

VERB CLUSTERS IN IZI

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I. INTRODUCTION

In linguistic analysis when data is scrutinized clear patterns emerge which form the basis for the establishment of categories which function within an interrelated system. Frequently, though, there is ambiguous data which does not fit easily into the over-all system, and instead of categories being differentiated boldly in a clear-cut way there is a cline from one category to another.

Verb clusters in Izi¹ illustrate this point. A verb phrase can be set up with certain specific characteristics and so, too, can a serial construction. But several other constructions occur which have some of the characteristics of the serial constructions and some of the characteristics of the phrase. There is a cline between the phrase and the serial construction with no immediate obvious break-point marking off one category from the other.

This paper² will give some of the details of these constructions and discuss their analysis.

2. THE VERB PHRASE

In Izi it is useful to distinguish two types of verb phrase: the simple verb phrase and the complex verb phrase. The simple verb phrase consists of a verb³ with the following characteristics: (a) it may be in any aspect, (b) it may be suffixed by one or more extensor suffix, of which there are more than twenty. For the understanding of this paper it should be noted that verbs occur in three forms, termed A-form, B-form and C-form. On the basis of these forms and tonal patterns a system of verb aspects is established.

The simple verb phrase may be either affirmative or negative. With negative forms, the negative particles, *te* 'not' and *teke* 'not yet' occur immediately before the verb and the negative suffix occurs as one of the verb suffixes.

Two types of complex verb phrase are distinguished. Type 1 has a very similar structure to the simple verb phrase but includes in addition the verb particle, *gege* 'obligative'. This particle occurs immediately before the verb in affirmative verb phrases. In negative verb phrases the negative particle may precede or follow the verb particle *gege*. The status of this particle is discussed in section 5.

Complex verb phrase type 2 also has a similar structure to the simple verb phrase but includes in addition the verb auxiliary, *shi* 'completed past'. This auxiliary occurs im-

¹ Izi is spoken by some 200,000 people living around and to the east of Abakaliki in eastern Nigeria. It is related to Ibo and many lexical and grammatical similarities with Ibo are found.

² This paper results from discussions with Mr and Mrs P. E. Meier, who have been carrying out field-work among the Izi for the last three years under the auspices of the Institute of Linguistics (West Africa) in co-operation with the University of Nigeria. Mrs Meier is responsible for the Izi examples. The paper was first presented at the Seventh West African Languages Congress in Lagos, 1967.

³ For details of the Izi verb see 'Some features of the Izi Verbal System', J. T. Bendor-Samuel and Inge Meier a paper presented at the 6th West African Languages Congress, 1966, and due to appear in *JOURNAL OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES*, vol. VI, no. 1.

mediately before the verb in affirmative phrases. In negative phrases the negative particle precedes the auxiliary and the negative suffix is affixed to the auxiliary rather than to the verb. Two of the verb extensor suffixes are found suffixed to the auxiliary rather than to the verb.

Simple verb phrases are found in imperative sentences but complex verb phrases do not occur in such sentences. Both types of verb phrase occur in other types of sentence.

3. SERIAL CONSTRUCTIONS

Frequently Izi sentences consist of a string of clauses, related to each other in specific ways. Certain of such clause strings are termed serial constructions. The following characteristics are found with serial constructions.

(1) Only the first clause includes a nominal phrase functioning as subject (NPs). There is no such phrase in the successive clauses.

(2) If two or more clauses have the same nominal phrase functioning as object (NPO), that nominal phrase only occurs once and always it is found in the first of the two or more clauses concerned.

(3) All clauses are always affirmative and cannot be transformed into the negative.

(4) The verb of the first clause can be of any independent or non-subordinate aspect, but the verbs in successive clauses are restricted to certain aspects, as shown below.

(5) All the verbs which occur in clauses in such a construction can also occur as head of a verb phrase in a simple clause.⁴

(6) All verbs in such a construction may be suffixed with one or more extensor suffix but most frequently only the verb of the first clause is so suffixed. The suffixes -nu 'after all', -kwa 'emphatic', -aha 'start' and -cha 'all' occur more than others.

(7) Certain patterns of aspect are found and these patterns carry specific meanings. The verb in the first clause occurs in a particular aspect and the verb in the second and subsequent clauses occurs in another aspect. Similarly the verb phrase of the first clause may be a complex verb phrase type 2 and subsequent verbs are found in certain aspects. Two groups of patterns are found and they may be labelled punctiliar and progressive. These patterns may be set out in tabular forms as in Table 1.

Type	Examples ⁵	
1	iijérwúá tsúá énwùrù yé lùpyí you reach beat snuff put in the horn	You reach, beat snuff put (it) in the horn
1	ó'ó 'shí jí ^tsúá ríá she will cook yam pound eat	She will cook, pound and eat yam
2	óò shí 'jí àtsú èrí she is cooking yam pounding eating	She is cooking, pounding and eating yam (everyday)
3	ó'ó 'tsú nrí èrí 'jí she will be pounding food eating yam	She will be pounding food and eating yam
4	ó shí eré 'jí èrí 'nrí she auxiliary was selling yam eating food	She was selling yam and eating food

⁴ All simple clauses can function in a one-clause sentence.

⁵ Izi examples are written phonemically. High ' and low ` tone together with downstep ¹ and upstep ^ are written. Two vowels occurring together across word boundaries will elide. In such circumstances sometimes only the tone of the first syllable is found and in which case no tone is written over the second syllable. When a tone glide results the tone is written over both of the respective vowels. Numbers indicate type.

Type					
5	ò	shíá	'jí	àtsù	èrí
		she cooked yam	is pounding	eating	and eating it
6	ò	shíá	'jí	èrí	
		she cooked yam	is eating		(now)
7	ò	shíá	'jí	^tsùá	èrí
		she cooked yam	pounded	eating	eating it (now)

Table 1

Type	Initial clause	Intermediate clause(s)	Final clause	Meaning
		Punctiliar		
1	Any aspect except the present progressive	A-form of the verb	A-form of the verb	Actions are successive
		Progressive		
2	Present progressive (B-form) ⁶	Present progressive	Present progressive	(a) Actions done successively and continually, e.g. every day or (b) simultaneous actions
3	Future progressive	—	Present progressive	Simultaneous actions in the future
4	Progressive with complex VP ₂	—	Present progressive	Simultaneous actions in the past
5	Past	Present progressive	Present progressive	The last two actions are simultaneous
6	Past	—	Present progressive	Successive actions with the last action still going on
7	Past	A-form	Present progressive	Two or more past actions with the last still going on

4. STATUS OF THE VERB AUXILIARY, shi

In certain respects the verb auxiliary shi 'completed past' functions very similarly to a verb. A negative particle precedes it and the negative suffixes are affixed to it in the same way as to a verb. Two of the extensor suffixes, -kwa, 'emphatic', and -wa 'result' also occur with it though on the other hand the majority of the extensor suffixes are not found with it. Phonologically the auxiliary is like a verb not a particle. Izi particles generally are of CV structure with V either e or ε, not i. Ci is a common verb structure.

Not only does the auxiliary have some of the characteristics of the verb but it is also found that the construction of the auxiliary followed by a verb is similar to a serial construction in some respects. Only one noun phrase subject is found. The form of the verb following the auxiliary is restricted to forms which are similar to the forms of verbs in the second and successive clauses in serial constructions, namely the A-form of the verb and the present progressive aspect. This suggests at first sight that the construction with the auxiliary could be treated as a very restricted type of serial construction.

In other respects, however, there are clear distinctions between the auxiliary and other verbs. The auxiliary does not occur with the three basic forms of the verb as do other verbs. The auxiliary has an invariable stem form and cannot be said to be marked by any aspect. It may be noted that it is similar to the C-form of a stative verb. Furthermore, the auxiliary

⁶ All progressive aspect forms use a B-form of the verb.

does not occur as the verb of a simple clause but always occurs with another verb and so can hardly be regarded as an independent verb form.

Furthermore, constructions that include an auxiliary differ from serial constructions in the following respects.

(1) No nominal phrase object can occur between the auxiliary and the following verb. The nominal phrase object always occurs after the second verb. If the auxiliary were the first verb in a serial construction it would be expected that the nominal phrase object would occur after it and before the second verb.

(2) The construction of the auxiliary and verb may be in the negative, whereas the serial construction is never marked by the negative.

(3) The auxiliary always comes first in a cluster of verbs and can never occur in the second or subsequent clauses. All other verbs that occur in serial constructions occur in the first or successive clauses and so can occur in any place in a cluster of verbs.

(4) In a serial construction the first verb in the construction can generally be regarded as the most free form. It occurs in any aspect, carries extensor suffixes more frequently than the other verbs in the construction and in every way is more like a verb in a simple clause. In a construction, however with an auxiliary and a following verb, it is the second verb which can be stated to be the most free. Even though it is true of the second verb that it is restricted to certain forms, it still occurs in two different forms whereas the auxiliary is only found in one form. Similarly, it is the second verb which carried most of the extensor suffixes.

(5) Constructions including an auxiliary never occur in imperative sentences whereas serial constructions do.

These differences seem sufficiently important to justify the setting up of a different category, the verb auxiliary and to handle the construction of auxiliary and verb as a complex phrase rather than a serial construction.

Examples

ó shìwà	tsúá 'nrí	She already pounded food
she completed past pound food		
ó tó	'shídú ^tsúá 'nrí	She did not pound food
she negative compl past pound food		
n^wànyì óbù shì	shíá 'jí ^tsúá ríá	The woman cooked, pounded and ate yam
woman the compl past cook yam pound ate		
ó shì	atsújé 'nrí	She usually was pounding food
she compl past pound food		

5. THE STATUS OF THE PARTICLE, *gege*

The verb particle *gege*, 'obligative', has some similarities with the verb auxiliary, *shì*. Phrases which include *gege* are similar to complex phrases which include the auxiliary in that they do not occur in imperative sentences. It is found that *gege* and *shì* never occur in the same verb phrase.

In negative verb phrases which included *gege* there appear to be two possibilities. Sometimes the negative particle precedes *gege*.⁷ At other times, though, the negative particle occurs between *gege* and the main verb. In all circumstances the negative suffix is

⁷ In such instances the form of the particle is *ge*.

found with the main verb never with the particle. This second construction is identical with the negative simple verb phrase, with *gege* preceding the negative particle.

In other respects *gege* seems to be more like a verb particle than a verb auxiliary. No extensor suffixes are ever found suffixed to *gege*. In the case of second and third singular forms, *gege* harmonizes with the preceding pronoun. This vowel harmony is the same as the vowel harmony that occurs with the negative particles *te* and *teke*.

Constructions including *gege* differ from serial constructions in all the same ways that constructions with *shi* differ (see section 4). In addition it is found that verbs occurring with *gege* are in the B-form with the future progressive aspect, which is one of the independent forms of the verb.

On balance, then, it seems better to treat *gege* as a verb particle rather than to regard it either as a second auxiliary or to include it with the serial constructions.

Examples

mú gégè	á'byá	I would have come
I	would have come	
ó gógò	é'shí ^ríá	She would have cooked and eaten
she would have cook eat		

6. AMBIGUOUS VERB CLUSTERS

Certain verb clusters are found which are similar to a serial construction in some respects but not in others. The question arises whether they should be treated as restricted forms of serial constructions or handled in some other way. In some instances it could be argued that they function rather similarly to an auxiliary. Further types of the complex verb phrase could be set up therefore to handle them.

6.1. Gude ETC.

A group of verbs consisting of *gude* 'to hold (instrumental)', *wota* 'to take', *nɔdu* 'to stay (continue)', *shi* 'to be from (time and place)', *to nwɛhu* 'to be or do slowly' and *vu ɥzɔ* 'to be or do the first', occur frequently with other verbs in a cluster.

These verbs appear to have a dual function. They are found in simple clauses functioning like any independent verb. In such cases for instance *gude* has the meaning of 'to hold', and *nɔdu* of 'to stay'. But they also occur in a close-knit relation to the verb which follows them and in such cases there is a slight change in their meaning; *gude* has an instrumental meaning and *nɔdu* means to continue doing something. Normally verbs in a serial construction are in a loose relationship to all the other verbs in the construction. With these verbs, however, there is a very close relationship with the verb immediately following.

These close-knit constructions are very similar to serial constructions. In the first place there is only one nominal phrase subject. A nominal phrase object can occur after each of these verbs. These verbs and the verbs that follow them are in the same aspect as other verbs in serial constructions.

In other respects, however, constructions with these verbs differ from serial constructions. These verbs may be in the negative. As has already been noted serial constructions are never found in the negative. When these forms occur in the negative they are always in the initial place in a string of verbs.

In this respect these verbs are similar to the auxiliary, which can also be marked by the negative. If the negative is introduced with one of these words in any other place than the

initial place in the string of verbs, a fresh construction is required. The series of verbs is immediately interrupted, and usually a conjunction is introduced with a following NPs.

In a string of verbs it is not uncommon for the verbs of this group to be repeated. With other verbs in a serial construction this would be most unusual. The fact that there is such a repetition illustrates the close-knit relationship there is between the verbs and the verbs immediately following them.

It seems that in spite of some differences, constructions involving these verbs can best be handled as serial constructions.

Examples

únwànyì egúdé nkàtá vútá í'ýá ^l'wá únú'phú
 woman hold baskets carry it return home
 The woman carry it with baskets and return home

ndú ònó éwòtá í'ýá ^gúdé láchíá
 people that take it hold go home
 The people take and with it go home

ó tó nòdùrù riá n'rí
 he negative stay eat food
 He did not stay and eat

nwànyì nòdú àbyájé 'ákpátá 'nrí ^lí'bé ^ngú
 woman continually coming take food at house your
 The woman is continually coming to get food from your place

ó wòtáru ékwó tó nwéhù déé 'ýá
 he took paper slowly wrote it
 He took paper and wrote slowly

Nwéze ègúdé onmó ònó gúdé láá
 Nweze hold whetstone that hold goes
 Nweze with that whetstone goes with it

6.2. Tụkọ, ETC.

There is another group of verbs which also occur frequently with other verbs in a cluster, consisting of *tụkọ* 'all', *woru* 'then', *gbẹ* 'from' and *parụ* 'hold or carry'. These verbs have many similarities with the group just discussed.

Constructions including these verbs also look rather similar to a serial construction. In the first place there is only one nominal phrase subject. A nominal phrase object can occur after each of these verbs. Negative forms are not possible, except for *parụ*. These verbs and the verbs that follow them are in the same aspect as other verbs in serial constructions. On the other hand there is one very significant difference between these verbs and other verbs which enter into serial constructions. These verbs never occur alone, i.e. as the verb of the verb phrase in a simple clause. Nor can they occur last in a cluster of verbs.

They are also found in a close-knit relationship with another verb. As with the group previously described these verbs are in a close relationship with the verb immediately following them. Sometimes these verbs recur several times in a cluster of verbs and with each occurrence they are linked closely to the following verb. In this respect they are very much more like an auxiliary.

They differ from the auxiliary, however, in that they are found with extensor suffixes; occur in imperative sentences and do not occur in the negative.

It seems simplest to set up a subclass of verbs which cannot occur alone but are always

followed by another verb and to handle the constructions in which these words occur as a restricted serial construction.

Examples

ún'wóké tükòrù jé	All the men went
men all went	
óshí 'át'úkò mja ámìmì	All the trees will bear fruit
trees all will bear fruit	
ò wòrú iyá ètsú lí'phé	Then he was hitting it against something
he took it hit something	
mú àpàrù iyá hàà	I will leave him
I will take him will leave	

6.3. Kabẹ

There is another verb, kabẹ, 'for the first time after a long time' which functions very similarly to the group of verbs of which tükò is a member. Like these verbs which cannot stand alone it can occur with certain of the extensor suffixes, namely -kwa 'emphatic', -kpò 'really' and -je 'usually'. It does not occur in a serial construction with a negative; it modifies the following verb, and it can be repeated within the serial construction.

In two significant respects, however, it differs from this group. No nominal phrase object can occur after this verb and before the next verb in the serial construction.

Secondly, kabẹ can precede a complex verb phrase type 2. No other verbal forms can precede the auxiliary shí, and, as has already been noted, in all other circumstances the complex verb phrase always comes first in any verb string. In these circumstances kabẹ has the same close-knit relationship to the main verb of the complex phrase as it does to other verbs which follow it in other constructions. In this respect kabẹ functions more like an auxiliary than a verb.

There are some restrictions on the forms in which kabẹ can occur. It can occur only in the B-form with the future aspect. It can occur in the A-forms, but generally is found in the B- or C-forms. In this respect it is more like a verb than an auxiliary or particle since these have invariable forms.

Verbs which follow kabẹ are in the A-form or the B-form with the present progressive aspect, just as any other verbs in second or successive clauses within a serial construction.

Taken on balance it would seem that constructions in which it occurs can more easily be handled as a type of serial construction than as a complex verb phrase.

Examples

mú 'á'kábé	^tútá	ún'mé òt'anú	I will rest today for the first time
I B-form future	pick up	breath today	after a long time
ó kábẹ shí	ríá 'nrí		He ate food for the first time after
he C-form compl past	food		a long time

7. CONNECTING CLAUSES

With some verb clusters it is found that certain verbs appear to have a connective function. The verbs concerned are je 'go', bya 'come' and the combination bya eje 'come and go'. When these verbs are linking clauses together or sentences, their semantic load is very weak. They could most easily be translated as 'then'. Such verb forms may occur initially in a string of verbs or medially linking one verb with another or a series of verbs with another series of verbs.

There is never any nominal phrase object between these verbs and the following verb. They never occur in the negative nor with the auxiliary, *shi*. They do, of course, occur independently as free verbs in other clauses.

When occurring medially in a cluster they have an invariable form with a fixed tone. The verbs which precede them are in the same form as verbs in a simple clause or, if there is more than one verb, as verbs in a serial construction.

The verb which immediately follows them is always found in a certain form, namely the A-form with a preceding E-prefix. Successive verbs are in the A-form or B-form with progressive aspect in the same ways as verbs in successive position in a serial construction. Their occurrence could be likened to a temporary and rather minor interruption in the serial construction.

When these verbs occur initially in the string they are found in any aspect except the present progressive and they may be suffixed by *-kwa* 'emphatic' one of the extensor suffixes. Initially they may also occur in the imperative sentences. In these respects they are very similar indeed to the first verb in a serial construction.

The present analysis treats them as a restricted type of serial construction.

Examples

ànyí èyè ègúdé ọ̀gù wáa 'yá	Then we divide it with a hoe
we then hold hoe divide it	
nwátá ònó byà ànwùhù	Then the child died
child the then died	
mù jé àzùtácháa 'nrí ^ríá, byà àtùgbúá, byà èjé àzẹ lẹ̀ká ònó	
I then bought food ate then left then lay down at place	
Then I bought food, ate it, then left, and then lay down there	

8. ADDITIONAL AUXILIARY VERB

Another verbal form which occurs in a cluster of verbs is *ahajewaru* 'sometimes'. Constructions which include this form are similar to serial constructions in that there is only one nominal phrase functioning as subject. Like serial constructions they are not found in the negative. When *ahajewaru* occurs the verb following it is always in the A-form or present progressive. This also parallels a serial construction.

In all other respects, however, there is little in common between these constructions and serial constructions. No nominal phrase object for instance can occur after *ahajewaru*. The nominal phrase object always occurs after the following verb. There is also a very close link between *ahajewaru* and the following verb and it is never last in a cluster of verbs. Constructions with *ahajewaru* do not occur in imperative sentences.

Ahajewaru is not an independent form and it cannot occur as head of a verb phrase in the way that verbs which occur in serial constructions normally can. In its own form it is invariable and it is not like any regular verb form. It is similar to a B-form in its prefix but its tone pattern is quite different from a B-form verb and in this it is like an A-form. It might be analysed as comprising the extensor suffixes *-ha* 'before', *-je* 'usually', *-wa* 'already' and *-ru* 'past'. *Ahajewaru* cannot have any further extensor suffixes.

When the verb phrase in the serial construction is a complex verb phrase type 2 *ahajewaru* occurs after the verb auxiliary and before the main verb.

It can be seen that constructions with *ahajewaru* are significantly different from serial constructions. Perhaps this form should be treated as an auxiliary rather than as a verb. It

is more like the auxiliary *shi* than the particle *gege* since verbs following it are always in either the A-form or the B-form present progressive.

Examples

á àhájéwárú tsúá 'nrí	She sometimes pounded food
she sometimes pound food	
á àhájéwárú àtsú 'nrí	She sometimes was pounding food
she sometimes was pounding food	
ó shì ahájéwárú tsúá 'nrí	She used to pound food sometimes
she complete past sometimes pound food	

9. TABLE OF CHARACTERISTICS

The various characteristics of verb clusters that have been discussed in this paper can be presented in tabular form (see Table 2).

10. CONCLUSION

In order to facilitate the description of these various types of verb clusters it is useful to set up a 'clause pairing'. A clause pairing consists of two clauses in a close-knit relationship to each other.

Three types of clause-pairing can be distinguished in Izi. A non-dependent clause pairing is a clause pairing where the verbs in both the clauses concerned are independent verbs (i.e. can occur in a simple clause). A clause with *gude* and the following clause would be an example of a non-dependent clause pairing.

A semi-dependent clause pairing is a clause pairing where the verb of the first clause cannot occur in a simple clause. A clause with *túkɔ* and the following clause would be an example of semi-dependent clause pairing.

A dependent clause pairing is a clause pairing where the first clause consists of a verb only and this verb cannot occur in a simple clause. This is in contrast to the semi-dependent clause pairing where the first clause may include a NPo. A clause with *kabɛ* and a following clause would be an example of a dependent clause pairing.

In addition it will be useful to recognize a 'connecting clause'. A connecting clause is a clause which consists of a verb phrase only and this verb phrase consists of *je*, *bya* or *bya eje*.

Five types of serial construction can be established.

Type 1: consists of two or more clauses each with an independent verb; each clause being in a string relationship to the others.

Type 2: consists of two or more clauses each with an independent verb and including one or more non-dependent clause pairing; each clause and clause pairing being in a string relationship to the others.

Type 3: consists of two or more clauses and including one or more semi-dependent clause pairings, with or without one or more non-dependent clause pairings; each clause and clause pairing being in a string relationship to the others.

Type 4: consists of two or more clauses and including one or more dependent clause pairing, with or without one or more non-dependent or semi-dependent clause pairing; each clause and clause pairing being in a string relationship to the others.

Type 5: consists of two or more clauses with one or more clause being a connecting clause. Connecting clauses never follow one another, there being always at least one other clause or clause pairing between each connecting clause.

Table 2. Table of characteristics

	Serial construction	gude group	tuko group	paru	kabe (never final)	Connecting clauses	ahajewaru	Auxiliary (shi)	Particle (gege)
Verb occurs as an independent verb	x	x	.	.	.	x	.	.	.
Verb occurs any place in a cluster	x	x	x	x	x	.	.	.	.
Verb occurs in imperative sentences	x	x	x	x	x	x	.	.	.
Verb not repeated in a cluster	x	.	.	.	.	.	x	x	x
Only one Nps	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
NPo occurs after first verb	x	x	x	x	.	.	.	.	.
No negative possible	x	.	x	x	x	x	.	.	.
1st verb in any aspect	x	x	x	x	x	.	.	.	.
2nd verb in A-form or progressive	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	.
1st verb has extensor suffixes	x	x	x	x	x	x	.	x	.
1st verb close-knit relation to 2nd	.	x	x	x	(only 3)	(only 1)	x	(only 2)	x