

Building resultative serial verb constructions in Benue-Kwa languages

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Overview

The challenge

Analysis

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Data

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Resultative Serial Verb Constructions – Yorùbá I

jẹ ⟨AG, TH⟩ ‘eat’ + *tán* ⟨TH⟩ ‘be.finish’ → *jẹ* X *tán* ⟨AG, TH⟩ ‘eat X be.finish’

- (1) *Ẹniolá á jẹ ọbẹ ewédú tán.*
 Ẹniola HTS eat soup jute.leaf be.finished

‘*Ẹniola finished the ewédú.*’ YORÙBÁ

- a. *Ẹniolá á jẹ ọbẹ ewédú.*
 Ẹniola HTS eat soup jute.leaf
 ‘*Ẹniola ate ewédú.*’
- b. *Ọbẹ ewédú ú tán.*
 soup jute.leaf HTS be.finished
 ‘*The ewédú soup is finished.*’

fà <AG, TH> ‘pull’ + *ya* <TH> ‘tear’ = *fà X ya* <AG, TH> ‘tear X apart’

(2) Fẹmi í fa ìwé náà ya.
Fẹmi HTS pull book DET tear

‘Fẹmi pulled the book apart.’ YORÙBÁ, (Lord 1974,
pp. 198)

a. Fẹmi í fa ìwé náà.
Fẹmi HTS pull book DET
‘Fẹmi pulled the book.’

b. ìwé náà á ya.
book DET HTS tear
‘The book tore.’

họ́ọ̀ <AG, TH> ‘wash’ + *fúán* <TH> ‘be.clean’ → *họ́ọ̀ X fúán*
<AG, TH> ‘wash X clean’

(3) Òjẹ́ họ́ọ̀ ọ́lẹ́ úkpùn fúán.
Òjẹ́ wash DET.S cloth be.clean

‘Òjẹ́ washed the cloth clean.’, EMAI (Schaefer and
Egbokhare (2017, pp. 698–701))

a. Òjẹ́ họ́ọ̀ ọ́lẹ́ úkpùn.
Òjẹ́ wash DET.S cloth
‘Òjẹ́ washed the cloth.’

b. ọ́lẹ́ úkpùn fúán-ì.
DET.S cloth be.clean-FACT
‘the cloth is clean.’

Resultative Serial Verb Constructions – Igbo I

kụ <AG, TH> ‘knock’ + *wa* <TH> ‘break’ → *kụ X wa* <AG, TH> ‘knock X break’ = ‘smash X’

(4) Ògú *kụ-wa-ra* éfere *ń*.
Ògú knock-break-RV plate 1 SG.GEN

‘Ògú smashed my plate.’ IGBO, Déchaine (1993a, pp. 811–812)

a. Ògú *kụ-ru* éfere *ń*.
Ògú knock-RV plate 1 SG.GEN

‘Ògú knocked the plate.’

b. éféré *ń* wà-rà.
plate 1 SG.GEN break-RV

‘the plate broke.’

c. éféré *ń* àwá-álá.
plate 1 SG.GEN PFX-break-PRF

‘the plate is broken.’

- ▶ One agentive transitive verb V_1 (activities or accomplishments) combines with an unaccusative verb V_2 (states or achievements) (cf. Baker 1989, pp. 529–533, Collins 1997, pp. 481–487)
- ▶ Yield one common verbal concept
- ▶ Productive cases: two events interpreted as a complex telic event, even if composed of two atelic events
- ▶ Sometimes with idiomatic meaning: *ku X wa* ‘knock + break = smash’

Aspectual classes in RSVC: V_1

Following Vendler (cf. Beavers 2013, pp. 681–684):

- ▶ Attested aspectual classes for V concept expressed by V_1 : compatible with PROG → [+stages]

(5) Èniolá á ñ jẹ ọbẹ ewédú.
Èniola HTS PROG eat soup jute.leaf
'Èniola is eating the ewédú.' YORÙBÁ

- ▶ Activities [–telic,+stages] ??compatibility with PROG

(6) Èniolá á jẹ ọbẹ ewédú láàrín wákàtí kan.
Èniola HTS eat soup jute.leaf within hour one
'Èniola ate the ewédú within an hour.' YORÙBÁ

- ▶ Accomplishment [+telic,+stages]

(7) Èniolá á jẹ ọbẹ ewédú fún wákàtí kan.
Èniola HTS eat soup jute.leaf for hour one
'Èniola ate the ewédú for an hour.' YORÙBÁ

Aspectual classes in RSVC: V_2 *tán*

- ▶ Attested aspectual classes for V concept expressed by V_2
- ▶ incompatible with PROG [-stages]

(8) * *ọ̀bẹ̀ ewédú ú n tán.*
soup jute.leaf HTS PROG be.finished
Intended: 'The ewédú is finishing' YORÙBÁ

- ▶ Achievements [+telic, -stages]:

(9) *ọ̀bẹ̀ ewédú ú tán láàrín wákàtí kan.*
soup jute.leaf HTS be.finished within hour one
'The ewédú finished within an hour' YORÙBÁ

- ▶ States [-telic, -stages]

(10) *ọ̀bẹ̀ ewédú ú tán fún wákàtí kan.*
soup jute.leaf HTS be.finished for hour one
'The ewédú was finished for an hour' YORÙBÁ

Aspectual class of the entire RSVC *jẹ X tán* I

- ▶ Incompatible with PROG → [-stages]

(11) * Ẹniolá á ñ jẹ ọbẹ ewédú tán
Ẹniola HTS PROG eat soup jute.leaf be.finished
fún wákàtí kan.
for hour one
Intended: 'Ẹniola is finishing up the ewédú.'
YORÙBÁ

- ▶ compatible with telic *in an hour* modifier → [+telic]

(12) Ẹniolá á jẹ ọbẹ ewédú tán láàrín
Ẹniola HTS eat soup jute.leaf be.finished within
wákàtí kan.
hour one
'Ẹniola finished the ewédú within an hour.' YORÙBÁ

- ▶ Incompatible with atelic *for an hour* modifier → [+telic]

(13) * Ẹ̀niolá á jẹ ọ̀bẹ̀ ewédú tán fún
Ẹ̀niola HTS eat soup jute.leaf be.finished for
wákàtí kan.
hour one
Intended: 'Ẹ̀niola finished the ewédú for an hour.'
YORÙBÁ

- ▶ **Conclusion:** *jẹ X tán* 'eat X be.finished' is an achievement
[+telic, -stages]

CHECK DIFFERENT EXAMPLE

- ▶ Compatible with PROG → [+stages]

(14) Fẹ́mí í ñ fa ìwé náà.

Fẹ́mí HTS PROG pull book DET

‘Fẹ́mí is pulling the book.’ YORÙBÁ

- ▶ compatible with telic *in an hour* modifier → [+telic]

(15) Fẹ́mí í fa ìwé náà láàrín wákàtí kan.

Fẹ́mí HTS pull book DET within hour one

‘Fẹ́mí pulled the book within an hour.’ YORÙBÁ

Aspectual classes in RSVC: V_2 *ya*

- ▶ Attested aspectual classes for verbal concept expressed by V_2
- ▶ compatible with PROG → also [+stages]

(16) ìwé náà á ñ ya.
 book DET HTS PROG tear
 ‘The book is tearing.’ YORÙBÁ

- ▶ Achievements [+telic, –stages] or Accomplishments.
[+telic, +stages]:

(17) ìwé náà á ya láàrín wákàtí kan.
 book DET HTS tear within hour one
 ‘The book within one hour.’ YORÙBÁ

- ▶ Incompatible with atelic *for an hour* modifier → only [–telic]

(18) # ìwé náà á ya fún wákàtí kan.
 book DET HTS tear for hour one
 ‘The book tore for one hour.’ YORÙBÁ

Aspectual class of the entire RSVC *fà X ya* I

- ▶ Compatible with PROG → [+stages]

(19) Fẹ̀mi í ñ fa ìwé náà ya.
Fẹ̀mi HTS PROG pull book DET tear
'Fẹ̀mi is tearing the book apart.' YORÙBÁ

- ▶ compatible with telic *in an hour* modifier → [+telic]

(20) Fẹ̀mi í fa ìwé náà ya láàrín wákàtí kan.
Fẹ̀mi HTS pull book DET tear within hour one
'Fẹ̀mi tore the book apart within an hour.' YORÙBÁ

- ▶ Compatible with atelic *for an hour* modifier → [–telic]

(21) Fẹ́mí í fa ìwé náà ya fún wákàtí kan.
Fẹ́mí HTS pull book DET tear for hour one
'Fẹ́mí tore the book apart within for an hour.'
YORÙBÁ

- ▶ **Conclusion:** *fà X ya* 'pull X be.torn/tear' is can be an activity [+telic,+stages] or an accomplishment [+telic,+stages]

Aspectual Puzzle

verb	PROGRESSIVE	<i>for one hour</i> -MOD	<i>in one hour</i> -MOD
<i>jẹ</i> 'eat'	✓	✓	✓
<i>tán</i> 'be.finished'	*	✓	?
<i>tán</i> 'finished'	*	*	✓
<i>jẹ tán</i> 'eat up'	*	*	✓
<i>fà</i> 'pull'	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)
<i>ya</i> 'be.torn'			
<i>ya</i> 'tear'	✓	*	✓
<i>fà ya</i> 'tear apart'	✓	✓	✓

- ▶ Difficulty *ya* is ambiguous between a inchoative unaccusative and a causative transitive use

Already Ogie (2009, pp. 234–238) observed: RSVC in *Èdó* can fall into various aspectual classes

- ▶ Degree states: *washing extremely clean/washing clean in 2 minutes/*washing clean at 2pm*
- ▶ Achievements **pushing down from 2pm to 4pm/pushing down at 2 pm*

Syntactic headedness

- ▶ Imperative possible with full RSVC

(22) Jẹ ọbẹ ewédú tán!
eat soup jute.leaf be.finished
'Finish up the ewédú!' YORÙBÁ

- ▶ Imperative possible with V_1

(23) Jẹ ọbẹ ewédú!
eat soup jute.leaf
'Eat the ewédú!' YORÙBÁ

- ▶ Sometimes imperative impossible with V_2

(24) tán!
be.finished
Intended: 'Be finished!' YORÙBÁ

- ▶ V_1 is the syntactic head.

SVC in Benue Kwa – Challenges Syntax

1. How to model coreference with unrealised NPs of V_2 ?
2. What is the syntactic category of “ V_1 ” and “ V_2 ”?
 - ▶ Could one of them be P?
 - ▶ Could one of them be auxiliary?
 - ▶ Could one of them be particle?
3. Is there any hierarchical relation between V_1 and V_2
 - ▶ Is V_1 complement of V_2 (or vice versa)?
 - ▶ Does V_1 modify V_2 (or vice versa)?
 - ▶ Or are V_1 and V_2 coordinated?
4. What causes difference of word order V_1 NP V_2 vs. V_1 V_2 NP (Igbo Compounds, Yorùbá PROG)
5. How to distinguish between SVC vs TAM markers/auxiliaries, complementizers and other verbs that take verbal/clausal complements?
6. Are there subclasses of SVC?

Contrasting definitions of SVCs

	sharing of				single event	no sub-ord marker	no coord-marker
	SUBJ	D.OBJ	TAM	POL			
Stahlke (1970, pp. 60, 78, 80)	✓		✓		(✓)		
Baker (1989, pp. 513)	✓	✓	✓				
Déchainé (1993b, pp. 799–800)	✓		✓		✓		
Durie (1997)					✓		
Collins (1997, pp. 462, 465–468)	✓	✓				✓	✓
Aikhenvald (2006, pp. 1)			✓		✓		✓
Aboh (2009, pp. 3)			✓		✓		✓
Bisang (2009)					✓		
Shluinsky (2017, pp. 379)	✓			✓	✓		

- ▶ How to account for the syntactic behaviour of SVCs in these context?
- ▶ Vs in SVC are MEP –
- ▶ matrix Vs and SVC heads are MEP +



Competing analyses for SVC

1. **covert coordination:** headless structures
 - 1.1 Stewart (1963, pp. 145–147), Williamson (1965, pp. 47–60), Awóbùlúyì (1967, pp. 86–102), Pike (1967, pp. 3), Bendor-Samuel (1968, pp. 120–121, 127)
 - 1.2 Bamgboṣe (1974, pp. 21–27), Zimmermann and Amaechi (2020, sec 6.1)
 - 1.3 as constructions with non-compositional content (cf. Müller and Lipenkova 2009)
2. **head-adjunct structures** (Bamgboṣe 1974, pp. 34–36 A. S. Lawal 1989, N. S. Lawal 1993, Déchaine 1993b, Hellan, Beermann, and Andenes 2003, Ogie 2009)
3. **head-complement structures**
 - 3.1 Baker (1989) with multiple heads
 - 3.2 Collins (1997): SVC as object control predicates
 - 3.3 Aboh (2009), Zimmermann and Amaechi (2020, sec 6.2): SVC as light verbs in AspP
 - 3.4 Ogie (2009):

1. All SVCs have uniform syntax

- ▶ **head-adjunct:** N. S. Lawal (1993), Déchaine (1993a)
- ▶ **head-complement:** Baker (1989), Collins (1997), ?Aboh (2009)
- ▶ **coordination:** Müller and Lipenkova (2009) (Mandarin)

2. SVC fall into different syntactic classes

- ▶ **coordination and head-adjunct:** Bamgboṣe (1974, pp. 34–36)
- ▶ **coordination and head-complement:** Zimmermann and Amaechi (2020, sec 6.1)
- ▶ **head-complement and head-adjunct:** Ogie (2009)

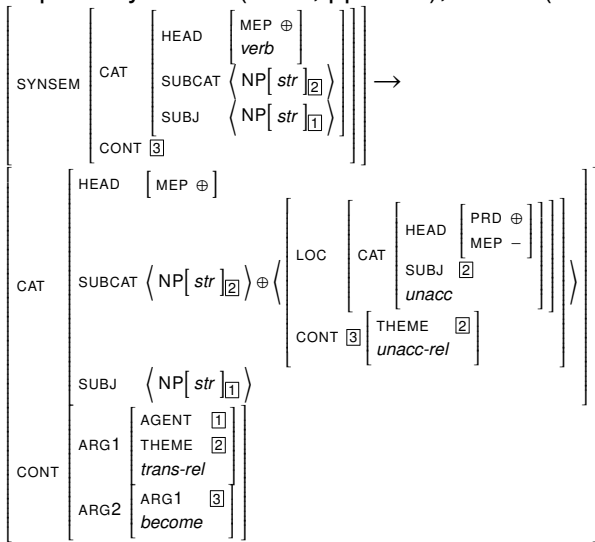
Assumptions on SVC

- ▶ SVC fall into different syntactic classes
- ▶ RSVC are head complement structures
- ▶ V which can occur in SVC are underspecified with respect to macro event property MEP (cf. Bohnemeyer, Enfield, et al. 2007, Bohnemeyer and Van Valin 2017)
 - ▶ as simple matrix context MEP+
 - ▶ embedded in SVCs verbs are MEP–
- ▶

1. Lexicon rule transforming $V_{trans} \langle NP_{AG}, NP_{TH} \rangle$ into $V_{trans-res}$ selecting for $\langle NP_{AG}, NP_{TH}, Pred \rangle$
2. Phrasal scheme combining complex predicate with predicate argument

Lexicon rule $V_{trans} \rightarrow V_{resultative-trans}$

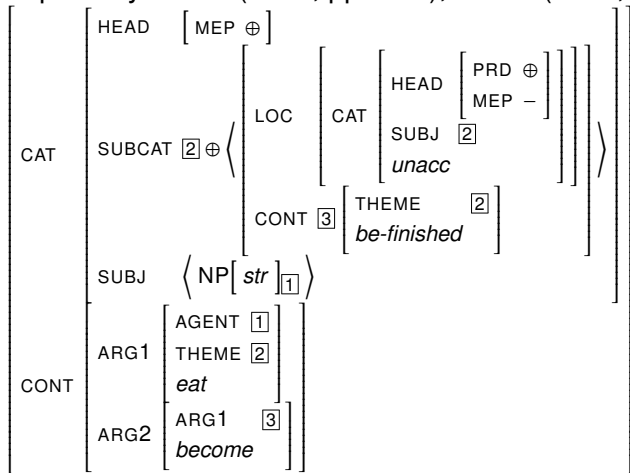
Inspired by Müller (2002, pp. 241), Müller (2013, pp. 359):



- ▶ Adding a predicate argument to the valency list of a transitive verb
- ▶ Common verbs do have the macro event property MEP
- ▶ Embedded unaccusative is MEP, its event can no longer be modified by negation, TAM

Lexicon entry RSVC *je X tán* 'eat X finish'

Inspired by Müller (2002, pp. 242), Müller (2013, pp. 361):



▶ CONTENT of RSVC is CONTENT [7]

- ▶
- ▶
- ▶
- ▶

- ▶ RSVC in Benue-Kwa are complex predicates derived from transitive V_s
- ▶ V_{trans} is the head
- ▶ The overall RSVC has the macro-event property MEP +
- ▶ The unembedded unaccusative has MEP –, no longer accessible for negation and TAM

Assumption here:

- ▶
- ▶ SVC fall into different syntactic classes
- ▶
- ▶

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