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Serial Verb Construction in Ìgásị́

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Abstract - Existing studies on serial verb construction focus on its identification for pedagogical purposes, semantic denotations, and syntactic structures. Scholars in different African languages have used semantic and syntactic criteria for classification. However, none of the previous scholarly works have addressed the structures of serial verb construction in Ìgásị́, an endangered language spoken in the Akoko North Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria. This study examines serial verb construction in Ìgásị́ using both syntactic and semantic structures. The data for the research were sourced from the native speakers of the language, and their utterances were recorded for transcription. The study deploys the Minimalist Program for its analysis. Our findings show that serial verb constructions in Ìgásị́ are mono-clausal, and the actions or state of affairs conveyed by the verbs in SVC constructions show that they occur within the same temporal semantic frame. It is shown that verbs in SVC are symmetrical and asymmetrical based on the semantic and grammatical content. It is also argued that the subject DeterminerPhrase of SVC with causative and performative agents are generated at Spec-vP (outer core vP) while those with theme theta subjects are generated at Spec-VP (inner core VP). This study contributes to the existing studies on SVC and brings to the fore the documentation of an endangered language.

Keywords - Serial verb, Ìgásị́, Mono-clausal, Multi-clausal, Inner core VP, Outer core vP.

1. Introduction

Ìgásị́ is a language spoken outside the Oke-Agbe community in Àkókó North Local Government Area of Oǹdó State. The community shared boundaries with Erìtì, Àjọwá and Arigidi. Scholars have classified the speech form as Northern Akokoid Cluster (Hoffman 1974), Akokoid (Akinkugbe 1976), Amgbe (Capo 1989) and Arigidi/Àmgbè (Akinyemi 2008). Fádọrọ̀ (2008) classifies the speech varieties in the North-west Akoko into Arigidi and O̍wọ̀n. He groups Arigidi and Erúṣú, under Arigidi while he grouped Ìgásị́, Àfá, Ògè, Àjè, Òdò, Oyín and Urò as dilaects of O̍wọ̀n. Olaogun (2016) refers to the speech forms as Njọ Kóo dialects. The controversy on the classifications and the appropriate nomenclature to be given to the speech forms has not been settled among scholars. Note that classification is not the focus of this research. The language under study, Ìgásị́, has few works on its structural description. To the best of this researcher's knowledge, no work has been published on serial verb construction in the speech form, and this is an academic gap that this present study intends to fill. Serial verb construction has been extensively studied in many Kwa languages and many other Benue-Congo languages.

Stewart (1971:181), acknowledging the significance of SVC in Kwa, asserts that "perhaps the most interesting of the grammatical phenomena from the general typological point of view is what might be called serialization". Stewart's (1971) view restricts SVC to a particular language family; however, Aikhenvald (2006) and Bisang (2009) note that SVC is manifested in West Africa, Creole languages, languages in South Asia, Amazonia, Oceania, and New Guinea. Dixon (2010) also claims that SVC is not confined to the language of a specific typological profile because it is prevalent and obviously attested in nearly one-third of the languages of the world; although there seems to be none in Europe or north and central Asia, and comparatively rare in North America or Australia.

However, the controversy that seems primarily attached to SVC is the source of the derivation of the clause as to whether it is mono-clausal and bi-clausal, and the classification that is based on semantic and syntactic criteria. This study aims to provide new insight into SVC using Ìgásí data with the Minimalist Program orientation.

2. Literature Review

There are myriads of scholarly works on SVC in languages of the world. Scholars who have provided insights into SVC include Awobuluyi (1967, 1973), Bamgbose(1973,1974,1982), Schachter (1974), Taiwo (2009), Ilori (2010), Abimbola (2014), and Abimbola and Taiwo (2014). Awobuluyi (1967,1973) proposed the derivation of SVC in Yoruba from a coordinate source, while Bamgbose (1973, 1974, 1982) argued that SVC is derived from two sources: coordinating and embedding sources. He differentiated between the linking and the modifying SVC. He explained further that the linking types are derived from two underlying sources, while the modifying types are derived from a single source. Awobuluyi (1973) disagreed with the assertion of modifying verbs based on their multi-source assertion; he suggested that the so-called modifying verbs should be analyzed as plain verbs, adverbs, prepositions or components of a splitting verb. Bamgbose (1982), in reaction to the multi-source assertion, explained that the verbs in the example below:

Ó sáré ̣lọ
3sg run go
'He ran away'

For the proponents of multi-source, when the verbs in the sentence above are split, they will produce another construction that is completely different from the original idea of the construction. Thus, the multi-source may not likely capture the essence of SVC.

Schacter (1974) claimed that SVC is derived through a monosentence. He opined that all SVCs are derived from a combination of a verb phrase in a single sentence of a basic clause. He argued that SVCs behave, to a large extent, like idiomatic expressions whose meaning(s) do not lie only in the combination of words or structure in the expression. This study agrees with the assertion that SVCs are derived through mono-source because of the event portrayed by the verbs as a composite unit; when split, the meaning and initial idea may be lost.

Taiwo (2009) utilized the minimalist programme to elucidate the process of deriving modifying SVC in Yorùbá. He argued that the deletion and substitution approach was insufficient in describing the derivation of the complicated SVC type. He employed two basic operations: select and merge, in explaining the derivation of SVC in Yorùbá. Thus, operations: select and merge led him to argue that external movement of DP occurs in a cyclic manner, where certain features are checked/valued, but these features are not expressed openly unless the construction is complex. He further elucidated that a singular clause architecture projection exists, achieved through the merging of constituents led by a single functional head. The resulting clause structure is composed of numerous lesser projections, since they are believed to originate from various underlying assumptions.

Ilori (2010) argued that in Yoruba and Igala languages, the subject DP of causative, instrumental, benefactive, resultative, and most sequential/consecutive constructions in SVCs are generated at the specifier of vP as an agent, causer, or performer, and these DPs are raised to the spec TP for Extended Projection Principle (EPP) checking. He elaborated that the subject DP of sequential/consecutive, which serve as theme arguments, are initially formed within the inner core of the VP and then raised to the spec-vP position and later to the spec-TP.

Abimbola (2014) analyzed the composition of the simple and complex vP in the Ìyínnọ̀ dialect of Aika using the Minimalist framework. He proposed that only the complement of the light verb (vP) is capable of recursion and

extension, enabling the inclusion of any type of verb. Consequently, a sequence of verbs can function as the complement of the light verb. He claimed that all the verbs in serialization are merged within the VP. However, the highest verb in the string is typically moved to adjoin to the null light causative/performative verb for lexicalization due to its strong features. This is done to create legibility and interpretability at the LF interface. Indeed, the verbs are not merged from distinct pre-syntactic computations. In his analysis of SVC classification in Ìyínnò, he identified three types of SVCs: sequential, causal, and complex SVCs. However, he argued against the inclusion of modifying SVCs, as modifying is not an inherent quality of a verb. He advanced a single-clause architecture for analyzing SVCs, regardless of the number of verbs. He contended that not all verbs in SVC had the same features when it comes to selecting arguments. He then proceeded to develop the concept of LF-residue as a replacement for *pro*, which Collins (1997) had previously used for non-overt objects. Having reviewed the works of the earlier scholars on SVC in languages, Igasi probably maintains a similar structure with the languages discussed; however, there are slight differences, which would be the focus of this paper. The remaining parts of this work will be devoted to the explanation of the derivation of SVC in Ìgásí.

3. Serial Verb Construction

Myriad scholars have defined SVC. According to Westermann (1930:126), SVC is "a row of verbs one after the other… (in which) the verbs stand next to each other without being connected". Bendix (1972) asserts that "SVCs are strings of verbs and verb phrases that run together to form what appears to be a single expanded verb phrase". Collins (1993) sees SVC as "a succession of verbs and their complement (if any) with one subject and one tense value that is not separated by any overt marker of coordination or subordination". Baker and Stewart (2002:2) define SVC as "clauses that have just a single tense node, but two or more verbs, with no overt markers of coordination or subordination."

"Aikhenvald (2006:1) explains SVC as: A sequence of verbs that act together as a single predicate, without any overt marker of coordination, subordination, or syntactic dependency of any sort. Serial verb constructions describe what is conceptualized as a single event. They are mono-clausal; their intonational properties are the same as those of a nonverbal clause, and they have just one tense, aspect, and polarity value. SVCs may also share core and other arguments. Each component of an SVC must be able to occur on its own. The individual verbs may have identical or different transitivity values within an SVC."

From the definition, SVC in Ìgásí conceptualizes a single event that is related by two or more verbs acting together as a single predicate. The sequences of verbs occur without any overt marker of coordination and subordination. SVCs in Ìgásí are monoclausal because they do not permit syntactic dependency of any sort. See the examples below:

1(a) Olú gbi unṣwẹ pẹ́ ìti
       O. use knife cut yam
       Olú is cutting yam with a knife'

 (b) Adé ṣwọ moto dà
       A. search car buy
       'Adé searched for a car and bought it.'

SVC conceptualizes a single (possibly complex) event; the verbs in a series are related to an action or state that can be associated with each other. However, what constitutes a single event has been a subject of debate among scholars and has been subjected to linguistic variation, language-internal evidence, and the native speaker's intuition. Pawley (1987: 330) claims that a single event is "what can be expressed in a single verb or event classifier, precisely a verb in a language". This definition is based on language-specific evidence. However, facts from other

languages may prove otherwise. Bisang (2009:10) states that '… event-hood can only be exactly defined to the extent that there are discrete criteria such as the macro-event property defined in terms of a time–positional operator'. Having observed that it is difficult if not impossible to arrive at a clear cross-linguistic definition of a single event or event-hood; Omachonu (2011), claims that the interpretation of what constitutes a single event in a language is subject to the discretion of the native speakers of a particular language using their intuitive knowledge of event-hood in the language. Examples (1a & b), above, depict SVCs' expressions that show a series of events that culminated into a single overall event in Ìgáṣí.

Moreover, in Ìgáṣí, SVCs have one specification for tense, aspect, and negation. The verbs share the preverbal particle that precedes the first verb in their series. See the examples below:

2(a) Olú ó   gbi unṣwẹ pẹ ìti
     O. prog use knife cut yam
     'Olú is using the knife to cut yam'

(b) Adé á ṣwọ moto dà
     A. fut. search car buy
     'Adé will search for a car and buy it'

(c) Adé *kpa* ṣíṣi   ve Olú
     A. neg surpass go O.
     'Adé is not older than Olú'

In 2a, b, and c above, the asp, tense, and negation are shared by the first and the second verbs, respectively. However, if the preverbal particle is repeated in front of each verb in the clause, it may result in ill-formed sentences or semantically awkward expressions will be formed. See the examples below:

3(a) * Olú ó   gbi   unṣwẹ ó   pẹ́ ìti
     O. prog use   knife   prog cut yam

(b) * Adé á   ṣwọ moto á dà
     A. fut. Search car   fut buy

(c) * Adé   kpa ṣíṣi   kpa ve Olú
     A.   neg surpass neg go O.

Furthermore, in Ìgáṣí, only a complete SVC can be questioned, and the response to such a question cannot employ only one of the component verbs, but the argument (shared object) remains constant. See the examples in 4 (a and b).

4(a) Question: Kí   Adé dà ju ?
     What A. buy eat
     'What did Adé buy and eat?'

(b) Response: Adé di ìti   ju
     A. buy yam eat
     'Adé bought the yam and ate it. '

Lastly, the overt DPs in the SVC in Ìgáṣí are non-coreferential. Simply put, the nouns do not refer to each other. Examples 1, 2, and 4 (b) clearly show that the arguments in the SVC are independent of each other.

The classifications of SVCs in languages over the years have been predicated on two criteria: syntax and semantics (Boadi 1968, Awobuluyi 1967, 1971, 1973, Bamgbose 1973, 1974, 1982, Schachter 1974, Baker 1989, Agbedor 1994, Schiller 1990, Lord 1993, Bearth 1999, Baker &Stewart 2002, Ameka 2005, 2006, Aikhenvald & Dixon (eds.) 2006, Bisang 2009, Omachonu 2011, among others). In this study, the discussion of SVCs in Ìgáṣí will be predicated on semantic and syntactic criteria noted by the earlier scholars.

4. The Semantic Classifications of Serial Verb Construction in Ìgáṣí

SVCs depict a wide range of semantic notions and a wide range of meanings made possible by their semantic properties. The semantic properties yielded the following types of SVC in Ìgáṣí.

4.1. Locative SVC

In Ìgáṣí, locative SVCs have two verbs within a clause. Locative SVCs are premised only on the (V2) in giving the location of the activity expressed by the (V1), although (V2) in locative SVCs performs a preposition–like function in the language. However, it is appropriate to analyze them as verbs because the few prepositions in Ìgáṣí only appear as adverbials, and in most cases, prepositions are usually null phonetically. See the examples below:

5(a) Ayọ̀ hun ìvève dò̩ Bọ̩lá
    A carry food accompany B.
    'Ayọ̀ carried the food after Bọ̩lá'

 (b) Ayọ̀ di ìwe ji Kọ̩lá
    A. throws book hit K.
    'Kúnlé threw the book at Kọ̩lá'

 (c) Olú ti inku fwę̩ uji
    O. push calabash enter water
    'Olú deeped the calabash into the water'

In 5(a-c), it is observed that the locative verbs do not occur in the initial position. They follow the other verbs, which indicate the main action or event. It is also noticed that the verbs of the main events are usually action verbs. As shown in the examples, the locative verbs are followed by object DP simply because they express the particular setting/location of the event.

4.2. Directional SVC

Locational and Directional SVCs look similar in that the two types of SVCs discuss a particular point or location. However, in directional SVCs, the V2 specifies the direction of the motion of the action initiated by V1. See the examples below:

6(a) Ayọ̀ gbi ìwe ǹve éfwe
    A take book go house
    'Ayọ̀ took the book home'

 (b) Olú hun òndù fwę éfwe
    O. carry load enter house
    'Olú carried the load to the house'
 (c) Ayọ̀ wọ̀ ǹve éfwe
    A. cry go house
    'Ayọ̀ cried and entered his house'

(d) Ayọ̀ dọ̀ Boḷá di aja
   A. accompany B. reach market
   'Ayò accompanied Bola to the market'

(e) Boḷá ṣwọ ondọ́ ve Eko
   B. find work go Eko
   'Boḷá looked for a job in Lagos'

(f) Adé ṣi ve ùwà
   A. run go farm
   'Adé ran to the farm'

In 6 (a-f), it is demonstrated that the second verb (V2) in the sentence shows the direction of the first verb (V1) and indicates that the action of V1 is predicated on V2 for accomplishment in directional SVCs. Note that the action of V1 must be present before the action of V2 begins/starts, and the action of V1 cannot progress when the action of V2 terminates.

4.3. Manner SVC

In a manner SVCs, V2 performs an adverb-like function by the way it describes the action of V1. The argument described by the (V1) is seen as taking a physical position in performing the action depicted by (V2). Moreover, the manner in which SVC describes the body posture of the subject of the argument of the (V1). However, this body position is temporal. In some cases, it terminates immediately at the commencement of the action depicted by the (V2). See the examples below:

7(a) Ayọ̀ ṣi daajì gwá unti
   A. run prostrate greet king
   'Adé ran to prostrate to greet the king'

(b) Ú ṣi jwihọ
   3sg run eat
   'He ate quickly'

(c) Kúnlé sẹ̀ṣi ju ìvèvé é
   K. sit eat food his
   'Kúnlé sat to eat his food'

(d) Ú *wọn fwẹ* éfwe.
   3sg laugh enter house
   'He laughed and entered his house'

In 7(a-d), the sentences depict the manner in which an action or process is carried out or perceived. Moreover, V1 describes the manner while V2 indicates the main action or process by which the said actions are carried out.

4.4. Purpose of SVC

Purpose SVCs are used to denote purpose; it simply shows the purpose of the action depicted by the (V1). In such constructions, V2 always shows the purpose of V1 in the sentence. See the examples below:

8(a) Adé fwẹ éfwe ńṣẹ.
   A enter house sleep
   'Adé entered the house to sleep'

(b) Bọlá di ìvève ju
   B. buy food eat
   'Bọlá brought food to eat'

(c) Olú yàji kọ ọ̀wọ̀n oyinbo
   O. prepare learn language white man
   'Olú prepared to learn the Whiteman's language'

(d) Adé ṣwọ moto dà.
   A. look car buy
   'Adé looked for a car to buy'

(e) Akin so àyẹ ju
   A. cook soup eat
   'Akin cooked soup to eat'

(f) Olú ṣwọ undọ ke
   O. look work do
   'Olú looked for work to do'

In the examples above, V2 shows the purpose of the action of V1or what it sets out to accomplish. This is illuminated in all examples. For clarity, explanations will be given to 8 (f). In the example, Olú (the subject DP) is searching for a job with the motive of doing it.

4.5. Circumstantial SVC

Circumstantial SVC refers to the circumstance or context under which a given state of affairs or event occurs. Thus, in circumstantial construction, the focus is on the circumstance under which the action occurs. One of the verbs usually denotes the action of the main event, while the other verb provides the context or circumstance under which the action takes place (Lawal 1989:13). The V1 provides the circumstance while V2 describes the main event. See the examples below:

9(a) Bọlá sèṣi ka iwe
   B. sit read book
   'Bọlá sat to read'

(b) Olú dòwẹn ju ìvèvé
   O. stand eat food
   'Olú stood to eat'

(c) Ú ji Olú vè
   3sg beat O. go
   'He beat Olú and left'

4.6. Comparative SVC

In comparative SVCs, the most common verb used as the (V2) is *vè* 'go. 'The verbs in comparative SVC in Ìgáṣí exhibit contiguous relationships. The verbs occur beside each other before the object. Noted that each of the verbs can stand alone in a sentence. Although the V1 in the SVC is an adjectivisable verb, it occurs alone in a meaningful sentence. See the examples below:

10(a) Olú ńgba ve Akin
     O. wise go A.
     'Olú is wiser than Akin'

 (b) ìlèmú yeǹ ve oyin
     Orange sweet go horney
     'Orange is sweeter than honey'

 (c) Ìbàdàn ṣíṣị ve Ọ̀yọ́
     I. surpass go Ọ
     'Ìbàdàn is bigger than Ọ̀yọ́'

 (d) Adé ṣíṣị ve Olú
     A. surpass go O
     'Adé is older than Olú'

 (e) éfew rin ńdù ve igéro.
     House this bigger go that
     'This house is bigger than that.'

In comparative SVCs 10(a-e), it will be noticed that the comparison is not only meant to show how a particular nominal is bigger or surpasses the other, but they are also used for the description of the concept and this is depicted in the choice of the verb *vè* 'go' used to show the comparison. It must be noted that the verb *vè* 'go' means 'more than' in the context of use because of the verb that occurs before. When the verb *vè* is used alone in a sentence, the meaning will be go.

4.7. Instrumental SVC

In instrumental SVC, the action of both verbs overlaps. This indicates that the action of the (V1) does not terminate before the action of the (V2) begins. Moreover, it is the (V1) that shows how (V2) operates, and the means by which the (V2) carries out the action manifested by the (V1). Ìgáṣí has only one instrument verb *gbi* 'use' that it uses with any other verbs (V2) in all instrumental SVCs in the language. This indicates that (V1) is always constant while (V2) varies. Note that each of the verbs has its object arguments, and the object of (V2) is always the recipient of the action carried out by the object of (V1). See the examples below:

11(a) Olú gbi únṣwẹ pé ìti
     O. use knife cut yam
     'Olú used the knife to cut yam'

 (b) Akin gbi ọngọ̀ kpu eỳeǹ
     A. use tree kill snake
     'Akin used the tree to kill the snake'

(c) Olú gbi uka wan àran
   O. use rope tie animal
   'Olú used the rope to tie the animal'

(d) Wálè gbi úgo ga ìti
   W. use oil fry yam
   'Wale used oil to fry yam'

In the examples 11 (a-d), one observes that V2 accomplishes the actions started by V1. The object of V1 indicates the instrument used to perform the action, and V2 shows how the instruments are used in carrying out the actions.

4.8. Causative SVC

In causative SVCs, the verb's action performed by the object argument of (V1) triggers the consequences of what the argument of (V2) undergoes. Each of them, in some cases, may have independent existence when used in another clause, while some (V1) are dependent verbs with grammatical meanings. See the examples below:

12(a) Á gbà mi   sẹẹ   Olú
   3PL make 1sg acc offend O.
   'They made me to offend Olú'

(b) Ú ke iku kpu ógbè e
   3sg do death kill friend his
   'He caused the death of his friend'

(c) Ú gbi ìyà ju mi
   3sg make suffering eat 1sg acc
   'He made me suffer'

In this SVC, the actions of verbs may either overlap or be consecutive. The implication is that the two events encoded by the (V1) may end before the event encoded in (V2) begins.

4.9. Resultative SVC

Resultative and causative SVCs are similar to each other. Both happen due to one event being the outcome of the other. However, in resultive SVCs, both events occur simultaneously; one event does not end before the beginning of the other. In resultative serial verbs construction (V2), it normally refers to the effect of (V1) upon a participant.

13(a) Bọlá ti Olú ye
   Bọlá push O. fall
   'Bọlá pushed Olú down'

(b) Àjàó ju ìvèvé hùn
   A. eat food be full
   'Àjàó ate food and was full'

(c) Olú ke ógbe rẹ́ ẹngbẹ
   O. do friend get trouble
   'Olu fell into trouble because of friendship'

(d) Á gwọ ùrà hùn
    3PL drink wine be full
    'They were drunk with wine '

(e) Ú ju ẹ̀bà hùn
    3sg eat eba be full
    'He ate eba and was full'

In 13(a-e), it is observed that the actions of the V2 denote the result or consequence of the actions of the V1 in the sentences. However, in resultative SVCs, the attainment of V2 may be gradual and immeasurable, or sudden and immeasurable. For instance, the action 13(a) where Olú fell down is sudden and immeasurable.

5. The Syntactic Classification of SVC

The syntactic classification proposed here is based on the formal features following the four parameters enumerated in Omachonu (2011). The parameters are as follows**:**

a) Marking of grammatical categories
b) Contiguity
c) Wordhood of components, and
d) Composition

5.1. Marking of Grammatical Categories

In Ìgáṣí, the SVC has one specification for tense, aspect, modal, and negation. This implies that the language manifests a 'single marking' of a preverbal particle for its SVC. This shows that tense, aspect, modal and negation are marked once in SVCs. Therefore, double or concordant marking of the preverbal particle will generate ill-formed sentences in Ìgáṣí. See the examples below:

14(a) Adé á di ìti ju
      A. fut. buy yam eat
      'Adé will buy the yam and eat it'

  (b) Olú wẹgẹ̀ di ìti ju
      O.   mod. buy yam eat
      'Olú must buy the yam and eat it'

  (c) Olú ó di ìti ju
      O. prog. buy yam eat
      'Olú is buying the yam to eat '

  (d) Olú ka di ìti ju
      O. perf. buy yam eat
      'Olú has bought the yam and eaten it'

  (e) Olú ré di ìti ju
      O. hab. buy yam eat
      'Olú used to buy the yam and eat it'

(f) Olú kpa di ìti ju
    O. neg. buy yam eat
    'Olú did not buy the yam and ate it'

15(a)* Adé á di ìti á ju
     A. fut. buy yam fut. eat
     'Adé will buy the yam and will eat it'

(b)* Olú wẹgẹ̀ di ìti wẹgẹ̀ ju
    O. mod. buy yam mod. eat
    Olú must buy the yam and must eat it'

(c)* Olú   ó di ìti ó ju
    O. prog. buy yam prog eat

(d)* Olú ka di ìti ka ju
    O. perf. buy yam perf eat

(e)* Olú ré di ìti ré ju
    O. hab. buy yam hab eat

(f)* Olú kpa di ìti kpa ju
    O. Neg. buy yam Neg eat

The ill-formedness of the examples 15 a-f, stems from the double marking of preverbal particles on the verbs; the examples further affirm our assumption that SVC relates single event, and it corroborates the position of Sebba (1987), Kroeger (2004), and Ogie (2009) that SVC has single marking for preverbs.

5.2. Contiguity

In Ìgáṣí, SVCs exhibit both adjoining (no argument between the verbs) and non-adjoining relationships (that is, V DP V DP, & V DP V Ø configuration) and multi-verbs (V DP V V). The adjoining SVCs usually involve intransitive verbs that do not require objects. The non-adjoining SVCs involve object sharing; the two verbs share the same object, as a result, the object comes between the two verbs. The examples of adjoining and non-adjoining SVC are shown in 9a, b, and c, while the examples of multi-verbs are illustrated in 10a and b.

16(a) Adé ka ṣi vè
   A. asp run go
   'Adé has run away'

(b) Adé á di ìti ju
    A. fut. buy yam eat
    'Adé will buy the yam and eat it.'

(c) Olú gbi unṣwẹ pẹ́ ìti
    O. use knife cut yam
    'Olú used the knife to cut yam'

17(a) Wálé kpu àran so ju
     W. kill meat cook eat
     'Wálé killed the animal cooked and ate it'

(b) Bọlá hun inswẹ va chá
    B   carry fish come sell
    'Bọlá brought the fish to sell'

From the examples (16a-c) above, the non-adjoining SVCs have two configurations: (V DP V Ø) and (V DP V DP). In example (16b), the last verb is always left stranded while the DP is sandwiched between the verbs. In (16c), each of the verbs has its own DP. For the multi-verb examples in (17a and b), one argument is shared by the three verbs; by implication, the last two verbs are stranded.

5.3. Wordhood Components

The verbs that comprise VPs of SVC in Ìgáṣí are capable of independent existence in other structures outside the serial verb constructions. For instance: gwọ… hùn 'drink, be full' dà …. Ju ' buy, eat' , ṣwọ … ke ' find, do' among others.

(18)(a) Olú di àran
         O. buy meat
         'Olú bought the meat'

  (b) Olú ju àran
      O. eat meat
      'Olú ate the meat'

  (c) Á gwọ ùji
      3PL drink water
      'They drank water'

  (d) Olú ka hùn (ùrà)
      O. asp be full (wine)
      'Olú is drunk'

The examples (18a-d) depict that each of the verbs in SVCs can occur independently in a grammatical sentence. Each of the verbs is a free morpheme with either grammatical or semantic meaning. However, the occurrences of two or more finite verbs within a sentence lead to a transition from one event to another with the same time frame of the event. To actualize this, the series of verbs share the same subject DP and they relate to an action or state of affairs that can be associated together. See the examples below:

(19)(a) Olú di àran ju
         O. buy meat eat
         'Olú bought the meat and ate it'

  (b) Á gwọ ùji hùn
      3PL drink water be full
      'They drank water to fill his stomach'

In 19 (a and b), it would be realized that two independent events are subsumed under the same semantic frame of event in SVC.

5.4. Composition

The composition of Ìgáṣí SVC depicts two broad groups, namely symmetrical and asymmetrical SVCs. The symmetrical SVCs often comprise verbs which could be two or more verbs taken from grammatically and semantically open classes: the order of arrangement of the constituent verbs is predominantly iconic to depict the temporal order of sub-events related in the construction, and the verbs in the SVC have equal rank. Symmetrical SVCs in Ìgáṣí are: manner, purpose, circumstantial, resultative and comparative. Furthermore, symmetrical SVCs are divided into two based on the status and the semantic reading of the components: concomitant (ti… ye 'push fall' ju … hùn ' eat filled ' gwọ… hùn 'tobe drun' used jointly to express a concept, coordinate (verbs of equal status with additive value, dà … ju 'buy and eat' ṣwọ … ke ' find and do'), and modifying SVCs such as ṣi vè ' run go'.

Asymmetrical SVCs in Ìgáṣí include a verb from a grammatically and semantically closed class or a verb from an open class that changes role to occupy a minor verb slot (verb with grammatical function without semantic content). Asymmetrical SVCs comprise the instrumental and comparative types. Moreover, asymmetrical SVC is ahead, which is usually the main verb. Concerning the position of the head of asymmetrical SVCs in Ìgáṣí, there are two possible heads that are dependent on the composition:

5.4.1. Head First: Left Hand Head Rule (LHHR), which is Found in Comparative SVCs

  (i) Olú ńgba ve Akin   'Olú is wiser than Akin'
  (ii) Adé ṣi vè   'Ade ran away'

This first head assumption in (i) above stems from the fact that **vè** 'go' (tone changes to mid before nominal complement) in example (i) above is not performing a semantic function or, better stil,l has no semantic content, because its meaning is more of the preposition 'surpass' in the sentence. Thus, it is the verb **ńgba** 'to be big' that conveys the main message that will be regarded as the head. It must be noted that this assumption is restricted to the examples of this type alone. In (ii) **vè** 'go' performs the function of an adverb in the sentence.

5.4.2. Head Last: Right Hand Head Rule (RHHR), this is Found in Instrumental and Causative SVC in Ìgáṣí

  (i) Akin gbi ọngọ̀ kpu ẹyẹ̀ 'Akin used the tree to kill a snake'
  (ii) Ú gbi ìyà ju mi   'He made me suffer'
  (iii) Ú gbi ìṣó ku mi   'He used his nail to pierce my body'
  (iv) Olú gbi inṣwẹ pé ̀ ìti   'He used the knife to cut yam'

The most productive SVCs with the Right Hand Head Rule (RHHR) in Ìgáṣí always emanate from the examples where gbi 'use' precedes another verb. The reason for this assumption is that in virtually all cases where gbi 'use' occurs before another verb, it has functional content rather than semantic content. It must be noted that asymmetry SVC is not limited to instrumental and causative alone; there could be vestiges of it in other types of SVC based on the verbs in the sentence. Note that the symmetric and asymmetric relationships enumerated above are based on the semantic content of the verbs in sentences.

6. Derivation of SVC Projection in Ìgáṣí

Scholars who have worked on SVC in Kwa and by extension Benue-Congo languages include Awobuluyi (1967, 1973), Boadi (1968), Lord (1973), Bamgbose (1973, 1974, 1982), Schachter (1974), George (1975), Oyelaran (1982), Williams (1971), Taiwo (2009), Omachonu (2011) and Akanbi (2014) among others. However, these scholars do not have a common ground on the source of SVCs in different languages of their study. The summary of their submissions is that:
  (i) SVCs are derived from multiple sentences at the underlying level (at the base)
  (ii) SVCs are derived from a single sentence at the underlying level (at the base)

Awobuluyi (1967, 1973, 1978) claims that SVCs in Yorùbá are derived from coordinating sentences while Bamgbose (1973, 1974, 1982, 1990) opines that they are derived from coordinating and embedded structures respectively, the latter scholar differentiates between linking and modifying SVC, he claims the linking SVCs are derived through two or more underlying sentences while modifying SVCs are derived from a single source. According to Boadi (1968), SVCs in Twi emanated from both coordinating and embedding sources. Williamson (1971) opines that Freetown Krio SVCs are derived from embedding structures only.

Schachter (1974) explains that SVCs behave like idiomatic expressions because their semantic interpretation sometimes does not depend solely on the literal meaning of the lexical items involved in their derivation. Based on the behavior of the SVCs, Schachter (1974) proposed a single underlying sentence for their derivation. Pavey (2010) emphasizes that SVCs emanated from a single source, which corroborated the mono-causal analysis mooted in Foley & Oslon (1985). The argument-sharing hypothesis of Baker (1989, 1991, 2000) and Collin (2003) also lends credence to the mono-causal arguments. For Baker, a true SVC involves argument sharing; he buttresses this point when he claims that, descriptively, we want to say that the NP between the two verbs is the argument of both verbs, whereas the phrase that occurs after (V2) (second verb) is only the argument of (V2)

From this excerpt, we can decipher that argument sharing occurs in two places: internal and external. All the verbs in the sentence share the external argument, while the internal argument will be shared when only one argument occurs between the verbs in the SVC. Baker (1989, 1991, and 2000) bifurcates SVC into two: (i) SVCs involving overt coordination and (ii) SVCs involving covert coordination. Baker concludes that SVCs are understood as a single event by the native speakers, while overt coordination construction is seen as a sequence of distinct events. Ìgáṣí operates SVCs involving covert coordination. In this study, we agree with the mono-causal analysis of Schachter (1974) that SVCs have idiomatic meaning; once the arrangement is distorted or the verbs are used separately, the meaning of the sentences is altered. We argue that SVCs in Ìgáṣí are derived from a single underlying sentence. Consider the example below:

(20) Olú ṣi vè
O. run go
'Olú ran away'

The sentence in (20), based on the argument of the scholars who claimed that SVCs are derived from two sentences underlyingly, could have been derived from Olú ṣi 'Olu ran' and Olú vè 'Olú went', which would have a completely different meaning /interpretation from the meaning intended when the verbs occur together in a sentence as in (22). Apart from this, other SVCs, when separated into two sentences, always truncate the flow of the discussion and meaning. For instance: Adé da ìti ju 'Adé bought the yam and ate it'. The purpose of the purchase of the item is for immediate consumption, but when the verbs are separated, the flow and meaning change entirely from the line of thought it follows when the verbs are used together.

In line with VP shell analysis, and following Schachter (1974), Foley & Oslon (1985), Ilori (2010) and Pavey (2010) mono-causal argument, I claim that all the verbs in the string of SVCs in Ìgáṣí are base-generated as a complex unit within the inner core VP. It is posited that the subject of causative, instrumental, resultative, circumstantial, directional, manner, locative SVCs are base-generated in Spec–vP as agent–causer/performative before they are raised to Spec-TP to value their EPP feature. For comparative SVCs where the subject is the theme, we posit that the subject is base-generated in the Theme argument position in the inner core VP before it is moved to Spec-vP and Spec-TP, respectively. The internal structures of SVCs in Ìgáṣí are presented in three forms.

We start with SVCs with agent-causer subject DP, which are categorized into three. The three types are presented below:

21(a) Instrumental SVC that has a causer-agent that uses instrument to affect patient (theme)/ experiencer,
    e.g: Olú gbi unṣwẹ pẹ́ ìti 'Olú used the knife to cut yam.'

(b) Causative SVC that has a causer-agent that makes the experiencer do certain things,
    e.g: Á gbà mi sẹẹ olú 'They made me offend Olú'.

(c) Causative SVC where the action of the causer-gent causes the Theme to affect the experience,
    e.g : Ú gbi ìyà ju mi ' He made me to suffer'

In Figure 1 example 21(a), two inner core VPs are projected, and their verbs are merged with their direct objects. PredPs are projected for the two verbs to allow their direct objects to check their accusative features. There is an overt movement of the instrument object of gbi (i.e unṣwẹ) to Dobj2 while only the formal feature of theme object pẹ́ (i.e ìti) moves covertly Dobj1; however, the Dobj1remains in the VP while the verb is raised to pred-head. Moreover, the first in the string of the two verbs gbi raises to VP to lexicalize its causative light V head. This is illustrated below:

Fig. 1 Example 21(a)

For Figure 2 example 21 (b), Á gba mi sẹẹ olú 'They made me offend Olú', the inner core VP predicts a simple VP expression I sẹẹ Olú 'I offended Olú'. It must be noted that the pronoun *I* changes to *mi (I or me)* at object position. The causative verb gba 'make' is generated separately at the inner core VP alongside the basic clause because mi 'me' is both the direct object of the verb gba 'make' and the subject of the verb sẹẹ 'offend'. Moreover, the VP is merged with PredP, which in turn merges with VP. Since the expression has a causative agent as the subject, we propose that the subject originated as the Spec-VP of the outer layer. Moreover, at the inner core VP, the first verb in the serial verb, which is gba 'make', raises to Pred-head before it moves to the light verb head to lexicalize it. The experiencer (mi), which is the direct object, is raised to Spec-PredP to check its accusative feature. The verb sẹẹ 'offend' and the Theme remain in the inner core; however, the formal feature of the Theme argument covertly moves to check its accusative feature. This explanation is represented below:
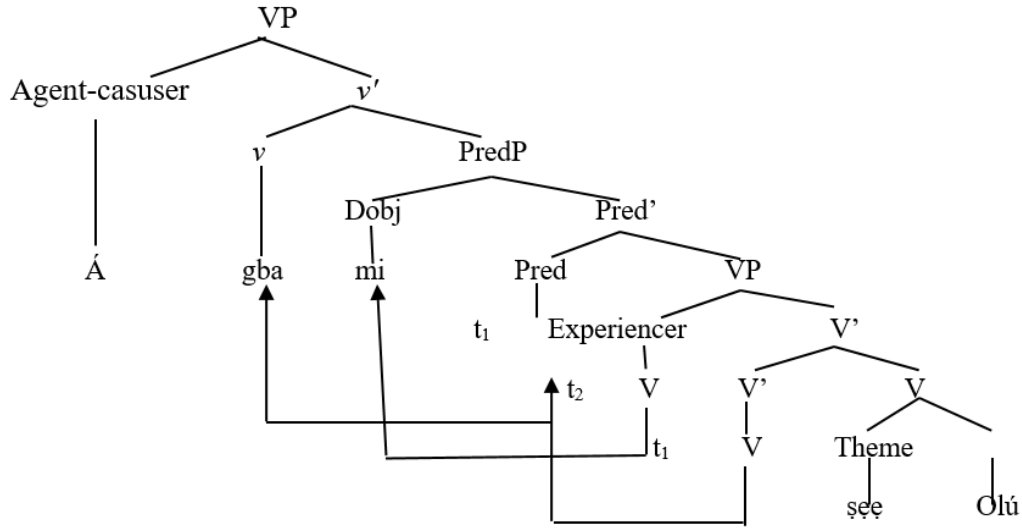
Fig. 2 Example 21(b)

Figure 3 example 21(c) has the structure of 21(b) except that there are only thematic adjustments. The Theme is the direct object that raises overtly to check its accusative feature in Spec-PredP, while the experiencer remains in the inner core VP, but its formal feature is raised covertly to check its accusative feature as well.
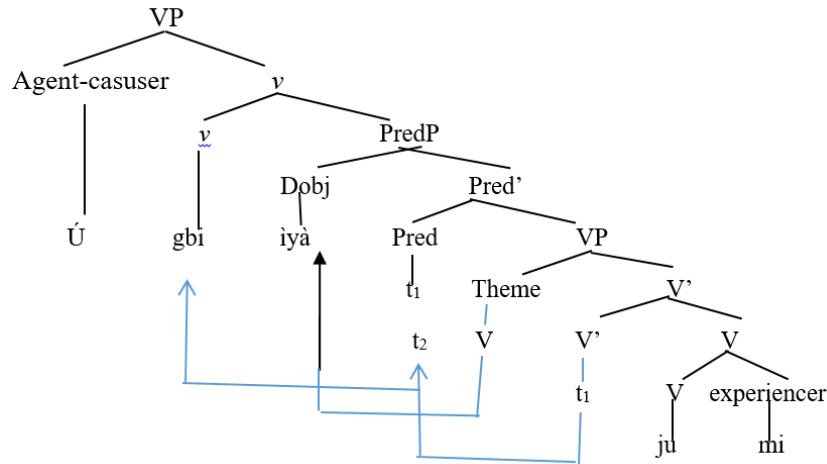

Fig. 3 Example 21(c)

This is SVC with Performative (agent DP) Serial Verb Construction. In this type of SVC, the subject DPs are usually agent-performative, and the first verb invariably refers to the subjects, unlike the other verbs in the string, which may or may not. They can be found in purpose, resultative, circumstantial, directional, locative, manner, and circumstantial SVCs. To exemplify the agent–performative, examples are chosen from purpose and directional SVCs to represent the SVCs with agent–performative. See the examples below:

(22) (a) Bọ́lá di ìvève ju

    B. buy food eat

    'Bọ́lá brought food and ate it'

(22) (b) Ayọ̀ gbi ìwe ǹve éfwe

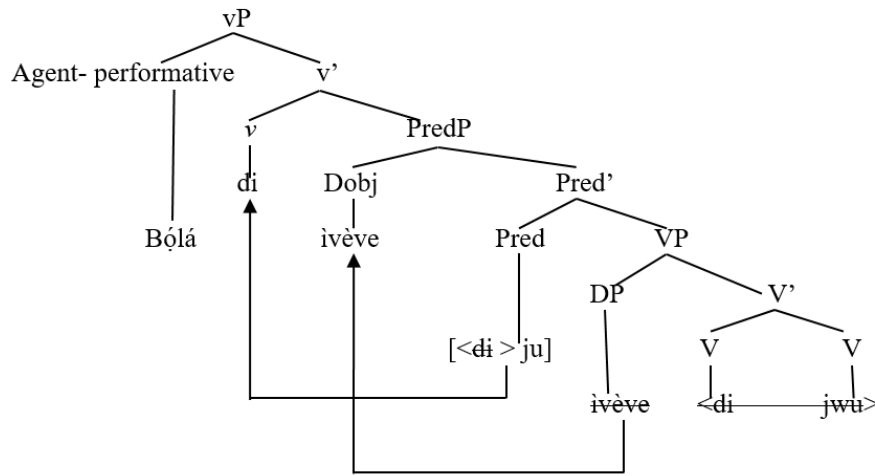   A. take book go house

    'Ayọ̀ took book to his house'

Fig. 4 Example 22(a)

In Figure 4 example 22(a), the inner core VP contains two lexical verbs, which have one direct object with the Theme theta role. PredP is projected to allow the direct object to check its accusative feature against the verbs; this is then merged with an outer TP shell with a performative light verb head. The verbs move from the inner core VP to Pred-head, while the direct object is raised to Spec-PredP to check its accusative feature. The first of the serial verbs is raised to the adjoining light verb to lexicalize it. Moreover, the Figure 4 example in (22a) has the same structure as (22b) except that it has two direct objects with Theme and goal thematic roles.
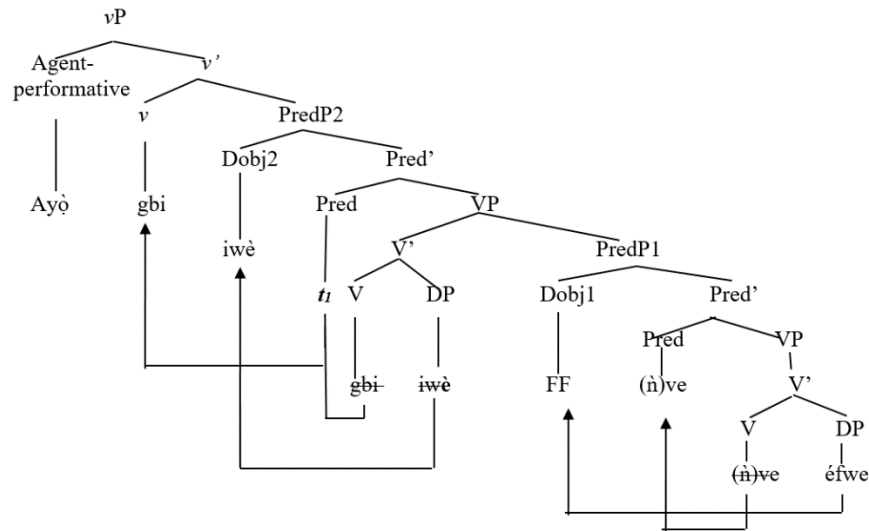

Fig. 5 Example 22(b)

In Figure 5 example 22(b), two inner core VPs are projected, and their verbs are merged with their direct objects. PredPs are projected for the two verbs to allow their direct objects to check their accusative features. There is an overt movement of the Theme object iwè to Dobj2 while only the formal feature of goal object moves covertly *Dobj1*, thus, the Dobj1remains in the VP while the verb is raised to pred-head. Moreover, the first in the string of the two verbs gbi raises to VP to lexicalize its performative light verb head.

Third is the non-agentive (performative) and non-causative subject DP serial verb construction. In this SVC type, the subject is neither causative nor performative; it projects a theta role subject DP, and as a result, it originates at the inner core VP. The examples of the SVC are found in comparative SVC. Consider the examples below:

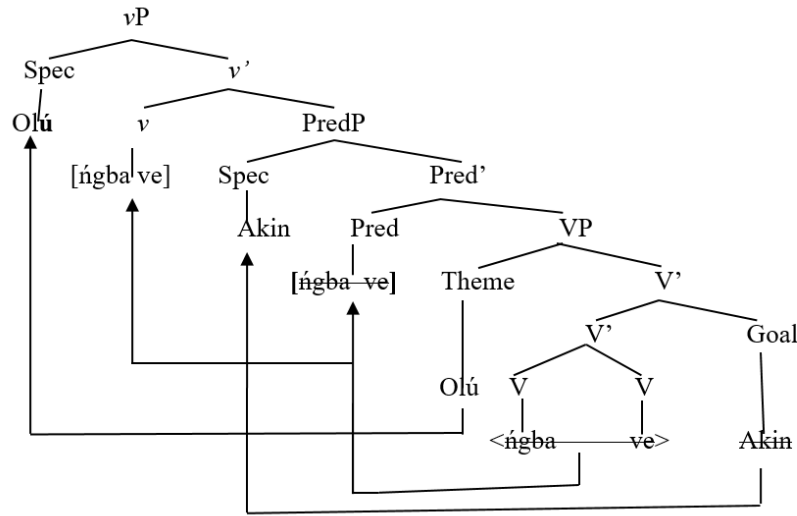23(a) Olú ńgba ve Akin
    O. wise go A.
    'Olú is wiser than Akin'

Fig. 6 Example 23(a)

In Figure 6 example 23 (a), the subject DP of the clause has the Theme theta role. Thus, we propose that it originates from the inner core VP. The two verbs are merged with the goal object, and PredP is projected to allow for the goal object to check its accusative feature. The subject DP is raised to Spec-VP while the verbs are moved in a cyclic manner from the inner core VP to Pred-head and light verb head, and the goal is moved to Spec-PredP to check its accusative feature. However, it must be noted that the argument sharing of SVCs with one complement is similar to that of the Splitting verb in Ìgáṣí. Consider the examples below:

24 (a) lòpa 'to spoil'   ⟶   Olú lo undọ pa   'Olú spoil the work.'

    pẹrẹju ' to deceive' ⟶   Á pẹrẹ mi ju   'They deceived me.'

    kerengbẹ 'to scold' ⟶   Olukọ́ kere Ṣọlá ngbẹ 'The teacher scolded Ṣọlá'

The resemblance noticed in SVC and splitting verbs is limited to the examples above. However, there are differences between the two syntactic structures. It has been stated earlier that the splitting verb is a complex unit at the base before it splits into two to allow the insertion of an object complement between them. Thus, it can be argued that it is the object complement that triggered the splitting of the verb; otherwise, it will remain as a single complex unit. It is worth noting that the fragments of the verbs in splitting verbs can be interpreted as single lexical verbs. However, some of the verbs can occur as independent units capable of their own semantics, while others cannot. SVC, on the other hand, contains a series of verbs in a row that relate to a single event (See Omachonu 2011). However, SVC differs from splitting verbs in the sense that the last verb of the splitting verb cannot take a direct DP complement. See the examples below:

24(b) (i) Olú gbi insẉẹ pé ̣ìtí   'Olú used the knife to cut yam'   SVC
       (ii) *Olu lo undo pa Òjó   'Olú spoilt the work Òjó'   Splitting verb

In SVC, three verbs can occur in the same sentence, but this is not permissible with splitting verbs. See the examples below:

24(c) (i) Olú di aran so ju 'Olú bought the meat, cooked and ate it'   SVC
       (ii) *Olú ke undo lopa ' Olú did work spoilt '   Splitting verb

The ill-formedness of example 25b (ii) is borne out by the fact that the last verb of the sentence cannot take a direct object complement. Moreover, example 25c (ii) is not grammatical because of the sequence of verbs in the sentence, which is not allowed in a splitting verb construction.

7. Conclusion

In this study, serial verb constructions in Ìgásị́ have been examined. It is established that serial verb constructions in Ìgásị́ are mono-clausal, and the actions or state of affairs conveyed by the verbs in SVC constructions show that they occur within the same temporal semantic frame. It is also demonstrated that verbs in SVC are symmetrical when the series of verbs has semantic content and asymmetrical when one has functional content while others have semantic content. The study also demonstrated that the thematic roles of the subject DP play a vital role in their appearance in the VP frame. It is established that the subject DP of SVC with causative and performative agents are generated at Spec-vP (outer core VP) while those with theme agent subject are generated at Spec-VP (inner core VP).

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