

**SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS OF SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS IN ENUANI
DIALECT OF THE IGBO LANGUAGE**

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS STUDIES,
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APPROVAL PAGE

I, **EFIOKWU ISIOMA PEARL** , a student of the department of linguistics studies, University of Benin, with the matriculation number **ART2008922**. I have completed the requirements for course work and research for the Bachelor of Arts Degree of the University of Benin. The research work contained in this project is a product of my personal effort and does not contain any previously written or published material that has been submitted in any other degree or diploma program from any university or higher institution of learning.

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to God almighty, whose love and grace has given me the strength to persevere throughout my journey. My parents Mr and Mrs Efiokwu for their constant love, support and encouragement through my years of study in this prestigious institution. Finally, I dedicate this work to Mr Hodge for being a constant source of inspiration and encouragement.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates serial verb constructions (SVCs) in the Enuani dialect of Igbo, with a focus on sequentialisation the linear ordering of verbs within a single clause without overt conjunctions or subordination. By analyzing the syntactic and semantic mechanisms underpinning sequentialisation, the research explores its functional utility in argument sharing, event conceptualization, and the formation of serial predicates. Primary data was gathered through a combination of digital linguistic corpora and interviews with a native Enuani speaker, enabling fine-grained analysis of naturally occurring SVCs. Findings reveal that sequentialisation serves as a critical narrative device in Enuani Igbo, streamlining complex event descriptions through linguistic economy. By eliminating redundant syntactic markers, it enhances discourse efficiency while preserving semantic coherence. This work contributes to understudied aspects of Niger-Congo syntax, addressing gaps in the documentation of Igbo SVCs and enriching typological discussions of serial verb phenomena. Its significance extends to both African linguistics and broader theoretical debates about clause structure and predicate coordination, offering insights into how non-configurational languages achieve syntactic complexity through verb serialization.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Serial verb constructions (SVCs) is syntactic phenomenon where two or more verbs are used in a single clause to describe a sequence of actions or events, functioning together as a single predicate without any overt markers of coordination, subordination, or argument sharing. According to Aikhenvald (2006), "Serial verb constructions are sequences of verbs which act together as a single predicate, with no overt marker of coordination, subordination, or syntactic dependency of any sort" Similarly, Ameka (2005) defines SVCs as "a series of verbs that appear in one clause and share the same subject without any conjunctions to link them"

The Igbo language is a member of the Benue-Congo branch of the Niger-Congo language family which prominently features serial verb constructions. These constructions are an important aspect of Igbo syntax and are employed extensively to convey complex actions and events. Although considerable research has been conducted on serial verb constructions, gaps remain in our understanding, particularly regarding the main verb's role within an SVC and the criteria for a language to be classified as an SVC language. With the use of five chapters, this project aims to explore deeply into these under-explored areas by critically assessing what constitutes the main verb in an Igbo SVC and evaluating whether Igbo meets the criteria to be considered a true SVC language.

1.1 The Igbo People and Their Language

The Igbo people are one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria, predominantly residing in the southeastern region of the country. They have a rich cultural heritage characterized by vibrant traditions, art, music, and a strong sense of community. The Igbo language, known as

Asụsụ Igbo, is a vital part of their identity and plays a significant role in their social and cultural practices.

The Igbo language comprises numerous dialects associated with specific regions and communities. The following are some Igbo dialects along with their locations and estimated number of speakers:

Dialect	Region	No of speakers
Abatete	Abagana, Nkpor	1 million
Aguleri	Aguleri, Otuocha	500,000
Enugwu- Ukwu	Enugwu-Ukwu, Nri	300,000
Isiagu	Awka, Nibo	400,000
Ekwulobia	Ekwuluobia, Isuofia	200,000
Ngwa	Abia State	3 million
Nsukka	Nsukka, Enugu	600,000
Ika/Agbor	Delta and Edo States	1 million
Ikwerre	Rivers State	1 million
Afikpo	Ebonyi tate	500,000

Other notable dialects include Ohafia (Abia State), Mbaise (Imo State), Ezaa (Ebonyi and Benue States), Izii (Ebonyi State), and Enuani (Delta State). The total number of Igbo speakers is estimated at over 31 million.

Igbo is a tonal language, which means that the pitch or tone used when pronouncing a word can change its meaning. There are three primary tones in Igbo:

High Tone (H): Represented with an acute accent (e.g., á), indicating a higher pitch.

Low Tone (L): Marked with a grave accent (e.g., à), produced at a lower pitch.

Mid Tone (M): Typically unmarked or represented with a macron (e.g., ā), serving as a neutral tone. These tones are not just phonetic; they are essential for distinguishing meanings and grammatical functions within the language. For example, the word "isi" can mean "head" (high tone) or "to cook" (low tone), illustrating how tonal variations can lead to different interpretations.

The Igbo language serves as more than just a means of communication; it is an essential component of cultural identity. The language includes a rich lexicon of ideophones—words that evoke sensory experiences—and proverbs that reflect communal wisdom and values. It plays a crucial role in traditional practices, storytelling, and rituals, reinforcing community bonds. While traditionally oral, Igbo has adopted the Latin alphabet for writing. The standardized version incorporates elements from various dialects to facilitate broader communication among speakers.

The Igbo people and their language represent a vibrant and dynamic aspect of Nigeria's cultural landscape. With its intricate tonal system and diverse dialects, Igbo is not just a means of communication; it is a living expression of identity, history, and community. The ability of tones to change meanings underscores the depth and richness of the language, making it a fascinating subject for linguists and language enthusiasts alike.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study at its core is to offer solutions answers to certain linguistic challenges and questions, unique to Igbo language, some of which are identified below;

1.2.1 RESEARCH PROBLEM

An important aspect of language is that of sentence construction, the means by which humans communicate with each other is done the construction and understanding of sentences, these sentences follow rules in order for appropriate comprehension to be achieved. Often times, especially through narrative or description of event multiple verbs are used in a serial like manner. Serial verb constructions in Igbo often involve multiple verbs sharing arguments, which complicates the analysis of their syntactic structure.

The mechanisms by which these verbs coalesce into a single predicate without overt coordination markers remain underexplored, leading to questions about their grammatical and semantic implications. Additionally, The way events are conceptualized through serial verb constructions in Igbo is not well understood. How these constructions convey complex actions or states through the sequential arrangement of verbs raises important questions about their semantic interpretation.

There is ongoing debate among linguists regarding the classification of Igbo as a serializing language. While some scholars argue that SVCs are prevalent in Igbo, others contend that they do not exist or are significantly different from those in other languages, such as Yoruba. This inconsistency creates a gap in understanding the nature and structure of SVCs in Igbo.

1.2.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study of Serial Verb Constructions is one that is important, to language speakers because it provides answers that will aid the use and comprehension of language. By providing these answers and explanation the speech community is equipped with a sense of understanding about how the language works. It is for this purpose that this project seeks to address questions such as;

1. What are the defining characteristics of serial verb constructions in Igbo (Enuani).
2. How do multiple verbs within a serial construction share arguments.
3. How is event conceptualization achieved through serial verb constructions in Igbo (Enuani).
4. What are the implications of the lack of consensus on the classification of Igbo (Enuani) as a serializing language for understanding its grammatical frameworks.

1.2.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to achieve the following;

1. To analyze the structure of serial predicates in Igbo; Enuani dialect
2. To examine the processes of argument sharing among verbs in Igbo (Enuani) SVCs
3. To explore how event conceptualization is achieved through serial verb constructions
4. To assess the impact of argument sharing on the semantic interpretation of sentences
5. To contribute to theoretical discussions on serial verb constructions in linguistics.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

1.3.1 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

The primary data collected for the undertaking of this project were various sequential serial verb construction in the Igbo language. Two main informants were consulted to acquire this data. Both informants are native speakers of the language and have reasonable knowledge of the standard igbo dialect. The first informant is a certain Mrs Ikedi, a forty seven year old school principal hailing from the Oshimili north region of Delta state. The second informant, Mr Iloba, 50 year old school counsellor, who is also a native of the igbo language hailing from the Aniocha North of Delta state. The data were collected with the aid of written and spoken words of data.

The information derived from both informants was instrumental as it served as the foundation of this project. While the information derived from the informants served as the primary source of data for this project, a secondary set of data was also derived from books, journal, articles and various online sources such as serial verb construction in Kwa language and serial verb construction in a functional grammar of Ewe. These materials contain information that were directly or indirectly related to the subject matter of this project. This secondary set of data were instrumental as they shed more light to the project, and gave guidance on the data analysis aspect of this project. Questions such as; various types of sentences that have serial verb and how they are used, when they are used and the benefits were asked.

1.3.2 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

After successfully collecting data from the informants a morpheme by morpheme gloss was carried out on each sentence, along with the English translation, the data was then used to analyse the igbo serial predicate with two and three verbs, the data was then used to analyse

constructions with subject and object argument sharing, it then analysed subject only argument sharing and then object only argument sharing, the data was then used to analyse the serial verb construction phenomenon event conceptualization it analysed sentence where three verbs crystalize one event and where two verbs crystalize one event. Using the Transformational Generative Grammar we were able to see the breakdown of each sentence at the deep structure. All necessary data was analysed using this framework.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

1. This study enhances our understanding of serial verb constructions by applying theoretical frameworks like Transformational Generative Grammar and Minimalism, contributing to ongoing debates about the classification of Igbo as an SVC language.
2. It provides insights into how arguments are shared among verbs in SVCs,
3. By clarifying the structure and function of SVCs, this research can inform language education and preservation efforts, ensuring that these important linguistic features are effectively taught and maintained in Igbo-speaking communities.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Serial verb constructions (SVCs) are syntactic structures in which multiple verbs are used together to describe a single event, without overt markers of coordination or subordination. Understanding SVCs is essential for analyzing Igbo syntax, as they reveal how the language encodes complex actions and sequences. This chapter will review key concepts related to SVCs and analyze previous studies on the topic. It will then address the main concern of our present study, which is to explore how SVCs manifest across various Igbo dialects, with a particular focus on the Enuani dialect. Additionally, the study will investigate how contact with other Nigerian languages and English influences SVC constructions in Igbo.

2.1 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

2.1.1 Serial verbs: Serial verb construction are an important grammatical feature in many languages including igbo, where two or more verbs appear in a single clause to describe one event or closely related actions. these verbs share the same subject tense, aspect and mood, and they are not linked by conjunctions such as "and" or subordinates such as "because".

Alkhenvald(2006) expressed that serial verb constructions "are a sequence of verbs functioning as a single predicate conveying a unified event" Baker(1989) adds that these constructions lack overt markers of coordinators or subordinators. In Igbo language, serial verb constructions are essential for expressing actions that occur together or in quick succession making communication more concise and dynamic.

2.1.2. Consequential serial verb constructions indicate that the action of one verb directly results in or causes the action of another. It is a subtype of svc where the action of the first verb directly leads to the action of the second.

Stewart(2001) defines the structure as" a pairing of verbs where the result of one action immediately follows from the other", similarly Alkhenvald(2006) emphasizes that consequentia svc's create a cause and effect relationship often used to narrate sequence of events.

In Igbo, this type of construction is frequently used to describe situations where one action triggers another, seamlessly presenting logical progression

2.1.3 Asymmetrical Serial Verbs: Asymmetrical serial verb constructions involve a primary verb often with a richer semantic content and a secondary verb usually grammaticalized or semantically lighter. It is a construction that involves the combination of verbs with unequal roles, where one verb carries the main semantic load, while the other provides additional grammar or functional information.

Sebba (1987) explains that asymmetrical SVCs "pair a semantically dominant verb with a less significant verb, often grammaticalized." Aikhenvald (2006) also notes that the secondary verb often modifies or complements the meaning of the main verb, serving purposes like direction, aspect, or manner. This subtype of serial verb involves constructions with verbs that are unequal, the first verb or the main verb is the verb expressing the meaning of the main verb.

In Igbo, asymmetrical SVCs often include motion verbs such as *gà* (go) or *bịà* (come), which function to specify movement or direction.

2.1.4 Contiguous Serial Verb: Contiguous serial verb constructions are those where the verbs in a serial construction occur directly next to each other, without any intervening elements like objects, adverbs, or particles. Aikhenvald (2006) describes contiguous SVCs as "verbs that appear adjacent in a clause, forming a single syntactic and semantic unit." Collins (1997) points out that this closeness is crucial for maintaining the unity of the actions described. This type of sves describes construction where verbs occur or are arranged in a seriwl manner that is to say that, they occur one after the other in these constructions,they are important because they maintain unity in actions being described.

In Igbo, contiguous SVCs are common and reflect the seamless flow of actions in everyday communication.

2.2 PREVIOUS STUDIES

This section consists of review of significant studies on serial verb constructions (SVCs) that have greatly influenced my own research in this area. These works provide useful deduction into the structure, function and linguistic role SVCs across various African languages.

The following are relevant study that are imperative to the understanding of SVCs.

I. Ameka(2001) has conducted extensive research on serial verb constructions in Ewe, a language spoken in Ghana and Togo. His work,provides a detailed examination of SVCs from both a grammatical and functional perspective.

Ameka's work focused primarily on the structure, function, and grammatical properties of serial verb constructions in the Ewe language. His study examines how SVCs contribute to the

expression of complex actions, events, and sequences within a single clause, an essential characteristic in Ewe language.

Ameka was motivated by the need to contribute to the broader understanding of serial verb constructions, which were prevalent in many African languages but relatively understudied compared to European and Asian languages. He was also motivated by the desire to preserve and document the complexities of Ewe grammar for both linguistic theory and language preservation.

Ameka's work aimed to do the following:

Examine the grammatical rules governing SVCs in Ewe language

Analyse how SVCs contribute to meaning including the nuances they bring to sequence and causative actions

Determine the role of SVCs in verbal agreement and syntactic arrangement.

The purpose of Ameka's research is to demonstrate how Serial Verb Constructions enable speakers to express multiple actions or ideas in a compact form. By examining Ewe, he sought to lay groundwork for comparative studies of serial verb constructions across languages.

Ameka's data collection methods primarily involved fieldwork and elicitation techniques with native Ewe speakers. He utilized both spoken examples and constructed sentences to observe SVC usage in natural contexts.

The following examples highlight the structure of SVCs in Ewe and show how he analyzed their syntax, semantics, and function within sentences;

Example 1: Expressing Sequential Actions

Ewe sentence: Me-va ye-á dzɔ

Translation: "I came and then ate."

In this example, va ("came") and dzɔ ("ate") are two verbs joined in a sequence, indicating actions that happen one after the other. Ameka's analysis of this structure showed that the two verbs share the same subject (the pronoun Me, "I"). This SVC allows Ewe speakers to express multiple actions in one clause.

Example 2: Causative Construction

Ewe sentence: Kofi ka nyi to-a

Translation: "Kofi caused the child to sleep."

Here, ka ("cause") and to ("sleep") form an SVC with a causative meaning, where the first verb (ka) specifies that Kofi is making someone else (the child) perform the action of sleeping (to). Ameka analyzed such constructions to show that Ewe uses causative SVCs to express influence or control over another's action, rather than using separate causative markers or auxiliary verbs.

Example 3: Expressing Motion and Direction

Ewe sentence: Eyi kpɔ la ku bɔ

Translation: "He ran and went outside."

In this sentence, kpɔ ("run") and bɔ ("go outside") are combined to express motion and direction. The SVC indicates that the action of running is connected with moving to a specific location

(outside). Ameka analyzed this structure to show how Ewe speakers use SVCs to combine manner and directional actions, with the first verb indicating how the motion is performed and the second showing where it leads.

Example 4: Instrumental SVC

Ewe sentence: Kofi tsi le gbɔ

Translation: "Kofi hit with the stick."

Here, tsi ("hit") and le ("use") form SVC, where le adds the meaning that a tool or instrument (a stick) was used in the action. Ameka pointed out that such constructions help convey complex actions involving tools or instruments without needing additional prepositions or markers, showing the efficiency of SVCs in communicating multiple layers of meaning.

Ameka's study is grounded in functional grammar theory, particularly in how it applies to analyzing syntactic and semantic aspects of African languages. This framework allowed Ameka to approach SVCs as constructions that serve specific discourse functions, rather than as purely syntactic forms.

Ameka's findings reveal that SVCs in Ewe have syntactic patterns such as, subject sharing and sequential verb ordering, which allow for expressions of causation, motion, and aspect. His study found that SVCs play an essential role in expression of complex, multiple parts actions within a single utterance.

II. Lefebvre (1991) is another prominent author who has conducted significant research on serial verb constructions in African languages. Lefebvre's work focuses on SVCs in Fon, a Gbe

language spoken in Benin, she explores the syntactic and semantic structures of SVCs and their role in expressing complex actions and events.

Lefebvre's work focuses on the syntactic and semantic properties of serial verb constructions (SVCs) in Fon. Her work was formulated with the intent to investigate how Fon speakers use SVCs to convey complex actions and relationships within a single clause. Her work investigates how Fon speakers use SVCs, in terms of their grammatical structure, their contribution to meaning.

Her work was mostly motivated by the need to provide a detailed language specific analysis of SVCs in Fon, which at the time was under-represented. She sought to address questions about how Fon uses SVCs to express concepts that are handled differently in non-serializing languages. She was inspired by the challenge of integrating SVCs into broader syntactic and semantic theories, particularly those developed for European languages.

The primary aim of Lefebvre's study was to:

Investigate how Fon uses SVCs to express actions, causation, and motion.

Examine the syntactic rules governing verb serialization in Fon.

Analyze the semantic relationships between the verbs in SVCs, including shared arguments and temporal sequencing.

The purpose of Lefebvre's research was to serve as a basis for comparative studies, helping to identify similarities and differences between Fon and other serializing languages, particularly within the Gbe language family. She also wanted to contribute to the understanding of SVCs as a linguistic phenomenon by providing an in-depth analysis of their occurrence in Fon.

Lefebvre collected data through a combination of fieldwork and textual analysis. She worked closely with native Fon speakers, using elicitation techniques and recording natural speech to gather authentic examples of SVC usage. The collected data were analyzed to identify patterns in verb ordering, argument sharing, and semantic interpretation.

The following examples are used to show the data collected during her research and how it was analysed.

Example 1: Sequential Actions

Fon Example: Kòkú xó kpó é nú

Translation: "Koku took and ate it."

In this SVC, xó ("take") and kpó ("eat") are serialized to describe a sequence of actions performed by the same subject (Kòkú). Both verbs share the same object (é nú, "it"). Lefebvre analyzed this construction to show how Fon combines multiple actions into a single clause.

Example 2: Motion and Direction

Fon Example: Ama sɔ vá àzɔ

Translation: "Ama ran and came home."

In this example, sɔ ("run") and vá ("come") combine to express both the manner of motion (running) and the direction (coming home). Lefebvre highlighted this as a common use of SVCs in Fon, where the first verb describes how the motion is performed and the second specifies its endpoint. She showed that such constructions allow Fon speakers to convey complex motion events without additional phrases or markers.

Example 3: Causative Construction

Fon Example: Kòkú gblò wé ví wá

Translation: "Koku told the child to come."

In this example, gblò ("tell") and wá ("come") form a causative SVC. The first verb, gblò, indicates a directive action, while the second verb, wá, specifies the action caused by the directive. Lefebvre's analysis focused on how causative SVCs in Fon establish a clear relationship between the cause (telling) and the effect (coming). She also noted that these constructions often omit overt complementizers, relying on verb serialization to link the two actions.

Example 5: Benefactive Construction

Fon Example: Kòkú dọ mí wé xwé

Translation: "Koku bought the book for the child."

In this benefactive SVC, dọ ("buy") and mí ("give") combine to express that the action of buying was performed for someone's benefit. Lefebvre analyzed such constructions to show how Fon SVCs explicitly encode benefaction, with the second verb (mí) indicating the transfer of the object (wé xwé, "the book") to the beneficiary (the child). She argued that this use of serialization allows Fon speakers to avoid complex syntactic structures, such as double-object constructions, which are common in non-serializing languages.

Lefebvre's research is grounded in generative syntax and semantic theory, particularly within the Principles and Parameters framework. Her analysis considers how Fon's verb

serialization fits into universal grammar and challenges existing theories developed for non-serializing languages.

Lefebvre found that Fon SVCs are characterized by strict syntactic rules, such as subject and object sharing among verbs, and a flexible semantic structure that allows verbs to combine in various ways to express causation, motion, and sequential actions. She concluded that Fon's SVCs highlight the language's syntactic economy, enabling speakers to pack complex ideas into concise constructions.

III. Another influential author who has conducted significant research on serial verb constructions (SVCs) in African languages is Akinlabi(1996). His research, focuses on the rules governing verb serialization, the interaction between serial verbs and tone, and the syntactic mechanisms that allow for argument sharing and sequencing in Yoruba.

Akinlabi's research focuses on the syntactic and prosodic properties of serial verb constructions (SVCs) in Yoruba,His studies investigate how Yoruba speakers use SVCs to express complex events, causation, and sequences of actions. Akinlabi also explores the interaction between syntax and tone in SVCs as Yoruba is a tonal language.

Akinlabi's motivation stemmed from the need to address gaps in the understanding of Yoruba syntax and its relationship with SVCs. Although SVCs were a common feature amongst African languages,their interaction with tonal features like in the Yoruba had not been thoroughly examined.

The aim of Akinlabi's work was to provide the following:

An apt examination how verbs are ordered and arguments are shared in SVCs.

An Investigation on the interaction between tone marking and verb serialization

Knowledge on how Yoruba SVCs fit into universal syntactic theories.

The purpose of Akinlabi's study was to deepen the understanding of Yoruba SVCs by analyzing their syntactic and tonal characteristics. He also sought to analyse how these constructions enhance the language's expressive capabilities and how tonal elements influence verb serialization.

He collected data from native Yoruba speakers, focusing on both naturalistic speech and constructed examples. The data included declarative and imperative sentences to explore how SVCs function in various contexts. Analysis involved syntactic parsing of verb sequences, examination of tone patterns.

A Brief Analysis of Data collected by Akinlabi.

Example 1: Motion and Direction

Yoruba Example: Ọmọ náà gba ọkọ náà wọ ilé.

Translation: "The child took the car and entered the house."

In this motion SVC, gba ("take") and wọ ("enter") describe sequential actions. The subject (ọmọ náà, "the child") is shared across both verbs, and the object (ọkọ náà, "the car") is associated with the first verb, while the locative phrase (ilé, "the house") complements the second. Akinlabi analyzed how the verb order reflects temporal and logical sequencing.

Example 2: Benefactive SVC

Yoruba Example: È ra ounjẹ fun mi.

Translation: "Buy food for me."

Here, ra ("buy") and fun ("give") form a benefactive SVC. The action of buying (ra) is performed with the intent to give (fun) to the speaker. Akinlabi observed that the second verb (fun) encodes the benefactive relationship and analyzed how Yoruba SVCs integrate this meaning without additional markers.

Example 3: Causative Construction

Yoruba Example: Baba rẹ mú ọ lọ sí ilé-ẹkọ.

Translation: "Your father took you to school."

In this causative SVC, mú ("take") and lọ ("go") combine to indicate that the father caused the child to go to school. Akinlabi noted that the causative meaning arises from the sequential relationship between the verbs, with the subject (baba rẹ, "your father") initiating the action.

Example 4: Complex Events

Yoruba Example: Mo lọ rìn rìn láti ibẹ lọ sí ilé.

Translation: "I walked from there to the house."

This SVC combines lọ ("go") and rìn rìn ("walk") to describe the manner and destination of motion. Akinlabi highlighted how Yoruba SVCs can express complex motion events with layered meaning, where the first verb indicates the direction and the second specifies the manner.

One of Akinlabi's key observations was the effect of tonal changes on meaning in SVCs. For example, tone marking in Yoruba can distinguish between causative and benefactive interpretations of the same SVC structure.

Akinlabi employed a generative grammar framework, particularly the Principles and Parameters theory, to analyze Yoruba SVCs. He also integrated insights from prosodic phonology to account for the role of tone in shaping the structure and interpretation of SVCs.

Akinlabi's study revealed several findings about Yoruba SVCs:

Yoruba SVCs often involve a single subject or object shared across multiple verbs, which helps streamline the expression of complex events.

SVCs in Yoruba encode various semantic relationships, such as causation (ọmọ náà mú oko náà lẹ, "the child took the vehicle away") and benefaction (ẹ ma ra ounjẹ fun mi, "buy food for me").

Tone plays a crucial role in distinguishing the meaning of SVCs in Yoruba. Akinlabi found that tonal patterns often signal shifts in the syntactic or semantic relationship between verbs.

IV. Another relevant study on serial verb constructions (SVCs) in African languages is Major(2014) his paper explores SVCs within the context of Ibibio.

Major's work focuses on identifying and analyzing SVCs in Ibibio. It examines the syntactic and semantic properties of these constructions, contrasting them with other verb combinations, such as coordination and subordination.

The study is motivated by the need to understand how Ibibio aligns with or diverges from other languages in the typology of SVCs. It addresses the lack of consensus in defining SVCs and their distinguishing features.

The primary aim was to refine the understanding of Ibibio SVCs by applying cross-linguistic diagnostic tests, such as tense marking, negation, and extraction, to establish their syntactic uniqueness. It aims to refine definitions and parameters for identifying SVCs across languages.

Data were collected through native speaker elicitation and analysis of natural language use. Major utilized syntactic tests to differentiate SVCs from coordinated and subordinated structures. Key diagnostics included:

Single tense/aspect marking across verbs.

Shared arguments between verbs.

Behavior of the construction under negation and syntactic extraction.

For example, Major demonstrates how Ibibio constructions like

Ekpe á-dí í-ng-úfók àkpa

("Ekpe went and built a house")

meets the criteria for SVC:

Both verbs share the same subject (Ekpe).

Tense marking applies uniformly across verbs.

No overt conjunction or subordination is present.

The study builds on frameworks by Aikhenvald (2006) and others, emphasizing shared argument structures and unified tense/aspect marking as defining traits of SVCs.

Major concludes that Ibibio exhibits prototypical SVC characteristics, aligning with other Niger-Congo languages. However, he notes unique syntactic behaviors, such as specific tense and aspect marking strategies, that highlight the language's individuality in SVC typology.

2.3 CONCERN OF PRESENT STUDY

This study focuses on key questions surrounding Serial Verb Constructions (SVCs) in Igbo, particularly their structure, function, and variability. While SVCs are central to Igbo syntax and semantics, aspects like argument sharing, event conceptualization, and serial predicates require deeper exploration. This section outlines the specific concerns guiding the research, aiming to contribute to a clearer understanding of SVCs in Igbo and their broader linguistic relevance .

1. **Argument Sharing:** This study seeks to understand the patterns of argument sharing, particularly with subject-only and object-only constructions. The specific syntactic and semantic constraints governing these patterns, especially in more complex SVCs, remain an area of interest.
2. **Event Conceptualization:** The study examines how Igbo SVCs encode sequences and relationships between actions, focusing on two- and three-verb constructions. The nuances of simultaneous versus sequential actions, as well as their contextual interpretations.
3. **Serial Predicates:** A key concern is the role of serial predicates in creating cohesive and efficient expressions. This study explores how tense, aspect, and modality influence the formation and interpretation of serial predicates in Igbo.

These concerns guide the present study, with the aim of providing clarity on the structure and function of SVCs in Igbo while recognizing that further exploration is needed to address these questions comprehensively.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.

This chapter presents the theoretical frameworks that underpin the analysis of serial verb constructions (SVCs) in the Igbo language. The study employs an integrative approach, drawing on Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG) to provide a comprehensive analysis. This framework was chosen for its relevance to syntactic structure, argument interpretation, and cross-linguistic syntactic variations.

3.1. TRANSFORMATIONAL GENERATIVE GRAMMAR TGG.

Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG) is a theory of syntax introduced by Noam Chomsky in his seminal work *Syntactic Structures* (1957). It aims to describe the implicit knowledge that speakers have of their language and to define the set of rules that generate all and only the grammatical sentences of a language.

Why TGG was developed.

Prior to TGG, linguistics relied heavily on structural and descriptive approaches, which primarily focused on surface-level patterns without explaining underlying syntactic relationships. Structural linguistics struggled to account for syntactic ambiguities and transformations like active/passive alternations. Chomsky argued that language is an innate capacity governed by universal principles. TGG was developed to formalize these principles and provide a model capable of generating all possible grammatical sentences while excluding ungrammatical ones.

Components of TGG.

i. *Phrase Structure Rules* These define how words are grouped into larger units (phrases). $S \rightarrow NP + AUX + VP$ (A sentence consists of a noun phrase an auxiliary and a verb phrase). Phrase structure rules define the constituent structure of a sentence by breaking it down into its parts (e.g., noun phrases, verb phrases). These rules are recursive, allowing the generation of complex sentences by embedding one phrase within another. They are expressed in the form of rewrite rules, which specify that one syntactic category (e.g., *S* for sentence) consists of other categories.

Core Phrase Structure Rules.

a. $S \rightarrow NP + VP$ A sentence (*S*) consists of a noun phrase (*NP*) followed by a verb phrase (*VP*).

Example: The boy (*NP*) is running (*VP*).

b. $NP \rightarrow Det + N + (PP)$ A noun phrase (*NP*) consists of a determiner (*Det*), a noun (*N*), and optionally a prepositional phrase (*PP*).

Example: The (Det) dog (N) in the yard (PP).

c. $VP \rightarrow V + (NP) + (PP)$ A verb phrase (VP) consists of a verb (V), optionally followed by a noun phrase (NP) and/or a prepositional phrase (PP).

Example: ate (V) the cake (NP) with a fork (PP).

d. $PP \rightarrow P + NP$ A prepositional phrase (PP) consists of a preposition (P) followed by a noun phrase (NP).

Example: on (P) the table (NP).

These rules provide a systematic method for generating grammatical sentences. They show the hierarchical nature of syntax, where phrases are composed of smaller units. The principles underlying phrase structure rules are thought to reflect Universal Grammar, making them applicable across languages. Phrase structure rules create the deep structure of a sentence, which transformations then modify to produce the surface structure.

ii. Transformational Rules: In Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG), transformational processes are operations that modify the deep structure of a sentence to produce its surface structure. Four key transformational processes include:

Deletion: This process removes elements from the deep structure when they are not necessary for the surface structure. For example:

Deep Structure: I will go if I am invited.

Surface Structure: I will go if invited.

The subject I am is deleted in the subordinate clause.

Insertion: This process adds elements to a sentence for grammaticality or clarity in the surface structure. For example:

Deep Structure: John is taller than Mary is.

Surface Structure : John is taller than Mary.

The verb is may be inserted in certain contexts to maintain grammaticality.

Movement: This process relocates elements from one position in a sentence to another. Common types of movement include:

Wh-Movement: Used in forming questions.

Deep Structure: You will eat what?

Surface Structure: What will you eat?

Passive Movement: Relocates the object of a verb to the subject position.

Deep Structure: The dog chased the cat.

Surface Structure: The cat was chased by the dog.

Substitution: This process replaces one element of a sentence with another, often to simplify or avoid repetition. For example:

Deep Structure: Mary likes her brother, and Mary likes her sister.

Surface Structure: Mary likes her brother, and she likes her sister.

The pronoun she substitutes for the repeated subject Mary

These transformational processes enable the grammar to account for variations in sentence structure while preserving the core meaning derived from the deep structure.

iii .Deep Structure and Surface Structure: In Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG), deep structure and surface structure are two levels of representation used to describe the syntax of a sentence.

Deep Structure: The deep structure represents the underlying, abstract grammatical relationships and meaning of a sentence. It is the core syntactic structure generated by the phrase structure rules before any transformations are applied. The deep structure reflects the logical and semantic relationships between elements in a sentence.

Surface Structure: The surface structure is the actual form of the sentence as it is spoken or written. It results from applying transformational rules (such as movement, deletion, or insertion) to the deep structure. The surface structure is what we observe as the final syntactic arrangement of a sentence.

Example 1: Active vs. Passive Sentences

Deep Structure: The dog chased the cat.

This is the base form, representing the core meaning: the subject (The dog) performs the action (chased) on the object (the cat).

Surface Structure (Passive Transformation): The cat was chased by the dog.

In the surface structure, the object of the verb in the deep structure (the cat) is moved to the subject position. This transformation alters the syntactic arrangement but retains the original meaning.

Example 2: Formation of Wh-Questions

Deep Structure: You will eat what?

In the deep structure, the question word (what) remains in its base position as the object of the verb (eat).

Surface Structure (Wh-Movement): What will you eat?

The transformation moves the question word (what) to the beginning of the sentence, following the syntactic rules for forming wh-questions in English

Deep structure captures the meaning and logical relationships in a sentence, while surface structure reflects the final arrangement of words after transformations. Transformations bridge the gap between deep and surface structures, allowing different syntactic forms (e.g., active/passive, statements/questions) to express the same underlying meaning.

Transformational Generative Grammar is a formal framework developed to explain the underlying structures of sentences and how they are generated in the human mind. By distinguishing between deep structure and surface structure, and by using transformations to derive the final form of sentences, allows linguists to predict which sentences are grammatical and which are not.

Relevance of Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG) in Analyzing Serial Verb Constructions (SVCs)

Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG) provides a good framework for analyzing Serial Verb Constructions (SVCs), especially in languages like Igbo. Here are the key ways TGG is relevant to the study of SVCs:

Deep Structure Analysis: TGG allows us to uncover the deep structure of SVCs, revealing the underlying syntactic and semantic relationships between verbs and their arguments. While the surface structure of SVCs may appear complex or ambiguous, the deep structure helps identify how these verbs share arguments (e.g., subject, object) and whether they are connected through coordination, subordination, or another syntactic mechanism.

Example:

In Igbo: $\text{\textcircled{O}}$ kpọrọ mmadụ weere ngwá.

Literal Translation: "He called people and took tools."

Deep Structure Analysis: The subject ($\text{\textcircled{O}}$) is shared by both verbs (kpọrọ and weere), forming a unified event structure. TGG helps to analyze how these verbs interact and share roles within the deep structure.

This framework is particularly useful in the analysis of Igbo SVCs because it introduced the concept of the deep structure and surface structure, which is used extensively in SVCs. The deep structure usually contains an in-depth analysis of which verbs case mark and assign Theta roles to various arguments in a construction.

2. Igbo: O lò-rò ogwù gbò-ọ yà.
 Gloss: O (S/he) lò-rò (swallow-PST) ogwù (drug) gbò-ọ (vomit-3SG).

Translation: S/he swallowed the drug and vomited it.

3. Igbo: Ọ bàchà-rà jiapụ bà-a yà mmiri.
 Gloss: Ọ (S/he) bàchà-rà (peel-PST) jiapụ (cassava) bà-a (soak-3SG) yà (in) mmiri (water).

Translation: S/he peeled cassava and soaked it in water.

4. Igbo: Ọ gà rà ahīa zụta anụ.
 Gloss: Ọ (S/he) gà rà (go-PST) ahīa (market) zụta (buy-PST) anụ (meat).

Translation: S/he went to the market and bought meat.

4.1.1 IGBO SERIAL PREDICATE WITH TWO VERBS.

The following are examples of serial predicates in Igbo language with two verbs

5. Igbo: Obi si-ri nri ri- e.
 Gloss: Obi (Obi) si- ri (cook-PST) nri (food) ri- e (eat-3SG).

Translation: Obi cooked food and ate it.

6. Igbo: O lò-rò ogwù gbò-ọ yà.
 Gloss: O (S/he) lò-rò (swallow-PST) ogwù (drug) gbò-ọ (vomit-3SG).

Translation: S/he swallowed the drug and vomited it.

7. Igbo: Ọ bàchà-rà jiapụ bà-a yà mmiri.
 Gloss: Ọ (S/he) bàchà-rà (peel-PST) jiapụ (cassava) bà- a (soak-3SG) yà (in) mmiri (water).

Translation: S/he peeled cassava and soaked it in water.

4.1.2 IGBO SERIAL PREDICATE WITH THREE VERBS.

The following examples express serial predicate in igbo language with three verbs.

8. Igbo: Eze kpòrò ndị ògbò ya
 | | | | |
Gloss: Eze (Eze) kpòrò (call-PST) ndị (the people) ògbò (of his age/group) ya (his) bjà
 | | |
 bjà ríè nri.
 | | |
 (come-PST) ríè (eat-PST) nri (food).

Translation: Eze called his peers to come and eat food.

9. Igbo: Ò zùtèrè akwụkwọ wètà gòzie ya.
 | | | | |
Gloss: Ò (S/he) zùtèrè (buy-PST) akwụkwọ (book) wètà (bring-PST) gòzie (bless-PST) ya (him/her).

Translation: S/he bought a book and brought it to bless him/her.

10. Igbo: Nne m sì jìe nwáà hụ ya.

Gloss: Nne m (My mother) sì (say-PST) jìe (take-IMP) nwáà (child) hụ (see-3SG) ya (him/her).
 | | | | |

Translation: My mother said to take the child and see him/her.

4.2 ARGUMENT SHARING IN IGBO SVCS.

The examples below illustrate how subjects and objects can be shared across multiple verbs in a single clause.

11. Igbo: Ọ gbù- rù anụ rì- e.
 Gloss: Ọ (S/he) gbù- rù (kill-PST) anụ (animal) rì- e (eat-3SG).

Translation: S/he killed an animal and ate it.

12. Igbo: Eze kpòrò ndị ògbò ya bìà
 Gloss: Eze (Eze) kpòrò (call-PST) ndị (the people) ògbò (of his age/group) ya (his) bìà (come-
 rìè nri.
 PST) rìè (eat-PST) nri (food).

Translation: Eze called his peers to come and eat food.

s13. Igbo: Nne m sị jìe nwáà hụ ya.
 Gloss: Nne m (My mother) sị (say-PST) jìe (take-IMP) nwáà (child) hụ (see-3SG) ya (him/her).

Translation: My mother said to take the child and see him/her.

4.2.1 SUBJECT AND OBJECT ARGUMENT SHARING.

The following examples depicts sentences with Both subject and object argument sharing;

14. Igbo: Ọ zụtara akwụkwọ gụnyere ya.
 Gloss: He/She 3SG buy-DIR- PST book read-give-PST 3SG.OBJ

Translation: "He/She bought a book and read it.

15. O jidere mma kụọ osisi.
 | | | |
 Gloss: He/She 3SG hold-COMPL-PST knife cut-SBJV tree

Translation: "He/She held a knife and cut a tree."

16. Ha kpọrọ nwata kposara ya.
 | | | |
 Gloss: They 3PL call-PST child call- DISP-PST 3SG.OBJ

Translation: "They called a child and dispersed him/her."

4.2.2. SUBJECT ONLY ARGUMENT SHARING.

The following examples express Subject only argument sharing in igbo SVCs:

17. O jidere mma kụọ osisi.
 | | | |
 Gloss: 3SG hold-COMPL-PST knife cut-SBJV tree

Translation: "He/She held a knife and cut a tree."

18. Ada dọ-rọ ọkụ tụ-ba- ra ya n'- osimiri
 | | | | | |
 Gloss: Ada pull-PST fire throw- APPL-PST 3SG.OBJ at-river

Translation: "Ada pulled the fire and threw it into the river."

19. Nwoke ahụ gara ahịa zuta anụ.
 | | | | |
 Gloss: ManDEM go-PST market buy-DIR meat

Translation: "The man went to the market to buy meat."

4.2.3 OBJECT ONLY ARGUMENT SHARING.

The following are examples of sentences with object only arguments sharing:

20. Ha gburu anụ tūbara ya n'ohia.
| | | | | | |
Gloss: They 3PL kill-PST meat throw-APPL-PST 3SG.OBJ at-bush

Translation: "They killed the meat and threw it into the bush."

21. Ụmụaka kpọrọ ọkụ kpọlite ya.
| | | | | |
Gloss: Children call-PST fire light-APPL-PST 3SG.OBJ

Translation: "The children called the fire and lit it."

22. Ụmụaka were akụ kpọsaa ya.
| | | | | |
Gloss: Children use-PST wealth distribute-PST 3SG.OBJ

Translation: "The children used wealth and distributed it."

4.3. EVENT CONCEPTUALIZATION, THREE VERBS ONE EVENT

Multiple verbs may be used to capture a single event this is a prevalent feature of event conceptualization, below are examples of event conceptualization with three verbs.

23 Igbo: Ụmụaka kwurụ tinye ihe kpọchie ụzọ
| | | | | | |
Gloss: Ụmụaka (children) kwurụ (stand-PST) tinye (put) ihe (thing) kpọchie (block) ụzọ (road).

Translation: "The children stood and put something to block the road."

24. Igbo: Nwoke ahụ si n'ụlọ puo gaa ahia
 Gloss: Nwoke (man) ahụ (that) si (leave) n'ụlọ (from-house) puo (go out) gaa (go) ahia (market).

Translation: "That man left the house and went to the market."

4.3.2 EVENT CONCEPTUALIZATION, TWO VERBS ONE EVENT.

The following examples depicts Event conceptualization with two verbs in igbo construction.

25. Igbo: O bia rie nri
 Gloss: O (he/she) bia (come) rie (eat) nri (food).

Translation: "He/she came to eat food."

26.. Igbo: O kwusiri ikwu okwu
 Gloss: O (he/she) kwusiri (stop-PST) ikwu (speak) okwu (word).

Translation: "He/she stopped speaking."

4.4 DATA ANALYSIS

4.4.1 ANALYSIS OF SEQUENTIALISATION

1.This construction illustrates the action of fetching and drinking water. The first verb "kù-rù" (fetch) takes "mmiri" (water) as its object, while the second verb "nù" (drink) implies that the subject drinks the fetched water, represented by the pronoun "ọ" (it). This example shows how two actions are linked to a single subject without needing a conjunction.

Here, "lò-rò" (swallow) and "gbò" (vomit) illustrate a sequence where the subject swallows a drug ("ogwu") and subsequently vomits it ("ya"). The verbs share the same subject.

2. In, "bàchà-rà" (peel) and "jiapu" (soak) indicate that the subject peels cassava and then soaks it in water. Each verb has its own object, showcasing how SVCs can convey multiple actions efficiently. 3. This data describes a sequence where the subject goes to the market ("gà rà ahīa") and buys meat ("zúta anū"). The verbs work together to express a coherent action involving movement and acquisition

4.4.2 SERIAL PREDICATE WITH TWO VERBS ANALYSIS

5 This showcases two actions performed by Obi: cooking ("si- ri") and eating ("ri- e"). The verbs illustrate a direct relationship between cooking and eating, emphasizing that both actions are part of Obi's meal preparation process.

6. Here, "lò-rò" (swallow) is followed by "gbò" (vomit), where the subject performs two actions in succession. The first action involves taking in a drug, while the second indicates expelling it from the body. This example illustrates how SVCs can convey a cause-effect relationship between actions—swallowing leads to vomiting—while maintaining a concise structure without additional conjunctions.

7. In this construction, "bàchà-rà" (peel) and "jiapu" (soak) are sequentially related actions performed by the same subject. The first verb indicates the action of peeling cassava, while the second verb describes soaking it in water. This example highlights how SVCs can effectively communicate multiple actions that are part of a single process—preparing cassava for cooking—showcasing the efficiency of verb serialization in Igbo.

4.4.3 SERIAL PREDICATE WITH THREE VERBS ANALYSIS

8 In the data , "kpòrò" (call) is the first action, which serves as a prerequisite for the subsequent actions of "bìà" (come) and "rìè" (eat). The sequence illustrates that Eze first calls his peers, who then come to eat. This highlights the social nature of the event, where calling is necessary for gathering before sharing a meal.

9. Here, "zùtèrè" (buy) is the first action, followed by "wètà" (bring), and finally "gòzie" (bless). The sequence indicates that the subject first buys a book, then brings it with the intention of blessing someone. This shows how actions are interconnected, with buying leading to bringing and then to blessing.

10. In this data, "sì" (say) is the initial action, which sets up an imperative for "jìe" (take), followed by "hù" (see). The sequence indicates that the mother instructs someone to take the child with the purpose of seeing him/her. This illustrates how directives can lead to subsequent actions.

4.4.4 ARGUMENT SHARING ANALYSIS

11. In this SVC, "Ọ" serves as the shared subject for both verbs "gbù- rù" (kill) and "rì- e" (eat). The object "anụ" (animal) is marked in the accusative case when it is associated with the first verb "gbù- rù." This means that the animal is directly affected by the action of killing.

When the second verb "rì- e" occurs, it implicitly refers back to "anụ," which allows for efficient communication without repeating the noun. The verb "rì" does not require an overt object because it is understood that the subject is eating the same animal that was killed. This

demonstrates how argument sharing works in SVCs, where the grammatical roles are maintained across multiple actions.

12. In this example, "Eze" is the subject shared across both verbs, "kpòrò" (call) and "bià" (come). The object of the first verb is "ndị ògbò ya" (his peers), who are being called. The subsequent action, "ríè nri," indicates that after coming, they will eat food.

The object of eating ("nri") is implied as being the food prepared for them after they arrive. This structure illustrates how argument sharing allows for a smooth narrative flow, as the same subject leads to two related actions without needing to restate who is involved in each action.

13. In this example, "Nne m" serves as the subject for both verbs: "sị" (say) and "hụ" (see). The imperative verb "jie" indicates an instruction to take the child ("nwáà").

Here, argument sharing occurs because after instructing someone to take the child, there is an implicit understanding that this child will also be seen ("hụ"). This highlights how commands can lead to shared arguments across actions, maintaining clarity in communication while reducing redundancy.

4.4.5 SUBJECT AND OBJECT ARGUMENT SHARING ANALYSIS

14. This sentence is an example of an SVC with object and subject argument sharing. The main verbs are "zụta" (buy) and "gụnye" (read to). The object "akwụkwọ" (book) is shared between both verbs. The subject "Ọ" (he/she) is also shared. The directional suffix "-ta" in "zụtara" indicates movement towards the speaker, while "-nye" in "gụnyere" implies reading to someone else.

15. The subject "Ọ" (he/she) is shared between "jide" (hold) and "kụ" (cut). The object of the first verb "mma" (knife) becomes the instrument for the second verb. The completive suffix "-de" in "jidere" indicates a completed action, while the subjunctive "-o" in "kụo" shows the purpose or consequence of the first action.

16. This SVC demonstrates both subject and object argument sharing. The subject "Ha" (they) is shared between both verbs "kpọ" (call) and "kpọsa" (disperse/send away). The object "nwata" (child) of the first verb becomes the object of the second verb, represented by "ya" (him/her). The dispersive suffix "-sa" in "kpọsara" indicates the action of sending away or dispersing.

4.4.6 SUBJECT ONLY ARGUMENT SHARING ANALYSIS

17. Here, the subject "Ọ" is shared between "jide" (hold) and "kụ" (cut). The first verb has an object ("mma," knife), while the second verb does not explicitly state an object but implies it through context ("osisi," tree). This sharing allows for concise expression of related actions.

18. This sentence demonstrates both subject-only argument sharing and object argument sharing. The subject "Ada" is shared between both verbs, while the object "ọkụ" (fire) is also referenced in both actions, emphasizing its movement from being pulled to being thrown.

19. In the sentence "Nwoke ahụ gara ahịa zụta anụ," the subject "Nwoke ahụ" (the man) performs two actions: "gara" (went) to the market and "zụta" (to buy) meat. The verb "gara" is in the past tense, indicating that the action of going has been completed, while "zụta" indicates the purpose of the trip. The sentence demonstrates subject-only argument sharing, as the subject is not repeated for both verbs.

4.4.7 OBJECT ONLY ARGUMENT SHARING

20. In this sentence, "Ha" (they) is the subject performing two actions: "gburu" (killed) and "tɔbara" (threw). The object of the first verb is "anɔ" (meat), which they killed. The second verb "tɔbara" shares the same object with "ya" (it), referring back to "anɔ." This demonstrates object-only argument sharing, where both verbs are linked by a common object without repeating it. The phrase "n'ɔhia" (into the bush) specifies where the action of throwing took place, providing additional context.

21. In this sentence, "Umuaka" (the children) serves as the subject who performs two actions: "kpɔrɔ" (called) and "kpɔlite" (lit). The first verb has an explicit object, "ɔkɔ" (fire), which they called. The second verb shares this object with "ya" (it), referring back to "ɔkɔ." This exemplifies object-only argument sharing, as both verbs are linked through a common object without repeating it.

22. In this sentence, "O" (he/she) engages in two actions: "ji" (used) and "kpɔchie" (closed). The first verb has an explicit object, "ũdɔ" (rope), which he/she used to perform an action on another object ("akpa," meaning bag). While "akpa" is not explicitly stated as an object for "ji," it is understood within context as being affected by "kpɔchie." This structure exemplifies object-only argument sharing where both verbs share a common theme but focus on different aspects of action without repeating the subject.

4.4.8 EVENT CONCEPTUALISATION THREE VERBS ONE EVENT ANALYSIS

23. In this example, the three verbs—kwurɔ (stood), tinye (put), and kpɔchie (block)—work together to describe a single event involving the children. The action begins with them standing, which sets the stage for their next action of putting something down. The final verb, kpɔchie,

indicates the purpose of their action: to block the road. This construction illustrates how Igbo speakers can convey a cohesive narrative where each verb contributes to a unified activity rather than being treated as separate actions.

24. In this SVC, the verbs *si* (leave), *pụọ* (go out), and *gaa* (go) collectively depict a single event of movement. The man first leaves his house (*si n'ụlọ*) before going out (*pụọ*) and then proceeds to the market (*gaa ahịa*). Each verb is essential in creating a clear picture of his journey: leaving initiates the action, going out signifies his departure, and going to the market indicates his destination. Together, they form a comprehensive description of one continuous movement.

4.4.9 EVENT CONCEPTUALISATION TWO VERBS ONE EVENT ANALYSIS

25. In this example, the verbs *bịa* (come) and *rie* (eat) work together to describe a single event where the subject arrives with the purpose of eating. The action of coming is directly linked to the act of eating, emphasizing the intent behind the movement.

26. In this construction, *kwụsiri* (stop) and *ikwu* (speak) combine to describe a single event where the subject ceases to talk. The stopping action is directly linked to speaking, emphasizing a moment of interruption in communication

4.5 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Sequentialisation in Igbo SVCs; Igbo serial predicate with two and three verbs.

Findings from the Data

Serial predicates with two and/or three verbs in Igbo SVCs involve verbs that jointly serve as the predicate of a single clause.

Importance of Serial Predicates.

It succinctly connects actions and intentions within a single clause.

It avoids the need for complex subordinating or coordinating structures, reducing redundancy.

It enables the speaker to capture detailed actions and their interrelations.

Patterns Observed

Purpose-Driven Structures: The second verb often specifies the goal of the first action.

Sequential Action Chains: The verbs represent actions that occur one after another.

Causative Relationships: The verbs indicate cause-effect dynamics.

Directional and Locative Expressions: The first verb indicates movement, while the second specifies an action at the destination. Sequentialisation is fundamental to the Igbo SVC system because they show how Igbo efficiently combines related actions into a single predicate. By linking verbs semantically and syntactically, serial predicates contribute to sentence unity

Subject-Only Argument Sharing in Igbo SVCs.

Findings from the Data

The data reveals that subject-only argument sharing is a prominent feature of serial verb constructions (SVCs) in Enuani Igbo. This pattern allows a single subject to control multiple verbs within a construction without the need for repetition. Importance of Subject-Only Argument Sharing.

Subject-only argument sharing plays a crucial role in the efficiency and fluidity of Igbo SVCs. By eliminating the need to repeat the subject for each verb.

Patterns Observed

Agentive Dominance: The subject is almost always an agent performing an action.

Tense and Aspect Uniformity: The tense and aspect of the SVC are dictated by the first verb, and subsequent verbs inherit this temporal framework.

Sequential and Simultaneous Actions: The subject can govern verbs that denote actions occurring in sequence or simultaneously.

Object Only Argument Sharing In Igbo Sves

Findings from the Data

Object-only argument sharing in Igbo serial verb constructions (SVCs) occurs when a single object is shared by multiple verbs within a sentence.

Importance of Object-Only Argument Sharing

Shared objects eliminate the need for repetition, ensuring that sentences remain concise and contextually clear.

The shared object acts as a bridge between verbs, connecting multiple actions to a single entity.

Patterns Observed

Unchanged Object Reference: The shared object maintains its referent across all verbs in the series. Flexible Positioning of Verbs: The verbs in SVCs can indicate different types of actions performed on the object, such as transfer, perception, or evaluation

Object Type: Objects can be animate or inanimate, depending on the context of the verbs.

The shared object links verbs into a cohesive narrative, illustrating how multiple actions affect the same entity

This pattern ensures that SVCs maintain clarity, especially in contexts involving complex action sequences.

Event Conceptualization with Two or more Verbs in Igbo SVCs

Findings from the Data

Event conceptualization involving two and/or three verbs in Igbo SVCs demonstrates how speakers linguistically encode closely related actions into a single, unified event.

Importance of Event Conceptualization with Two or more Verbs

It allows for the encoding of complex ideas in a concise manner, reducing verbosity.

By grouping related actions into a single event, it reflects how speakers perceive and process actions as interconnected rather than isolated.

Patterns Observed

Sequential Events: The verbs often represent actions occurring in a logical order. b. Ha gara hu onye zutara azu

Causative Linkages: One verb often expresses the cause, while the other expresses the effect.

Simultaneous Actions: Less commonly, two verbs may express actions that occur at the same time.

Event conceptualization allows speakers to describe multifaceted scenarios with precision and it promotes Unity of Thought: By encoding multiple actions into a single syntactic unit, it reflects the interconnectedness of real-world events.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

.Serial Verb Constructions (SVCs) are an essential part of how Igbo speakers express complex ideas. These constructions allow multiple actions or events to be packed into a single sentence without losing clarity or meaning. For example, instead of breaking down each action into separate clauses, Igbo speakers can link verbs together in a way that reflects the natural flow of events. In this study, we focused on three important aspects of SVCs: argument sharing, event conceptualization, and serial predicates. These features show how the language handles shared subjects or objects, connects related actions, and combines verbs to create unified meanings. By analyzing these patterns, we not only gain insight into the structure of Igbo grammar but also see how the language mirrors the thought processes and everyday experiences of its speakers.

5.1 Summary Of Findings

Argument sharing in Igbo SVCs involves multiple verbs sharing a common argument, either as the subject or object.

Subject Argument Sharing:

In these constructions, a single subject is shared across verbs, emphasizing the subject's continuity in performing sequential or simultaneous actions.

Object Argument Sharing:

Here, a single object is shared by multiple verbs, linking the verbs' actions to the same entity.

Relevance

Grammatical Economy: Argument sharing eliminates the need to repeatedly mention the same argument across multiple verbs. This creates a more compact sentence structure, making communication faster and more efficient.

Clarity in Complex Actions: When multiple actions are performed by the same subject or directed toward the same object, argument sharing provides a clear and cohesive way to represent this. It avoids ambiguity and ensures that the relationship between the verbs and the shared argument is easily understood.

Contribution to Semantic Coherence: By sharing arguments, SVCs maintain a tight semantic connection between verbs, ensuring that sentences remain cohesive,

Event conceptualization illustrates how Igbo SVCs encode multiple actions as part of a single cognitive unit, often reflecting sequential, simultaneous, or causative relationships.

Relevance

Efficient Encoding of Complex Events' Event conceptualization allows Igbo speakers to represent sequences of actions or events within a single clause, avoiding the need for complex subordinating or coordinating structures. This makes communication both concise and efficient.

Seamless Integration of Intention, Action, and Outcome: Event conceptualization reflects how Igbo speakers cognitively link actions to their intentions and outcomes. Each verb contributes to the overall meaning without disrupting the sentence's flow.

Expression of Simultaneous or Sequential Actions: Event conceptualization in SVCs enables the expression of actions that occur either simultaneously or in sequence, capturing nuances of time and process.

Serial predicates in Igbo involve two or more verbs forming the predicate of a single clause, creating a unified syntactic and semantic whole.

Relevance

Efficient Representation of Complex Ideas Serial predicates enable speakers to convey multiple related actions in a single sentence without resorting to conjunctions or separate clauses.

Unified Event Encoding: Serial predicates reflect how Igbo speakers perceive actions as interconnected events. By combining verbs into a single predicate, the language mirrors real-world experiences where actions are often causally or temporally linked.

Preservation of Semantic Coherence: Serial predicates maintain a strong semantic connection between the verbs, ensuring that the actions they describe are perceived as part of a unified whole.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

This study has examined Serial Verb Constructions (SVCs) in Igbo, shedding light on how the language organizes and expresses multiple actions or events within a single sentence. Through detailed analysis, this study has examined three central aspects of SVCs: argument sharing, event conceptualization, and serial predicates. The findings reveal that argument sharing, whether involving the subject or object, is a fundamental feature that enhances the grammatical economy and clarity of SVCs. By allowing multiple verbs to share the same argument, Igbo

speakers efficiently encode complex ideas, reducing redundancy while preserving semantic precision. The patterns observed in the data—such as the seamless integration of shared arguments into multiple verbs—reflect not only the structural coherence of SVCs but also their alignment with cultural context of Igbo speakers.

Event conceptualization was another crucial area of focus. The ability to group related actions into unified expressions, whether through two or three verbs, highlights how Igbo captures the natural flow of events. These constructions demonstrate the way speakers perceive relationships between actions—whether sequential or simultaneous—and show how the language bridges intention, process, and outcome seamlessly. Serial predicates further demonstrated how Igbo combines verbs into a single predicate to express complex ideas. The data showed how this feature supports narratives, emphasizes causality, and reflects multitasking or interconnected actions in everyday life. By linking multiple actions tightly within a single sentence, serial predicates create a cohesive and dynamic way of describing events. While this project has shed light on these critical aspects of SVCs in Igbo, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations and the vast terrain that remains unexplored. Questions regarding the full range of syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic variations in SVCs, as well as their diachronic development and typological comparisons with other languages, are still open for further research.

This study does not claim to provide a definitive account of SVCs in Igbo but aims to contribute to the growing body of work on this linguistic phenomenon. By offering detailed analyses and examples, this research seeks to provide clarity on the structure and function of Igbo SVCs, serving as a stepping stone for further scholarly inquiry. Ultimately, the findings demonstrate the complexity of SVCs in Igbo, reinforcing their importance as a key feature of the language and a significant area of study in linguistic research.

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