ON THE SCOPE OF THE SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTION* IN YORUBA

Olusope O. Oyelaran
University of Ifé, Nigeria

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 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, Bamgbose, 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, fi, and mú as in (1), (2), (3), and (4):

(1) wón rántí pé àlejọ ní owó
they remember say guest (focus) money
'they remember that money/wealth is transient'

(2) oníwààsù dá àwọn ènlàyàn rè ní ọkàn 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) ọrọ nàà kò fi mí ní ara ba ilè
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) ọrọ Múyíwá mú mi sè ọrẹ mí
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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As 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.]. 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 say (') you(pl.) come
b. Olu wí pé e wá 'Olu said you came'
   Olu say ( ) you(pl.) come

c. Olu rántí pé e wá 'Olu remembered that you came'
   Olu remember ( ) you(pl.) come

c. Olu ron pé ón ó bá wa nilé 'Olu thought/expected that he
   Olu think ( ) he would find us at home (Olu)

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

(6) Olu ní e wá 'Olu said you came'
   Olu say you come

Sentences such as (6) suggest to Lord [1974], surprisingly, only that the cy­
cle of the reanalysis of another verb of saying is underway in Yoruba. Speak­
ers, she argues, resort to the use of ni in order to put a brake on the pro­
liferation of verbs of saying, as in (7) in which each verb except the first
has been reanalyzed as complementizer:

(7) won so wí pé e wá 'they said that you came'
   they say say ( ) you come

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 con­
sisting 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
(6):

(8) a. Olu mú owó ta mí lórè 'Olu gave me money as a present'
   Olu take money strike me (as) gift

   b. Olu bún mi ni owó 'Olu presented me with money'
   Olu present me (prep) 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.

1.1.1. Thus, one may suggest that in SY the verbs sọ, wí, pé, and ní may be used individually or in a combination of two or more in a sentence without a change of meaning:

(5) a. Olú sọ pé ẹ wá  'Olu said that you came'
    b. Olú wí pé ẹ wá  'Olu said that you came'

(9) a. Olú ní pé ẹ wá  'Olu said that you(pl.) came'
    b. Olú sọ wí pé ẹ wá  
    c. Olú sọ wí pé ní ẹ wá

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

(10) a. Olú ní ẹ wá  'Olu said you that you came'
    'Olu say you come
    b. Olú pé ẹ wá  'Olu said that you came'

In view of (10b), we must find an explanation for the supposed reanalysis hypothesis, because if pé 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, fọ, sọ, wí, pé, ní are all fairly synonymous, all translatable as 'say', and may be used as in (11):

(11) a. i. Ọjọ fọ ẹdè tí n  kọ gbọ  'Ojo speak language which I did not hear
     'Ojo spoke a language which I did not understand'
    ii. Ọjọ fọ tán, ọ pèhẹ ndà  'Ojo speak finish he turn (his) back
     'Ojo having spoken, took off'
b. Ọjọ sọ ịtàn
Ojo ụfụta story
'Ojo told a story'

c. i. Ọjọ wị ọjọ b' i awéwa
Ojo talk case manner of grumbler
'Ojo complains like a grumbler'

ii. Ọjọ wị ohun ti a nị kụ ọ wị
Ojo say thing which we say (INTRO) he say
'Ojo says what we ordered him to say'

d. i. n kọ pẹ n kọ lọ
I not 'say' I NEG go
'I did not say I won't go'

ii. wọn pẹ ọọn ti dé
tey say they (perf) come
'they said they had arrived'

e. i. mo nị n kọ lọ
I say I neg go
'I say that I do not go'

ii. Ọjọ nị dun ọ lọ
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:

fọ : [+ ---(NP)]
sọ : [+ --- NP ]
wị : [+ --- NP ]
pẹ : [+ --- S ]
nị : [+ --- S ]

This explains why pẹ and nị may either precede or follow each other when combined. Thus sọ, wị, nị may precede pẹ as above in (5) and (9), while pẹ itself may precede nị as in (9c).

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

(12) a. Indirect connative constructions

gbłyànjú 'try'
gira 'struggle'
pàṣẹ 'order'
 bè 'beg, implore'
ràn(ṣè) 'send, commission'

Olu gbłyànjú pé kí òun bá wa
Olu try ( ) (comp) he(Olu) overtake us
(INTR)
'Olu tried to overtake us'

b. Value

dára '(be) good'
yè '(be) fitting'
burú '(be) bad'
sàn '(be) better'
wù 'to please'

ó dára pé kí a jọ lọ
it good ( ) (comp) we rally go
(INTR)
'it is good that we go together'

c. Result

dára '(be) good'
dùn '(be) sweet'
burú '(be) bad'

ó dùn pé a jọ lọ
it sweet ( ) we rally go
'it is sweet that we went together'

d. Saying, reporting, thinking; emotion

rántí 'remember'
bínú 'be annoyed'
rô 'think'
sọ. (nf,wf) 'say'
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 connative construction, in which pé serves as the only verb, where the third person singular pronoun obligatorily deletes before the negative marker kò (see Abimbọla and Oyelaran [1975]).

(13) a fí àkàrà je èkò kò pé kí a ní owó
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 pé in all cases in which it complements other verbs, namely, ènì 'one, someone'. In the case of (12e) and in all similar cases, it is impossible to ascribe anything but the verbal status to pé.

In (12f), ènì is presumed deleted between jẹ and pé as underlying subject of the clause in which pé is verb. The said clause, ènì pé ó gún 'one says it is long', is complement to jẹ 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 àsán or nítorójí and before pé, indicating that what follows functions as genitive NP, and the entire construction introduced by nítorójí and àsán 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:

\[
\text{Prep NP GM [pé............. ].............}
\]

\[
\text{np} \quad \text{np}
\]

\[(14) \quad \text{nítorójí pé Olu jẹ òmọ-ọba...........}
\]

on of-head of ( ) Olu be child(of) king

'on account of the fact that Olu is a prince'

Now, tí, the relative clause introducer, may be substituted for pé 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 tí-clause as opposed to the genitive function of the pé-clause.

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

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

\[(15) \quad \text{a. pé kí a jọ lọ dára } \quad \text{'that we go together is good'}
\]

\[
\text{( ) (comp) we rally go good}
\]

\[
\text{b. pé a jọ lọ dára} \quad \text{'that we went together is good'}
\]

\[
\text{( ) we rally go good}
\]
But consider that in SY only NP may function as subject or object, may be con­
joined with àti .... àti '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 fl ìàkàrà jè ìkö]...
NP subj.

(16) a. àti ójò rò àti ójò kò rò a ó bá qòba dè 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. ọrò yen jò mì lójú nì mo se tète dé
matter that surprise me in face (FOCUS) I make quickly arrive
'what surprised me was that I arrived quickly'

c. ayò o iyá mì nì 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. gbe ọmọ wàá kí mì owó ní ná ẹni
carry baby come greet me money (it is) spend one
'bring the baby to see me, that costs nothing but money'

e. na ọmọ mì dè mì kò dé inú ọlọmọ
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 pé , with or without the underly­
ing subject ẹni , 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 pé is selected to function as pé 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. ọjèṣà: (w)í 'say'
    i ọun ẹ wàá 'he said he won't come'
say he(will) NEG come
Yoruba Serial Verbs

ii. ́larẹ: fọ

iii. Ondo: fọ fọ

iv. ́jẹbú: fọ if (<nǐ)

v. ̀iẹ-0lújílẹ: fọ or ọ (with f deleted)

vi. Ekli: sù(hàn) 'say(show)', '-say(to)'

vii. ́gbumìnà: ká ní, (kí a ní) '(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 pé or ní 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 0.0.0.). 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) órẹ Muyíwa mú mi se órẹ mi 'Muyiwa's affair made me offend

\[\text{NP}_1 \quad \text{V}_1 \quad \text{NP}_2 \quad \text{V}_2 \quad \text{NP}_3\]

One observation which immediately casts doubts on Lord's claim is that other causative verbs than the five (mú, dá, sẹ, fọ, and ẹ) 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), jíje ṣeṣan or ́je ṣeṣan 'the fact of eating the meat', but not ṣeṣan 'meat' alone, is the logical or surface subject of ḃún 'to cause to experience pain or loss'.

(18) won ́je ṣeṣan yen ḃún mí '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. ọ ga pin he/it tall stop 'he has stopped growing tall'
   b. ọ pón ra he ripen rot 'it has ripened to the point of rotting'
   c. ọ sòrò tán he talk finish 'he has stopped talking'
   d. Bòlá ra ṣeṣan ́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 splitting 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 transitive:

(20) a. pamó 'hide; clean'
   paré 'erase'
   pati 'abandon'
   papó 'bring together'
   padé 'close'
   bàjé 'spoil'

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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, fi, and mú are as restricted as Lord [1974] and Awobuluyi [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 fi is grammaticalized and that, besides, it does not inflect, does not take object pronouns, and is semantically generalized. She suggests lastly that mú takes the kf-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 tì
    (caus) eye shame
    'put to shame'

b. da ėrù bá
    (caus) fear strike
    'to strike fear into someone'

c. da ààbò̀ bò̀
    (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 tì mì
         (eye/face) fail me
         'I am ashamed'

    ii. ėrù bá mì
         (fear strike me
         'I am afraid'

    iii. ara mì yá
         (body my (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.  
mu esē dūró
feet stop
'to cause to stand firm'

ii.  
da esē dūró
feet stop
'to stop'

iii.  
da sf
exist
'to spare'

iv.  
da kojā
(to) cross
'to traverse'

g. i.  
da nī āre
(caus) prep justice
'to acquit'

ii.  
da nī ebo
(caus) prep sacrifice
'to prescribe sacrifice to'

iii.  
da nī 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 , jē (kl) , mú , as in (22).

(22) a.  
da bō
turn cover
'use to cover'

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

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

d.  
jē (kl) ēnu kō
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.

5All constructions of type (g) have proper SVC equivalents:

(a) gbé āre fūn/kō
convey justice give/meet
'declare justice in favor of (someone)'

(b) yan ebo fūn
choose sacrifice give
'impose sacrifice on (someone)'

(c) mú jē oró
make suffer pain
make suffer pain

6Examples (22a-d) have the following as f i -introduced equivalents in that order: f i bō , f i lē , f i jē , and f i ēnu kō .
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\'i 'show it to me'
   (caus) it appear me
   ii. fi han m\'i

   b. i. mo fi won s|\'e 'I leave them alone'
   I (caus) them to ground
   ii. fi won han m\'i '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 gb\'e and s\'e, as in (24a, b):

(24) a. i. ba wo ni o s\'e r\'i \? manner which (Focus) you \( ) see it
   'how did you happen to see it?'
   ii. ba wo ni o ti r\'i \? 'how did you happen to see it?'

   b. i. aj\'a mi gb\'e eegun m\'i 'my dog swallowed a piece of bone'
   dog my ( ) bone swallow
   ii. ni\'bo ni o gb\'e r\'i \? 'Where did you happen to see it?'
   where (focus) you \( ) see it
   iii. ni\'bo ni o ti r\'i \? 'Where did you happen to see it?

s\'e and gb\'e 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 ti: thus s\'e in (24ai) and gb\'e in (24bii) without a change in the meaning of the two sentences concerned. Notice that SVC reading would be considered uniquely appropriate for both s\'e and gb\'e 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, fí, 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. ọbá rán mi fí àáké gé ịgị
    king send me use axe cut tree
    'the king sent me to cut the tree with axe'

b. ọbá rán mi mú won gé ịgị
    king send me make them cut tree
    'the king sent me to force them to cut the tree'

c. ọbá rán mi dá àwọn pàràkọyí ọnụ dúró
    king send me make them caravan that stop
    '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 $V_x$ 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 mọ Atinűkẹ dẹ ilé
    I know Atinuke reach home
    'I know Atinuke intimately'

b. àgbà ọlọfoọfo ọnụ rò wa ká
elder gossip that tell us (be)abroad
    'the old gossip spread rumours about us'

c. won je eran ẹfọn ọnụ dün mị
    they eat meat bushcow that pain me
    'their eating that bushcow meat by themselves displeased me'

d. ọkánjūa dá eran nàà je
    greedy(one) (be) alone meat the eat
    'the glutton ate the meat alone'
(a-c): NP1 V1 NP2 V2 (NP3)
   NP1 subj. V1; [Naf-V1] subj. V2; NP2 obj. V2
(d): NP1 V1 NP2 V2
   NP1 subj. V1, V2; NP2 obj. V2

BENEFACTIVE

(27) a. Olu fi ṣoṣọka ta m'ọrẹ
   Olu make ring offer me (prep) gift
   'Olu made me a gift of a ring'

b. ọgbẹ gẹka ro oko fun ẹye je
   farmer sorghum cultivate field give bird eat
   'all grain farmers cultivate to feed birds'

c. bábabá mi ra Ọwù bẹn mì
   father my buy garment present me
   'my father bought me a garment'

d. oníwàjasù sú lọre fun wa
   preacher say blessing give us
   'the preacher said a blessing for us'

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

CAUSATIVE

(28) a. i. òwọn ọ̀ṣọṣẹ pa iṣẹ tì
   they workers (caus) work fail
   'the workers set the task aside'

ii. òwọn ọ̀ṣọṣẹ fi iṣẹ tì
    (caus)

iii. òwọn ọ̀ṣọṣẹ gbé iṣẹ tì
    (caus)
(28) b. mo pè è dé ikè I call him reach home
'I called him home'
c. òtòtù ikè yèf so mí da alàrùungun cold land this turn me become hypochondriac
'the cold weather in this country has made a hypochondriac of me'

\[ \text{NP}_1 V_1 \text{ NP}_2 V_2 (\text{NP}_3) \]
\[ N_1 \text{ subj. } V_1; \text{NP}_2 \text{ obj. } V_1, \text{ subj. } V_2, \text{ NP}_3 \text{ obj. } V_2 \]

CIRCUMSTANTIAL

(29) a. mo jàkòò ka ìwé I sit down read book
'I sat down while reading'
b. ó bá ènu ďàà wò ilè he use mouth way enter house
'he entered the house through the door'
c. ọlè kò jeun sùn sloth NEG eat. sleep
'the lazyman did not eat before going to bed'
d. kùrùkùrù àjàànàkú fì ìkè sè magnitude elephant make hill do
'the elephant makes a mountain of itself'

\[ \text{NP}_1[ V_1 (\text{NP}_2)] [V (\text{NP}_3)] \]
\[ \text{Pred 1} \quad \text{Pred 2} \]

COMITATIVE

(30) a. Olu bá mi lọ sì Kano Olu accompany me go to Kano
'Olu went with me to Kano'
b. Ayo àti ìbùn jò wá sì ilè yèf Ayo and Ebun join together come land this
'Ayo and Ebun came to this country together'
c. àbúrò mi kùn mi lòwò ko ebè younger sibling my fill me (prep)hand make heaps
'my younger brother assisted me in making heaps'
Yoruba Serial Verbs

\[
\text{[NP}_1 \text{NP}_i (=\text{NP}_{ii})]\text{NP}_1 + \text{V}_1 (\text{NP}_2) (\text{PP}_1) \text{V}_2 (\text{NP}_3) (\text{PP}_2)
\]

Condition: where \text{NP}_1 is complex, \text{NP}_2 may be null

COMPLEMENT

(31) a. \text{wọn } \text{ro} \text{ wá pin}
  \text{they think us finish}
  'they think no further good can come out of us'

  \text{b. lỳàwò } \text{rè } \text{fì } \text{lìṣẹ } \text{kan ràn } \text{mi sì } \phi
  \text{wife your make errand one commit me to you}
  'your wife gave me a commission for you'

  \text{c. adájó } \text{so } \text{pè òdàràn } \text{nàà yìò } \text{wọ } \text{èwọn}
  \text{judge tell say criminal the will enter gaol}
  'the judge decided that the criminal will go to gaol'

\[
\text{NP}_1 \text{V}_1 (\text{NP}_2) \text{V}_2 \{\text{NP}_3\} (\text{PP})
\]

COMPARATIVE

(32) a. \text{ọmọ nàà gbốn } \text{ju } \text{àsàrun}
  \text{child the clever pass tssetse fly}
  'the child is smarter than the tssetse fly'

  \text{b. ìgbàyun } \text{dùn } \text{jo } \text{oyin}
  \text{agbayun sweet resemble honey}
  'the agbayun is like honey in sweetness'

  \text{c. ìṣẹ́ } \text{yì́ } \text{pò } \text{tó } \text{tì } \text{ènì } \text{mèfà}
  \text{work this amount equal that (of)persons six}
  'this work is up to six persons'

\[
\text{NP}_1 \text{V}_1 (\text{NP}) \text{V}_2 \text{NP}_2:
\text{NP}_1 \text{subj. } \text{V}_1; \left[\text{NP af-V}\right] \text{NP subj. } \text{V}_2
\]

CONSECUTIVE

(33) a. i. \text{ó } \text{wì } \text{bẹ́ẹ́ } \text{so bẹ́ẹ́}
  \text{he say so do so}
  'he did exactly as he said'

  \text{ii. ó } \text{tè } \text{lgbẹ́ tè } \text{ojú } \text{ọ̀nà}
  \text{he tread bush tread path way}
  'both the bush and the road is path to him'
(33) b. ó na mì lọ
he hit me go
'he hit me, then left'

c. ọjọ rọ dá
rain fall stop
'the rain has stopped falling'

NP₁ V₁ (NP₂) V₂ (NP₃)

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

b. won fi suúrú yanjú orọ nà
they use patience sort matter the
'they sorted out the affair with patience'

NP₁ V₁ NF₂ V₂ NP₃

LOCATIVE
(35) a. alááárù so érù rè ka énu ònà
porter bring down load his rest on mouth way
'the porter brought down his charge in the door way'

b. alágmọ ka owọ ijà lè orí
praying mantis fold hand fight "rest-on" head
'the praying mantis always raises his hands ready to fight'

c. alágbé yẹn gbé ebo kọjá móšálááśí
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. onfrinárè wọ ilé sùn ní aago méta òru
vagabond enter house sleep at clock three a.m.
'the vagabond came home to bed at 3 a.m.'
b. àgbẹ́ wá ọ̀gédè́ sun jẹ́ ní ọ̀ṣù́ Aṣà
farmer seek plantain roast eat at month May
'farmers find only plantain to roast and eat in May'

c. a pàdè yanjú ọ̀rọ́ ọ̀ṣù́ wọn
we meet settle matter fight their
'we met to settle their quarrel'

d. mo wá ọ̀rẹ́ mì lo sì́ New York
I seek friend my ọ̀ṣù́ to New York
'I went to New York to look for my friend'

NP₁ V₁ (NP₂) V₂ (NP₃) PP

RESPECT

(37) a. ọmọge àná yen ga wù mì
damsel yesterday that (be) tall please me
'the young woman (of yesterday) pleased me with her height'

b. ọmọge kejì kúrú ye ijó
damsel second (be) short fit dance
'the second young woman has the perfect height for dancing'

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

RESULT

(38) a. ọlọpà́á na ọlè nàà bẹ̀
police whip thief the bleed
'the police whipped the thief till he bled'

b. ó mu omi yó
he drink water "state"
'he drank water till he was full'

c. ó dútò dáràn
he stayed get-into-trouble
'he got into trouble because he delayed'

7 Oṣù́ Aṣà́ is the month during which new yams are not ready to be harvest-ed, old stores, barns and silos are empty, and fruits are few and scarce. This configuration often falls in the month of May.
(38) d. ó ro oko là
   he cultivate field rich
   'he became rich farming'

e. ó sunkún sunk
   he cry sleep
   'he fell asleep crying'

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

g. i. wón gbé kòtò náà jìn
   they dig trench the deep
   'they dug the trench deep'

   ii. aláró re aşo mi důdú
   dyer dyed clothes my black
   'the dyer dyed my clothes black'

   NP₁ V₁ (NP₂) V₂ (NP₃)
   (a),(g): NP₁ subj. V₁; NP₂ subj. V₂
   (b-f): NP₁ subj. V₁, V₂; NP₃ obj. V₂

SIMULTANEOUS EVENTS
(39) a. lre ñ mu qoàn rln
     you (sg) (PROG) suck orange walk
     'you eat orange while walking'

   b. mo ró ó ro lre
     I think(or) you think good(things)
     'I entertain only good thoughts for you'

   NP₁ V₁ NP₂ V₂ (NP₃)
       NP₁ subj. V₁ V₂; NP₂ obj. V₁, NP₃ obj. V₂

MISCELLANEOUS
(40) a. àwọn ara ìlè yöò jẹ wa ìwọ
     they people below will let us do
     'the ancestors/the dead will endow our undertakings with success'
b. i. àwon alájápá  
(i. Ekó mú lóf sê  
they itinerant produce buyer: (LOC) Lagos take base found  
'the produce buyers set out from Lagos'

ii. àwọn ti  afejúmọ mú  îsé  sê  
they (LOC) dawn take work do  
'they set to work right from dawn'

c. àwọn na  òmọ  nàdà  ìbá  
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  
opinion that this group can be enlarged almost indefinitely. Second, there is  
indeed 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 'causa-
tive' 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 futurity of at-
ttempting to derive SVC in Yoruba from underlying structures, conjoined or em-
bedded.

It turns out, fortunately, that the grammar of Yoruba imposes certain con-
4. Constraints on VP

4.1. The SVC as clause VP. In this section, we present arguments to show that the category VP must be allowed to take VP as complement in a sequence which constitutes a whole constituent VP that is a clause VP.

(41) a. ... Won gbọ mi lãyè láń láń o gbọ tọ ọ ọnà.

they except everyone who collect it bring together print

jáde pẹlú á swọn ọshiwaju Onímọ Yorùbá
distribute accompany technology when forerunners. experts Yoruba

(ọfọ) ọ gbọ fọ ọ gbọ yarlo

(which) we receive collect bring together this

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

b. Won gbọ mi lãyè láń tọ

they except a specific go

'They gave use permission to go.'

In (41a-b), ọfọ ọ in (41b) is a VP, and in (41a) 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. We are using formative for modals, negation, aspect, and a modified in order subcategorize for VP in Yoruba:

ti 'THAT
yóò 'PROGRESSIVE'

---

These 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
b. i. 1. ó ti mu omí 'he has drunk water'
   ii. kò mu omí '(he) does not drink water'
   iii. ó lè mu omí 'he can drink water'

c. i. 1. mo ti wá òrè mi lọ sí New York
   2. *mo ti wá òrè mi tì lọ sí New York
   3. *mo wá òrè mi tì lọ sí New York
      'I have gone to New York to look for my friend'

ii. 1. n kò wá òrè mi lọ sí New York
   2. *n kò wá òrè mi kò lọ sí New York
   3. *mo wá òrè mi kò lọ sí New York
      'I did not go to New York to look for my friend'

iii. 1. mo lè wá òrè mi lọ sí New York
   2. *mo lè wá òrè mi lè lọ sí New York
   3. *mo wá òrè mi lè lọ sí New York
      'I can go to New York to look for my friend'

d. i. 1. ó ti mu omí yó
   2. *ó ti mu omí tì yó
   3. *ó mu 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. *ó mu omí kò yó
      'he is not drunk on water'

iii. 1. ó lè mu omí yó
   2. *ó lè mu omí lè yó
   3. *ó mu 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 bà and fì considered in the present study.

10Before Neg kò and aspectual yóò, mo + n, and ó (3rd sg. Pro.) + ∅. Again, (di12,3) 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)  Wọn ti gbà mì láyè látì kò o pò tè jàde pèlú tì àwọn aṣíwájú onímò
      Yorùbá tì a ti gbà kò jọ yìì.

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 jẹ '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 jẹ 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:

    rò  'think; ponder; report'
        [+animate__]; [__+abstract]

    pìn  'come to an end; bring to an end'
        [__-animate]

    mú  '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: ó mu onì ó yó .

11Culturally 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) ḍrọ  Sàlá mú  mi wá  sì  ilé
    affair Sala take me come to house
    'Sala's affair brought me home'

(31) a.  wọn  rò  wà  pìn
    they think us finish
    '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 ... wá 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 ḍ as in (46):

(46) a.  mo  lọ  sì  ilé
    I go to house
    'I went home'
b.  ọ lọ-sé-ìlè
    'going home'

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

(47) a.  Ḋ- lọ
    'out-going/departure'
b.  l- lọ
    'the act or manner of going'
c.  a- lọ
    'the person who goes'
c.  ì- lọ  sì  ilè
    'failure to go home'

Apart from the observation that both ì- and the reduplication admit the so-called preverbs which in our analysis must be constituents of the AUX, while Ḋ-, l-, and a- do not, they all impose the same restrictions on the SVC-VP:
\((48)\) a. i. \(\text{wíwá }\breve{\text{ọrè}} \text{ mi } \underline{\text{lọ sì New York}}\)

'going to New York to look for my friend'

ii. \(\text{àlìwá }\breve{\text{ọrè}} \text{ mi } \underline{\text{lọ sì New York}}\)

'failure to go to New York to look for my friend'

iii. \(\text{títí }\breve{\text{ọrè}} \text{ mi } \underline{\text{lọ sì New York}}\)

'the fact of having gone to New York'

iv. \(\text{àlìti }\breve{\text{ọrè}} \text{ mi } \underline{\text{lọ sì New York}}\)

'failure to have gone to New York to look for my friend'

v. \(\text{lọ }\breve{\text{ọrè}} \text{ mi } \underline{\text{lọ sì New York}}\)

'the act of going to New York to look for my friend'

1. \(\text{wíwá }\breve{\text{ọrè}} \text{ mi lì} \underline{\text{lọ sì New York}}\)

2. \(\text{wá }\breve{\text{ọrè}} \text{ mi lì } \underline{\text{lọ sì New York}}\)

b. i. \(\text{àlìmù } \text{ omi } \underline{\text{yó}}\)

ii. \(\text{àlìlèmu } \text{ omi } \underline{\text{yó}}\)

iii. \(\text{mìmù } \text{ omi } \underline{\text{yó}}\)

iv. \(\text{lìlèmu } \text{ omi } \underline{\text{yó}}\)

v. \(\text{lìmu } \text{ omi } \underline{\text{yó}}\)

1. \(\text{mu } \text{ omi } \underline{\text{alìyó}}\)

2. \(\text{umù } \text{ omi } \underline{\text{alìyó}}\)

3. \(\text{umù } \text{ omi } \underline{\text{alìyó}}\)

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:

\((49)\) \(\text{dì } \text{ mu omi } \text{ mu omi } \text{ mu omi}\)

'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 (38b) is (50):

(50) ó mumi yá mumi yá mumi yá '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 series within the same clause as a clause VP.

1.1.5. **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. i. ọshẹ 'week'
    ii. ọsọṣe (ọsọṣẹ) 'weekly/every week'

b. i. ọkan 'one'
    ii. ṣokọkan 'one by one'

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

d. i. egbèrùn 'one thousand' (lgba '200' × èrùn 'five')
    ii. egbèegbèrùn 'thousands' or 'by the thousand'

Without stretching the analogy, it appears that the treatment of topicalization 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 process is sensitive to the morpheme structure. Take (43bi,di), for example:

(43) b. i. ó ti mu omi 'he has taken water'
    he (perf) drink water

    d. i. ó ti mu omi yá 'he has taken water to satiation'
    he (perf) drink water become sated

When topicalization or relativization applies to the verb phrase as often happens, we have the following cases:

(52) a. **Relativization**
Yoruba Serial Verbs

139

i. mímu  ti ó ti mu omi
   ii. 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**
   i. mímu  ni ó ti mu omi
   ii. títimu  ni ó ti mu omi
   'the fact is that he has drunk water'
   'his accomplishment is his having drunk water'

(53) a. **Relativization**
   i. mímu  ti ó ti mu omi yó
   ii. títimu  ti ó ti mu omi yó
   iii. *yíyó  ti ó ti mu omi yó
   'the fact he has drunk water to satiation'

b. **Topic**
   i. mímu  ni ó ti mu omi yó
   ii. títimu  ni ó ti mu omi yó
   iii. *yíyó  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). Mímu 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 ní ó ẹ̀ ẹ̀?  
    what (focus) he do
    'What did he do?'
in respect of (43bi,di) has only the following possible answers:

(55) a. mǐmu ní ó mu omi
    b. mǐmu ní ó mu omi yó\(^\text{12}\)

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

(56) ó mu omi ní àárò

'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. 0 mu omi yó ní àárò
    b. *ó [VP[VP[VP mu omi][PP ní àárò]]] yó
    c. *ó [VP[VP mu omi][VP[yó][PP ní àárò]]]

The only acceptable bracketing is (56"):

(56") ó [VP[VP[VP mu omi][VP[yó][PP ní àárò]]]]

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) \[ \text{S} \quad \text{NP} \quad \text{VP} \quad \text{VP} \]

\[ \text{i.e. S} \rightarrow \text{NP} \quad \text{VP} \quad \text{VP} \]

\(^{12}\)Ṣe ní o mu omi yó is also possible, but in this case, the initial Ṣe is the usual pro-VP which renders partial or total reduplications unnecessary. Alternatively, the phrases ó mu omi and ó mu omi yó might be given in response with mimu ní 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):

\[(59) \text{Olu ran wa wa isu gb\'e ko \-'re re pad\'a si \-Ek\'o ni \-\-} \]
\[\text{Olu send us seek yam carry meet friend his return to Lagos yesterday} \]

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):

\[(60) \text{VP} \rightarrow \text{V (NP) (PP) (VP)} \]

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 dif-
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. Ayọ gbé ẹwú wọ ọ nílé
Ayọ carry garment wear ọ (prep)house
'Ayọ put on his garment before leaving home'

b. ajá mi gbé ẹran nàà mì tewé tewé
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. Ayọ gbé wọ ẹwú ọ nílé

b. ajá mi gbé ẹran mì ẹran tewé tewé

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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: Ọ sô qâ lô ọnìfì? ọdọ yọ jî ọmọọ? 'Did you go to the market today?'
   B: Mo lô (q). ọI ọ]. 'I went.'

b. A: Kâ ni ẹ gbe lô? 'What did you take (to the market),'#
   B: Iṣu. 'Yam.'

c. A: Ọ ẹ tâ? ọdọ yọ jî ọmọọ? 'Do you sell?'
   B: Mo tâ. 'I sold.'

In the answer of (a) the PP's sô qâ and ọnìfì are both deleted. In the exchange of (c), the NP Iṣu 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.

(66a) ọ rán mi sí ɪlè 'he sent me home'
      he send me to house

b. Rel: ṣmì tf ọ rán ọ sí ɪlè 'I whom he sent home'
      I (Rel.M) he send to house

c. Rel: ɪlè tf ọ rán mi sí ọ 'the house to which he sent me'
      house (Rel.M) he send me to

but

d. Rel: ọun tf ọ rán mi sí ɪlè '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 ẹwù and ẹran 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 "syntacticized" in a way analogous 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


