

On the serial verb construction (svc) in ìyínnó¹

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Abstract: The derivation of SVC has been an unresolved issue in African linguistics. It has led to series of postulations and tough structures from one generative theory to the other. Taiwo (2009) and Abimbola (2014) gave a beacon of hope towards the derivation proposing that there is one and only one clause structure projected. A brilliant proposal as it were which raises some other questions like feature roaming (Angitso, 2013), consequently resulting to convergent derivation with theta unassigned and unvalued features. Observing these inadequacies, the present paper proposed a revision of Abimbola (2014) on the bases LF-residue of shared DP object jointly selected from the Lexicon but not legible at PF interface. The LF-residue caters for the valuation of the roaming features and assignment of theta to the residue object without flouting Inclusiveness Condition. Only the linearized copy of the DP object is legible at the PF interface.

Keywords: LF-residue; Feature roaming; Inclusiveness Condition.

Resumo: A derivação SVC tem sido uma questão não resolvida para a linguística africana, o que levou a uma série de postulações e estruturas rígidas de uma teoria gerativa para outra. Taiwo (2009) e Abimbola (2014) deram uma luz de esperança em relação a derivação, propondo que existe uma única estrutura oracional projetada. Essa brilhante proposta levantou questões como *roaming features* (Angitso, 2013), resultando, conseqüentemente, na derivação convergente com recursos teta não atribuídos e não valorados. Observando essas inadequações, o presente trabalho propõe uma revisão de Abimola (2014) sobre as bases de resíduo LF de objeto DP compartilhado, selecionados em conjunto a partir do léxico, mas ilegível numa interface PF. Os resíduos LF fornecem a valoração dos *roaming features* e a atribuição de teta ao objeto resíduo sem desrespeitar a condição de inclusão. Apenas a cópia linearizada do objeto DP é legível na interface PF.

Palavras-chave: LF-resíduo; feature roaming; condição de inclusão.

Introduction

Serial verbal construction (hence, SVC) or verb serialization is one of the features of most West African languages, manifested in many Nigerian languages in the Kwa language family. SVC has been variously defined in the literature and we shall not attempt to give a definition farfetched. SVC consists of “a string of at least two verbs and their relevant complements, where applicable, with the verbs sharing just one subject without any sign of coordination” (Ilori 2010:215). It has been studied in detailed by most linguists in various languages in

¹ ìyínnó is a dialect of Àíká, a language spoken in Akoko-Edo, Edo State of Nigeria. The language is one of the highly endangered languages in the country today.

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Nigeria however Ìyínnó has not enjoyed linguists' attention. In view of this we draw heavily our examples from Ìyínnó. Consider the following examples:

(Yorùbá)

(1a) [_{TP} Olá raomi mu]

[_{TP} Ola buywater drink]

"Ola bought water and drank it"

(1b) [_{TP} Olá gbé ajá náà tà]

[_{TP} Ola carrydog the sell]

"Ola carried the dog and sold it"

(Ìyínnó)

(2a) [_{TAgrP} Olú ò gá yá wù Òjọ]³

[_{TAgrP} OluTAgr go greet v Ojo]

"Olu went to say hello to Ojo"

(2b) [_{TAgrP} Á gí ṣená waya ńbọ]

[_{TAgrP} they v want come greet us]

"They want to come and greet us"

In the examples above, *rà* "buy" and *mu* "drink" in (1a) underlyingly have both *omi* "water" as their objects which shows that their accusative cases were discharged, and consequently valued. Similarly, *gbé* "carry" has an object on whose accusative case was valued and deleted; in this case it is *ajá* "dog". *Tà* "sell" requires a DP complement, which is *ajá* "dog" in this case as well. But computation is lazy. Thus, economy of effort would not realize *tà* "sell" object DP overtly.

It is important to know, however, that the verbs in (1a&b) and (2a&b) share the same tense, aspect and negation features. In this connection, scholars have proposed different structures to account for the derivation of SVC. In fact, Ilori's (2010) proposal shows that the derivations of SVC types are different. In this work, our concern is on the derivation of SVC through an empirically sound

3 TAgrP is a merger of both the T0 and Agr0 heads as proposed in Abimbola (2014) for Ìyínnó based on the difficult situation for T0 and Agr0 to inherit features handed over by the C⁰. Neither of these two heads could be the head in the split-I analysis for Ìyínnó, thus, the need for the merger of the two functional heads.

argument premised on Principle of Full Interpretation, Earliness Condition, feature valuation and roaming, and Inclusiveness condition. In the next section we quickly examine Phase syntax in Minimalist Program (MP).

Phase syntax: a quick view

A lot of theories have been developed in the Generative tradition and the current theory is the Minimalist Program (MP) on which this research is based. MP, a hydra headed theory, in its present outlook assumes the Phase derivation building syntactic structures through Merge.

According to Chomsky (2005:5), Phases are independence at the interface, and are also propositional. Phases are the subarrays of the numeration. i.e. some chunk or part of the numeration. He sees Phase as the lexical subarrays, which is a chunk of the numeration and it is exhaustible. When a lexical subarray is exhausted, the derivation continues with the next just to minimize the memory in use i.e. the memory may forget some part of the derivation which are said to have undergone transfer while the other part of the derivation is said to be the active memory, which builds the next phase. Similarly, Hornstein, Nunes and Grohmann (2005:355) observe that the computational system activates a subarray δ_1 from the numeration and builds a phase PH, using all the lexical items listed in $\delta \dots$ this means that the Numeration must be exhausted for the derivation of a syntactic structure. A phase is complete *if* the head of the phase is saturated. Richards (2010) says that a phasal array defines the areas where merge is predictable. Computation is lazy and has to minimize its activity which means that economy of efforts is usually set in motion in order to reduce computational burden. In the next section, we focus on the types of SVC proposed by Abimbola (2014) for Ìyínnó.

Types of SVC in Ìyínnó

It is pertinent to quickly look at the types of SVC so far proposed in the literature. There are various classifications of SVC although only Abimbola (2014) has classified SVC in Ìyínnó into types. There are other types in literature like Yorùbá. On Yorùbá, Bamgbose (1983, 1990),

cited in Abimbola (2014), classify SVC into; Sequential, Consequential, Modifying, Durational and Causative SVC. Taiwo (2009) agrees with Bamgbose's classification but he does not accept Modifying SVC as a class. Angitso (2013) renamed Modifying SVC class as Manner SVC. Déchaine (1993), cited in Ilori (2010), classifies SVC into types based on the argument structure; (i) Benefactive SVC, (ii) Instrumental SVC, (iii) Resultative SVC, and (iv) Sequential SVC. Ilori (2010) adds Causative SVC to Déchaine's classification. According to Abimbola (2014), there are three types of SVC so far identified in Ìyínnó which are: Sequential, Causative and Complex SVC types. His classification is adopted in this work and they are discussed briefly below.

Sequential SVC: The action or event coded by the first verb precedes that of the second verb. Examples include:

(3a) [_{TAgrP} Olu ó wárahún]
 [_{TAgrP} OluTAgrquicklygo:NF]
 "Olu went quickly"

(3b) [_{TAgrP} Olú ò síó fíenù]
 [_{TAgrP} OluTAgr ran returned]
 "Olu ran back"

Causative SVC: This class involves the first verb causing the action or event triggered by the second verb. Examples are:

(4a) [_{TAgrP} Olú ò síso jì ránhín]
 [_{TAgrP} OluTAgr pounded yam sold]
 "Olu pounded yam for sale."

(4b) [_{TAgrP} Olú ò rá wá jeré]
 [_{TAgrP} OluTAgrvcome yesterday]
 "Olu arrived yesterday"

Complex SVC: This subclass of SVC is regarded as complex because the first verb does not occur independently in a clause⁴. It is

⁴ This is the class so-classified as Modifying SVC in the literature (see Bamgbose, 1983 among others). The concept "modifying", under minds the reason why any verb should be called a verb. If a verb modifies another verb it should be regarded as performing an adverb function.

assumed that there is nothing like modifying SVC. Examples are given below.

(5a) [_{TAgrP} Á dá wá ìsìnà àláfià ùbọ́]
 [_{TAgrP} they will come ask peace us]
 "They will come and ask about our wellbeing"

(5b) [_{TAgrP} à gí ṣená waya ùbọ́]
 [_{TAgrP} they impf want come greet us]
 "They want to come and greet us"

On the earlier SVC derivational proposals

For the most part debated in literatures, the derivation of SVC generated a lot of controversies among scholars. Opinions are polarized into two schools of thoughts. Multi-source hypothesis/school is on the one hand and the Mono-source hypothesis/school on the other hand.

The Multi-source hypothesis/school, assumes that SVCs are derived from two different underlying sentences. But the two sentences would have identical object DPs such that would make their object identical at the surface derivation. The school assumes that SVC derivation is either through some transformational rules like Equi-NP deletion, object deletion where applicable or through blending of sentences together. For (1a) (6a&b) would be the two underlying structures according to this school.

(1a) [_{TP} Olá raomi mu] (Yorùbá)
 [_{TP} Ola buywater drink]
 "Ola bought water and drank it"

(6a) [_{TP} Olá raomi]
 [_{TP} Olá buy:pst water]
 "Ola bought water"

(6b) [_{TP} Olá mu omi]
 [_{TP} Olá drink:pst water]
 "Ola drank water"

The Mono-source hypothesis/school assumes that derivation of

SVC is from one and only one underlying sentence. Because, some verbs found in the Modifying SVC class do not usually occur in simple or mono-clausal sentences. Thus, the claim of two underlying sentences holds no water in this school. No matter how brilliant this may present itself, it has several shortcomings.

The major shortcoming of these two schools as predicated in the Minimalist view is the major starting point in the derivation of structures for the two schools is defective. One is claimed to be the D-structure and another, S-structure. There is no any underlying and surface representations in MP as derivation are said to proceed in the narrow syntax and or through the covert syntax interfaces from the subarray. The idea of bringing two different sentences from the "underlying" representation to the "surface" representation before they can come together to derive a single SVC through the application of transformational rules is not welcome in MP. In MP, derivation proceeds through merger of Lexical Items (LI) from the numeration or lexical subarrays without assuming any theory internal imposed levels. Merge groups two LIs at a time to form a syntactic object. By implication, the assumptions of the two schools aforementioned above would only support claims in Government and Binding theory (GB) and other previous models of generative theory without predicting how language faculty really behaves. If the processing of one singular construction is too complex, children would avoid it because the phases want to derive structures and relax in its efforts.

Constructing the SVC architecture

Syntactic structural building processes need not be cumbersome as assumed in earlier works. In the Phases syntax of MP, derivations of syntactic structures start from the subarrays of the numeration therefore eliminating the issue D- and S-structures and also the consideration of the merged sentences' sources. One important point which could point us to how syntactic structures are derived, particularly SVC, is to look at their structural architectures. In this section, we examine how SVC are projected in Ìyínnó so that the issues in the derivation of SVC in general may be resolved our analysis.

Scholars like Oyelaran (1982), Bamgbose (1983) in Abimbola

(2014), Ilori (2010) and Taiwo (2009) among many others have postulated different SVC constructions ranging from deletion transformations, substitutions and minimalist move over merge derivations. As rightly observed by Taiwo (2009), there is only one clause architecture projected through merger of constituents headed by one functional head parametrically lexicalized differently from one language to the other. Taiwo further asserts that the projected clause structure has multiple lower projections like TAspP, AgrO etc. But we depart from Taiwo (2009) on this latter assumption. Following Abimbola (2014), on the basis of the projected clause, SVC structure has one and only one projected clause structure. This means that the claim that the derivation has all these “multiple lower projections” because they are assumed to be from many underlying sentences just like the underlying assumption of the Multi-source school does not hold any water.

On Taiwo (2009) we note that the external DP moves cyclically checking features but these features are not there nor implied in the construction except a highly complex structure. In MP, the basic foundation of movement is motivated mainly for valuing uninterpretable features and deleting those unvalued. Invariably, without unvalued features there can be no movement. Lexical item is frozen in place if it bears no unvalued features. If the external DP has to move, something must motivate the movement. If the two VPs merged and project different TAspP, AgrO, etc., then, the assumption hasn’t changed at all. For some examined languages in the literature, internal DPs are sandwiched within the verbs in serialization. According to Abimbola (2014), data found in Ịyínnó is quite different from those observed in Yorùbá or Ào dialect and all other languages displaying SVC. Internal DPs are stranded clause finally. Consider the examples below.

(7a) [_{TAgrP} Á dá wá ìsìnà àláfíà ùbó]
 [_{TAgrP} they POS come ask wellbeing us]
 “They will come and ask us about our wellbeing”

(7b) [_{TAgrP} Olú ò síso juùyán]
 [_{TAgrP} OluTAgr pound eat yam]
 “Olu pound yam and ate it”

(7c) [_{TAgrP} Olú ò gá yá wù Òjó]
 [_{TAgrP} OluTAgr go greet vOjo]
 "Olu went to say hello to Ojo"

(7d) [_{TP} Á gí sèná waya úbọ́]
 [_{TP} they v want come greet us]
 "They want to come and greet us"

In Ìyínnó SVC, two or more verbs share one external argument and may have the same internal argument. The DP objects usually are always stranded clause finally irrespective of the number of the verbs in sequence.

On the Abimbola's (2014) minimalist SVC derivation

Abimbola (2014) proposes a derivation through Merge. As implied from his analysis, Case, an uninterpretable unvalued feature, of two verbs is not valued. Although the derivation is adjudged convergent, the case feature is still left unvalued in the derivation and transferred to the interfaces. This is captured in Angitso (2013) as Feature Roaming. A roaming feature could crash a derivation at the interfaces even if it is adjudged convergent.

(8a) [_{TAgrP} ò wà ùmó wá rẹ́s]
 [_{TAgrP} TAggr come water v prep-me]
 "He brought me some water"

(8b) [_{TAgrP} Òjó ó kùmà rá wá ìjèrẹ́]
 [_{TAgrP} OjoTAgr had v come yesterday]
 "Ojo had arrived yesterday"

Abimbola (2014) assumes that SVC has only one clause structure projected for all the verbs in serialization. He proposes that all the verbs in series are merged in the VP internal, but only the highest verb in the string is raised to adjoin the null light verb for lexicalization due to its strong features so that it will be legible and interpretable

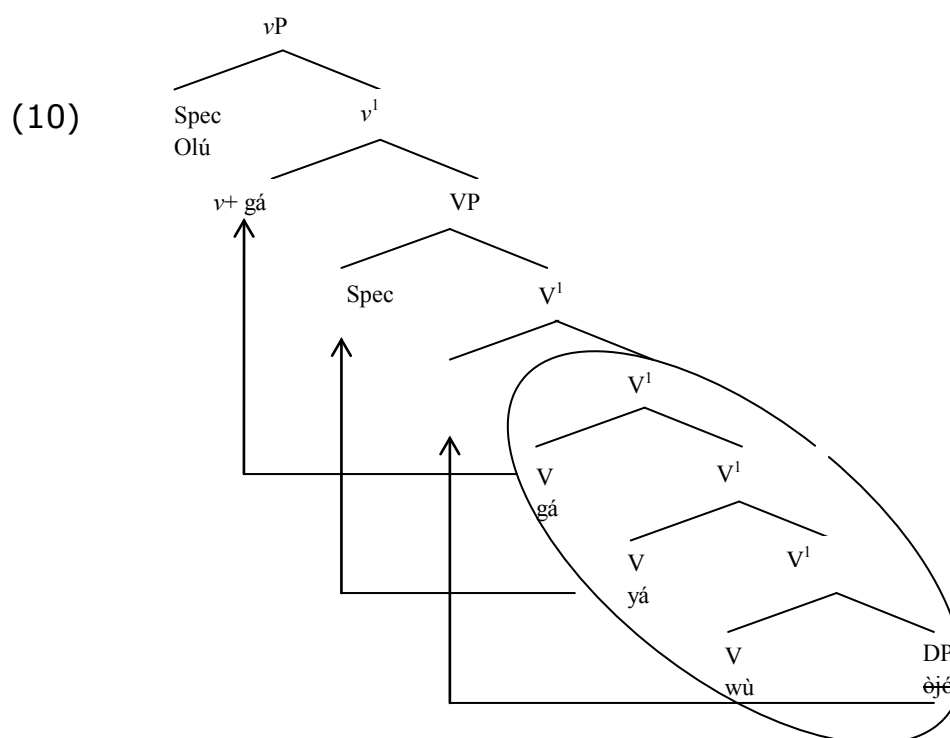
at the twin interfaces, PF and LF. The light verb has to be lexicalized so as to complete the vP phase. He maintains that all the verbs have overt realization at the interfaces. Abimbola (2014) also claims that all the verbs share the same tense, aspectual and some other features which do not require individual verb's projection to have separate AspP, TP, NegP, etc. In his view, the verbs are merged together and not from certain separate different pre-syntactic computation and this reduces the burden on the computation. Similarly, it does not imply any carryover of the assumptions in the multi-source school.

The structure of SVC in Ȳyínnò

The internal DP moved to [Spec,VP] to value accusative case feature. The movement strands the whole verbs in series sentence finally. The highest verb moves to adjoin to the null causative verb because of its strong feature. This means that only the highest copy of the moved constituents will be visible at the PF for linearization. But in order to realize the basic world order, Abimbola (2014) proposes that Earliness Condition (EC), stated below as (9), should be relaxed so that the whole domain of the highest V to move to [Spec, VP] before transfer to the interface and projecting multi-Spec for VP. His proposed derivation is given below as (10) using (7c) repeated below for illustration.

- (9) Earliness Condition (EC)
A linguistic operation must apply as early in a derivation as possible.
(Abimbola 2014; **what page?**)

- (7c) [_{TAgrP}Olú ò gá yá wù Òjò]
[_{TAgrP}OluTAgr go greet vOjo]
"Olu went to say hello to Ojo"



Abimbola (2014): Some inadequacies and beyond

Although Abimbola (2014) is a brilliant contribution towards developing a model of derivation for SVC in general, there are several theoretical observations in the work which we shall explain and use to advance arguments in favour of a new proposal.

As observed in the analysis, all the verbs in the series have uninterpretable unvalued case waiting to be valued and deleted in the numeration. According to Angitso (2013), an uninterpretable feature which is not valued and deleted in the course of the derivation would lead to feature roaming. That is a formal situation where a feature which ought to be deleted is not deleted, and the derivation is adjudged convergent. As evident in the derivation above, only the lowest verb accusative case is valued. The derivation contains two other instances of [Acc]. We propose that no feature roaming is allowed for a convergent derivation so that the derivation will not crash at the interfaces.

The semantic load of the verbs in serialization shows that all the verbs are inherently transitive. Invariably, they require internal DPs. As evident in Abimbola (2014) SVC structural analyses, the semantic

features of these verbs in serialization are not considered. If we consider (7b) for instance (repeated below for ease of reference), *síso* “pound” and *ju* “eat” requires what is pounded and eaten which is *ùyán* “yam”. In this connection, the verbs have internal arguments.

(7b) [_{TAgrP} Olú ò síso juùyan]
[_{TAgrP} OluTAgr pound eat yam]
“Olu pound yam and ate it”

However, only a copy of the two DPs would be linearized. That is why (11) below crashed at the LF and PF interfaces following the Inclusiveness Condition in (12).

(11) * [TAgrP Olú ò síso ùyán juùyan]

(12) Inclusiveness Condition

The LF object λ must be built only from the features of the Lexical Item N.

(Hornstein, Nunes and Grohmann 2005)

Only a copy can be linearized, usually that one is always stranded clause finally. If we do not strand it clause finally, the derivation will crash and if we do not show the semantic features of the verbs, our analysis will run contrary to the principle of Inclusiveness Condition as defined above in (12).

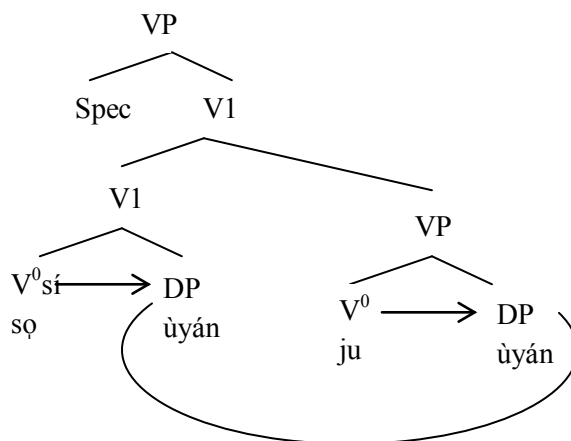
In the next section we turn to the two proposals for the derivation of serial verbal construction within the minimalist point of view building on the premises of Abimbola (2014).

Proposal 1: Cyclic movement of the object DP

Our view here is not completely novel as our arguments draw strengths from Abimbola’s (2014) assumption that there is only one clause structure projected in the SVC and also from the shortcomings of his analysis examined above (under 3.3). One way of looking at the derivation is to assume that the object DP is the same in all its occurrences. Only that it has to move for the same purpose, from the

lowest verb where it enters the derivation, cyclically to the next verb and valuing the required features on the verb, in this [Acc-case], and itself as it moves upward in the structure as shown below in (13).

(13)



In (13) above the slight curve shows the movement of the DP, *ùyán*, from one verb to the other. This movement would proceed irrespective of the number of verbs in serialization.

But a careful examination of the proposal would reveal that the [Acc-case] which is going to be valued would at first be valued randomly. i.e. the feature [Acc-case] is available on the lowest verb valued and deleted would also be valued by the same DP. This seems problematic and the DP would become too saturated. It will contain more than one instance of the same feature⁵. This is not possible because LIs usually contain all the necessary features for them to project in the derivation maximally. Once a feature has been valued and deleted, it LI would not contain it because it will be illegible at the interface.

Secondly, cyclic valuation of [Acc-case] would violate Activity Condition stated below in (14). If a DP does not have any unvalued feature it is frozen in place for any other activity. i.e. inaccessible for further use in the computation.

⁵ This assumption may result to "case erasure". Case erasure simply refers to removal of the [Acc-case] on the DP in readiness for the assignment of another case feature from the other verbs higher up in the tree. If case is erased, what would become of the theta previously assigned under merge? This would become a very big issue as well which should not be. It will become more like the one we have earlier criticized. i.e. feature roaming and full interpretation of these LIs would not be given accurate representation.

(14) Activity Condition

A goal must bear some uninterpretable features
[otherwise it is frozen in place]
(Abimbola 2014:36).

Since the object DP [Acc-case] has been valued, and it bears no other instances of that same feature, it becomes inactive for any other activity. The [Acc-case] of other verbs are left roaming since there is no any other DP available in the numeration.

Proposal 2: Containment of LF-residue and visibility

In view of the fact that cyclic onward valuation of accusative case feature is not possible as argued above, another plausible consideration for the valuation of roaming features is to go back to the Numeration. That is, the Numeration defined the number of the set of lexical items made available for a given derivation and whatever is not specified in the numeration cannot be introduced to it at another level, it should be specified in it and linearization would take care of those legible at the interfaces. If there is a dummy DP contained in the subarray of the numeration there would be no violation of inclusiveness condition, activity condition, full interpretation and no feature roaming would be visible in any SVC structure. So, we propose that in the subarray, an abstract element copy of the object DP (which is the linearized DP) and the LF-residue are selected into the numeration so as to value the [case] on the verb. The semantic load of individual verbs in the SVC would be given Full Interpretation. Consequently, all unvalued features would be valued. The residue contained in the subarray is an instance of the LI which is only legible at the LF interface as specified by their v-feature shown below would not be linearized because it is a copy;

(15a) [_{TAgrP} Olú ò [vPsíṣo ùyán]]
[_{TAgrP} OluTAgr [vPpound yam]]
"Olu pounded yam"

(15b) [TAgrPOLú ò̄ [vPjuùyán]]
 [TAgrPOLuTAgr [vP eat yam]]
 "Olu ate yam"

As specified above in (9) Earliness Condition holds that a process should apply as early in a derivation. This proposal eliminates the delay process in the verbs delaying valuation of their accusative case feature [and theta] which is not possible supposing they occur in minimal clauses. As shown above, the semantic feature of *síso*, "pound" requires an internal DP on whom the accusative case is discharged. Similarly, *ju* "eat" requires an internal DP. Both of them are satisfied in (15a&b) mono-clausal constructions above. Similarly, the principle of Full Interpretation holds that a lexical item is projected with all the required features necessary for its interpretation satisfied above in (15a&b).

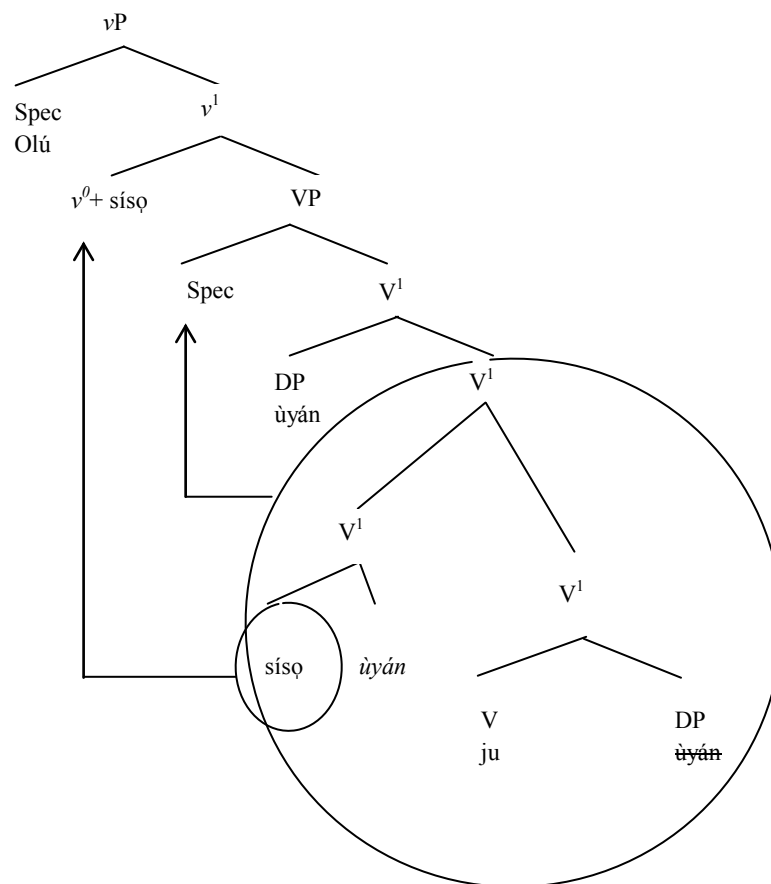
For the derivation to satisfy Full Interpretation, the Inclusiveness Condition has to be revised to accommodate the LF-residue in the numeration. Because the abstract dummy element is selected with the object DP into the numeration from the Lexicon to receive the [Acc-case] of other verbs in serialization sharing the same object such that will be legible at the LF but not visible to the PF for linearization. We propose that inclusiveness condition should be reviewed so as to accommodate the LF-residue as stated in (16) below. For instance, the numeration of (7b) would be as (17) below.

(16) Inclusiveness Condition (revision)

The LF object λ must be built only from the features of the Lexical Item N [which may include instances of LF-residue visible at LF; not legible at PF].

(17) {Olú1 ò̄1 síso1 ju1 ùyán1 ùyán1}

(18)



As shown in (18) above, the verb *síso*, “pound” is raised to adjoined the light verb for interpretive purpose. Prior to that, *ju* “eat”, in external merge, merged with the object DP *ùyán* “yam”, to derive V^1 which is a syntactic object, and its theta features were assigned but raised to Spec, V^1 where the [Acc-case] was valued. The derivation proceeded by merging with *síso*, “pound” which assigned it [Acc-case] to the LF-residue *DP ùyán*, its theta were assigned and the case feature was also checked and frozen in place. Consequently, its feature cannot roam in the derivation if convergent. Both the two syntactic objects were merged and the derivation yields V^1 . Merging the overt object DP with the V^1 at spec, V^1 and it projects the derivation to VP. But the remnant moved from the VP internal project yet another spec leading to multi-spec in the VP and thus derives the surface order. All features were valued and the domain of the light verb is ready for transfer to the interfaces.

At the interface, the LF-residue is only visible at the LF interface and thus satisfied the principle of Full Interpretation of the verb. At

the PF interface however, the LF-residue is not linearized because it is reduced to a copy of the object DP *ùyán* with which it was jointly selected from the Lexicon into the subarray.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have examined the derivation of SVC in Ìyínnó, a dialect of Àíká spoken in Akoko-Edo Local Government area of Edo State in Nigeria. We have shown that SVCs are derived from the same clause structure projected from the subarray as first proposed by Taiwo (2009) and Abimbola (2014). Also, we have shown that a LF-residue of the shared object DP is selected along the legible DP object in the subarray. But the LF-residue is like a dummy item which enables Full Interpretation of a given LI at the LF interface. We argue that the legible DP is consistently stranded sentence finally and remnant movement of the domain of V is moved to spec, V¹ after raising the first verb in series to lexicalize the light.

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