the V+V construction in Singaporean English is an SVC. There is also a lack of studies on detailed syntactic properties of this construction.

There were five main ethnic groups in Singapore in the 19th century, the Malay, the Chinese, the Indians, the Eurasians and the Europeans (Low & Brown 2005). There is a general consensus among scholars (such as Ho & Platt 1993, Ansaldo 2004, Low & Brown 2005 and Bao 2010) that the development of Singaporean English was influenced by the languages spoken by these ethnic groups. However, there is disagreement on the dominant source of the influence. Some scholars such as Ho & Platt (1993) believed that Chinese was the dominant substratum influence and the influence of Malay was indirect. However, according to Gupta (1998), the main substratum was Baba Malay and Bazaar Malay, and the secondary substratum was southern Chinese dialects, especially Hokkien, Teochew and Cantonese.<sup>1</sup> Identifying one single source language is difficult. One reason for the difficulty is that two possible substratum languages such as Malay and Sinitic display typological similarities in some structural aspects (Ansaldo 2004). The superstratum language is usually considered to be British English, as Singapore was part of the British colony. However, American English might also have had influence on Singaporean English in recent years as US television shows and movies are readily available in Singapore. Regarding the V+V construction, it is believed by some scholars such as Ho & Platt (1993) and Bao (2010) that the V+V structure in Singaporean English has a Chinese source.

A quantitative study of the V+V construction in Singaporean English was conducted using the Corpus of Web-based Global English (GloWbE: Davies 2013) and a survey of native speakers. The V+V construction under discussion does not include a verb followed by a VP complement such as *make me dress like a witch for Halloween* or a verb followed by a present participle such as *go hiking*. Syntactic properties of the V+V construction in Singaporean English observed in this quantitative research are presented.

The V+V construction in Singaporean English is then examined against Aikhenvald's (2006) proposed criteria. It is argued in this paper that not all V+V constructions in Singaporean English are prototypical SVCs. The

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<sup>1</sup> Chinese is an umbrella term. It consists of Mandarin and dialects which can be broken into smaller sub-dialects. Not all of them are mutually intelligible.

reason for adopting Aikhenvald's proposal is that it is comprehensive and work of previous scholars was considered in the definition.

Finally, the formation of the V+V construction is briefly discussed. It is argued that substratum influence or superstratum influence alone cannot explain the formation of this construction. The "Transfer to Somewhere Principle" proposed by Anderson (1983) might suggest that both substratum and superstratum influences are present in the formation. The grammar does not come exclusively from the substratum or the superstratum.

## 2. Methodology

The V+V construction was searched for in the Singapore section of the Corpus of Web-based Global English. The Singapore section of this corpus contains 29,229,186 words in 28,332 web pages from 5,775 web sites (Davies 2013). It contains informal, internet-based language. It may include data from both native and non-native speakers but this is an accurate characterization of the usage of Singaporean English in its social context. This corpus allows users to search for words and phrases and the corpus is tagged for parts of speech. For example, "go [vv0]" locates instances of *go* followed by a verb in its infinitive form. [vv0] includes both transitive verbs and intransitive verbs so the results of this search include both *go* followed by an intransitive verb and *go* followed by a transitive verb and its object such as *go greet him*. Some search results contain constructions which need to be filtered out such as *To create a JPG graphic for your web site choose SAVE AS from the FILE pull down menu*. As *save* is a verb and it appears immediately after another verb *choose*, *choose save* is included in the result by the search engine although *save* does not form a constituent with *choose*. All the results were checked to remove such instances.

The first construction searched in the corpus is V+V with *go* or *come* as one of the verbs because *go* is one of the most commonly cited examples in serial verb constructions in Singaporean English (Bao 2010). Then several other V+V constructions were searched including *want+V*, *choose+V*, *decide+V*, and *try+V*. The number of occurrences of each construction was recorded. The occurrences per million words which are provided in the corpus were also recorded.

Based on the results of the corpus search, a survey was then designed and conducted to find out the acceptability of these constructions. There are 29 test items in total. Among the constructions searched in the corpus, those whose number of occurrences is at least one are included in the survey.

Constructions which do not appear in the corpus but might possibly be used by speakers of Singaporean English are also included in the survey. For example, *have gone+V* is not found in the corpus but is included in the survey. The majority of the sentences in the survey are taken from the corpus. Some sentences found in the corpus are difficult to understand without context. Such sentences are replaced by other sentences with the same constructions. For each sentence listed in the survey, the participants are required to answer two questions: (1) do you say the sentence, and (2) have you heard other people say the sentence. For each sentence, the number of participants who answer ‘yes’ to at least one of the questions is calculated. The total number of participants of the survey is 26. The participants are Singaporeans from 17 - 24 years of age residing in Singapore. They were explicitly instructed to judge the sentences according to Singaporean English.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Results of the Search in the Corpus

##### 3.1.1 V+V with *Go* or *Come* as the First Verb in Singaporean English

	Number of occurrences in Singaporean English	Occurrences per million words
go+V	893	21.75
goes+V	4	0.08
went+V	2	0.04
come+V	260	5.76
comes+V	1	0.02
came+V	5	0.13
has come+V	2	0.05

Table 1. Number of occurrences of V+V with *go* or *come* as the first verb

The occurrences per million words of the constructions show that most of them are rare although examples are found in the corpus. V+V constructions with *go* or *come* as the second verb were also searched to find instances of other verbs as the first verb. The search did not produce any systematic results but several first verbs are found to be used in multiple results, which are *decide*, *want*, *choose* and *bother*. V+V constructions with these four verbs as the first verb were then searched. The results are shown in Table 2.

### 3.1.2 V+V with *Want*, *Decide*, *Choose* and *Bother* as the First Verb in Singaporean English

	Number of occurrences in Singaporean English	Occurrences per million words
decide+V	1	0.02
decides+V	0	0
decided+V	7	0.14
have decided+V	4	0.08
want+V	98	2.19
wants+V	4	0.08
wanted+V	9	0.18
had wanted+V	1	0.02
choose+V	4	0.08
chooses+V	0	0
chose+V	2	0.04
have chosen+V	0	0

Table 2. Number of occurrences of *decide/want/choose+V* with the first verb in different forms

It can be seen from Table 2 that *decide*, *want* and *choose* can combine with other verbs and can appear in inflected forms. *Want+V* has the highest number of occurrences. Beside *bother go* and *bother come*, no other instances of *bother+V* were found in the corpus.

### 3.1.3 *Try+V*

*Try* is another verb that appears in the V+V construction.

	Number of occurrences in Singaporean English	Occurrences per million words
try+V	82	1.533
tries+V	2	0.04
tried+V	1	0.02
have tried+V	1	0.02

Table 3. Number of occurrences of *try+V* with *try* in different forms

### 3.2 Results of the Survey on the Acceptability of V+V in Singaporean English

The V+V constructions found in the corpus and the constructions which may possibly be accepted are included in the survey. The table below shows the number of participants, among the 26 total participants, who answered “yes” to at least one of the two questions: (1) do you say the sentence, and (2) have you heard other people say the sentence.

No.	Sentence	Y1*	Y2*	Y1Y2*	Total
1	The nurse asked me to <b>go wait</b> on one of the beds for the doctor.	1	9	12	22
2	What I like the most is Animax <b>goes promote</b> Korean entertainment instead of Jpop.	0	3	0	3
3	We <b>went eat</b> sushi and went back to the hotel.	0	13	5	18
4	I <b>have gone eat</b> McDonald twice today.	0	6	4	10
5	He <b>had gone eat</b> lunch before you came here.	0	4	3	7
6	I'm planning to <b>come visit</b> you again with Julia.	2	1	21	24
7	He wants his blog to be such a blog where everyone <b>comes read</b> and ends up feeling cheated.	2	3	6	11
8	Five speakers <b>came speak</b> to us on the topic of entrepreneurship.	0	6	14	20
9	He <b>has come see</b> me five times this week.	0	10	8	18
10	They <b>had come report</b> the incident to me before Alex knew it.	0	9	3	12
11	I <b>want go</b> to the US.	1	9	14	24
12	Ask him whether he <b>wants go</b> for coffee with us.	0	8	15	23
13	Anyone who <b>wants join</b> an agency as a housing agent must sit for an exam.	0	8	11	19
14	My dog <b>wanted go</b> rolling in mud.	0	6	4	10
15	They <b>decided go</b> back to their camp after reaching the mountain top.	0	3	9	12
16	She <b>decides go</b> to Canada for her holidays this year.	0	3	5	8
17	He <b>decides look</b> for a job on the internet.	0	2	5	7
18	We <b>decide go</b> to Korea this summer.	0	10	7	17
19	We <b>have decided apply</b> for bank loan.	0	7	2	9
20	He <b>had decided work</b> in the rural area many years ago.	0	6	3	9
21	Few students <b>choose go</b> to less popular countries for SEP.	0	9	5	14
22	He always <b>chooses study</b> at night instead of in the morning.	0	7	4	11
23	We <b>chose go</b> with Tom's method as it seemed more practical.	0	3	6	9
24	They <b>have chosen go</b> to a less popular place for their holidays.	0	6	3	9
25	That town is noisy. It is not a place I would <b>bother go</b> back to.	0	3	14	17
26	He should <b>try carry out</b> his plan rather than keeping thinking about it.	0	5	6	11
27	Fortunately for him, no one <b>tries make</b> him the scapegoat when things go bad.	0	8	10	18
28	The teacher <b>tried include</b> fun activities in the lesson.	0	5	4	9
29	I <b>have tried make</b> various dessert using the new oven.	0	6	7	13

Table 4. Number of participants who answered “yes” to at least one of the two questions

\*Participants answering “yes” to only the first question (Y1), only the second (Y2), or both (Y1Y2).

Looking at those constructions for which a majority of the survey participants answered “yes” to at least one of the questions, the items that seem to be acceptable are 1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 18, 21, 25, 27 and 29. Although some of them have low occurrences in the corpus, they seem to be acceptable judging by the survey results. The results suggest that *want*, *decide*, *choose*, *bother*, *try* and *follow* form the V+V construction, in addition to *go* and *come*. With the data found so far, the first verb is lexically restricted while the second verb is not.

#### **4. Syntactic properties of the V+V construction in Singaporean English observed in the results**

*Go/come+V* are commonly used in American English. For most speakers of American English, the first component of the construction can only be *go* or *come*. The second verb is not restricted as long as it describes an activity. Both of the two verbs must be in their uninflected form (Pullum 1990):

- (1) Every day I go get the paper.
- (2) \*Every day my son goes get the paper. (Pullum 1990:219)

In Singaporean English, however, there are no such restrictions. Firstly, it can be observed from the results that the first verb is not restricted to *go* and *come*, it can also be *want*, *choose*, *bother* and *try*. Secondly, the first verb can be in its infinitive form or in inflected forms, i.e. the use of this construction is not restricted to simple present tense and it can also be used for third person singular. This can be seen from the survey results which show that some V+V constructions in which the first verb is in inflected forms are acceptable. However, not all tenses and aspects of V+V are accepted and which ones are accepted may depend on the verbs in the construction. The inflectional morpheme is attached to the first verb but not the second verb. The second verb needs to be in its infinitive form.

#### **5. Is the V+V construction in Singaporean English an SVC?**

Aikhenvald (2006) listed some properties and parameters of SVCs. Aikhenvald's (2006) proposal is relatively comprehensive and work of previous scholars was considered when making the proposal. An SVC should possess most of the properties according to Aikhenvald (2006). However, the properties are not fulfilled in all languages. Some constructions may not fulfil all the criteria but they might have been discussed as SVCs by some linguists (Bisang 2009). To solve this problem, Aikhenvald adopted a prototypical approach, i.e. there is a prototypical

SVC and there are also less prototypical ones which do not fulfil all the criteria.

Bisang (2009) surveyed various criteria for defining serial verb constructions proposed by scholars. He emphasized that single eventhood is a crucial criterion and argued that most of the properties and parameters proposed by Aikhenvald (2006) “can be seen as iconic reflections of single eventhood as a more general criterion” and the “distinction between properties and parameters is arbitrary” (2009:801). Therefore, we can judge whether a construction is an SVC using the properties and parameters which are associated with eventhood. Based on the formal and semantic properties of SVCs proposed by Aikhenvald, Bisang listed seven factors which are associated with SVCs:

- shared grammatical categories
- shared arguments
- monoclausality
- intonational properties
- contiguity
- wordhood
- marking of grammatical categories.

In this section, the V+V constructions in Singaporean English listed in the previous section are checked against these seven criteria.

a. shared grammatical categories

Verbs in an SVC have the same tense, aspect, mood, modality, illocutionary force and polarity values. They are marked on both verbs or are marked on only one verb but are shared by the two verbs semantically. The V+V constructions in Singaporean English do not always fulfil this criterion.

As mentioned in section 4, inflectional morphemes are attached to the first verb only in Singaporean English. However, the meaning is shared by both verbs. Take the following sentence in Singaporean English as an example:

- (3) We went eat sushi.

Even though *eat* is in its infinitive form, the event of eating happened in the past. Both verbs in (3) are of indicative mood. Both verbs are stating a fact and hence have the same illocutionary force.

However, there are exceptions where the two verbs have different moods.



- (4) We went eat sushi but the restaurant was closed!

Sentence (4) is grammatical in Singaporean English. This shows that the second verb *eat* is not associated with factual assertion and hence is not in indicative mood. In *want/choose/decide+VP*, the two verbs do not always have the same mood either.

- (5) We decide go to Korea this summer.

In (5), *decide* and *go* are in different moods. *Decide* is in declarative mood while *go* is not as it is associated with intention. Failing to fulfil this criterion suggests that these constructions fail to meet the single eventhood criterion and hence may not be SVCs.

At the same time, the two verbs in V+V may not always have the same tense. The survey results show that *want+VP*, *decide+VP* and *choose+VP* are considered grammatical if the first verb is in simple present tense, and ungrammatical if in other tenses. The second verb, however, may not always be in simple present tense. In (5), the event of going to Korea has not happened and it does not happen routinely either. Hence, it cannot be concluded that *go* is in simple present tense. This also applies to *want+VP*.

- (6) I want go to Korea next year.

Sentence (6) is grammatical in Singaporean English. *Next year* implies that *go* may not be in simple present tense. *Want*, however, is in simple present tense. *Next year* does not modify *want*. This means that the two verbs may not be in the same tense, which violates the criterion of shared tense.

According to Aikhenvald (2006), the scope of negation of a negator in an SVC can be the whole construction or part of it. In Singaporean English, the scope of negation can be either one of the two verbs. The scope of negation can also be the whole construction i.e. both verbs are negated.

- (7) We did not go eat pizza. We went eat pasta.
- (8) We wanted to eat outside. Dad wanted to eat pizza. But in the end, we did not go eat pizza. We ate pizza at home.
- (9) We did not go eat pizza. We stayed at home and watched TV.

In (7), the scope of negation is the second VP, *eat pizza*. In (8), the scope of negation is the first VP, *go*. In (9), the whole construction *go eat pizza* is negated. The first sentence in (9) means “neither went nor ate pizza”.

b. shared arguments

This requirement is always fulfilled as the two verbs always share the subject of the sentence that they are in. For example, in sentence (3), the two verbs share the subject *we*.

Pro-drop is allowed in Singaporean English as shown in (10) and (11). However, if there are no noun phrases between the two verbs in the V+V construction, the second verb is not allowed to have a subject which is different from that of the first verb.<sup>2</sup> For example, the only interpretation of (12) is that *I* is the subject of both *want* and *eat*. *Eat* cannot be interpreted as having a different subject.

- (10) Can bring your book tomorrow?  
'Can you bring your book tomorrow?'
- (11) “What did you do yesterday?” “Went shopping.”  
'I/We went shopping.'
- (12) I want eat sushi.  
'I want to eat sushi.'

c. monoclausality

Aikhenvald stated that SVCs “allow no markers of syntactic dependency on their components” (2006:6). This criterion differentiates coordination from SVCs. A coordinate structure and an SVC with the same components may have different meanings. Some V+V constructions in Singaporean English show such difference in meaning.

- (13) I want go to the US.  
(14) \*I want and go to the US.

The V+V construction in (13) is converted to a coordinate structure in (14) and the sentence become ungrammatical. This shows that the two verbs in (13) are not coordinated. The relationship of the two verbs may probably

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<sup>2</sup> If there is a noun phrase between the two verbs, the noun phrase can be interpreted as the subject of the second verb. For example, *him* in *I want him die* is the subject of the second verb. However, the construction is not a V+V construction.

be subordination as (13) can be changed to *I want to go to the US* which has a subordinate structure.

However, the difference in meaning between the V+V construction and a coordinate structure is not always distinct in Singaporean English.

(15) We went eat sushi.

(16) We went and ate sushi.

When both verbs are in realis mood like in (15), its meaning is similar to that of a coordinate structure like (16) although the meaning of (16) suggests that there are two events.

#### d. intonational properties

The possibility of intonation breaks and pause markers between the components of SVCs is much lower than that in structures containing more than one verb (Givón 1990, 1991). Speakers of Singaporean English do not pause between the two verbs in the V+V construction so this construction shares similar intonational properties as monoverbal clauses.

#### e. contiguity

SVCs can be contiguous or non-contiguous. Bisang stated that “the fact that SVCs are characterized by the obligatory contiguity of their verbal components” is an “iconic reflection of the conceptual unity of SVCs” (2009:806). This criterion is not applicable in this study. The scope of this study is the V+V construction in Singaporean English so the two verbs are contiguous by definition.

With the data found so far, the two verbs in the V+V construction are mostly contiguous. For these constructions, if other constituents are inserted between the two verbs, the sentence is judged to be ungrammatical as shown in (17) and (18). There are cases where a sentence is judged to be grammatical by some of the survey participants when a component is inserted between the two verbs, like in (19b) *quickly* is inserted between *went* and *eat*. However, the sentence is not a V+V construction any more, which is out of the scope of the study.

(17) a. I want go to the US.

b. \*I want very much go to the US.

- (18) a. I have tried make various dessert using the new oven.  
 b. \*I have tried several times make dessert using the new oven.
- (19) a. We quickly went eat sushi.  
 b. We went quickly eat sushi.

f. wordhood

Based on whether the verbs in an SVC form a single word, SVCs can be one-word or multi-word. Verbs in a multi-word SVC can function independently. The verbs in the V+V construction in Singaporean English are independent words. Each of them can function as a predicate of a sentence. At the same time, verbal inflection is attached to the first verb. This shows that the two verbs do not form a single word, as infixation is absent in English.

g. marking of grammatical categories

Grammatical categories such as person of the subject, tense, aspect, mood, modality are marked on every component of an SVC or are marked once in an SVC. In Singaporean English, grammatical categories are marked once in the V+V construction. Inflectional morphemes are attached to the first verb only.

After checking the V+V constructions found in this study with each of the seven criteria, it can be seen that not all of the V+V constructions fulfil all the criteria. The verbs in *go/come*+VP do not always have the same mood. The verbs in *want/decide/choose*+VP may differ in tense and in mood. Using the prototypical approach, it might be argued that these V+V constructions in Singaporean English are not the most prototypical SVCs. The constructions where the two verbs do not share the same mood might be considered to fail the single eventhood criterion and hence may not be SVCs.

*Bother*+V seems to fulfil all the criteria. However, *bother* is found to combine only with *come* and *go* in this study. Further research is needed to support that it belongs to SVCs.

## 6. The formation of the V+V construction in Singaporean English

Ho & Platt (1993) believed that SVCs in Singaporean English have a Chinese source. Structural similarities between SVCs in Singaporean

English and SVCs in Chinese were demonstrated. However, they also mentioned that SVCs are found in many creoles so the Chinese source cannot be proved. Muysken & Veenstra (1994) argued that there is substratum influence in SVCs in pidgins and creoles. Some scholars' work such as Bickerton (1981) and Mufwene (2001) suggests that substratum influence in general is questionable.

It might be worth noticing that the structure provided by Chinese is not always copied directly into Singaporean English, even if Chinese is the source of SVCs in Singaporean English. This can be seen in sentences which are not in simple present tense. The inflectional morpheme for tense is always attached to the first verb in Singaporean English, in contrast to Chinese. Chinese does not mark tense but only aspect (Gao 1986), and function words which are aspect markers appear after the second verb of an SVC when there is only one marker of aspect in the sentence.<sup>3</sup> The sentence is ungrammatical if the aspect marker appears after the first verb as shown in (20) and (21).

(20) gualaŋ k<sup>h</sup>uixui t<sup>h</sup>olun liau tsit le bunte.<sup>4</sup>  
 1 pl have a meeting discuss PFV this CLF issue  
 'We have had a meeting to discuss this issue.'

(21) \*gualaŋ k<sup>h</sup>uixui liau t<sup>h</sup>olun tsit le bunte.  
 1 pl have a meeting PFV discuss this CLF issue

If the marker of perfective aspect *liau* is placed after the first VP like in (21), the sentence is ungrammatical.

In "standard" English, although SVCs do not have any inflections, it can be seen in other constructions that the first verb in a structure tends to bear inflections for tense and number while those after it do not. For example, the past tense of *go hiking* is marked on *go*, while *hiking* remains the same (see Zwicky 1990). It is seen above that in Singaporean English, tense and number are reflected on the first verb rather than the second verb. With respect to this distributional property, SVCs in Singaporean English are similar to English rather than Chinese.

<sup>3</sup> There can be two aspect markers, one appearing after the first verb and the other one after the second verb but the two are different aspect markers. The same aspect marker appears only once in an SVC in Chinese.

<sup>4</sup> The Chinese source refers to Chinese dialects spoken in Singapore. Mandarin is believed to have influence on Singaporean English at a later time than the dialects, especially after the start of Speak Mandarin Campaign in 1979 (Low & Brown 2005). The examples provided here are Hokkien. The sentences are transcribed in IPA symbols.

The extreme version of substratists' argument is that the grammar of pidgins and creoles comes from the substratum language and the vocabulary comes from the superstratum language. The fact that the distribution of inflectional morpheme in Singaporean English is similar to that in British and American English but different from Chinese shows that the grammar of Singaporean English cannot come exclusively from Chinese. At the same time, the fact that SVCs in Singaporean English are not as restricted as SVCs in American English shows that influence from other language(s) was present in its genesis. Superstratum influence alone cannot explain the formation of SVCs in Singaporean English either. Therefore, it is reasonable to propose that both Chinese and English influenced the formation of SVCs in Singaporean English.

There are structures in English which are superficially similar to the V+V construction in Singaporean English. *Go/come+V* in American English is similar to V+V in Singaporean English although their syntactic structures are different.<sup>5</sup> Anderson (1983) proposed the "Transfer to Somewhere Principle". He stated that:

A grammatical form or structure will occur consistently and to a significant extent in interlanguage as a result of transfer if and only if there already exists within the L2 input the potential for (mis-)generalization from the input to produce the same form or structure. (Anderson 1983: 178)

As there are SVCs in Chinese with similar structure to the V+V construction in Singaporean English and there are structures in American and British English which are seemingly similar to SVCs, speakers of Singaporean English might have matched the SVCs in Chinese with the structures in English and applied the structure to a larger range of verbs and inflected forms, including third person singular and different tenses and aspects, beyond what is found in other varieties of English.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Go/come+V* is grammatical in American English but it might have become more and more acceptable in British English. It is stated in Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary that such usage is present in spoken English, especially in North American English (Hornby 2009). Therefore, this construction is not only present in American English.

<sup>6</sup> Besides British English, American English might have influenced the development of SVCs in Singaporean English in recent years through the media. Further research is needed to investigate the possible influence of American English on Singaporean English.

## 7. Conclusions

This paper presents a study of the V+V construction in Singaporean English. A search in the Corpus of Global Web-Based English was conducted and then followed by a survey on the acceptability of the V+V constructions. Some of the V+V constructions have low occurrences per million words but they are acceptable judging by the responses of the survey participants. For these constructions, majority of the participants answered “yes” to at least one of the two survey questions. The results show that unlike in “standard” English, the first verb is not restricted to *go* or *come*. *Want, decide, choose, bother, try* and *follow* are observed to form V+V constructions. The first verb can appear in its infinitive form as well as in inflected forms. Inflectional morphemes are attached to the first verb but not the second. The first verb is lexically restricted as compared to the second verb.

Checking the V+V construction against the criteria proposed by Aikhenvald shows that not all the V+V constructions fulfil all the criteria. The criteria of shared arguments, intonational properties are fulfilled. The criterion of shared grammatical categories is not always fulfilled. The two verbs in some constructions such as *want+V* do not have the same mood. Such constructions might be considered to fail the single eventhood criterion and hence may not be SVCs. For monoclausality, the difference in meaning between some V+V constructions and a coordinate structure is not always distinct. For wordhood, the two verbs in the V+V construction function as two independent words. Grammatical categories are marked once in the V+V construction. Hence, not all the V+V constructions in Singaporean English found in this study are prototypical members of SVCs.

Lastly, the formation of this construction is briefly discussed. It is very likely that both English and Chinese had influence on the formation of this specific construction in Singaporean English. As there are SVCs in Chinese which have a similar structure to the V+V construction and there are superficially similar structures in American English (and perhaps British English also), it is hypothesized that speakers of Singaporean English matched the SVCs in Chinese with the structures in English and used the structures for a greater range of verbs, tenses, aspects and numbers of the subject.

It is seen from the properties of the V+V constructions that some constraints of the superstratum language are violated while others are not. Future studies may look into what determines which features of the superstratum language cannot be compromised.

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