

Support-verb constructions with objects: Greek-Coptic Interference in documentary papyri?

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Support-Verb Constructions (SVCs henceforth) consist of two components, a verb and a noun, as in *to give rise*. The verb (*to give*) has primarily syntactic functions and therein supports the noun (*rise*), which bears the primary semantic weight but has limited syntactic functions. The problem is that we have multiple components, but only one meaning. Put differently, the internal and external structures differ (Gross 1998; Kamber 2008; Langer 2004). Greek examples are δίκην λαμβάνω ‘to punish’ and λόγον ποιέομαι ‘to speak’ (Jiménez López 2016; Marini 2010).

In SVCs, the direct-object slot is filled by the nominal component, e.g. δίκην in δίκην λαμβάνω. Consequently, semantic objects take the syntactic form of adverbial adjuncts or attributive phrases, e.g. παρὰ^{genitive} indicates the person punished with δίκην λαμβάνω. However, the verbal and nominal components of the SVC can fuse so tightly that the direct-object slot becomes available, e.g. Sanskrit *vedam adhyayanam karoti* ‘studies (makes the studying) the Veda’ (Ittéz 2007 p. 11), Latin *qui ludos facis me* ‘when you are still deriding me’ (Hoffmann 2018 p. 80) and sporadically in classical Greek, e.g. Thucydides, *Historiae* 8.62 σκεύη καὶ ἀνδράποδα ἀρπάγην ποιησάμενος ‘to steal the equipment and the slaves’ (Kühner & Gerth 1890 p. 322).

Such tight fusion in the internal structure is reflected in decreased morpho-syntactic flexibility of the SVC, e.g. regarding the permissibility of determiner phrases, attributive phrases and patterns of negation (e.g. French *ne ... pas* vs *ne ... aucune*). Tightly fused SVCs may unverbate, e.g. Latin *animus advertere* → *animadvertere* (Rosén 2020 p. 265), German *Gewähr leisten* → *gewährleisten* (Lehmann 2020 p. 218) and Greek νόμον τίθημι → νομοθετέω ‘to legislate’ (Schutzeichel 2013 pp. 136–138). The resulting unverbates may eventually even accept a direct object (e.g. Latin *animadvertere* vs *belligero*). Due to their synchronic and diachronic structural peculiarities, SVCs attract non-canonical syntactic patterns (e.g. Montaut’s (2016) experiencer-patterns), which if frequent enough can cause typological changes (e.g. Creissels’ (2016) patient- vs agent-marking).

The present paper considers SVCs in documentary papyri from Roman and Byzantine Egypt. Egypt is a region of intense language contact between Greek and the native language. Egyptian (Coptic) SVCs take direct objects, such as †-CBW N-/NA= ε- *ti-sbō n-/na= e-* ‘to teach something to somebody’, and †-OCE N-/MMO= *ti-ose n-/mmo=* ‘to lose something’ (Layton 2011 para. 180.a.i–ii; Zakrzewska 2017). In these, a Differential-Object Marker is needed (Grossman 2019). If the noun is a so-called possessed noun, which allows for suffixation of a possessive marker, e.g. 2HT= *hēt=* ‘heart’, the object of the SVC can be suffixed, as in κ-†-PHT-† *k-ti-rēt-f* ‘you are calling him’. In addition to the native SVCs, SVCs with the verb ‘to do’ are frequently used to integrate foreign lexical material (Bakker 2003; Reintges 2001; Rutherford 2010), e.g. ρ-ΧΡΕΙΑ N-/MMO= *r-k^hreia n-/mmo=* ‘to require something’ and †-ρ-ΠΑΡΑΚΑΛΕΙ ΜΜΟ-Κ *ti-r-parakalei mmo=k* ‘I beg you’. In these, a Differential-Object Marker is always needed.

While SVCs are established in the Greek lexicon and morphosyntax, direct objects with them are rare, unlike in Coptic. The paper reviews strategies to attach objects to SVCs in the papyri vis-à-vis classical literature considering lexical and morpho-syntactic constraints on and semantic and pragmatic differences between strategies. The paper considers the frequency and spread of direct objects with SVCs in the papyri evaluating whether the attested object-marking patterns reflect interference from Coptic, in the sense of a minor use pattern becoming a major use pattern under the influence of language contact (Heine & Kuteva 2005). Vis-à-vis classical Greek, SVCs in the papyri are lexically (i.e. collocational range of the noun) and structurally (i.e. non-canonical patterns) more versatile. However, non-canonical patterns either did not spread far enough in the system or were lost with the demise of Egyptian Greek, as they did not leave traces in the modern language.

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