ON THE SCOPE OF THE SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTION*
IN YORUBA

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The serial verb construction has been observed in many languages of the world, including Chinese [Li and Thompson 1973, 1978], Malayalam [K.P. Monahan, personal communication], and pidgins and creole languages. Among the languages of Africa, it is accepted to be a characteristic of, though not limited to, the Kwa languages. Various proposals have been made to account for the phenomenon. Some speculate that its existence and productivity is in inverse relation to the functional yield of the inflectional categories in the verb and/or of prepositions in individual languages. The hypothesis on reanalysis of verbs is related to the explanation which takes cognisance of prepositions [Givón 1975]. Although this relatedness is not explicitly pursued in the present work, we present data to show that in Yoruba, and perhaps in other Kwa languages, reanalysis of verbs is ill-motivated as a working hypothesis depending, as it does, solely on cross-linguistic analogy and translation. But more crucially, no transformational account of the SVC finds justification in the data. The SVC is, therefore, not a surface structure phenomenon, at least not in the sense that can be accounted for by deletion transformations described on putative underlying coordinate and embedded sentences proposed to date.

0. Introduction

This paper recognizes the scholarly contribution of many linguist Africanists (notably, Ansre, Awobuluyi, Bamgboye, Christaller, George, Givón, Hyman,

*Nick Clements made available to me his important, rigorously well thought out 1973 mimeographed paper which he refused to publish because he did not believe he had enough data. The questions asked in that paper have enabled me to avoid a number of analytic pitfalls. This is not to say that this paper has even begun to answer the most important of his questions. He has also listened patiently to fragmentary discussions of this paper without the benefit of being really familiar with the Yoruba data. He bears no responsibility whatsoever for any inadequacy in this paper. I hope he will accept credit for its merits.
Lord, Schachter, Stahlke, Ward, Westermann) whose works have advanced our awareness of the complexity of the syntactic type referred to as serial verb construction (SVC), particularly the manifestation of this phenomenon in most of the KWA languages. All these studies bear important relevance to the study of the phenomenon in the Yoruba language. A close examination of data from Yoruba leads one to conclude, however, that its scope in that language is much wider than has been hitherto admitted. In particular, and as will be shown below, the data argue that if one eschews translation (say into English), there is little ground for accepting the hypothesis of syntactic reanalysis (as complementizers) for certain verbs which take either sentential or verbal complementation [Lord 1974, 1976; Awobuluyi 1978]. This is so because the data and syntactic analysis, in fact, support their being considered verbs participating in serial verb constructions. Such verbs include pé 'say' and the so-called causative verbs dá, ũ, and mú as in (1), (2), (3), and (4):

(1) wọn rẹntí pé ìlejá ní owọ
   they remember say guest (focus) money
   'they remember that money/wealth is transient'

(2) oníwàáṣú dá òwọ̀n ànìyàn rè ní òkàn le
   preacher make them people his (prep) heart firm
   (lit: 'preacher make the heart of his people firm')
   'the preacher/pastor reassured his people'

(3) óró nà àì fì ní ara ìyì
   matter the Neg (Caus) me (prep) body reach ground
   (lit. 'the matter does not allow my body to rest easy')
   'the matter continues to give me anxiety'

(4) óró Múyíwá mú mì sè óró mú
   matter Muyiwa take me offend friend my
   'Muyiwa’s affair made me offend my friend'

Second, SVC in Yoruba is not classifiable into just same-subject type and

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1As in these examples, verbs and putative reanalysed verbs are underlined in all illustrative sentences below, except in cases where the verb may not be at issue.
causative type as, again, Lord [1976] has done, observing, as a corollary, that "both same subject and causative readings are possible for any serial construction..." [emphasis mine—O.O.O.J. It must be admitted, at the same time, however, that the recognition of these two types already represents an improvement over earlier views, particularly on the semantics of SVC's.

Third, data will be provided which allow only one conclusion, namely, that all verbs in a characteristic SVC series may be best considered as dominated by one VP regardless of the logical relationships deducible among the NP's of the sentence, or of the functional relation between the verbs and the NP's. This conclusion derives from two observations. First, the same syntactic and morphological constraints that apply to single verbs in mono-verbal constructions apply to each series of verbs in a SVC as if to a single functional entity. Second, and of equal significance, no convincing argument can be marshalled for deriving Yoruba SVC's from underlying "coordinate" structures or from structures with embedded sentences. To be sure, there exist near equivalences between "coordinate" structures and structures with embedded sentences on one hand, and SVC's on the other. Problems remain, however, in determining, first just what coordinate structures consist in in the language and second the transformational rules for deriving the desired surface structures, doing so not necessarily without changing meaning, which in virtually all the cases examined appears inevitable, but without proposing unjustifiable transformations and still preserving recoverability.

The following is only a summary of findings arising from on-going inquiry on the serial verb construction in Kwa languages with particular reference to Yoruba.

1. Verbs of Saying

1.1. pé as a verb. Example (5) is a typical diagnostic frame which has led analysts to conclude that pé 'say' and synonymous verbs in a number of languages [Lord 1976] have undergone a reanalysis and that pé is a complementizer of the same category as that in English, que in French, qué in Spanish, dass in German, and so on:

(5) a. Olu so pé e wá 'Olu said that you came'
   Olu báy (') you(pl.) come
b. Olu \(\text{̣}\) pé e wa
Olu say \(\) you(pl.) come

'Olu said you came'

c. Olu rántf pé e wa
Olu remember \(\) you(pl.) come

'Olu remembered that you came'

c. Olu rò pé dun ó bá wa nílé
Olu think \(\) he will find us at home

'Olu thought/expected that he would find us at home'

First, consider that when another verb \(\text{̣}\) 'say' is used as the only verb of the matrix sentence, as in (6), \(\text{̣}\) need not appear:

(6) Olu \(\text{̣}\) e wa
Olu say you come

'Sentences such as (6) suggest to Lord [1974], surprisingly, only that the cycle of the reanalysis of another verb of saying is underway in Yoruba. Speakers, she argues, resort to the use of \(\text{̣}\) in order to put a brake on the proliferation of verbs of saying, as in (7) in which each verb except the first has been reanalyzed as complementizer:

(7) won sq \(\text{̣}\) pé e wa
they say say \(\) you come

'They said that you came'

The explanation, we would like to suggest, lies in other directions, namely that sentences such as (7) are SVC's in which in common Yoruba\(^2\) a string consisting solely of verbs of saying is used for explicitness just as a speaker may or may not choose to employ the SVC for achieving the same effect as in (8):

(8) a. Olu mú owó ta mí \(\text{̣}\) ife
Olu take money strike me \(\) gift

'Olu gave me money as a present'

b. Olu bín mi \(\text{̣}\) owó
Olu present me \(\) (prep) money

'Olu presented me with money'

In (8), sentence (a) is a SVC, (b) is not. Both are otherwise constructions involving verbs which take necessarily the prepositional phrase involving

\(^2\)Common Yoruba" is the variety used for literary and educational purposes. It is a sort of Koiné understood all over the Yoruba speaking area, and serves to facilitate interdialectal communications. Although we refer to it in the rest of this paper as SY for "Standard Yoruba", that appellation by no means implies a systematic normalization.
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Avobuluyi's [1972] particle n_{1}.

1.1.1. Thus, one may suggest that in SY the verbs s_{0}, w_{1}, p_{e}, and n_{1} may be used individually or in a combination of two or more in a sentence without a change of meaning:

(5) a. Olu s_{0} p_{e} q w_{a}  'Olu said that you came'
   b. Olu w_{1} p_{e} q w_{a}  'Olu said that you came'

(9) a. Olu n_{1} p_{e} q w_{a}  'Olu said that you(pl.) came'
   Olu say ( ) you come
   b. Olu s_{0} w_{1} p_{e} q w_{a}
   c. Olu s_{0} w_{1} p_{e} n_{1} q w_{a}

Interestingly enough, (10a) and (b) mean exactly the same as each of the foregoing.

(10) a. Olu n_{1} q w_{a}  'Olu said you that you came'
       Olu say you come
   b. Olu p_{e} q w_{a}  'Olu said that you came'

In view of (10b), we must find an explanation for the supposed reanalysis hypothesis, because if p_{e} is a complementizer and (10b) means the same as (5a), (5b), (9a-c), and (10a), then (10b) has no verb. As we can see, no plausible, properly motivated transformational rule is in sight for deriving (10b) from (10a), from (9c), or from any other of the preceding forms. This is so again because no process, to the best of the present writer's knowledge, deletes the verb of a clause in Yoruba, no matter the functional or derived categorial status of that clause.

1.1.2. Consider again the following facts: in common Yoruba, f_{0}, s_{0},
   w_{1}, p_{e}, n_{1} are all fairly synonymous, all translatable as 'say', and may be used as in (11):

(11) a. 1. Ojo f_{0}  òd_{e}  ti n k_{b} gb_{o}
       Ojo speak language which I not hear
       'Ojo spoke a language which I did not understand'

  II. Ojo f_{0}  t\_n,  ó p\_h\_n\_d\_a
       Ojo speak finish he turn (his) back
       'Ojo having spoken, took off'
b. ọjọ sq ọtàn
Ojo tell story
'Ojo told a story'

c.i. ọjọ wí ejí b' i ọwọwa
Ojo talk case manner of grumbler
'Ojo complains like a grumbler'

ii. ọjọ wí ohun t' a ni' kí ó wí
Ojo say thing which we say (INTRO) he say
'Ojo says what we ordered him to say'

d.i. n kò pé n kò ọg
I not 'say' I NEG go
'I did not say I won't go'

ii. wọn pé awọn t' dé
they say they (perf) come
'they said they had arrived'

e.i. mo ni' n kò ọg
I say I neg go
'I say that I do not go'

ii. ọjọ ni' ọwọ ọjó
Ojo say he(Ojo) (Neg) go
'Ojo said he (Ojo) did not go'

From the sentences in (11), the verbs in question subcategorize minimally as follows in SY:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{fọ} & : [+----(NF)] \\
\text{sq} & : [+---- NF ] \\
\text{wí} & : [+---- NP ] \\
\text{pé} & : [+---- S ] \\
\text{ni} & : [+---- S ]
\end{align*}
\]

This explains why pé and ni may either precede or follow each other when combined. Thus sq, wí, ni may precede pé as above in (5) and (9), while pé itself may precede ni as in (9c).

1.1.3. Consider also constructions in (12), in which different verbs and even
nominal constructions take po:

(12) a. Indirect connative constructions

\[ \text{gblyanju} \quad 'try' \]
\[ \text{gira} \quad 'struggle' \]
\[ \text{pase} \quad 'order' \]
\[ \text{be} \quad 'beg, implore' \]
\[ \text{ran} \quad 'send, commission' \]

Olu gblyanju po k' dun ba wa
Olu try (comp) he(Olu) overtake us

'Olù tried to overtake us'

b. Value

\[ \text{dara} \quad '(be) good' \]
\[ \text{ye} \quad '(be) fitting' \]
\[ \text{buru} \quad '(be) bad' \]
\[ \text{sàn} \quad '(be) better' \]
\[ \text{wu} \quad 'to please' \]

\[ \text{dara po k' a jọ} \quad 'it good (comp) we rally go' \]

'it is good that we go together'

c. Result

\[ \text{dara} \quad '(be) good' \]
\[ \text{dun} \quad '(be) sweet' \]
\[ \text{buru} \quad '(be) bad' \]

\[ \text{dun po a jọ} \quad 'it sweet (comp) we rally go' \]

'it is sweet that we went together'

d. Saying, reporting, thinking; emotion

\[ \text{rant} \quad 'remember' \]
\[ \text{bínu} \quad 'be annoyed' \]
\[ \text{ro} \quad 'think' \]
\[ \text{sq(}nf,WF) \quad 'say' \]
boss anger ( ) they Neg arrive on time
'the boss is angry that they did not arrive on time'
e. Comparison
   jọ (bí ẹnl) 'seem (manner of someone)'
   dà (bí qnî) 'appears (manner of someone)'
1. ọ jọ bí ẹnl pé ọjọ tẹẹ rọ
   it seem manner(of) one ( ) rain wants fall
   'it looks like it is going to rain'
ii. ọ dà bí ẹnl pé mo ti pădé rẹ rị
   it appears manner(of) one ( ) I PERF meet you see
   'it seems as if I have met you before'
f. Concession
   bí ọ tìlè jẹ pé ọ gùn kọ tọ o
   manner it from ground be ( ) it long NEG reach it
   'although it is long it does not reach it'
g. Cause/Reason
   nfürf (onfo of) 'on account of', 'for reason of'
   àṣán on of-head 'reason'
   àṣán pé Reagan jẹ bàbá rẹ ko jẹ kí a simi
   reason ( ) Reagan be father his NEG allow (comp) we rest
   (INTRO)
   'just because Reagan happens to be his father he is getting on our nerves'

In (12a) and (b), pé may be deleted but never kí which introduces the embedded clause of intention. In such constructions, pé, if considered as complementizer, would have no obvious function. In this regard, compare (13), also a cognitive construction, in which pé serves as the only verb, where the third person singular pronoun obligatorily deletes before the negative marker kọ (see Abimbọla and Oyelaran [1975]).

(13) a tí akara je ẹkọ kọ pé kí a ní ọwọ
    one apply akara eat eko NEG say (comp) one has money
    'eating eko with nothing but akara does not guarantee afluence'
Sentence (12e) is explicit about what one might consider as the underlying subject of pe in all cases in which it complements other verbs, namely, eni 'one, someone'. In the case of (12e) and in all similar cases, it is impossible to ascribe anything but the verbal status to pe.

In (12f), eni is presumed deleted between je and pe as underlying subject of the clause in which pe is verb. The said clause, eni pe o gun 'one says it is long', is complement to je which never occurs without a complement.

Sentence (12g) offers a curious case. First, in formal or slow speech, an extra vowel on mid tone is heard following the last vowel of asan or nitor and before pe, indicating that what follows functions as genitive NP, and the entire construction introduced by nitor and asan must therefore be considered a sentential PP or an NP with the following structure:

Prep + NP + genitive markers (GM) + NP ....

Thus (14) can be assigned the following structure:

Prep NP GM [pe ........ ] ...........

np np

(14) nitor 1 pe Olu je omo-oba........
on of head of () Olu be child(of) king
'on account of the fact that Olu is a prince'

Now, tf, the relative clause introducer, may be substituted for pe in (14) and (12g) without a change of meaning; but then the genitive marker does not appear, thus underscoring the determiner role of the resulting tf-clause as opposed to the genitive function of the pe-clause.

What role do (12g) and (14) assign pe?

At first, an account of (12b) and (c) which considers the pe-clause transformationally extraposed or moved to the complement position, from putative underlying structures such as (15) suggests that pe may plausibly be considered a complementizer derived from the reanalyzed verb pe.

(15) a. pe kf a jo 1o dara 'that we go together is good'
( ) (comp) we rally go good

b. pe a jo 1o dara 'that we went together is good'
( ) we rally go good
But consider that in SY only NP may function as subject or object, may be con-
joined with ati .... ati 'both .... and', may precede or follow the focus marker ni, or may serve as head of a relative construction. It turns out that sentences are found in each of these positions, and without any sign of
nominalization whatsoever, as in the following examples:

(13) a fi akàrà je ìkò]

(16) a. atì òjò rò atì òjò kò rò à ó bá óba dé ilé and rain fall and rain NEG fall we will accompany king reach home 'whether it rains or not, we will go all the way to the palace with the king'
b. òrò yèn jò mì lójú ni mo se tètè dé matter that surprise me in face (FOCUS) I make quickly arrive 'what surprised me was that I arrived quickly'
c. ayo ò lỳá mì ni a rà, a kò rà mì Joy GEN mother my (FOCUS) we buy we NEG buy me 'the joy of a free-born child of a slave-mother'
d. òbè qìno wàá kí mì owò nìf ná ìnì carry baby come greet me money (it is) spend one 'buying the baby to see me, that costs nothing but money'
e. na qìno mì dè mì kò dè inú qìno beat child my await me NEG reach heart child owner 'no parent can be taken seriously when he says "beat my child when I am away (if he misbehaves)"'

It is not surprising, therefore, that the verb pe, with or without the un-
derlying subject ìnì, may introduce sentences all functioning as NP.

1.2. 'Say' in other dialects. Finally, in a number of other dialects, one of
the verbs of saying other than pe is selected to function as pe does in
common Yoruba, and the verb so chosen is often used as the only verb with a sen-
tence as complement. Such sentential complements do not normally have introducers
which would correspond to that in English:

(17) i. ìjéè: (w)! 'say'
   l oun ó wàá 'he said he won't come'
   say he( will) NEG come
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ii. Ịjàrọ: fọ
iii. Ondo: fọ fi
iv. Ịjẹbú: fọ if (<ni)
v. Ịlọ-Olùjìfí: fi or i (with f deleted)
vi. Ekiti: sù(hàn) 'say(show)', '-say(to)'
vii. Igbo:nà: ká ni, (ki a ni) '(comp) we say'

Given that these dialects use these words as the unique verbs in the sentence with sentential complement, it appears compelling not to entertain any suggestion that pe or ni is used other than as another element in a serial verb construction in those cases in which they do not occur as only verb.

2. Causative Construction

Lord [1974] has argued convincingly, we believe, that the Yoruba causative construction is a SVC. But she also claims in the same work, and as cited above, that "both same subject and causative readings are possible for any serial construction..." (emphasis mine O.O.C.). In this section, further data will be provided to buttress her argument that the causative construction is a SVC and to show that causative construction as SVC covers cases which she herself least suspects or which she denies outright.

On the other hand, data will also be provided to invalidate her suggestion in the above claim, as we understand it, namely, that the causative construction is always and necessarily a SVC in which the NP2 object of the first verb is also the logical subject of the second verb. Example (4), repeated here, is one such construction:

(4) ọrọ Múyíwa mú mi se ọrọ mi 'Muyiwa's affair made me offend
matter Muyiwa take me offend friend my my friend'

One observation which immediately casts doubts on Lord's claim is that other causative verbs than the five (mü, dá, sọ, fi, and ọg) listed by Awobuluyi [1972, 1978] and examined by Lord [1974] may be first verbs of a SVC and with identical semantic and syntactic consequences as these five. What is more, the resulting SVC in each case is not always analyzable or paraphrased to show that the object of the first verb is at the same time the logical sub-
ject of the effect verb. Thus in (18), \( \text{jè } \text{èran} \) or \( \text{jè } \text{èran} \) 'the fact of eating the meat', but not \( \text{èran} \) 'meat' alone, is the logical or surface sub­ject of \( \text{dùn} \) 'to cause to experience pain or loss'.

(18) \( \text{wò n je èran yen dùn m' } \) 'they ate the meat and brought me to grief
they eat meat that pain me by so doing'

Nor is it the case that all serial verb constructions in Yoruba can be given a causative reading in any of the senses meant by Lord [1974]. Thus there is no obvious way in which any sentence in (19) can be given the so-called "causa­tive reading":

(19) a. \( \text{ò } \text{ga } \text{pìn} \)
he/it tall stop
'he has stopped growing tall'
b. \( \text{ò } \text{pìn } \text{rà} \)
he ripen rot
'It has ripened to the point of rotting'
c. \( \text{ò } \text{sòè tàn} \)
he talk finish
'he has stopped talking'
d. \( \text{Bòlá } \text{ra } \text{èran je} \)
Bola buy meat eat
'Bola buys meat for eating'

On the other hand, there is a real sense in which most of the so-called splits­ting verbs (which Lord makes no mention of) are fixed causative SVC's in which either the first 'causative'\(^3\) verb or the second (the effect) verb no longer occurs by itself in a sentence, although its meaning can always be deduced from the SVC's in which it participates, particularly when the usage is trans­sitive:

(20) a. \( \text{pámó} \) 'hide; clean'
\( \text{pàrò} \) 'erose'
\( \text{pat} \) 'abandon'
\( \text{pàpò} \) 'bring together'
\( \text{pàdè} \) 'close'
\( \text{bàjò} \) 'spoil'

\(^3\) 'Causative' is used here strictly to refer to any verb in a string which refers to the event leading to the effect represented in a later verb.
Finally, it is not the case that the so-called causative verbs da, fj, and mü are as restricted as Lord [1974] and Awobuluji [1978] claim. Lord [1974], for one, claims first that all three, particularly da, take few verbal complements, co-occur with limited number of nouns, and participate in strictly idiomatic expressions, especially in constructions providing no clue to independent usages. She argues further that fj is grammaticalized and that, besides, it does not inflect, does not take object pronouns, and is semantically generalized. She suggests lastly that mü takes the k-f-clause as complement. Let us examine these claims.

With respect to da, (21) provides a few examples, by no means exhaustive, which call into question the first set of claims:

(21) a. da ojú t1 (caus) eye shame 'put to shame'
    b. da èrù bá (caus) fear strike 'to strike fear into someone'
    c. da bábá bá (caus) protection cover 'to protect'
    d. da ara yá (caus) body quick 'to exercise; to cheer up'

These expressions are no more idiomatic than non-SVC's in (21e):

e. i. ojú t1 m¡ (caus) eye/facing fail me 'I am ashamed'
    ii. èrù bá m¡ fear strike me 'I am afraid'
    iii. ara m¡ yá body me /be) quick 'I am in good health'

or than similar but otherwise ordinary SVC's in (21f) and da constructions with prepositional phrase as complement in (21g):

Examples (21a, b, c) are given in Lord [1974].
(21) f. i. mú ẹsẹ dura
feet stop
'to cause to stand firm'

ii. dá ẹsẹ dura
feet stop
'to stop'

iii. dá si
exist
'to spare'

iv. dá kojə
(to) cross
'to traverse'

g. i. dá nif àre
(cause) prep justice
'to acquit'

ii. dá nif ẹbo
(cause) prep sacrifice
'to prescribe sacrifice to'

iii. dá nif oró
'to inflict pain/loss on'

With respect to f. i it is not clear precisely in which sense it can be said to have been grammaticalized. First, it commutes not only with dá, but also with other verbs such as dá, gbé, jẹ (kf), mú, as in (22).

(22) a. dá bọ
'turn cover'
'use to cover'

b. gbé jẹ
'carry (be on) top'
'put upon' (to cause to be upon)

c. mú jẹ
'take eat'
'eat up' (to cause to be eaten)

d. jẹ (kf) ūnu kọ
'make (comp) mouth meet'
'come to an agreement'

To the extent that it makes sense to say that the Yoruba verbs inflect, no verb inflects more than f. i, dá, or mú in that they take all preverbs

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5 All constructions of type (g) have proper SVC equivalents:
(a) gbé àre fún/kọ
'declare justice in favor of (someone)'
convey justice give/meet

(b) yan ẹbo fún
'choose sacrifice give'
choose sacrifice give

(c) mú jẹ oró
'make (someone) suffer pain'
make suffer pain

6 Examples (22a-d) have the following as f.i-introduced equivalents in that order: tì bọ, tì jẹ, tì jẹ, and tì ūnu kọ.
that the first verb in a SVC takes. And fi takes the object pronoun which, as is the case with virtually the totality of Yoruba verbs which take NP object complement, may delete just in case it represents an old piece of information in the discourse (see further below). Since pronouns most often presuppose an earlier anaphoric element in the discourse, it optionally deletes after fi, too. Thus one may have (i) or (ii) of (23a) but always (b).

(23) a. i. fi han m' "show it to me"  
       (caus) it appear me

   ii. fi han m'

   b. i. mo fi won sili 'I leave them alone'  
       I (caus) them to ground

   ii. fi won han m' 'show them to me'  
       make them appear (to)me

With respect to the claim of semantic generalization, fi possesses this attribute to no greater extent than verbs such as gbé and ṣe, as in (24a, b):

(24) a. i. ba wo ni o ṣe rî i?  
       manner which (Focus) you (') see it
       'how did you happen to see it?'

   ii. ba wo ni o tî rî i?  
       'how did you happen to see it?'

   b. i. ajá mi gbé eegun mî  
       'my dog swallowed a piece of bone'  
       dog my (') bone swallow

   ii. nîbo ni o gbé rî i?  
       where (focus) you (') see it
       'Where did you happen to see it?'

   iii. nîbo ni o tî rî i?  
       'Where did you happen to see it?'

Ṣe and gbé are normally glossed 'do' and 'dwell' respectively. But in (24) this meaning is lost to each of them, or is at least inappropriate. Moreover, each substitutes with the directional locative tî: thus ṣe in (24a)i and gbé in (24b)ii without a change in the meaning of the two sentences concerned. Notice that SVC reading would be considered uniquely appropriate for both ṣe and gbé in (24), and any consideration for the reanalysis hypothesis would be excluded. We hold, therefore, that only unrestricted SVC reading has any
motivation for mú, fì, or dá. This conclusion is made more compelling by cases in which these verbs do not occur as the first in a verbal series, as in (25):

(25) a. gbá rán mi ti àákó gé ìgi

\[ \text{king send me use axe cut tree} \]

'the king sent me to cut the tree with axe'

b. gbá rán mi mú won gé ìgi

\[ \text{king send me make them cut tree} \]

'the king sent me to force them to cut the tree'

c. gbá rán mi dá awo pàrákojì yẹn dóró

\[ \text{king send me make them cut tree} \]

'the king sent me to stop that caravan'

3. Serial Verb Construction Types in Yoruba

In this section we present a non-exhaustive list of SVC types in Yoruba together with the characteristic surface constituent structure and an indication of the functional relations between NP's and VP's. It must be understood that this last bit of information has no bearing whatsoever on the derivation of each type. The term subject of Vx should be read to mean subject of a putative sentence in which the verb number x is the unique verb; af. is short for "affix", usually a nominalizer.

ADVERBIAL

(26) a. mo mo Atinúkè dà ilé

\[ \text{I know Atinuke reach home} \]

'I know Atinuke intimately'

b. àgbà olófòfò yẹn rò wa ká elder gossip that tell us (be)abroad

'the old gossip spread rumours about us'

c. won je èran efùn yẹn dún mì

\[ \text{they eat meat bushcow that pain me} \]

'their eating that bushcow meat by themselves displeased me'

d. ìkánjù dá èran náa je
gbì (be)alone meat the eat

'the glutton ate the meat alone'
Yoruba Serial Verbs

(a-c): NP₁ V₁ NP₂ V₂ (NP₃)
NP₁ subj. V₁; [Subj-VP] subj. V₂; NP₂ obj. V₂

(d): NP₁ V₁ NP₂ V₂
NP₁ subj. V₁; V₂; NP₂ obj. V₂

BENEFACTIVE

(27) a. Olu ọfụka ra mi lọrọ
Olu make ring offer me (prep)gift
'Olú made me a gift of a ring'

b. ọgbẹ ọka ro oko fún ẹyẹ je
farmer sorghum cultivate field give bird eat
'all grain farmers cultivate to feed birds'

c. baba mi ra ọbụ bùn mi
father my buy garment present me
'my father bought me a garment'

d. on(wàsú sù lọrẹ fún wa
preacher say blessing give us
'the preacher said a blessing for us'

e. Olu bá mi ra báta
Olu act(with)(for) me buy shoe
'Olú bought shoes for/from/with me

CAUSATIVE

(28) a. ọwọn ọgịọgị pa ịzé il
they workers (caus) work fail
'the workers set the task aside'

i. ọwọn ọgịọgị ịzé il
(caus)

ii. ọwọn ọgịọgị gbé ịzé il
(caus)

| (i) = (ii) = (iii) |
(28) b. mo pè è dè ilè
  I call him reach home
  'I called him home'

c. òtú è ilè yíl sò mí de alàrùngún
cold land this turn me become hypochondriac
  'the cold weather in this country has made a hypochondriac of me'
 NP₁ V₁ NP₂ V₂ (NP₃)
  N₁ subj. V₁, NP₂ obj. V₁, subj. V₂, NP₃ obj. V₂

CIRCUMSTANTIAL
(29) a. mo jìkòó ka lè
  I sit down read book
  'I sat down while reading'

b. ó bá enu ènà wá ilè
  he use mouth way enter house
  'he entered the house through the door'

c. ègà kó jaun sùn
  sloth NEG eat sleep
  'the lazyman did not eat before going to bed'

d. kùrùkùrù ìjìnàkò fì èkè se
  magnitude elephant make hill do
  'the elephant makes a mountain of itself'

COMITATIVE
(30) a. Olu bá mí ló sf Kano
  Olu accompany me go to Kano
  'Olu went with me to Kano'

b. Ayo àti Òbùn jọ wá sf ilè yíl
  Ayo and Ebun join together come land this
  'Ayo and Ebun came to this country together'

c. èbùrò mí kùn mí lówọ ko ebè
  younger sibling my fill me (prep)hand make heaps
  'my younger brother assisted me in making heaps'
(31) a. wọn rè wà pin
    they think us 1ll1ish
    'they think no further good can come out of us'

   b. iyẹwọ rè ti ọsẹ kan rèn mi sí q
    wife your make errand one commit to you
    'your wife gave me a commission for you'

   c. adájọ so pé ṣiṣaràn náa yfọ wọ èwọn
    judge tell say criminal the will enter gaol
    'the judge decided that the criminal will go to gaol'

   NP₁ V₁ (NP₂) V₂ {NP₃} (PP)

(32) a. èmọ náa gbọ́n ju ọṣarun
    child the clever pass tssetse fly
    'the child is smarter than the tsetse fly'

   b. ègbàyun dún jọ oyin
    agbayun sweet resemble honey
    'the agbayun is like honey in sweetness'

   c. ọṣẹ yfọ pọ́ ti ọni mọ̀fọ́
    work this amount equal that (of)persons six
    'this work is up to six persons'

   NP₁ V₁ (NP) V₂ NP₂;
   NP₁ subj. V₁; [NP ar-V] NP subj. V₂

(33) a. i. ò wí bẹ̀é so bẹ̀é
    he say so do so
    'he did exactly as he said'

   ii. ò tẹ̀ ọgbẹ̀ tẹ̀ ojú òmọ̀
    he tẹ́ad bush tẹ́ad path way
    'both the bush and the road is path to him'
(33) b. ó nà mf ọ
   he hit me gə
   'he hit me, then left'.

c. ọjó rọ sà
   rain fall stop
   'the rain has stopped falling'.

   NP₁ V₁ (NP₂) V₂ (NP₃)

INSTRUMENT/MANNER
(34) a. onísàajè a fi ọwọ re imú
   bad mannered (PROG) use hand pick nose
   'the uncouth person picked his nose with his fingers'.

b. wọn fi sùnrú yanjú ọbọ ọmà
   they use patience sort matter the
   'they sorted out the affair with patience'.

   NP₁ V₁ NP₂ V₂ NP₃

LOCATIVE
(35) a. alánrù sp ọrù rà ẹna ẹnu ọnà
   porter bring down load his rest on mouth way
   'the porter brought down his charge in the door way'.

b. alágbọọ ka ọwọ lìà lìà orí
   praying mantis fold hand fight "rest-on" head
   'the praying mantis always raises his hands ready to fight'.

c. alágbẹ yen gbé ẹbo kọjá mọgáaláṣìf
   mendicant that carry sacrifice pass mosque
   'the mendicant has overstepped his bounds'.

   NP₁ V₁ NP₂ V₂ NP₃:
   NP₁ subj. V₁; NP₂ obj. V₁, subj. V₂ [+LOC];
   NP₃ ([+LOC]) obj. V₂

PURPOSE
(36) a. onírlnàrè wọ ilé sùn ní aago mọtọ ọrù
   vagabond enter house sleep at clock three a.m.
   'the vagabond came home to bed at 3 a.m.'
b. Ọgbẹ wá ọgbẹ sun je ọfọ ọgbá7
farmer seek plantain roast eat at month May
'farmers find only plantain to roast and eat in May'

c. a pādẹ yanju ọgbọ ọjọ wọn
we meet settle matter fight their
'we met to settle their quarrel'

d. mo wá ọgbọ mi ọfọ New York
I seek friend my go to New York
'I went to New York to look for my friend'

NP₁ V₁ (NP₂) V₂ (NP₃) PP

RESPECT

(37) a. omọge ọná yẹn ọga wū m’ì
damsel yesterday that (be) tall please me
'the young woman (of yesterday) pleased me with her height'

b. omọge kejì kuru ọja
 damsel second (be) short fit dance
'the second young woman has the perfect height for dancing'

NP₁ V₁ V₂ NP₂
NP₁ subj. V₁ [NP ar-V₁] subj. V₂; NP₂ obj. V₂

RESULT

(38) a. ọgabọ na ọhụ nàbọ́
police whip thief the bleed
'the police whipped the thief till he bled'

b. ọ mu omi ọja
he drink water "state"
'he drank water till he was full'

c. ọ dụrọ dàràn
he stayed get-into-trouble
'he got into trouble because he delayed'

---

7 Ọgbá ọgbá is the month during which new yams are not ready to be harvested, old stores, barns and silos are empty, and fruits are few and scarce. This configuration often falls in the month of May.
(38) a. ó ro oko  lá
   he cultivate field rich
   'he became rich farming'

e. ó sunkün sín
   he cry sleep
   'he fell asleep crying'

f. ó mu ome ta eyín
   he drink water prick tooth
   'he picks his teeth because he drank water'

g. 1. wọn gbé kótó náa jín
   they dig trench the deep
   'they dug the trench deep'

11. aláro re asó mi ṣe ddí
    dyer dyed clothes my black
    'the dyer dyed my clothes black'

(39) a. ire  mu ṣẹ̀n rínl
   you(ag) (PROG) suck orange walk
   'you eat orange while walking'

b. mo rò ṣe pe ire
   I think(of) you think good(things)
   'I entertain only good thoughts for you'

(40) a. ìwọ́n ara i le yọ̀ọ́ jẹ́ wa ọ̀o
   they people below will let us go
   'the ancestors/the dead will endow our undertakings with success'
b. i. ṭọọ̀ n pà́yà́ló́ n tí i wá n?
      ìfì ì sfì sà
      they itinerant produce buyers: (LOC) Lagos take base found
      'the produce buyers set out from Lagos'

ii. ṭọọ̀ n tí ifì wá lè sà
dawn they (LOC) commune take work do
      'they got to work right from dawn'

ii. ṭọọ̀ n ná ọmọ mìí gánlé
      they flogged child the (be) without redemption
      'they got away with flogging the child'

The foregoing examples show the range of semantic concepts which Yoruba
can express by means of the SVC. That is not to say, of course, that any or
all of these concepts cannot be expressed by means of other syntactic construc-
tions; and the reality of this possibility has, in our view, given grounds for
the plethora of hypotheses on underlying structures for the SVC. It cannot be
overemphasized, however, that the above inventory of types does not exhaust
possible semantic concepts that may have SVC correlates. Two observations
point in this direction of thinking: the first is the existence of the type
called "MISCELLANEOUS", for want of proper characterization. It is our opin-
ion that this group can be enlarged almost indefinitely. Second, there is in-
deed a large number of SVC tokens capable of expressing two or more of the
types listed above. Consequently, we are constrained to hold that the range
of constructions in (26) to (40) demonstrates that SVC, in Yoruba at least,
cannot be meaningfully limited to two types: same subject type and 'causative'
type. It will also be observed that the basic surface structures of all
the types are similar and can be given canonically as follows:

NP V NP PP V NP PP

Where only the first NP and the verbs may be considered obligatory in the
sense that under no circumstances may they be deleted, as we will have occa-
sion to specify below. These facts alone should suggest the futility of at-
tempts to derive SVC in Yoruba from underlying structures, conjoined or em-
bedded.

It turns out, fortunately, that the grammar of Yoruba imposes certain con-
constraints and processes on the category VP, and these same set of constraints and processes apply to any given verb and its complements in a particular SVC, and not independently to any constituent of such a series. We turn to these considerations in section 4.

4. Constraining VP formation

4.1. The SVC as phrasal VP. In this section, we present arguments to show that the category VP may be forced to take VP as complement in a sequence which constitutes a single constituent of a VP that is a clause VP.

(4.1) a. ... won gbó mi idé àáái kpó o Pó tó tóó Tó

the request to combine will act it bring together print

jáá

they requested them. They will act it bring together print

swó ásóóájú

distribution among the ones that forerunners. experts Yoruba

yóó
tóó

(whicc) we would like to bring together this

TRANSLATION: 'They allowed us to bring it together for purposes of publication along with those of leading Yoruba scholars whom we have received and have brought together in this information.'

b. won gbó mi idé ááái kpó

they requested a print to do

'They gave us permission to do.'

In (4.1a-b), in (4.1a) is a VP, and in (4.1b) the series consisting of 1, 2, 3, and 4, along with their complements on one hand and 5, 6, and 7 on the other hand, should each constitute a VP in the same sense.

4.1.1. Subcategorization: Some of the main formative for modals, negation, aspect, and a modifier. We provide subcategorize for VP in Yoruba:


These formatives bear the contextual feature \([-+_{VP}]\). This means that in any given sentence, wherever a verb phrase is a sentence constituent the result of inserting any formative of the class of those listed above should always result in a grammatical structure. In (41a,b) above, insertion before the three occurrences of the verb gbà only is grammatical. But notice that insertion is not possible before ko in (a) or lọ in (b) because both are already nominalized by the prefix ati- and therefore are no longer clause VP's. For a clearer demonstration, consider (42), (35d), and (38b).

(42) a. mo wà ire lìù mi
   I seek good country my
   'I seek (the) good of my country'

   b. ó mu omí
   he drink water
   'he drank water'

(35) d. mo wà òrè mi lọ sì New York
   I seek friend my go to New York
   'I went to New York to look for my friend'

(38) b. ó mu omí yó
   he drink water become satiated
   'he drank water till he was full'

If we take ti, ko, and lè, the following cases arise:

(43) a. i. mo ti wà ire lìù mi  'I have sought the good of my country'

   ii. n ko wà ire lìù mi  'I do not seek the good of my country'

   iii. mo lè wà ire lìù mi  'I can seek the good of my country'

9These classes of formatives are referred to as preverbs by Bamgbose [1966, 1967, 1972] and as "pre-verbal adverbs" by Awobuluyi [1978] and previous publications. Clearly both scholars have classified some formatives as preverbs on the supposed validity of the reanalysis hypothesis. Later
(43) b. i. ṃ ti mu omí 'he has drunk water'
   ii. kò mu omí '(he) does not drink water'
   iii. ṃ lè mu omí 'he can drink water'

c. i. 1. mo ṃ ti wà ọrẹ mí lọ sf New York
       2. *mo ṃ ti wà ọrẹ mí ti lọ sf New York
       3. *mo wà ọrẹ mí ti lọ sf New York
          'I have gone to New York to look for my friend'

   ii. 1. n kò wà ọrẹ mí lọ sf New York
       2. *n kò wà ọrẹ mí kò lọ sf New York
       3. *mo wà ọrẹ mí kò lọ sf New York
          'I did not go to New York to look for my friend'

   iii. 1. mo lè wà ọrẹ mí lọ sf New York
      2. *mo lè wà ọrẹ mí lè lọ sf New York
      3. *mo wà ọrẹ mí lè lọ sf New York
          'I can go to New York to look for my friend'

d. i. 1. ṃ ti mu omí yó
       2. *ṁ ti mu omí ti yó
       3. *mù omí ti yó
          'he has drunk water to satiation' or 'he is drunk on water'

   ii. 1. kò mu omí yó
       2. *kò mu omí kò yó
       3. *mù omí kò yó10
          'he is not drunk on water'

   iii. 1. ṃ lè mu omí yó
      2. *ṁ lè mu omí lè yó
      3. *mù omí lè yó
          'he can be drunk on water'

---

work will have to sift out such formatives which from all account should be verbs. These may include bá and fì considered in the present study.

10Before Neg kò and aspeclual yó, mo + n, and ṃ (3rd sg. Pro.) + Ø. Again, (dii2,3) are each perceptible as two sentences with the 3rd singu-
We therefore reach the conclusion that the only reason that sentences (2) and (3) of (43c,d) are unacceptable is that formatives like ti, ko, and le may not occur within the clause VP. This is confirmed further by the fact that they can occur before both occurrences of the verb gbà in (41a) to give (44) and a perfective meaning (cf. (41a) and translation):

(44) Wọ́n ti gbà mi láyé ńá ti ko ọ́pọ̀ tẹ̀ jẹ́dọ̀ pẹ́lú tì ènìyẹ̀n aṣíiwájú onímọ́
Yorùbá: ọ́pọ́tọ́ ti gbà kò jẹ́ yí.

The result (44) is perfectly acceptable because, although both occurrences of gbà are in the same sentence, they belong to different clauses.

4.1.2. Selectional restrictions. If we accept that verbs are marked with features indicating the type of NP they may take as subject or object, verbs like jẹ́ 'eat' will have the following features: [+animate__; ___+edible]. This insures that except in poetry, nouns like 'tree', 'sun', and 'wisdom' cannot be subject of a sentence in which jẹ́ is the main verb; nor, at least in Yoruba, can things like 'oranges' or anything you cannot chew occur as its object. In the same way the verbs below have the following as part of their dictionary entry:

- rò́ 'think; ponder; report'
  [+animate__; ___+abstract]

- pìn 'come to an end; bring to an end'
  ___ -animate

- m̀̀d 'take'
  [+animate__]

- wá 'come'
  [+mobile__]

However, when used in the SVC these specifications may change in a way that

lar pronoun deleted. In this case the affirmative structure will be: ọ́ mu ọmì ọ́ yò́o.

11 Culturally the Yoruba only suck the juice out of citrus, without eating the flesh and pulp.
the new specifications cannot be assigned independently to any of the verbs in the series. Consider sentences (45) and (31a):

(45) ọrọ Ọsád mú mi wà sì ilẹ́
  affair Sala take me come to house
  'Sala's affair brought me home'

(31) a. wọ́n rò wà pìn
    they think us THIRISH
    'they think no further good can come out of us'

If taken severally, mú, rò, and pìn in (45) and (31a) violate their lexical specifications. But if we accept that the verbal combinations mú ... wà and rò ... pìn select the NP they co-occur with as these sentences suggest, we will be in the position to account for a large variety of apparently anomalous co-occurrences observed in SVC's to date. In other words, SVC-defined VP has different selectional restrictions which are not necessarily a function of those of the perceived component verbs and verb phrases.

4.1.3. Deverbalization. In Yoruba, gerundive type nominals are derived from verb phrases by means of the reduplication of the initial consonant of the VP followed by ọ as in (46):

(46) a. mọ ọ ṣe ilẹ́ 'I went home'
    I go to house

b. ọ́ọ́ -ọ́ẹ́ 'going home'

Other prefixes for nominalizing the VP include a-, l-, a-, ọl-, as in (47):

(47) a. a-ọ́ 'out-going/Departure'

b. l-ọ́ 'the act or manner of going'

c. a-ọ́ 'the person who goes'

c. ọl-ọ́ sì ilẹ́ 'failure to go home'

Apart from the observation that both ọl- and the reduplication admit the so-called preverbs which in our analysis must be constituents of the AUX, while a-, l-, and a- do not, they all impose the same restrictions on the SVC-VP:
(48) a. i. ỉlìwà òrè mi lọ si New York
'going to New York to look for my friend'

ii. ỉlìwà òrè mi lọ si New York
'failure to go to New York to look for my friend'

iii. ǐfì ti ỉlìwà òrè mi lọ si New York
'the fact of having gone to New York'

iv. ǐlìti ỉlìwà òrè mi lọ si New York
'failure to have gone to New York to look for my friend'

v. ǐlìwà òrè mi lọ si New York
'the act of going to New York to look for my friend'
   1. *ỉlìwà òrè mi lọ si New York
   2. *ỉlìwà òrè mi lọ si New York

b. i. ǐlìmu omi yó

ti. ǐlììmu omi yó

iii. mìmu omi yó

iv. ǐfììmu omi yó

v. ǐlìmu omi yó
   1. *mìmu omi ǎlyó
   2. *mìmu omi lìyó
   3. *mìmu omi ǐyó

In short, for purposes of gerundive and other VP nominalization processes, the series of verbs in the same clause in a SVC is treated exactly like the VP of a simplex sentence.

4.1.4. Verbal reiteration. For expressing intensity, repetition of an event, or plurality of action, a verb or an entire VP may be repeated. There is no limit to the number of repetitions permissible, but it is usually three or four. Thus, instead of (42b) a speaker may utter (49) for expressing the intensity of effort:

(49) ọ mu omi mu omi mu omi

   NP VP VP VP

   'he really took a long drink'
In the same way, the only manner to express either the intensity or the repetition of the event in (50b) is (50):

(50) ọ mumi ọ mumi ọ mumi ọ  'he repeatedly got drunk on water'

Where mumi + mu omi by means of vowel elision which is a regular process affecting verb-noun combinations.

Reiteration of this sort supports, therefore, the treatment of verbal ser-

sions within the same clause as a clause VP.

4.1.5. Topicalization and relativization. In Yoruba, distributive nominals are derived from a basic noun by reduplicating everything up to the end of the first lexical root morpheme of the word. Thus we have the following:

(51) a. 1. ọgbó  'week'
   ii. ọgbó ọgbó  'weekly/every week'

b. 1. ọkó  'one'
   ii. ọkó ọkó  'one by one'

c. 1. ojúmọ  'clear' (ojú 'eye' + face (of day) + mọ)
   ii. ojúmọ ojúmọ  'everyday'

d. 1. ọgbẹgbẹgbẹgbẹgùn 'one thousand' (igba '200' X ọgùn 'five')
   ii. ọgbẹgbẹgbẹgbẹgbẹgbẹgùn 'thousands' or 'by the thousand'

Without stretching the analogy, it appears that the treatment of topical-
ization and relativization in Yoruba does lead one to take verbal series in a
SVC as a linguistic (syntactic) unit as the word is in (51), although the pro-
cess is sensitive to the morpheme structure. Take (43b,i,di), for example:

(43) b. i. ọ ti mu ọmọ  'he has taken water'
   he (perf) drink water

d. i. ọ ti mu ọmọ ọ  'he has taken water to satiation'
   he (perf) drink water become
   satiated

When topicalization or relativization applies to the verb phrase as often hap-
pens, we have the following case:

(52) a. Relativization
Yoruba Serial Verbs

1. mímù ti ó ti mu omi
2. títimu ti ó ti mu omi
   'the fact that he drank water'
   'his act of drinking water'
   'the fact of his having drunk the water'

b. Topic
   1. mímù ni ó ti mu omi
   2. títimu ni ó ti mu omi
   'the fact is that he has drunk water'
   'his accomplishment is his having drunk water'

(53) a. Relativization
   1. mímù ti ó ti mu omi yó
   2. títimu ti ó ti mu omi yó
   3. *yó yó ti ó ti mu omi yó
   'the fact he has drunk water to satiation'

   b. Topic
   1. mímù ni ó ti mu omi yó
   2. títimu ni ó ti mu omi yó
   3. *yó yó ni ó ti mu omi yó
   'the fact is that he has drunk water to satiation'

Now the acceptability of the títimu version is equally marginal in everyday speech in (52) and in (53). But under no circumstances is it admissible to single out yó for topicalization or relativization just as it is not normally acceptable to reduplicate non-initial root morphemes in words, as in (51). Mímù and títimu represent the first root morpheme (and a prefix) in a clause VP consisting of a verbal series. Since there does not appear to be any exception to this treatment, we are compelled to accept that the process of relativization and topicalization confirms the syntactic treatment of the verbal series in a clause as a single entity.

To see that this is not a mere intellectual exercise, any answer to the question

(54) kí ni ó sè?
   what (focus) he do
   'What did he do?'
in respect of (43bi,di) has only the following possible answers:

(55) a. m IMF u ni 6 mu omi
    
    b. m IMF u ni 6 mu omi yo12

4.1.6. Verb phrase modification. The prepositional phrase nI àårò 'in the morning' modifies the VP mu omi in (56):

(56) ó mu omi nI àårò 'he drank water in the morning'

If our hypothesis regarding the verbal series is correct, it should make a difference how the PP is bracketed in (56'):

(56') a. 6 mu omi y6 nI àårò 'he got drunk on water in the morning'

As is expected, (56') (b) and (c) are unacceptable:

(56') b. *ó [ VP [VP mu omi] [PP nI àårò]] [VP yó]]
    
    c. *ó [ VP [VP mu omi] [VP [VP yó] [PP nI àårò]]]

The only acceptable bracketing is (56'):

(56'') ó [ [ [ mu omi] [ yó]] [ nI àårò] ] [PP VP VP]

4.2. Summing up. In our own opinion, all the constraints and processes considered in this section lead to only one postulate, namely, that the phrase structure of Yoruba must include at least the following rewrite rules:

(57) a. VP + VP (PP)
    
    b. VP + V (NP) (PP) (VP)

Now, (57) is empirically different from Lord's [1974] proposal, given here as (58):

(58) S

NP VP VP

i.e. S + NP VP VP

12Se ni o mu omi yo is also possible, but in this case, the initial șe is the usual pro-VP which renders partial or total reduplications unnecessary. Alternatively, the phrases șe mu omi and șe mu omi yo might be given in response with mI mu nI understood.
Apart from the typological limitation implied in Lord's explanation, there is another which imposes a maximum of two to her proposed sentence VP's. Since she herself has already reached the justifiable conclusion that SVC in KWA languages cannot be accounted for through transformation described on underlying coordinate or embedded sentences, we suggest further that her phrase-marker (58) cannot account for ordinary sentences such as (59):

(59) Olu rán wa wá igbá ko ṣe pe da si ìkò ni àná Olu send us seek yam carry meet friend his return to Lagos yesterday

'Olu sent us yesterday to find yams and take them to meet his friend so that he (Olu's friend) can take them with him back to Lagos'

in which all the underlined elements are verbs and the sentence contains no idiomatic constituent whatsoever.

On the basis of the insuperable difficulties encountered in formulating transformational rules which would delete sentence connectives without violating constraints on transformations, Williams [1971] rejects the proposal that SVC derives from underlying coordinate sentences and proposes that the Krio Phrase Structure Grammar must, therefore, include (60):

(60) VP → V (NP) (PP) (VP)

Although (60) is more highly syntactically motivated than (58), it too, cannot account for sentences such as (59). The point must be made particularly that (60) proposes, too, an internal structure of the VP which is not supported even by data from Krio. We believe that (57) accounts adequately for SVC in Krio as in Yoruba. It does, for example, account for the modification of the clause VP just in case it is a SVC, as in (56').

George [1975] rejects Williams' otherwise well motivated proposal on diff-

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13 In spite of the compelling nature of her argument for the causative SVC, (58) does imply that all SVC's are of the "same subject" type. Compare also Schachter's [1974] more powerful schema

\[ S \rightarrow NP AUX VP VP^* \]

While this accounts for more than two VP's, it does not admit that all VP's in a given SVC belong to a single sentence constituent, a position which Stahlke [1974] fails to defend successfully, but which is crucially justified by our data.
ferent grounds. Unfortunately, since George's proposal by his own admission cannot account for sentences like (59) without making counterfactual claims, and since he has no suggestion at all for the so-called sequential serialization among others, there is no basis for taking it seriously.

Problems certainly remain which even our own proposal may not be able to account for. Studies in preparation will take up some of these problems. Among them are issues of semantic interpretation of SVC, given (57). For the moment, proposals by Lord [1976] and those by Li and Thompson [1978] remain to be tested. Li and Thompson [1978:241] claim for example

that speakers infer the appropriate interpretations for such strings on the basis of four types of knowledge, pragmatic factors, certain language-independent principles, and universal linguistic principles.

The present study has, however, a bearing which is worth considering without further delay on the on-going speculation on the direction of syntactic change in languages of the KWA type. Consider sentences in (61):

(61) a. *Ayo gbe ṣiwọ wọ lo nile*

   Ayo carry garment wear go (prep) house

   'Ayo put on his garment before leaving home'

b. aja mi gbe ẹran náa mi tewe tewe

   dog my carry meat the swallow leaf and leaf

   'my dog swallowed the meat together with the leaves'

Now, (57) proposes two derivations for each of these sentences:

(62) NP₁ V₁ NP₂ V₂ NP₃ (V₃) PP

(63) NP₁ V₁ NP₂ V₂ (V₃) PP

Structure (62) assumes that (61a) has an underlying structure in which V₂ has an NP object and presupposes a transformational rule which deletes it. Thus (64) should underly (61).

(64) a. *Ayo gbe ṣiwọ wọ ṣiwọ lo nile*

b. aja mi gbe ẹran mi ẹran tewe tewe

Structure (63), on the other hand, claims that the surface structure is virtually identical to the underlying structure and dispenses with transformation altogether. The very possibility of (63) lends credence to the suggestion that clauses like (61a,b) are relics of an earlier SOV word order.

Now, the question is whether there is any synchronic evidence to support the claim of structures like (62) and (64a). The answer is yes, and we have briefly touched upon such pieces of evidence earlier in this paper. Consider the following piece of dialogue between speakers A and B:

(65) a. A: Ọ̀ṣẹ̀ ọ̀gọ̀ ọ̀gọ̀ ọ̀nọ̀? 'Did you go to the market today?'
   B: Mo ọ̀gọ̀ (q). 'I went.'
   Ọ̀gọ̀ I go

b. A: Ọ̀gọ̀ ni ẹ̀ gbẹ̀ ọ̀gọ̀? 'What did you take (to the market),'#
   B: Ẹ̀ṣẹ̀. 'Yam. '
   Ẹ̀ṣẹ̀ yam

c. A: Ọ̀ṣẹ̀ Ọ̀tẹ̀? 'Do you sell?'
   B: Mo Ọ̀tẹ̀. 'I sell.'
   Ọ̀tẹ̀ I sell

In the answer of (a) the PP's ọ̀gọ̀ ọ̀nọ̀ and ọ̀gọ̀ ọ̀nọ̀ are both deleted. In the exchange of (c), the NP Ẹ̀ṣẹ̀ is not realized. Why is this so? The answer lies in a principle in Yoruba which deletes the object of verbs and prepositions just in case they represent old information either in the discourse or in the sentence. This principle accounts for the missing constituents in the answers in (65a,b) and the exchange in (c). It is optional but represents a regular choice in everyday speech.

This same principle appears to account for the deletion, without trace, of relativized as well as topicalized NP's, objects of verbs or prepositions (cf. (66), below). It explains, too, the uselessness of using transitivity as a classificatory criterion for Yoruba verbs, since the objects of virtually all transitive verbs may not surface, just in case they represent old information in the discourse. Now this fact has not always been recognized in its far-reaching effects by analysts. But we are persuaded by the facts of the
language that this is a very productive synchronic process.

(66) a. ò rán mi sf ìlè
   he send me to house
b. Rel: ẹmí ti ò rán ø sf ìlè
   I (Rel.M) he send to house
c. Rel: ìlè ti ò rán mi sf ø
   'the house to which he sent me'
   house (Rel.M) he send me to
but
d. Rel: óun ti ò rán mi sf ìlè
   'he who sent me home'
   he (Rel.M) he send me to house

Now, applied to (64a,b), the result is (61a,b), since the second occurrence of ìwù and òrán represents old information in (64). To the extent that this account is correct, (63) may represent a transformationally derived structure which is on the way to being "syntactivized" in a way analogical to the "phonologization" of phonetic alternations. This explains also the tendency for (63) to be more acceptable than (62).

If the lead suggested by the facts of Yoruba is here correctly interpreted, it appears that the scope of the serial verb construction imposes at least a re-examination of the claim that sentences such as those in (61) represent relics of an earlier SOV order in Yoruba and related languages.

REFERENCES


Yoruba Serial Verbs


