Serial Verb Constructions in Ikwere

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Abstract

The paper identifies and analyzes the serial verb constructions (SVCs) in Ikwere. Ikwere is an Igboid language spoken in Rivers State of Nigeria. The paper uses a descriptive approach to analyze serial verbs in the language. It observes that the unmarked variety of SVC is characteristic of the Ikwere language. The paper further highlights the characteristic of sharing of certain features in serial verb constructions in the language. They include tense and aspect sharing, negative sharing and argument sharing. The paper also suggests that a serial construction is derived from two or more underlying sentences by deleting all but the first subject NP in a serial construction. It finally identifies the semantic types of SVC in the language. We believe that this paper will not only contribute to the body of literature, but will project some of the peculiarity of SVC in Ikwere.

Key words: *Serial Verb Construction, unmarked variety, tense/aspect sharing, instrumental, directional*

Introduction

Ikwere is an Igboid language classified under the West Benue-Congo within the Niger-Congo phylum (Williamson 1988, Williamson and Blench 2000). It is spoken in four Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Rivers State of Nigeria, namely Ikwerre, Emohua, Obio/Akpor and part of Port Harcourt. Ikwere comprises twenty- four divergent dialects spoken in different geographical locations of the language area and they are mutually intelligible. The dialects are Rumuekpne, Rundele, Ọdeegnu, Ẹmowha, Ọgbakiri, Akpo, Ọbio, Aluu, Igwuruta, Ọmagwa, Isiokpo, Ibaa/Obeele, Ipo, Ozuaha, Ọmuanwa, Ubima, Akpnabu, Egbedna, Ọmadeeme, Eleele, Omudiogna, Ubimini, Omerelu and Apnani. Considering their degree of mutual intelligibility, Williamson (n.d. c. 1997), Donwa-Ifode and Faraclas (2001) and Alerechi (2007), using certain linguistic features categorize these dialects into groups such as north and south dichotomy, east and west dichotomy and the like. Using the lexical item that mean 'person', for example, some of the southern dialects like Rumuekpne, Rundele, Ọdeegnu and Ẹmowha use the item *vádnụ̀* 'person' with tonal modifications, while the choice for others

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like Ọgbakiri, Akpo and Ọbio is *bádnụ̀* 'person'. On the other hand, some of the northern dialects like Aluu, Igwuruta, Ọmagwa, Isiokpo, Ibaa/Obeele, Ipo, Ozuaha, Ọmuanwa, Ubima, Ọmadeeme, Omerelu and Apnani show preference for *mádnụ̀* 'person' while yet others like Akpnabu, Egbedna, Eleele, Omudiogna and Ubimini, favour the term *gbádnụ̀/gbádnị̀/gbánị̀* 'person' depending on the dialect. Note that despite the similarities that these dialects share based on certain linguistic items, there are also some other items that demonstrate their differences.

According to Alerechi (2017 forthcoming), the Ikwere people constitute one of the major ethnic groups of Rivers State of Nigeria and their language is one of the major languages of Rivers State. Thus, like Kana, Kalabari and Ekpeye, which are the other major languages of Rivers State, Ikwere is used in broadcasting in the electronic media. Crozier and Blench (1992:55) and Grimes (1996:349) put the population of Ikwere at about 200,000, as contained in the National Population Census of 1963. This figure, however, rose to 674,402 and 1,235,412 as contained in the final results of the National Population Census of 1991 and 2006, respectively.

The data used in the analysis of serial verbs in the language are drawn from Obio, a southern dialect of Ikwere spoken in the cosmopolitan city of Port Harcourt in Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt Local Government Areas and Omuanwa, a northern dialect spoken in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State of Nigeria. The data were elicited from two competent native speakers of the language and verified by three other competent native speakers. The paper adopts a descriptive approach of data analysis. A descriptive approach is an approach that accounts for the primary linguistic data in such a way that it agrees with the intuition of the native speakers of the language. The Ikwere data in this paper are transcribed orthographically. Note that since nasalization normally affects an entire syllable in Ikwere, it is symbolized in the Ikwere orthography by inserting 'n' between the consonant and vowel of the affected syllable (Donwa-Ifode and Faraclas 2001:5).

Review of Literature

There are several works on serial verb construction by some scholars in the literature. This section gives a brief review of some of such works on serial verb constructions. It takes cognizance of conceptual and empirical review on the subject.

Conceptual Review of Serial Verb Constructions

Serial verb construction (SVC), according to Welmers (1973:336), is a syntactic phenomenon generally known as 'serialization.' It is sometimes referred to as serial verbs and naively called by some split verbs. The serial verb constructions (SVCs) are observed in the literature as a common phenomenon in most West African languages and particularly the Kwa languages such as Yoruba, Igbo, Edo, Esan, Tiv, Yatye, Nupe, Akan, Ewe, etc. In fact, they serve as one of the features used in distinguishing the Kwa languages from other languages within the Niger-Congo family. The SVCs are also recorded in languages such as Mandarin Chinese, Thai, Tok Pisin, etc.

Definitions of SVC

SVCs are defined from both syntactic and semantic perspectives. Syntactically, they are defined as constructions in which two or more verbs including their possible complements are juxtaposed without overt conjunction, and share a common surface subject and one or more common aspect, tense or polarity markers (Schachter 1974:254, Williamson 1989:30, Hünnemeyer 1990:91). This definition indicates that the two or more verbs, which share the same subject noun phrase (NP), may or may not have an intervening object between them. The sequences of verbs indicate a simultaneous action performed by a common subject, but not necessarily applying to the same object (Ikoro 1996:250). An example of SVC in Kana (Ikoro 1996:250) is given in (1):

1) maā̄   sú   bá   dē̄-ạ̄   nū̄
   1: PROG   take hand eat-INST   thing
   'I am eating with my hand'

The serial construction demonstrates a simultaneous action of the subject using his hand to eat his food. Also, Aikhenvald (2006:1) sees serial verb construction as a sequence of verbs which act together as a single predicate, without any overt marker of

coordination, subordination, or syntactic dependency of any other sort.

From semantic perspective, Ejele (1992) says SVC… functions as a bundle of information which is itself made up of the meanings contributed by the composite verbs. The actions (or states) depicted by the verbs are interpreted as related and such relationships reflect in the overall reading associated with the different SVC types. In fact, SVCs are used to express a wide range of semantic notions in languages where they occur.

Varieties of SVC
According to Williamson (1989:30), there are three varieties of SVCs, namely unmarked, consecutive and concordial SVCs. The unmarked SVCs involve the full marking of the first verb (in SVO languages) or the last verb (in SOV languages) for tense, aspect or polarity while the others occur as bare stems. Medua (2010:27) attests the unmarked variety of SVC in the Akwukwu dialect of Igbo. Among other things, she observes that the perfect tense (aspect) is marked by attaching a perfect suffix to the initial verb while the non-intial verb remains bare. Consider example in Akwukwu-Igbo in (2):

2) O   jé-gé   afịa   gótè   ji

   3SG   go-PERF   market   buy   yam

   'He has gone to buy yam in the market'

The example illustrates that the perfect marker *-ge* attached to the initial verb *jé* 'go' is deleted in the non-initial verb *gótè* 'buy'.

Williamson (1989:30) states that the consecutive SVC has the first verb fully marked, while the later ones bear a general marker showing that they are 'consecutive' to the first. Ikoro (1996:261) identifies consecutive construction in Kana and states that it involves two separate actions whereby one (the second action) is dependent upon the other (the first action). For instance, the action *kúé* 'called' in example (3) of consecutive construction in Kana occurred first before that of *tēērā kìī* (run go) 'ran' (Ikoro 1996:261):

3) Kúé   mē   tēērā kìī   bē

   he:call me   run   go   home

'He called me and then ran home'

For the concordial variety, each verb refers back to the subject by means of a concord marker or pronoun. The concordial SVC is attested in Degema. In treating types of concordial SVC in the Degema language, Kari (2007:12) notes, among other things, the concordial SVC with only subject clitic. He observes that it is the type of SVC where the only subject clitic that occurs in the serial construction precedes the initial verb. This is illustrated in example (4) as taken from Kari (2007:12):

4) Ohoso o̩-tá   dé̩-n   isen

    PN   3SGSCL-go buy-FE fish

    'Ohoso went and bought fish'

From the example in (4), Kari (2007:12) observes that the verbs in series *tá* 'go' and *dé̩* 'buy' concord with the subject NP Ohoso in person and number, and that the subject clitic o̩- precedes the initial verb *tá* 'go'. Note that of the three varieties of SVC (unmarked, consecutive and concordial), the unmarked variety is typical of the Ikwere language.

Empirical Review of SVC

Scholars have identified and analyzed serial verb constructions in different languages. Among them are Ikoro's (1996) and Emenanjo (1978, 2015). Ikoro's (1996) analyzes serial verb constructions in Kana. Similar to the view of SVCs in different languages, Ikoro (1996:250-253) states that it is made up of a succession of two independent verbs without any overt connective or subordination marker between them. The successive verbs indicate a simultaneous action performed by a common subject, but not necessarily applying to the same object. In Kana, tense and aspect are marked once before or on the first verb. Ikoro further observes that if an object NP of a serial verb construction is not a pronominal clitic as in example (5), the word order remains SVO but if it is a pronominal clitic as demonstrated in (6), the word order changes to SOV.

5) Yaā̄   teēērā̄ kì̄ī   Káá

    We:PROG   run   go   Kaa

'We are running to *Kaa*'

6) Légbò weè̄ mɛ̄ sú bá zì-mà

   PN PAST me take hand hit-INST

   'Legbo hit me with a hand'

Ikoro (1996) further notes that the position of a derivative suffix depends on the particular suffix involved. Suffixes marking causative, instrumental, reciprocal, etc. occur on the second verb, whereas those marking repetition and modality occur on the first verb. See examples of causative, reciprocal and repetition in Kana taken from Ikoro (1996:251) in (7) – (9):

7) Zúē̄ āā mɔ̀ kāgā̄-rɛ́ nū
   Sun PROG shine dry-CAUS thing
   'Sun shine is helping something to get dry'

8) Bà-téērā̄ mɔ̀n-ā̄ zìì
   3PL-run see-REC one
   'They ran and met each other'

9) Wàā̄ sìnákɛ̄ tɛ́ɛ̄ Káá yìī kùɛ̀
   you:NEG REP pass Kaa enter forest
   'Do not go to the forest through *Kaa* again'

Ikoro (1996:253) also observes that in addition to a succession of verbs, another criterion for identifying a serial verb construction in Kana is negation. This means that negation occurs only once on the first verb, but in a non-serial construction, a negative marker may occur more than once. Examples of serial and non-serial negative constructions as taken from Ikoro (1996:253) are given in (10)-(11):

10) Náā̄ lè é-tɛ́ɛ́ Káá kìī̄ Kó
    He:NEG be DF-pass Kaa go Ko
    'He will not pass through *Kaa* to a village called *Kò*'

11) Náā̄ lè é-tɛ́ɛ́ Káá è à-náā̄ lè é- kìī̄ Kó
    He:NEG be DF-pass Kaa CONN he-NEG be
     DF-go Ko
    'He will not pass through *Kaa* but he will also not go to *Kò*'

Ikoro finally identifies different types of SVCs in Kana. They are instrumental, benefactive, allative, source and comparative construction.

In Igbo, Emenanjo (2015:541-542) observes that a serial verb construction is a complex syntactic structure internally made up of a series of verbs with their complements, which go together without an overt linker, or conjunction. He illustrates this point with the examples in (12):

12a) A na̍-**ejì** mmà àsụ̣ ọrū̲, **ègbu** anụ̲, **ègbu** osisi, **alụ̀** aghā̲
'People **use** the knife **for cutting** the bush in preparation **for farming**, **for slaughtering** animals, **for cutting** trees (and) **for fighting** wars'.

Sentence (12a) contains five verbs without any connectives or conjunctions linking them in spite of the gloss. They are all accompanied with their complements. The verbs all function syntactically as one consistent unit or whole in terms of subject NP. The underlying or deep structure of (12a) is shown in example (12b):

b) A **na̍**-ejì mmà **na**-àsụ̣ ọrū̲, **na**-ègbu anụ̲, **na**-egbù osisi, **na**-alụ̀ agha.
'People **use** the knife **for cutting** the bush in preparation **for farming**, **slaughtering** animals, **cutting** trees and **fighting** wars.'

Emenanjo points out that (12a) and (12b) have exactly the same meaning as demonstrated in the gloss. The only difference is that the simple progressive/durative marker, the auxiliary, *na,* has been deleted in (12a) because SVC requires that all the verbs agree in terms of affirmation and aspect.

However, if (12a) becomes a case of futurity, the future marker will be found in the deep structure with the first verb, while other verbs will retain their simple participle or narrative form. Consider (13a) and (13b):

13a) A gà-**ejì** mmà, àsụ̣ ọrū̲, ègbu anụ̲, ègbu osisi, **alụ̀** aghā̲.

'People will use the knife for cutting the bush in preparation for farming, for slaughtering animals, for cutting trees and for fighting wars'.

b)   A   gà-ejì mmà, sụ   ọrū,   gbuo anū̩,   gbuo osisi,
      lụ̀o aghā
      'People will use the knife for cutting the bush in preparation for farming, slaughtering animals, cutting trees and fighting wars'.

Emenanjo (2015:542-543) emphasizes that one of the most problematic issues in Igbo SVC is how the different sentences have come to be. He states that it is easy to postulate and prove that (12b) is the underlying or deep structure of (12a). It is not easy to do so with (13a), whose semantics is the same in spite of obvious differences in surface structure. The structural difference in the surface structure suggests two different deep structures. Example (13a) cannot admit an underlying future marker *-ga* before the other verbs. But the presence of a participle in (13a) suggests some underlying auxiliary. This issue is yet to be resolved in Igbo SVC.

There are also previous works on verb serialization in Ikwere. One of such works is on serial verb construction in the Obio dialect of Ikwere by Martins (2010). Martins (2010:33) identifies the comparative, instrumental, manner, accompanimental, directional and simultataneity SVCs as the semantic types of SVC in the language. See an example of comparative SVC in Obio as taken from Martins (2010:33) in (14):

14) Ézè   tòrù   ógólógó   kárụ́ Uche
    PN   be-tall   tall   surpass   PN
    Eze is taller than Uche'

Example (14) demonstrates that the verb *kárụ́* 'surpass' is used to mark comparison in Obio. In addition to the foregoing semantic types identified by Martins, the present study recognizes the benefactive and sequential SVC in the Omuanwa variety of Ikwere. While Martins (2010:37-38) identifies the unmarked variety of SVC in Obio, also recorded in the present study, there is no such discussion on the sharing characteristics of SVC in her work. The present study seeks to give a fairly comprehensive description of SVC in Ikwere.

Serial Verbs in Ikwere

Serial verb constructions in Ikwere may reflect series of two or more verbs without an intervening conjunction, coordination or complement between the verbs as illustrated in (15) and (16) in the Omuanwa variety of Ikwere:

15)   Bià   è-vúrú   jnè   è-ré!

       Come PPL-carry   go   PPL-sell

       (come, carry and go and sell)

       'Come and carry to sell'

16)   Ọ̀   bià   è-vúrújí   jné   è-ré!

       3SG   come PPL-carry   yam   go   PPL-sell

       (S/he came and carried yam to go and sell)

       'S/He came to carry yam to sell'

Sentence (15) demonstrates that up to four verbs can co-occur in a sequence without an intervening object NP. This is particularly true with imperative sentences, which require the presence of the addressee at the point of speaking. The presence of the addressee, therefore, presupposes the fact that the addressee is perfectly aware of the context of speaking and may not require explanation to certain issues as he would when absent.

Some other verbs in series, however, take obligatory object as given in examples (17) and (18):

17)   Ọ̀lú   gbà   ọ̀kwú vúrú í⁺vú   jné   áhịá

       PN   use   leg   carry load go   market

       (Olu used leg to carry load to go to the market)

       'Olu carried load to the market on foot'

18)   Ọ̀   gbù   ánọ̀   nyègá úrù

       3SG   kill   animal   give   PN

'S/He killed an animal and gave it to Uru'

Examples (17) and (18) show a separation of each of the verbs with an object. Here each of the verbs represents a sub-component of an overall event.

Verbs in series may be used to express a single semantic notion as examples (19) - (21) in Obio illustrate:

19) Nyé   ógbónyè   bịà-rừ bịá   bnǎ   írù

     Person   poor   come-FT   come enter profit

     (The poor came and became useful)

     'The poor eventually became useful'

20) Ọ́   kúnízọ́-gá   nụ̀   ǹgàdná   bé/bịá   be⁺kwú
     á

     3SG   rise-HAB   PREP seat   come greet   3SG

     (He rises from his seat to come to greet her)

     'He rises from his seat to greet her'

21) Ọ́   sǐ-rǐ   àrụ̀sí   rí   3SG   cook-FT   rice
     eat
     'S/He cooked rice and ate '

Example (19) shows a successive co-occurrence of the verbs *bịàrừ* 'came', *bịá* 'come' and *bnǎ* 'enter' in Obio to reflect a single semantic notion of the English verb 'became' or 'appeared'. Similarly, example (20) records three verbs *kúnízọ́gá* 'rises', *bịá* 'come' *bé⁺kwú* 'greet'. While the first verb signals the commencement of the action, the second and third verbs reflect the culmination of the action. The verbs *bịá* 'come' and *bé⁺kwú* 'greet' are equivalent to the English infinitive verb 'to greet', which actually is the result of the action. It is worthy of note that for ease of articulation, the verb *bịá* is often heard as *bé* which is a copy of the first syllable of the verb *bé⁺kwú* 'greet'. In (21) however, the verbs *sǐrǐ* 'cooked' and *rí* 'eat' represent the English verbs 'cooked' and 'ate'. We note however that the Ikwere

version for the second verb is unmarked with no overt conjunction linking it to the third verb as in the English equivalent.

The Unmarked Serial Verb

Considering Williamson's (1989:30) classification of serial verb construction into three varieties such as the unmarked, consecutive and concordial SVCs, Ikwere records the unmarked SVC (Martins 2010:37). As an SVO language, the first verb in the language is fully marked for tense, aspect or polarity while others occur as bare stems. This implies that the initial verb and non-initial verb(s) share a common tense, aspect or polarity in an SVC of the Ikwere language. Examples (22) - (24) in Obio are illustrative.

22a) Ézê   jǐ-rǐ   ̀zùzà zà-má   ́rò   Factative

PN   hold-FT   broom   sweep-clear   house

(Eze used the broom and swept the house)

'Eze swept the house with broom'

b)   Ézè   jí-lê   ̀zùzà zǎ   ́rô   Negation

PN   hold-NEG broom   sweep   house

(Eze did not use the broom to sweep the house)

'Eze did not sweep the house with broom'

23a)   Ézè   jí-lém ̀zùzà zà-má ́rò   Perfective

PN   hold-PERF   broom   sweep-clear   house

(Eze has used the broom to sweep the house)

'Eze has swept the house with broom'

b)   Ézè   yé   é-jí-lê   ̀zùzà   zǎ   ́rò

PN   NEG   PPL-hold-NEG   broom   sweep house
Negation

(Eze has not used the broom to sweep the house)

'Eze has not sweep the house with broom'

24a) Ézè   yè   é-jĭ   ọ̀zùzà   zà-má   ọ́rò   Future

PN   FUT   PPL-hold   broom   sweep-clear   house

(Eze will use the broom to sweep the house)

'Eze will sweep the house with broom'

b)   Ézè   bé   é-jĭ   ọ̀zùzà   ză   ọ́rò   Negation

PN   NEG/FUT   PPL-hold   broom   sweep   house

(Eze will not use the broom to sweep the house)

'Eze will not sweep the house with broom'

It is observed that the first verb *ji* meaning 'hold' or 'use' is marked with the suffix *-ri* for past action in (22a); *-lem* for perfect action in (23a), and a combination of the auxiliary *ye-* and the participial prefix *e-* attached to it for future action in (24a). On the other hand, the second verb zàmá 'sweep-clear' is left completely unmarked for tense and aspect. A similar feature holds true for their negative counterparts in sentences (22b) - (24b). The initial verb *ji* is marked with the suffix *-ĭe* for simple past negation; the auxiliaries *yé-* for perfect negation and *bé-* for future negation. It is interesting to note that the negative markers for the simple past tense, perfect and future aspects co-occur with tonal variations compared with their affirmative counterparts. Furthermore, the *-ma* in *zàmá* with the notion of 'clear' in the affirmative sentences in (22a) - (24a) is completely lost in their negative counterparts in (22b) - (24b). Interestingly, however, the high tone in *-má* rather than being deleted along with the segments, is re-linked to the vowel of the stem as in *zàmá* becoming *ză* 'sweep' in the negative construction. This observation is somewhat different from the situation in Omuanwa dialect particularly with the past form as shown in example (25):

25a) Ézè   jĭ   ọ̀zĭzà   zà-má   ọ́rò   Past

PN   hold   broom   sweep-clear   house

(Eze used the broom and swept the house)

'Eze swept the house with broom'

b)   Ézè   jí-è   ọzǐzà   zá   ọ́rò   Negation

        PN   hold-NEG   broom   sweep house

        (Eze did not use the broom to sweep the house)

        'Eze did not sweep the house with broom'

Example (25a) demonstrates that the base of the initial verb, which expresses past meaning in Omuanwa is unmarked as opposed to that of Obio in (22a), which is marked. Example (25b) however shows that the negative counterparts of the simple past constructions in Omuanwa is marked with tonal modifications.

Source of SVC in Ikwere

Similar to Kari's (2003:275) observation in Degema, the SVC in Ikwere is derived from two or more underlying sentences by deleting all but the first subject NP in the serial construction. Example (26c) demonstrate serial construction derived from (26a) and (26b) in Omuanwa.

26a)   Âdná   jnè   úbǐ

        PN   go   farm

        'Adna went to the farm'

b)   Âdná   gbú   ọ̀sná   ní   úbǐ

        PN   kill   squirrel   PREP farm

        'Adna killed the squirrel in the farm'

c)   Âdná   jnè   úbǐ   gbú   ọ̌⁺sná

        PN   go   farm   kill   squirrel

        'Adna went to the farm and killed the squirrel'

From example (26c), we observe a deletion transformation of the substantive subject *Âdná* along with the place adjunct *ní úbǐ* 'in the farm' in (26b). In addition, we observe a spread of the high tone of

the non-initial verb *gbú* 'kill' to the prefix of the object ɔ̀sná 'squirrel' and a reduction of the original low tone in (26b) to a downstep as in ɔ́⁺sná 'squirrel' in (26c). Example (27d) demonstrates a serial construction that is derived from more than two sentences.

27a) Ò   jné-né á⁺hi̟á

      3SG   go-PERF   market

      'S/He has gone to the market'

b) Ọ   zú̟-lá   ọ́kwú⁺kwó ni̟   áhi̟á

     3SG   buy-PERF   book   PREP market

     'S/He has bought book in the market'

c) Ọ̀   gnú̟-ná   ọ́kwú⁺kwó

     3SG   read-PERF   book

     'S/He has read the book'

27d) Ò   jné-né á⁺hi̟á zú̟

      ọ́kwu⁺kwó   gnú̟   ⁺á́

      3SG   go-PERF   market   buy   book   read   3SG

      'S/He has gone to the market bought a book and read it'

In addition to the deletion transformation of the substantive subject pronoun in (27b) - (27c), and the place adjunct in (13b), there is a substitution of the object noun in (27c) with the appropriate pronoun ⁺á́ in (27d). There is also a deletion transformation of the perfective allomorphs *-la* and *-na* in (27b) and (27c), respectively, in the serial construction. Thus, the SVC in (27d) is left with only one substantive subject and one perfective marker.

Sharing Characteristics of SVC in Ikwere

From the examples in the preceding sections, it is obvious that one of the characteristics of SVC is that of sharing. Thus, verbs in series share features such as tense and aspect, negation and argument, as discussed in the following subsections.

Tense and Aspect Sharing

As observed in the preceding sections, verbs in series share tense and aspect features in sentences where they occur. Tense and aspect sharing treated in the following subsections are the past, future, habitual, perfect, progressive and unfulfilled forms of the verb.

Sharing of Past Tense

Generally, simple past notion is expressed with the *-rV* suffix in Ikwere. Consider examples (28a) - (28c) in Obio:

28a) Ézè   jì-rù   ọ́chí

       PN   use-FT   leg

       'Eze used leg'

b)   Ézè   znè-rù   Lagos

       PN   go-FT   Lagos

       'Eze went to Lagos'

c)   Ézè   jì-rù   ọ́chí   zné   Lagos

       PN   use-FT   leg   go   Lagos

       (Eze used leg to go to Lagos)

       'Eze traveled to Lagos on foot'

Note that (28a) and (28b) are two independent sentences from which the SVC in (28c) is derived. The data demonstrate that the *-rV* suffix past marker of *znèrù* 'went' in (28b) is deleted and reduced to *zné* 'go' in (28c). This indicates that the past marker of the initial verb *jì-rù* 'used' in (28c) bears the burden of the past notion implicit in the non-initial verb.

In some other dialects, however, most of the verbs if not all are left unmarked in their past form. A typical example is the Omuanwa variety of the language where the simple past notion is left unmarked in the surface structure as given in sentences (29a) - (29c):

29a) Ézè   jì   ọ́kwú

       PN   use   leg

       'Eze used leg'

b)   Ézè   jnè   Lagos

PN   go   Lagos

'Eze went to Lagos'

c)   Ézè   jì   ọ́kwú jnè   Lagọṣ

PN   use   leg   go   Lagos

(Eze used leg to go to Lagos)

'Eze traveled to Lagos on foot'

Sharing of Progressive Aspect

Progressive aspect is marked with the suffix -*ga* and are used to express a state or an action or an event that is in progress at the moment of speaking. Whenever two or more sentences in the progressive form combine to form a serial construction, the initial verb bears the whole burden of the progressive marker. Note, however, that even though the non-initial verb is not overtly marked, it is understood to express an action that is in progress as (30c) in Omuanwa illustrates:

30a)   Úrù   lìzọ̀-gàélú

        PN   stand-PROG up

        'Uru is standing up'

b)   Úrù   gwèrè-gà   ḿmà

        PN   take-PROG   knife

        'Uru is taking the knife'

c)   Úrù   lìzọ̀-gà   élú   è-gwèré   ḿmà

        PN   stand-PROG   up   PPL-take   knife

        'Uru is standing up to take the knife'

The preceding examples show that while the progressive marker -*gà* in *lìzọ̀gà* in (30a) is retained in (30c) that of *gwèrègà* in (30b) is completely eliminated in the serial construction. There is, however, a participial prefix attached to the non-initial verb in the serial construction.

Sharing of Perfective Aspect
The perfective aspect is used to denote that an action has taken place before a definite time in the past. In Ikwere, particularly the Omuanwa dialect, the perfective is expressed with the allomorphs -*le/-la*, -*ne/-na*, the choice of which is dependent on whether the preceding vowel is oral or nasalized, and expanded or non-expanded. Table 1 gives a clear picture of the co-occurrence of the allomorphs in the language.

Table1: Ikwere Perfect Allomorph

	[+Expanded]	[-Expanded]	
Oral	-le	-la	Omuanwa
Nasalized	-ne	-na	
Oral	-lem	-lam	Obio
Nasalized	-nem	-nam	

Observe the example of perfect sharing of serial construction in (17a). While (17a) is acceptable in the language, (17b), which retains both the non-initial perfect marker and the object pronoun is not acceptable.

17a) Úrù   sí-lé   jí   rí

      PN   cook-PERF   yam   eat

      'Uru has cooked yam and eaten '

*b) Úrù   sí-lé   jí   rí-lé

      PN   cook-PERF   yam   eat-PERF

      'Uru has cooked yam and has eaten'

Sharing of Future Time
Future event or action or state is expressed with the future auxiliary *de* or *da* respectively combined with the participial prefix *e*- or *a*- attached to the verb base. The choice of *de* and *e*- or *da* and *a*- prefix depends on whether it precedes an expanded or non-expanded vowel as shown in examples (31) in Omuanwa:

31a) Ò   dè   è-té   úsnè   rá

3SG   AUX PPL-pound pepper   lick

'S/he will pound the pepper and eat'

*b)   Ọ̀   dè   è-té   úsnè daa-rá

  3SG FUT/AUX   PPL-pound pepper   FUT/AUXPPL-lick

   'S/he will pound pepper and eat'

While example (31a) demonstrates a serial construction that is acceptable in the language, (31b) shows one that is not acceptable. This is because the non-initial verb is not expected to attract the future auxiliary marker and the appropriate participial prefix of the initial verb in a serial construction.

Sharing of Habitual Aspect

The habitual aspect in Ikwere is marked with the suffix -kọ in Omuanwa or

-kọm in Obio. It only occurs in the initial verb of the SVC as demonstrated in example (32) in Omuanwa.

32)   Ézè   gbà-kọ̀ọ́hiá è-gbú ánộ

       PN   hunt-HAB   bush PPL-kill   animal

       'Eze hunts and kills animal'

Obio, can also use the suffix -□nà to mark a habitual action. Thus it is used to refer to an action or event that occurs always either in the present or in the past as illustrated in example (33):

33)   Ọ̀bí   znè-□nà   áhiá zọ́   ọ̀-zú ìwó

       PN   go-HAB   market   go   PPL-buy   cloth

       (Obi goes to the market to go to buy cloth)

       'Obi goes to the market to buy cloth'

Note that *zọ́* preceding the non-initial verb *ọ́zú* 'to buy' is actually *znẹ́* 'go', which has assimilated to the rounded feature of the non-initial

verb. Thus instead of *zné ọ́zú*, it is now realized as *zọ́ ọ́zú* in the utterance.

Sharing of the Unfulfilled Condition
The unfulfilled condition is used to denote an action, event or state not yet fulfilled. It is expressed with the auxiliary verbs *dìrì* and *znèrnù* in Omuanwa and Obio, respectively. An example is demonstrated in (34) in Omuanwa:

34) Ń dìrì m à-lá ọ́rò sí n⁺rí

    1SG UNF 1SG PPL-go   home cook food

    'I would have gone home to cook'

The example show that the unfulfilled auxiliary verb marker preceding the initial verb in (34), is not repeated before the non-initial verb.

Sharing of Negative Polarity
Just as verbs in a serial construction share common tense and aspectual features as it has been demonstrated in the preceding sections, they also share the feature of negation. This implies that while the initial verb overtly bears the mark of negation, the non-initial ones are left bare. Examples of negative sharing, which take cognizance of the different tense and aspect in the language are presented in (35b) - (38b):

35a) Ọ̀ jnè áhịá jné à-zú ú⁺wó
    3SG go market   go PPL-buy   cloth
    (S/he went to the market to go and buy cloth)
    'S/he went to the market to buy cloth'

b) Ọ̀ mê è-jné á⁺hịá jné à-zú ú⁺wó
    3SG NEG   PPL-go   market   go PPL-buy
    cloth
    (S/he did not go to the market to go and buy cloth)
    'S/he did not go to the market to buy cloth'

36a) Ọ̀   dè   è-jné á⁺hị̣á jné   à-zụ́ ú⁺wó
      3SG   FUT   PPL-go market   go   PPL-buy cloth
      (S/he will go to the market to go and buy cloth)
      'S/he will go to the market to buy cloth'

b)   Ọ̀   dê   è-jnéá⁺hị̣á   jné   à-zụ́ú⁺wó
      3SG   FUT/NEG   PPL-go market   go   PPL-buy cloth
      (S/he will not go to the market to go and buy cloth)
      'S/he will not go to the market to buy cloth'

37a) Ọ̀   jnè-gà áhị̣á   jné   à-zụ́ ú⁺wó
      3SG   go-PROG   market   go   PPL-buy   cloth
      (S/he is going to the market to go and buy cloth)
      'S/he is going to the market to buy cloth'

b)   Ọ̀   jné-gà àhị̣à jné   à-zụ́ ú⁺wó
      3SG   go-PROG/NEG market   go   PPL-buy   cloth
      (S/he is not going to the market to go and buy cloth)
      'S/he is not going to the market to buy cloth'

38a) Ọ̀   jné-né á⁺hị̣á jné   à-zụ́ ú⁺wó
      3SG   go-PERF   market   go   PPL-buy   cloth
      (S/he has gone to the market to go and buy cloth)
      'S/he has gone to the market to buy cloth'

b)   Ọ̀   mè   è-jné-nê   àhị̣à jnéà-zụ́ ú⁺wó
      3SG   NEG PPL-go-PERF   market   go   PPL-
      buy   cloth
      (S/he has not gone to the market to go and buy cloth)
      'S/he has not gone to the market to buy cloth'

Just as in the tense and aspect sharing, the preceding serial constructions from (35b) to (38b) reflect that the burden of negation is borne by the initial verbs. Thus, negation is marked by either the auxiliary *mè,* with tone modifications as in (35b) and (38b) or strictly by tone alteration as in (36b) and (37b). More examples are shown in (39b) and (40b) in Obio:

39a) Ọbí   znè-rnụ̀   àhịá zọ́ ọ́-zú   ĭwó

PN   go- FT   market   go   PPL-buy   cloth

(Obi went to the market to go and buy cloth)

'Obi went to the market to buy cloth'

b)   Ọbí   zné-nèàhịá zọ́   ọ́-zú íwó

PN   go-NEG   market   go   PPL-buy   cloth

(Obi did not go to the market to go and buy cloth)

'Obi did not go to the market to buy cloth'

40a)   Ọ   znè-znẹ̀   àhịá zọ́   ọ́-zú ĭwó

3SG   go-PROG   market   go   PPL-buy   cloth

(S/he is going to the market to go and buy cloth)

'S/he is going to the market to buy cloth'

b)   Ọ   zné-mánạ̀   àhịá zọ́   ọ́-zú   ĭwó

3SG   go-NEG   market   go   PPL-buy   cloth

(S/he is not going to the market to go and buy cloth)

'S/he is not going to the market to buy cloth'

The Obio examples in (39b) and (40b) further demonstrate that negation is marked on the initial verb in Ikwere. It is represented with a suffix attached to the initial verb root and tone modification. The example in (40a) shows that Obio marks progressive with the suffix *-zne*.

Argument Sharing

Arguments are nouns in a construction. They reflect nouns that occur in subject position (external argument) and those found within the predicate (internal argument). In Ikwere, verbs in a serial construction share obligatory single subject in the surface structure. This agrees with Stahlke (1970) and Bamgbose's (1974) observation

that a common characteristic of SVC is that a series of verbs share the same structural subject or a common subject in the surface structure. This is demonstrated in example (41) in Omuanwa.

41) Àdná ⁺tụ́ í⁺mé mụ́ ń⁺nwọ́

PN pregnant (become) pregnant born child

'Adna got pregnant and gave birth to a child'

Example (41) demonstrates that the verbs ⁺*tụ́* 'pregnant (become)' and *mụ́* 'give (birth)' share the same obligatory external argument *Àdná.* This is not exactly the case with the internal argument. While certain verbs may share common internal argument, others may obligatorily take separate argument. Examples of SVC with shared internal argument are given in (42c) and (43c):

42a) Úrù sì jí

PN cook yam

'Uru cooked the yam'

b) Úrù rì jí

PN eat yam

'Uru ate the yam'

c) Úrù sì jí rí

PN cook yam eat

'Uru cooked the yam and ate'

*d) Úrù sì jí rí jí

PN cook yam eat yam

'Uru cooked the yam and ate the yam'

43a) Ọ gbù á⁺nọ̀

3SG kill animal

'S/he   killed the animal'

b)   Ọ   nyé   m   á⁺nộ

       3SG   give   1SG   animal

       'S/he gave the animal to me'

c)   Ọ   gbù   á⁺nộ   nyé   m

       3SG   kill   animal   give   1SG

       'S/he killed the animal and gave me'

       *d) Ọ   gbù   á⁺nộ   nyé   m á⁺nộ

       3SG   kill   animal   give   1SG   animal

       'S/he killed the animal and gave me the animal'

From the serial verb constructions in (42c) and (43c), we observe a deletion transformation of the substantive object of (42b) and (43b). A repetition of the objects *jí* 'yam' and *á⁺nộ* 'animal' of (42b) and (43b) in serial constructions would render them unnatural or ungrammatical as respectively demonstrated in (42d) and (30d). A similar situation is reported in Echie by Nwogu (2005). Note, however, that the indirect object of (43b) is retained in (43c).

As opposed to the preceding sentences, examples (44) - (45) in Omuanwa demonstrate serial constructions in which the verbs in a series take separate internal argument.

44a)   Àị̀   jǐ   ḿmà   kpé   m̀bàlàkà

       1PL   use   knife   peel   cassava

       (We used knife to peel the cassava)

        'We peeled the cassava with knife'

*b)   Àị̀   jǐ   ḿmà   kpé …

       1PL   use   knife   peel

'We used the knife to peel …'

45) Wè   jǐ   ọ́gnù   kpá   úsnè

3PL   use   hoe   plant peper

(They used the hoe to plant the pepper)

'They planted the pepper with hoe'

*b)   Wè   jǐ   ọ́gnù   kpá …

3PL   use   hoe   plant

'They used the hoe to plant …'

The verbs *jǐ* 'use' and *kpé* 'peel' take the separate objects *ḿmà* 'knife' and *m̀bàlàkà* 'cassava', respectively in (44a). The same applies to the *jǐ* 'use' and *kpá* 'plant' in (45a). A deletion of the second object as in (44b) and (45b) render the construction incomplete or rather ungrammatical.

Semantic Types of SVC in Ikwere

SVC has been classified into different types based on their semantic notions. Just as scholars like Emenanjo (1978; 2015), Ikoro (1996), Kari (2003), Nwogu (2005), etc. have identified various types of SVC in languages such as Igbo, Kana, Degema, Echie, etc., respectively, Martins (2010) observes the comparative, instrumental, manner, accompanimental, direction and simultaneity as the semantic types of SVCs in Ikwere. In addition to these, the present paper records the benefactive and sequential SVCs in the language. The following sub-sections present the SVC types in Ikwere.

Comparative SVC
Generally, comparative constructions used to express degree of comparisons do not always involve serial verb construction in Ikwere as sentences (46) - (48) demonstrate.

46) Mé   ⁺ká   ị́   n'   é⁺lú

1SG   surpass   2SG   PREP   up

'I am taller than you'

47) ị̀   làrà   ńnè   í

2SG   resemble   mother   2SG

'You resemble your mother'

48)   Ọ̀   znó̱-ká-lá   á   n'   é⁺lú

3SG   grow-surpass-PERF 3SG   PREP   up

'S/he has grown taller than him/her'

Sentences (46) and (48) reflect equative comparison, while (48) depicts non-equative comparison, which are not expressed with serial verb construction.

Constructions that involve verbs in series are used to show comparison reflecting assertion. Comparative SVC involve comparisons where the quality, size, ability, etc., of an entity exceed that of the other. While the initial verb may or may not be marked with -rV assertive suffix in the language, the non-initial verb, is restricted to the verb *ka.* The English equivalent of *ka* is 'surpass', 'exceed', 'be more or greater than' and in dialects such as Obio, it is always expressed with the -rV assertive suffix, whereas in others such as Omuanwa, *ka* may, in addition, combine with the root of the initial verb as shown in examples (49) - (50) in Obio and (51) - (52) in Omuanwa:

49)   Ézè   tò-rù   ògólógó   ká-rụ́   Ụ́chè

PN   grow-ASERT tall   surpass-ASERT   PN

(Eze grow tall surpass Uche)

'Eze is taller than Uche'

50)   Á⁺má   kâ   tùgà   bụ́kó   ká-rụ́   kị̱⁺yárí

Knife   D(PR)   sharp(become)   sharp   surpass-ASERT D(DS)

(This knife is sharp surpass the other one)

'This knife is sharper than that one'

51)   Ádnà   jọ̀-rò   ń⁺jô   ká-rí   ńnè   á

PN   ugly(become)-ASERT   ugly surpass-ASERT
mother 3SG

(Adna is ugly surpass her mother)

'Ada is uglier than her mother'

52)   Ádnà jò̖-rò   ń⁺jô̖ jó̖-ká ńnè á

PN   ugly(become)-ASERT   ugly ugly-surpass   mother
3SG

(Adna is ugly ugly surpass her mother)

'Ada is uglier than her mother'

Instrumental SVC
In instrumental SVC, the subject NP of the first verb causes a
change in the physical state of the object NP of the second verb with
the aid of an instrument (i.e. the object NP of the first verb). In
Ikwere, the initial verb *jĭ* 'use' or 'hold' is used to introduce the
instrument that causes the change as example (53) in Omuanwa
demonstrates:

53)   Wè   jĭ   ḿmà kpé   égbúkéré

3PL   use   knife peel   cassava

(They used the knife to peel the cassava)

'They peeled cassava with the knife'

Manner SVC
The manner SVC expresses the pattern of behaviour by which an
action is carried out. Like the instrumental SVC, the manner SVC
uses the initial verb *jĭ* to introduce the mode by which the action
process or state of the non-initial verb is realized. Examples are
given in (54) - (55) in Obio:

54)   O̖   jĭ-rù   ághú̖ghò   bá   ézè

3SG   use-FT   trick   rich(become) wealth

(S/he used trick to become wealthy)

'S/he became wealthy deceitfully'

55) Ézè   jǐ-rù   ọ́chí   zné   Lagos

    PN   use-FT   leg   go   Lagos

    (Eze used leg to go Lagos)

    'Eze went to Lagos on foot'

Accompanimental SVC
Accompanimental SVC has the meaning of how one event or state of affair is accompanied or led by another. Thus the subject NP of the first verb is led by the object NP of the same verb to some location. In Ikwere, accompanimental is mainly expressed with the initial verb *snò* follow' as demonstrated in (56) in Omuanwa:

56) Ọ̀   snò   ényǐ   á   jné   á⁺hiá

    3SG   follow friend 3SG   go   market

    (S/he followed his/her friend to go to the market)

    'S/he went to the market with his/her friend'

Directional SVC
The directional SVC expresses the direction of the motion of an entity. In other words, it shows the movement of the subject NP toward or away from the speaker. An example is given in (57) in Omuanwa:

57) Ọ̀   gbà   ásọ́   gbá-hié   ọ́rò

    3SG   run   run   run-return   home

    (S/he ran and returned home)

    'S/he ran home'

Benefactive SVC
The benefactive SVC demonstrates that the object NP benefits from the action carried out by the subject NP. In other words, it expresses an indirect objective relationship or range of meaning equal to that covered by 'to' or 'for' in English. In her treatment of compound verbs

in Ikwere, Weje (2007:106) uses the term dative in discussing benefactive SVC. An example from Omuanwa is given in (58):

58) Ọ̀   sǐ   ńrí   vú⁺té   Ọ́gè

3SG   cook   food   give   PN

(S/he cooked food and gave to Oge)

'She cooked food for Oge'

Sequential SVC
The sequential SVC reflects series of verbs depicting that one action follows the other in a sequence. Thus the subject NP first carries out the action expressed by the initial verb before that of the non-initial one. Example (59) below from Omuanwa indicates that the act of plucking of pear obligatorily precedes that of licking it.

59) Ọ̀   ghò   ùbé   rá

3SG   pluck   pear   lick

'He plucked pear and licked'

Simultaneous SVC
Simultaneous SVC expresses actions that are carried out concurrently by the subject NP. Example (60) demonstrates that the subject NP is singing and cooking at the same time.

60) Ọ́chǐ   gnụ̀-gà   érí   è-sí   ń⁺rí

PN   sing-PROG   song   PPL-cook   food

(Ochi is singing and cooking food)

'Ochi is singing while cooking'

(61) Wè   vù   jí   hié́   ọ́rò

3PL   carry   yam   return   home

(They carried yam and returned home)

'They returned with yam'

Conclusion

This paper has been able to give a fairly comprehensive description of serial verb construction in Ikwere. Evidence from this paper corroborates the following points made by Martins (2010) on SVC in the Obio dialect of Ikwere: First, that the unmarked variety of SVC is typical of the language. Second, that SVC in Ikwere is derived from two or more underlying sentences through a deletion transformation of substantive subject NP and/or place adjunct, substitution of object noun with the appropriate pronoun where necessary. Third, that the semantic types of SVC such as the comparative, instrumental, manner, accompanimental, direction and simultaneity are attested in the language.

Of specific contribution of this paper to knowledge on Ikwere serial verb construction include the following points. The paper observed that up to four verbs can co-occur in a sequence without an intervening object NP particularly with imperative sentences. This does not rule out the fact that some other verbs take obligatory object NP.

Considering Ikwere as an SVO language with an unmarked variety of SVC, the work also stressed that the initial verb is fully marked for tense, aspect or polarity, while the non-initial verb stems are left bare. This further corroborate the fact that language is systematic and rule governed as the deletion of either the tense, aspectual or negative feature of the non-initial verb does not in any way render the construction ungrammatical.

Furthermore, the study noted that similar to Emenanjo's (2015) observation in Igbo, a related Igboid language, verbs in series in Ikwere may be used to reflect a single semantic notion, where the first signals the commencement of an action, while the second and the third reflect the culmination of the action.

More so, the paper identified in Ikwere the phenomenon of sharing characteristic of serial verb constructions in languages like Degema (Kari 2007) where SVC is significant. Thus in Ikwere, verbs in series share features such as tense and aspect, negation and argument.

In addition to the comparative, instrumental, manner, accompanimental, directional and simultataneity SVCs identified by

Martins (2010) as the semantic types of SVC in the language, this paper further identified the benefactive and sequential SVCs as existing in Ikwere.

This work demonstrates the fact that serial verb construction exists in Ikwere as in most African languages in general and the Igboid group in particular. It is expected that this work will not only serve as a contribution to the body of knowledge in SVC studies but will serve as basis for comparison with other related and non-related languages in linguistic studies.

Abbreviations
The following abbreviations are used in this paper:

1PL = First person plural, 1SG = First person singular, 2PL = Second person plural, 2SG = Second person singular, 3PL =Third person plural, 3SG = Third person singular, 3SGSCL = Third person singular subject clitic, ASERT = Assertive, AUX = Auxiliary, CAUS = Causative, CONN= Connective, D (DS) = Distal demonstrative, DF = Definite future, D(PR) = Proximal Demonstrative,

FT = Factative, FUT = Future, PERF = Perfect, PN = Personal name, PPL = Participial, PROG = Progressive, INCEP = Inceptive, INST = Instrumental, HAB= Habitual, NEG =Negation, UNF =Unfulfilled, -rV = -rV assertive suffix, SOV = Subject object verb, SVO = Subject verb object, SVC = Serial verb construction, NP =Noun phrase, PAST =Past tense marker, PN = Personal name, PREP = Preposition, REC = Reciprocal, REP = Repetition

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