

ISSUES IN THE ANALYSIS OF SERIAL
VERBAL CONSTRUCTIONS

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This paper examines four types of verbal combinations that have been labelled serial verbal constructions (SVCs) in the literature on serial verbs. It then concentrates on two issues: the nature of serial verbal constructions and their derivation. Judged by the criteria of verbal function, meaning, and morphology, components of SVCs including those that have lost verbal meanings, are shown to be primarily verbs. As far as derivation is concerned, two hypotheses are examined: the mono-source hypothesis and the multi-source hypothesis. The latter is shown to account better for the different types of SVCs and, in particular, their negative forms. The paper ends with the propositions that the concatenation of verbs in the surface structure of SVCs is the result of a convergence from different underlying structures and that SVCs form part of a continuum, the end points of which are coordinate sentences and complex verbs.

Nous examinons dans cet article quatre sortes de combinaisons verbales désignées constructions des séries verbales (CSV) "serial verbal constructions" dans la littérature portant sur cette sorte de verbes. Notre attention se porte donc sur deux questions: la nature des CSV aussi bien que leurs dérivations. A la lumière de critères fonctionnelles, sémantiques et morphologiques, les constituants des séries verbales y compris ceux qui ont perdu leurs significations verbales s'avèrent être des verbes à l'origine. Quant à la dérivation, deux hypothèses sont examinées: l'hypothèse mono-source et l'hypothèse multi-source. Cette dernière rend mieux compte des différents types de CSV en particulier des formes négatives. La communication examine en dernier lieu les propositions que la concaténation des verbes dans la structure de surface des CSV résulte de la convergence des différentes structures profondes et que les CSV fait partie d'un continuum dont une extrémité représente les phrases coordonnées et l'autre les verbes complexes.

In spite of the considerable attention that has been devoted to the study of serial verbal constructions (SVCs) in West African languages, there is still a great deal of disagreement on the range, nature, and derivation of these constructions.¹ One probable reason for the disagreement is the wide variation in the *surface manifestation* of SVCs. In Akan, for example (Boadi 1968:84, Schachter 1974:259), verbs in SVCs are marked for tense, thereby making it easy for tense marking to be used as a criterion in determining which verbal combinations constitute SVCs, and as an argument in favour of a particular derivation (Schachter 1974:259). Such an option is not available for either Yoruba or Nupe where there is no surface marking of tense. Similarly, the modifying nature of some verbs in Anyi, such as *fa* 'take' (Van Leynseele 1975:203), is amply shown by the possibility of their being repeated in the same SVC. Again, there is no such ready indicator for many other languages.

I. SVC Types

In general, it may be said that four types of verbal combinations have been labelled SVCs in the literature on serial verbs. The four types are: 1. the Coordinate (or Linking) SVC, 2. the Modifying SVC, 3. the Purpose SVC and 4. the Complex Verb SVC; and they may be exemplified by the sentences in (1), (2), (3) and (4) respectively:

1. The Coordinate (or Linking) SVC:

- | | | | | |
|-----|--------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| (a) | Yoruba | Olú ra èpà jẹ | <i>Olu bought groundnuts eat</i> | 'Olu bought and ate groundnuts.' |
| (b) | Nupe | Tsoda fã èwó dà dé | <i>Tsoda put-on garment went out</i> | 'Tsoda put on the garment and went out.' |
| (c) | Akan | Kofi kɔɔe baɛɛ | <i>Kofi went came</i> | 'Kofi went and came back.' |

2. The Modifying SVC:

- | | | | | |
|-----|--------|------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| (a) | Yoruba | ó sùn ló | <i>he slept go</i> | 'He fell asleep.' |
| (b) | Nupe | Mí lotũ yà Tsoda | <i>I worked give Tsoda</i> | 'I worked for Tsoda.' |

- (c) Akan Kofi yee adwuma maa: Amma
 Kofi did work gave Amma
 'Kofi worked for Amma.'

3. The Purpose SVC:

- (a) Yoruba Olú fẹ́ẹ́ ra aṣọ
 Olu wants-to buy cloth
 'Olu wants to buy cloth.'
- (b) Nupe Tsoda bé lá egbà
 Tsoda came take axe
 'Tsoda came in order to take the axe.'
- (c) Akan (Not SVC)
 Kofi pe se ɔko
 Kofi wants that he-go
 'Kofi wants to go.'

4. The Complex Verb SVC: (Collocation demands both verbs)

- (a) Yoruba Olú gba ọmọ náà gbọ́
 Olu received child the hear
 'Olu believed the child.'
- (b) Nupe Tsoda bèyé kú mí
 Tsoda spread-eye stick me
 'Tsoda stared at me.'
- (c) Akan Kofi gyee Amma dii
 Kofi received Amma ate
 'Kofi believed Amma.'

In the coordinate SVC, each verb has the same meaning as it would have had in a simplex sentence. Thus, the meaning of each of the sentences in (1) is the sum of the meanings of the simplex sentence constituted by each of the verbs with the NP subject. In contrast to this, in the modifying SVC, the meaning of one of the verbs is different from what it would have been in a simplex sentence. This is because one verb in the combination serves only to modify the meaning of the other. Thus, in the sentences in (2), the verbs *lo* 'go', *yà* 'give', and *maa* 'gave' merely extend the meanings of the other verbs with which they occur. In sentences (3a) and (3b) which are instances of the Purpose SVC, each verb has the same meaning as it would have had in a simplex sentence, but the idea of purpose is introduced into the combination. To this extent, these two sentences resemble (3c) which is not an SVC

but a complex sentence with an embedded purpose clause. In contrast to all the other types, the complex verb SVC is like a fixed collocation of verbs because both verbs must be present for the sentence to be meaningful. Besides, the meaning of the combination is very different from the meanings of the verbs in a simplex sentence.

Although not everyone (including the present writer) accepts all the four types as SVCs this issue will not be of immediate concern in this paper; but comments will be made later on the probable range of SVCs.

The two issues that will be taken up relate to the nature and derivation of SVCs. What is the status of the so-called verbs in SVCs? Are they all verbs? Secondly, what should be the underlying structure and derivation of SVCs?

II. Verbal Status in SVCs

There are three types of criteria by which verbal status may be determined. These are: function, meaning and morphology.

A simple test of verbal function is ability to occur in a simplex sentence. Judged by this criterion, each of the words labelled verbs in (1) - (4) is definitely a verb. There may, however, be a loss of verbal potential when a verb occurs in an SVC, as opposed to when it occurs in a simplex sentence. For example, the second verb in (1a) and (2a) cannot be topicalized; yet it can when it occurs in a simplex sentence.

Two aspects of verbal meaning may be examined. Verbs may be said to display characteristic meanings which can be classified under the usual semantic categories of action, process, action-process, state, attribute, experience etc. From this point of view, all the verbs in (1)-(4), with the exception of those having a modifying function in (2), qualify as verbs, since they can be shown to express one or the other of these categories. Those verbs in (2) having a modifying function will be considered to be deviant because they express meanings usually associated with adverbials or prepositions. And on this basis alone, they will fail to qualify as verbs. The other aspect of verbal meaning is the contrast between the meaning of the verb in a simplex sentence and its meaning in an SVC. On this criterion, the verbs in (4) and those having a modifying function in (2) will fail to qualify as verbs, since they do not retain the meanings they have in a simplex sentence.

The drastic change of meaning of the verbs in (4) is easily observed, since the meaning of the combination is an idiom which is very different from the meaning of the parts. The modification of meaning in the case of the verbs in (2) is not so obvious.

Some people think that there is really no modification, other than that reflected in the English gloss of the verbs concerned.² There are three ways of demonstrating that the modification of meaning is real. Firstly, we can examine the selectional restrictions of the verbs in question; secondly, we can compare sentences in which the verbs occur with paraphrases in the language; and thirdly, we can contrast the meanings of the SVCs in which they occur with the meanings of the corresponding coordinate sentences.

Consider, for example, the following sentence which illustrates the first two ways of demonstrating the meaning change:

5. (a) Yoruba *ónjẹ náà sáré tán*
 food the ran finish
 'The food finished quickly.'
- (b) Yoruba **ónjẹ náà sáré*
 'The food ran.'
- (c) Yoruba *ónjẹ náà tán kíákíá*
 food the finished quickly
 'The food finished quickly.'

In (5a), the verb *sáré* 'ran' has undergone a meaning shift in its function as a modifying verb. This is the only reason why it is now compatible with the subject *ónjẹ* 'food' with which it cannot occur in a simplex sentence, as shown by the ungrammaticality of (5b). Furthermore, sentences (5a) and (5c) are paraphrases in which the meaning of *sáré* 'ran' is the same as that of *kíákíá* 'quickly'.

The contrast of meaning between a modifying SVC and a coordinate sentence can be illustrated by (2a) which has the meaning 'He fell asleep'. The corresponding coordinate sentence made up of two simplex sentences has the meaning 'He slept and went'. Again, there has been a shift between the meaning of *lọ* 'go' in a simplex sentence and its meaning in the modifying SVC.

Neither aspect of verbal meaning can be considered a reliable guide to verbal status. This is because each presupposes a pre-conceived notion of limits to verbal meaning. There is no reason why a notion expressed by one language through a preposition or an adverb cannot be expressed through a verb by another language. This is the whole basis of differentiating between functions of the verb in an SVC.

The modifying function and meaning of verbs in SVCs have given rise to their re-analysis as case markers, prepositions or even adverbs.³ In general, however, the consensus seems to be

that they are primarily verbs, whatever secondary function they may be made to serve. This position finds strong support in the morphology of the verb. Even the verbs with modifying meaning display verb morphology. For example in (2c), the verb ma 'give' occurs with the past tense marker as maa. Similarly, the two verbs constituting the complex verb SVC in (4c) also have past tense markers.

The ability of a word to take tense and aspect markers has been used as evidence of verbness. For instance, Ansre (1966:29-30) distinguishes between verb and verbid in Ewe on this basis. Thus in

6. (a) Ewe é nò kútsétsé wó gbém nò nàmám
 he was fruit plu. plucking was sharing
 ná ame wó
 to person plu.
 'He used to pluck fruits and share (them)
 with people'
- (b) Ewe nò ... gbém 'was plucking'
 nò màmám 'was sharing'
 nò ... nám 'was giving'

the verbs gbè 'to pick (a fruit)' and má 'to share' in (6a) are inflected for tense, but not the verbid ná 'to' as the paradigm in (6b) clearly shows. In this case, inability to take a tense marker is taken as evidence of non-verbal status. Hence ná 'to' is a verbid and not a verb. Notice, however, that there is a verb ná 'to give' in the language which is fully inflected for tense and aspect as in (6b). One might argue that the verbid ná performs the modifying function of the verb ná 'give', and that its loss of verbal inflection is a direct consequence of this function. But such a position will be difficult to justify, if there are other verbs in a modifying function that are still conjugated for tense and aspect, as is clearly the case in Akan.⁴

If it is accepted that absence of verb morphology is evidence of non-verbal status, is the converse necessarily true? When a word displays verb morphology, is it necessarily a verb? Consider the following sentences:

7. (a) Yoruba Olú bá a ló
 Olu accompanied her go
 'Olu went with her.'
- (b) Yoruba *Olú bá a
 'Olu accompanied her.'

(c) Yoruba bíbá ní Olú bá
accompanying it-is Olu accompanied

a ló
her go

'It was going that Olu went with her.'
 (= 'What Olu did was to go with her')

8. (a) Yatye lwyí abà utsì ikù
child CAUS. door close

'The child shut the door.'

(b) Yatye lwyí ǎbà utsì íkù
'The child shuts the door.'

(c) Yatye bà utsì kù
'shut the door'

Sentence (7a) shows that *bá* 'accompany, with' which occurs in a seeming SVC fails the functional test for verbs, since it cannot occur in a simplex sentence as in (7b). However in (7a), it takes the usual third person pronoun form for verbs (which is a reduplication of the vowel of the verb), and in (7c), it can be topicalized. In other words, it has verb morphology and partly syntax.

Sentence (8) is even more striking. It shows the causative marker (which appears to be a kind of auxiliary) behaving exactly like a verb. According to Stahlke (1970:68), the behaviour of verbs in Yatye is as follows:

<u>Tense</u>	<u>Marker</u>	<u>Example</u>
Perfect	Mid tone prefix	abà, íkù
Imperfect	Low-High prefix	ǎbà (´) íkù
Imperative	Absence of prefix	bà, kù

In all respects, the causative marker behaves morphologically like a verb.

Cases like (7) and (8) present a problem. Can one ignore a verb morphology in determining what is a verb in an SVC? In (7), the only reason *bá* does not appear to be a verb is that it does not occur in a simplex sentence, otherwise there is no difference between it and other verbs having a modifying function in SVCs. I have shown elsewhere (Bamgboje 1972, 1974) that occurrence in a simplex sentence is not crucial to verbal status, since part of the result of having a modifying function in an SVC is the loss of certain verbal characteristics associated with occurrence in a simplex sentence. It is conceivable, therefore, that there are verbs like

bá in (7) which only occur in an SVC. One further support for this position is that bá can combine with other verbs to form complex verbs similar to those in (4), for example, bá...sùn 'accompany....sleep' (= 'cohabit'), bá...wì 'accompany...say' (= 'rebuke'), bá...rín 'accompany...walk' (= 'be friendly with'). If bá were not a verb, how could it combine to form a complex verb whose components are supposed to be verbs? Similarly, the causative marker in (8) is, in all probability, also a verb, in spite of its meaning and inability to occur in a simplex sentence. For instance, according to Stahlke (1970:74), it can be replaced in (8a) by the verb awá 'took' without any change in the meaning of the sentence. The inevitable conclusion to be drawn from the above is that, in determining verbal status in SVCs, verb morphology must take precedence over verbal function defined narrowly as occurrence in a simplex sentence.

III. Derivation of SVCs

The derivation of SVCs is an issue that has provoked a great deal of controversy; and the area of the greatest dispute concerns the derivation of the coordinate and the modifying SVCs typified by the sentences in (1) and (2) respectively. There is almost unanimity of opinion about the complex verb SVC typified by (4). Everyone agrees that no multi-sentence source can be provided for it. To be sure, there are differences of opinion as to whether its source is a fixed collocation or concatenation of verbs with an idiomatic meaning which must be entered as a single lexical entry in the lexicon (Bamgbose 1972:31, Schachter 1974:263), or whether it is a single verb which splits for object insertion (Awobuluyi 1971). The purpose SVC typified by (3) also does not pose any serious problem. At some point in its derivation, there must be an embedded sentence constituting the purpose construction.

As far as the coordinate and the modifying SVCs are concerned, there are two major views. The first is that both derive from the same underlying structure (let us call this 'the mono-source hypothesis') and the second is that they derive from two different underlying structures (we may call this 'the multi-source hypothesis').

The mono-source hypothesis is the older of the two hypotheses. Since Stewart (1963), it has been usual to regard all SVCs as coming from a multi-sentence source. This traditional analysis was challenged in Bamgbose (1974) with the proposal that in addition to the multi-sentence source, there must also be a single-sentence source. Schachter (1974) took up this suggestion but went further to propose that all SVCs should be derived from a single-sentence source. The result is that there are now two versions of the mono-source hypothesis: multi-sentence source and single-sentence source.

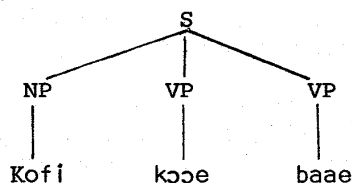
It would appear that the version of the mono-source hypothesis that claims that all SVCs are derived from a multi-sentence source has lost most of its adherents. However, Awobuluyi (1973) continues to stick to this analysis. It is easy to demonstrate that derivation from coordinate sentences will not work for the modifying SVCs in (2) for two reasons: Firstly, the meanings of the corresponding coordinate sentences are different from those of the SVCs. As already pointed out above, the coordinate sentence source for (2a) has the meaning 'He slept and went' which, in this analysis, is supposed to yield 'He fell asleep'. Similarly for (2b), 'I worked and gave Tsoda' is supposed to yield 'I worked for Tsoda' and for (2c), 'I did work and I gave Amma' should yield 'I worked for Amma'. Secondly, even where more suitable coordinate sentence sources which will not involve a change of meaning may be found, the transformation required in such a derivation must be so powerful as to achieve all sorts of ad hoc deletions.

The second version of the mono-source hypothesis that claims that all SVCs derive from a single-sentence source is championed by Schachter (1974) and his stand is strongly supported by Van Leynseele (1975).⁵ According to Schachter (1974:257), all SVCs are to be derived from a concatenation of verb phrases in a single sentence of the basic structure:

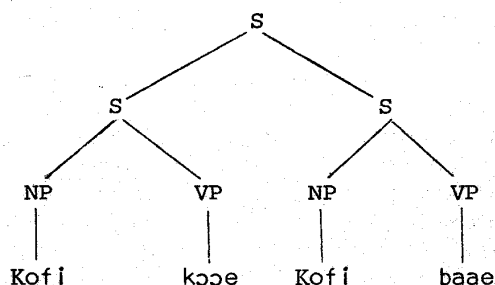
9. $S \rightarrow NP \quad AUX \quad VP \quad VP^*$

where the asterisked VP stands for null occurrence or iterative occurrence of VP. Thus, (1c) will have the structure (10a) rather than (10b).

10. (a)



(b)



The advantages claimed for the (10a) type tree structure are:

- (i) it eliminates the need to ensure identity of the NP of the conjunct in order to make deletion possible.
- (ii) it eliminates the need to ensure agreement of tense or aspect which can be indicated at only one point in the basic structure.
- (iii) it eliminates the need to postulate a conjunction only to delete it later in order to obtain an SVC.
- (iv) it is economical, since it employs the same type of derivation which in any case is required for complex verbs.
- (v) it facilitates the statement of historical change from verbs to auxiliaries or prepositions.

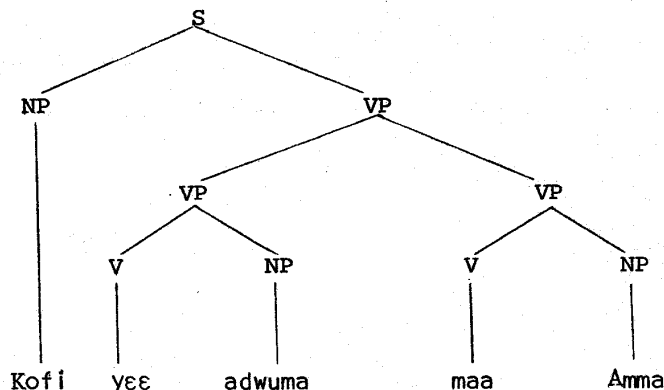
The objections implied in the above advantages are certainly not true of all SVCs nor of all languages. For example, (i) is truer of the modifying SVC than of the coordinate one, while (iii) does not take account of a language like Nupe which displays the retention of a conjunction. As far as I know, (ii) is a perfectly valid objection in the case of those languages that have surface marking of tense.⁶ The objections in (iv) and (v) are artifacts of the analysis which can neither be proved or disproved. In fact, as we shall see later, the argument that a particular structure is already required could be used to justify either the mono-source or the multi-source hypothesis.

Even if all of Schachter's objections are considered to be valid, the proposed basic structure in (10a) for all SVCs is faulty for reasons which have to do with the relationship between the SVCs and with their semantic interpretation.

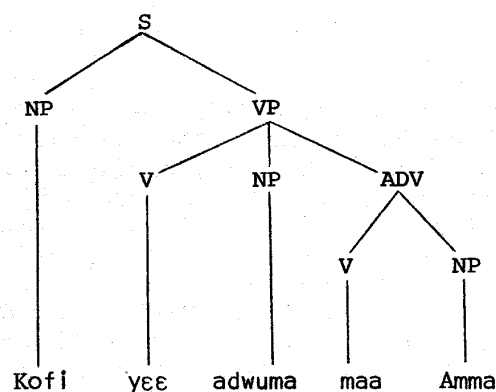
The single-sentence concatenated verbal source for all SVCs ignores the obvious relationship between (10a) and (10b) which have an identical meaning.⁷ Notwithstanding the apparent current unpopularity of Equi-NP deletion rules (Schachter 1974:253), a grammar that fails to account for the identity of meaning between these two sentences cannot really be considered to be adequate.

This same concatenated verbal source ignores the syntactic and semantic contrast between (10a) and (10b) on the one hand, and such sentences as (2c) for which there are no equivalent coordinate sentences with the same meanings. In (2c), yεε adwuma 'did work' appears to be the main VP and what maa Amma 'gave Amma' does is simply to modify that main VP. It is this contrast that the multi-source hypothesis seeks to capture by deriving coordinate SVCs from structures like (10b), and modifying SVCs from structures like (11a) and (11b).⁸

11.(a)



(b)

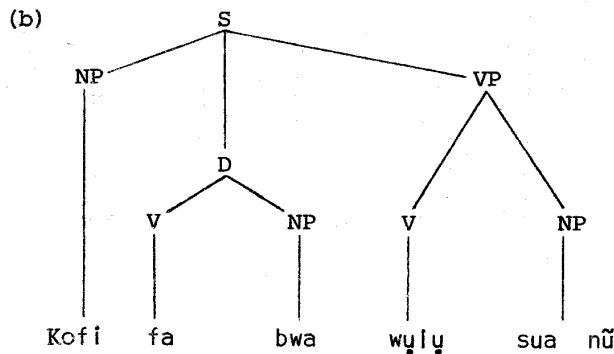


'Kofi worked for Amma.'

(11a) is the structure proposed for modifying SVCs in Bamgbose (1974:35-36). Its main defect is that it does not indicate which is the main VP and which is the modifying one. For this, an additional device of feature specification [+MOD] is required. (11b) is proposed by Stahlke (1974:274). Its main advantage is that it indicates which VP has a modifying function by putting it under an ADV node. However, the use of an ADV node that dominates V-NP is bound to create an awkward problem in a language in which the same node also dominates Prep-NP.

Van Leynseele (1975:214,216) who basically accepts (11b) has proposed a notational variant to reflect the same modifying function. For verb phrases with benefactive or manner meanings (e.g. 11), she has exactly the same structure as (11b); but for dative and directional meanings, she proposes a dependency node (D) which will dominate the modifying verb phrase. For example, sentence (12a) will have (12b) as its underlying structure.

12. (a) Anyi Kòfí fà bwă wùlù sùá! nǔ
Kofi take sheep enter house inside
 'Kofi drives a sheep into the stable.'⁹



The main advantage of Van Leynseele's D node is that it partially avoids the problem with Stahlke's ADV node which dominates a verb and its object. On the other hand, to the extent that her benefactives and manner verb phrases will be dominated by an unidentified Adjunct, that advantage is considerably reduced.

There is, however, a real problem with the D node. It is merely a label for the slot in which the class of "handling verbs" (verbs such as 'take', 'touch', 'grab', 'push' etc.) occurs.¹⁰ The dependency structure, unlike Stahlke's ADV node, has no semantic correlate in terms of the relationship of the dependent to the main verb phrase. It is only because of this that Van Leynseele has found it possible to propose that all SVCs can be described in terms of the dependency structure in (12). For example, irrespective of meaning, the following SVCs (including complex verbs which are supposed to be idiomatic) will have a dependency structure in which the first verb of the pair is the dependent and the other the main verb:¹¹

13. Anyi	fa...mă	'take...give'	(=give to)
	fa...kɔ	'take...go'	(=take to)
	kundu...kɔ	'push...go'	(=push away)
	kă...kle	'touch...show:	(=tell to)
	tira...di	'catch...eat'	(=eat)
	de...di	'grab...eat'	(=believe)

The rules required for the semantic interpretation of these combinations must, to say the least, be extremely complicated.

The semantic interpretation of negative SVCs has generally been ignored in the analysis of SVCs. This is not surprising because a deep knowledge of a language is required to cope with this phenomenon. Statements about surface agreement in negation (e.g. Schachter 1974:266; Van Leynseele 1975:191) bear no relationship at all to the scope of negation and the semantic interpretation of SVCs in which there is a negative element. In spite of references to the semantic interpretation of SVCs in Bamgboṣe (1974:25-30), hardly any attention has been paid to this problem in the analysis of SVCs.

The concatenated verbal structure does not appear to be capable of coping with negative SVCs in which not the whole construction but only one or the other of the verbs in the combination is negated. In a forthcoming paper, I have attempted to show the relationship between negation and type of SVC. Here, I will only draw attention to the difficulty of using a concatenated verbal structure for all negative SVCs.

Compare the negative SVCs in (14a) and (14b).

14. (a) Yoruba Dàda ò gbé àpótí lọ ilé
 Dada not carry box go house
 'Dada did not carry the box home.'
- (b) Yoruba Dàda ò ṣí àpótí fún mí
 Dada not open box give me
 'Dada did not open the box for me.'

Apart from a general negation which is common to both sentences (i.e. it is not the case that the event asserted took place), it can be observed that (14a) has two possibilities of negation, while (14b) has only one. These possibilities of negation can be stated in terms of a paraphrase involving one of the verbs or the entire verbal combination as in (15).

15. (a) Yoruba Dàda lọ ilé láìgbé àpótí
 Dada went house part-not-carrying box
 'Dada went home without carrying the box.'
- (b) Yoruba Dàda gbé àpótí láìgbé e
 Dada carried box part-not-carrying it
 lọ ilé
 go home
 'Dada carried the box without carrying it home.'

- (c) Yoruba Dàda sì àpótí lálàí í
 Dada opened box part-not-opening it
 fún mí
 for me
 'Dada opened the box without opening it
 for me.'

The two possibilities of negation for (14a) are reflected in (15a) and (15b): (15a) is an assertion that the subject went home, but a denial that he carried the box; (15b), on the other hand, is an assertion that the subject did carry the box but a denial that he carried it home. In contrast to this, the only possibility of negation for (14b) is an assertion that the subject opened the box, but a denial that he opened it for the entity specified. This is a crucial difference which cannot be ignored in the analysis of SVCs.

IV. Two Propositions about SVCs

It should be clear from the foregoing that I do not support the mono-source hypothesis. The simplicity of structure it entails is at the expense of complexity in the lexicon and in the semantic interpretation. That leaves us with the other alternative, the multi-source hypothesis¹² which can now be expanded to cover all SVCs and stated as follows:

Proposition 1

The concatenation of verbs in the surface structure of SVCs is the result of a convergence from different underlying structures.

We have already seen that complex verb SVCs must be entered in the lexicon as fixed combinations with idiomatic meanings. This condition is not required for the modifying SVCs where it is possible to distinguish between a verb in its modifying function as opposed to its function as a full verb. A verb that has a modifying function will have both its full meaning and its modifying meaning entered in the lexicon. So, even when a concatenated verbal source is employed for both complex verb and modifying SVCs there is still a difference in the relationship between the verbs in the combination. The purpose SVCs are, in all probability, not SVCs at all. Serialization is not possible with (3c), and both (3a) and (3b) appear to be derived from an embedded purpose clause, possibly with complementizer deletion. In other words, whatever name they go by, the sentences in (3) will have to be derived from a source different from the coordinate, modifying and complex verb SVCs. As already shown above, the concatenated verbal source is not adequate for coordinate SVCs. So they too will have to be derived from a different source, the most appropriate being a coordinate sentence source.

A second proposition about SVCs (with the exception of purpose constructions which, as already stated, are probably not SVCs anyway) may be stated as follows:

Proposition 2

SVCs form part of a continuum ranging from coordination through consecutivization to complex verbs.¹³

Hyman (1971) has drawn attention to consecutivization which occurs in languages such as Fe'fe' and Igbo. For example, in the sentences

16. (a) Fe'fe' á ká lán cák nsá
he past take pot and-come

(b) Igbo ó wèrè ìtè byá
he took pot come

'He brought the pot.'

there is no repeated pronoun subject; hence what we have is, strictly speaking, not coordination. However, the fact that there is a sequence of actions is indicated by the nasal before the second verb in (15a), and the high tone of the second verb in (15b).¹⁴ In SVCs there are no such overt markers of non-initiality of the verb, other than such predictable features as non-repetition of tense and aspect markers or negative markers in some languages. Sentences such as (16) therefore, are neither coordination nor serialization. Hyman (1971:29) also provides data from Nupe to show that consecutivization is an intermediate stage between coordination and serialization. Thus in

17. (a) Nupe u lá dùkù u cí bé
he took pot he and came

'He took the pot and came.'

(b) Nupe u lá dùkù cí bé

'He took the pot and came.'

(c) Nupe u lá dùkù bé

'He brought the pot.'

(17a) is a coordinate sentence; (17b) in which the pronoun subject has been deleted, but with the connective remaining, is analogous to the consecutivized sentences of Fe'fe'; (17c) is an SVC.

Given this kind of continuum, the question will naturally arise where to place particular SVCs and which are the closest sources from which to derive them. Some SVCs are bound to be

closer to coordinate or consecutivized sentences, while others are likely to be closer to complex verbs. It will be a falsification of the facts to say that all SVCs are derived from coordinate sentences or that they are all derived in the same way as complex verbs.

FOOTNOTES

¹This article was originally presented at the 14th Congress of the West African Linguistic Society in April 1980. Most of the examples, apart from the Yoruba ones, have been taken from the literature on serial verbal constructions in West African languages. Where no specific reference has been made to the contrary, the Nupe examples are from George (1976) and the Akan ones from Schachter (1974) which also drew on Boadi (1968) for some of its examples.

²See, for example Awobuluyi (1973:98-99).

³See Givón (1975), Lord (1973) and Kachru (1978).

⁴Compare, for example, Akan wɔ 'in, at etc' which does not inflect for tense (Ansre 1966:31-32) with Akan ma 'give, for' which does, even in its modifying function as in (2c). See, however, Welmers (1973:378) who argues against the recognition of verbids in Akan.

⁵Lord (1974) also shares Schachter's views on derivation from a single-sentence source. Van Leynseele (1975) reports that Stewart is now of the view that a single-sentence source, but with one verb, is a suitable source for SVCs. The other verb with a modifying function will be inserted transformationally. However, the tree diagram for the verbal combination with a directional meaning (Van Leynseele 1975: 209) still shows an underlying coordinate structure. This implies that not all SVCs will come from a single-sentence source.

⁶The only exception I know of is in Izi where verbs in a combination don't have to agree in surface tense marking. See Bendor-Samuel (1968:121).

⁷Apparently in Anyi (Van Leynseele 1975:192-193), no such identical meaning relationship exists. This, rather than the surface syntactic differences noted in the paper, is a more important factor for the distinction between co-ordination and serialization. For example, it means very little to say that, in an SVC having a V_1 -NP- V_2 cluster, no pronoun object referring to the NP can occur after V_2 . The reason for this restriction is, of course, well-known. It is simply that the NP is an object to both verbs. Hence pronominalization after V_2 is blocked.

⁸Stahlke (1974:274) also proposes a higher predicate analysis in which the modifying verb phrase will be the higher predicate. George (1975a:108) also makes use of a higher sentence analysis for some types of modifying verb phrases, although his embedding structure for the purpose construction, in which an Adverbial node dominates a modifying sentence (George:1975a:120-129), is mistakenly identified as a higher sentence analysis. Suffice it to say that the higher sentence analysis is less satisfactory because of its implications for phrases other than verb phrases.

⁹When this paper was given at the 14th Congress of the West African Linguistic Society, J. Burmeister drew my attention to the fact that Van Lynseele's data was slightly defective. For instance, (12a) lacks the tense marker lé and the definite particle ní. It should really have been Kòfí lé buá wùlù sùá ní ánú.

¹⁰The twin concepts of "handling verbs" and "semantically empty verbs" are undoubtedly useful in the analysis of SVCs. However not all SVCs have a handling verb in the V_1 slot. For example, there are no handling verbs in (1c), (2), (4b) nor in the well-known comparatives such as Olú ga ju Ayo ló (Olu tall exceed Ayo) 'Olu is taller than Ayo'.

¹¹Given this predictability of occurrence, the D node may well turn out to be superfluous.

- ¹² The multi-source hypothesis is advocated not only by Bamgboṣe (1973, 1974) but also by Stahlke (1974), and George (1975a, 1975b).
- ¹³ It is even possible that the continuum does not stop with complex verbs but extends to auxiliary plus verb combinations.
- ¹⁴ Note that when it occurs in an initial sentence, this verb has a low tone as in ó byàrà 'He came'. Welmers (1973:365-369) includes under serialization the type of Igbo construction described above as consecutivization. But clearly the construction exhibits the non-initiality feature which he also associates with coordination. Even in those cases where this non-initiality feature is not in evidence, a case could be made that they result from the deletion of ná 'Prog' which exhibits the high tone associated with consecutivization e.g. ó bù fù ná àgá áhýá > ó bù fù àgá áhýá (he carry load Prog going market) 'He is carrying a load to the market'.

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