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# Serial Verb Constructions in NAIJA

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1. Naija and Nigerian Pidgin
2. Serial Verb Constructions
3. SVCs in Naija
4. The « no predicate-argument » rule
5. Predicate focus and SVC semantics
6. SVCs as a source of grammaticalisation: TAKE

# Naija and Nigerian Pidgin

- ▶ Naija is different from **Nigerian Pidgin**
- ▶ Nigerian Pidgin = creole = several hundred years old
  - ▶ Faraclas (1989) ;
  - ▶ Elugbe & Omamor (1991) ;
  - ▶ APICS (Faraclas 2013),
  - ▶ Mensah (2011, 2012)
- ▶ Naija = pidgincreole = 60 years old → vernacular
  - ▶ Deuber (2005); Mazzoli (2013, 2015)

# Serial Verb Constructions

→ Definition of SVC:

- “a monoclausal construction consisting of multiple independent verbs with no element linking them and with no predicate–argument relation between the verbs” (Haspelmath 2016: 292)

(1.) Keo (Central Malayo-Polynesian; Baird 2008: 60, cited by Haspelmath 2016:295)

*Ja'o kéma dapu ti'i 'ine*

1 SG build kitchen give mum

'I built a kitchen for mum.' (Lit. 'I built a kitchen (I) gave (it) to mum.')

(2.) Yoruba (Yoruboid, Benue-Congo)

*mo sùn lọ*

PRON sleep go

'I slept deep.'

(3.) Igbo (Igboid, Benue-Congo)

*Akudo zùrù jí síé súọ lóó*

Akudo buy.PST yam cook pound swallow

'Akudo bought yam, cooked (it), pounded (it) and ate (it).'

(4.) Ukwuani (Igboid, Benue-Congo)

*ò bà-nì ìjì kẹ̀ò shí é rì*

3SG peel-PST yam DEF cook 3SG eat

'S/he peeled the yam cooked it and ate (it).'

(5.) Naija (pidgincreole, Nigeria; ABJ\_GWA\_05)

*im*      ***pound***    *am*      ***finish***

3SG.SBJ   verb      3SG.OBJ   verb

'he/she pounded it all.'

- SVC = no subordination or coordination relation between the verbs
- Naija, a language with very little morphology
- Syntactic structures rely heavily on word-order, and often show no cue to differentiate e.g. complementation and coordination from and SVC construction

6 = complementation

(6.) P\_IBA\_31\_93  
*nobody want collect your money.*  
 nobody want collect 2SG.POSS money  
 'Nobody wants to take your money.'

8 = Serial Verb Construction

(8.) P\_ENU\_02\_16  
*I con prepare finish*  
 1SG.SUBJ AUX.CONNS prepare finish  
 I then got completely ready.



- (7.) P\_ENU\_37\_47  
*she just **look** me **smile** **comot**.*  
 She just looked at me, smiled, and came out.

(7) Annotated as coordination in the corpus.

However: cf. Igbo (3) analysed as SVC:

- (3.) Igbo (Igboid, Benue-Congo)  
*Akudo **zùrù** jí **síé** **sùó** **lóó***  
 Akudo buy.PST yam cook pound swallow  
 'Akudo bought yam, cooked (it), pounded (it) and ate (it).'

# SVC AS A COMPARATIVE CONCEPT

Haspelmath (2016: 296)

- *“A serial verb construction is a monoclausal construction consisting of multiple independent verbs with no element linking them and with no predicate–argument relation between the verbs.”*

# SVCs in Naija

10

- ▶ **Verbhood:** SVCs link individual verbs that can be used as full lexical verbs heading an independent clause.
- ▶ **Intonation:** SVCs are pronounced with a single intonation contour, like single-verb clauses.
- ▶ **TAM and polarity:**
  - ▶ SVCs make up a single clause with a single TAM and polarity value having scope over the combination of verbs.
  - ▶ If there is just a single person, tense, mood or negation marker, it occurs in a peripheral position that is, preceding the first verb or following the last verb.
- ▶ **No dependency:** The verbs making up SVCS have no predicate-argument relation.

# VERBHOOD

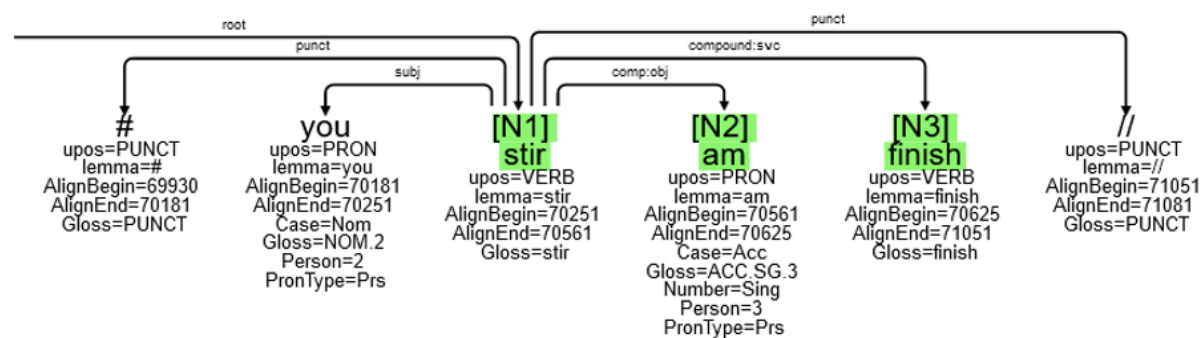
- ▶ Verbs that appear in SVCs normally appear as full verbs heading clauses outside SVCs

## SVC= stir-finish

BEN\_08\_19

*You stir am finish.*

You stir it well.



# Independent verbs

12

ENU\_37\_134

*Sey e go **finish** everyting.*

'He would finish everything.'

KAD\_10\_14

*If you pour your pepper, you **stir**.*

'When you have poured in your pepper, stir it.'

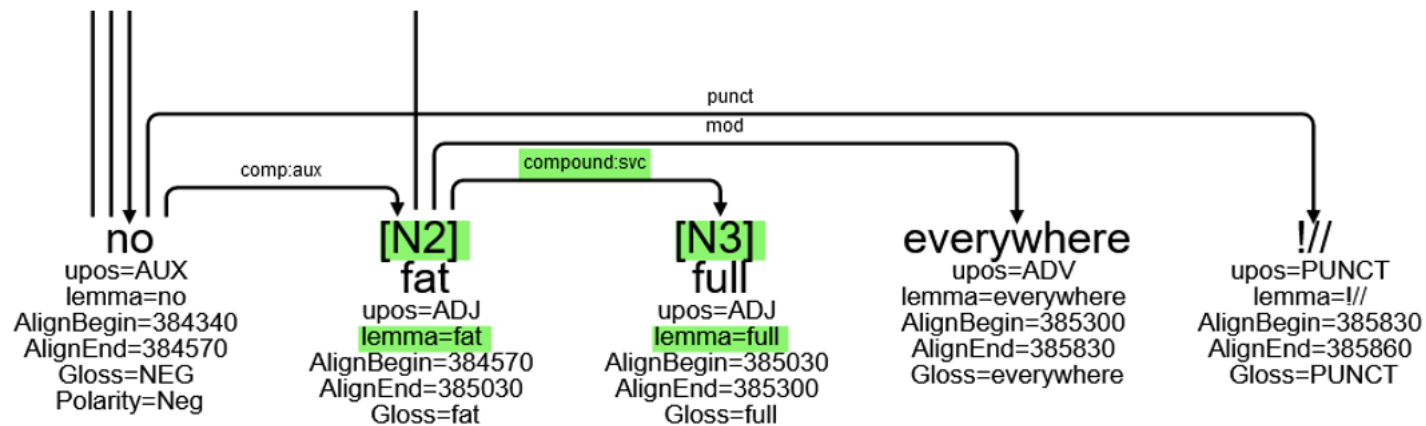
# SVCs and Adjectives

- ▶ The “Verbhood property “ is only partially met by Naija SVCs
- ▶ So-called “Adjectives” or “Property items” appear in SVCs both as V1 & V2

IBA\_03\_107

*But if di woman for house sef try, no **fat full** everywhere!*

‘But if the woman in the house makes an effort, she should not be too fat!’



<b>Adjectival noun modifier</b>	sweet ending	'happy ending' (KAD_03_69)
<b>Adjectival predicative complement</b>	e déy sweet it BE nice	'it is good' (ENU_17_144)
<b>Intransitive verb</b>	di fruit go sweet the fruit FUT nice	'the fruit will be nice' (IBA_31_31)
<b>Transitive verb</b>	di ting no con sweet im belle the thing NEG nice 3SG stomach	'He was pleased with it.' (LAG_11_66)
	my bele sweet me. my stomach nice me	'I am sated.' (lit. 'my stomach satisfies me', IBA_01_35)
<b>Indirect Transitive verb</b>	e no good for your kind body it NEG good for your kind body	'It is not good for your type of body' (PRT_02_9)

Conclusion: in Naija, SVCs concern both Verbs and “verby” adjectives (or Property Items as (Mazzoli 2013) calls them).



# SINGLE INTONATION CONTOUR

16

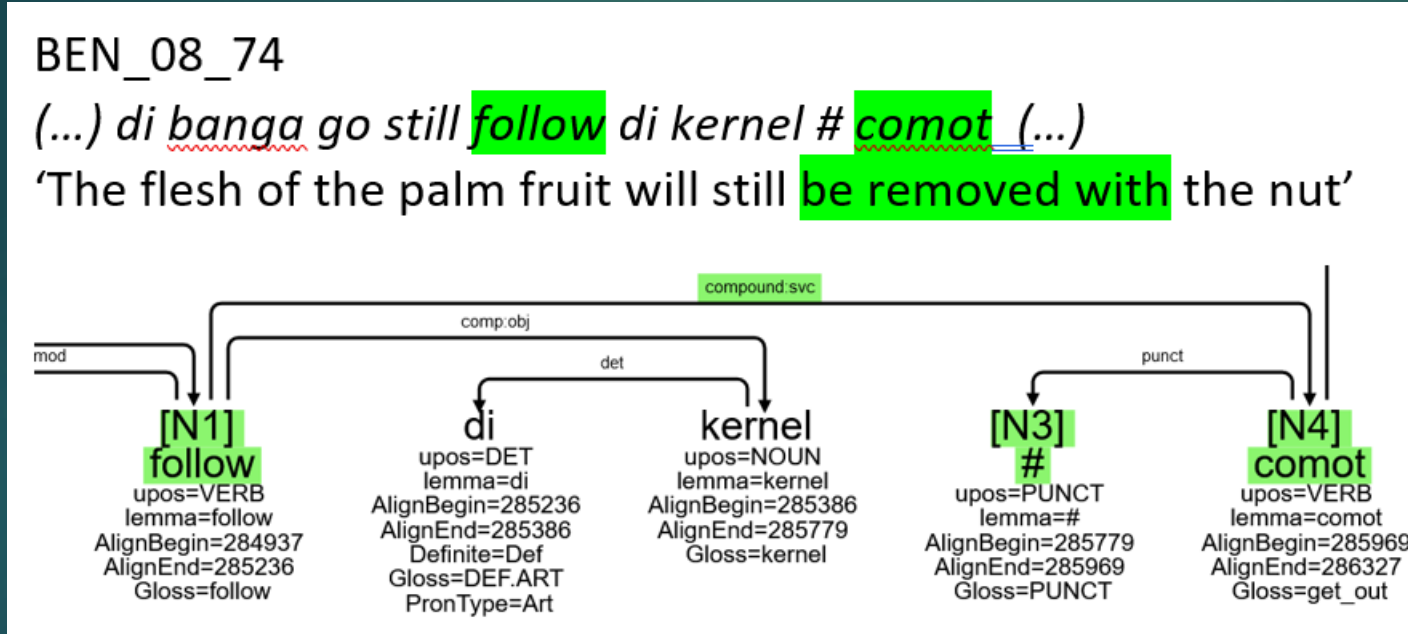
- ▶ SVCs are pronounced with a single intonation contour, and SVCs tend to be differentiated from, e.g., asyndetic coordination by pauses or other prosodic boundaries

WAZA\_05\_81IBA\_03\_107

*you go go di people dem wey get di oil |c talk to dem |c# do agreement wit dem |c# den  
move forward } //*

'You will go to the people who own oil reserves |c talk to them, |c enter into an agreement with them, |c then move forward.'

# Pauses do not necessarily change the intonation contour



- ▶ **However:** No precise prosodic survey has established the prosodic contours of SVCs
- ▶ Need for further research to be able to use prosodic criteria

# Negation & TAM markers

18

- ▶ Negative markers *no* and *never* (Negative Perfective); TAM markers *con* (Sequential), *go* (Future), *don* (Perfect), *dey* (Imperfective), *fit* (ability modality), etc. all appear on the left edge of SVCs, as individual words annotated as AUX

ENU\_17\_86

I **no go fit** cook?

Won't I be able to cook?

IBA\_04\_72

de **no con** dey carry am **go** market //

They were not taking them to the market.

# Negation placement in SVCs

- ▶ The structural position of the negative marker **no** in Naija SVCs is strictly before the first verb in the series, as in (21a).

D\_ABJ\_GWA\_05\_20

<i>we</i>	<b>no</b>	<i>con</i>	<b>sew</b>	<i>am</i>	<b>finish</b>	<b>wear</b>	<i>am.</i>
1PL.SBJ	NEG	CONS	sew	3SG.OBJ	finish	wear	3SG.OBJ

'We **did not** sew it up and wear it.'

The insertion of the negation marker *no* before the V2 (21b) or the V3 (21c) turns the SVC into a coordination, with a prosodic boundary preceding the negative particle *no*

(21.b) V1 neg V2 V3

<i>we</i>	<i>con</i>	<i>sew</i>	<i>am</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>finish</i>	<i>wear</i>	<i>am.</i>
<u>pron</u>	asp	verb	<u>pron</u>	neg	verb	verb	<u>pron</u>

'We sewed it **but** did not finish wearing it.'

(21.c) V1 V2 neg V3

<i>we</i>	<i>con</i>	<i>sew</i>	<i>am</i>	<i>finish</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>wear</i>	<i>am.</i>
<u>pron</u>	asp	verb	<u>pron</u>	verb	neg	verb	<u>pron</u>

'We sewed it up **but** didn't wear it.'

## Placement of *dey* (Imperfective) and *con* (Consecutive) in SVCs

Both are allowed to be repeated or moved away from the pre-V1 position of the other Auxiliaries

ABJ\_GWA\_10\_142

*I con dey follow one man dey work.*

I was working with one guy.

IBA\_01\_53

*(I like) as di teacher take dey dress.*

(I liked the way) the teacher was dressing up.

ABJ\_GWA\_10\_32

*Mah con say meh I take come Abuja, mah I take con start school.*

Then I said I should use it to go to Abuja, to start schooling.

# Conclusion

- ▶ TAM and negation markers (annotated as Auxiliaries in NSC) have a single value and take scope over the whole of the SVC construction (Property #3a). However, as they are not expressed by a single marker, property #3b does not apply: the Imperfective and the Consecutive are allowed to attach to the pre-V2 position in the SVC.

# THE “NO PREDICATE-ARGUMENT RELATION” RULE

23

- ▶ Following Haspelmath, rule #4 (“the verbs making up SVCS have no predicate-argument relation”) excludes completive (25) causative (26) and purposive (27) constructions where we analyse V2 as a predicative complement of V1 with subject raising.



## Completive

(25.) JOS\_21\_136  
*de go just allow you do wetin you wan do.*  
 They'll just let you do what you want to do.

## Causative

(26.) WAZA\_03\_  
*na im make me dey do am.*  
 That's what makes me do it.

## Purposive

(27.) ABJ\_GWA\_03\_119  
*Mah go hustle for your admission letter for you.*  
 'Let me go to look for your admission letter for you.'

# PREDICATE FOCUS AND SVC SEMANTICS

- ▶ Many attempts have been made to classify SVCs according to their semantics (Lovestrand 2018: 31 ff.). We have adopted a classification of SVCs into symmetric vs. asymmetric (Aikhenvald 2006: 21–22). Asymmetrical SVC, that have one open class or unrestricted verb and one closed class or restricted verbics (as in e.g. Yoruba) while symmetric SVCs have no obvious restriction to a particular subclass of verbs.

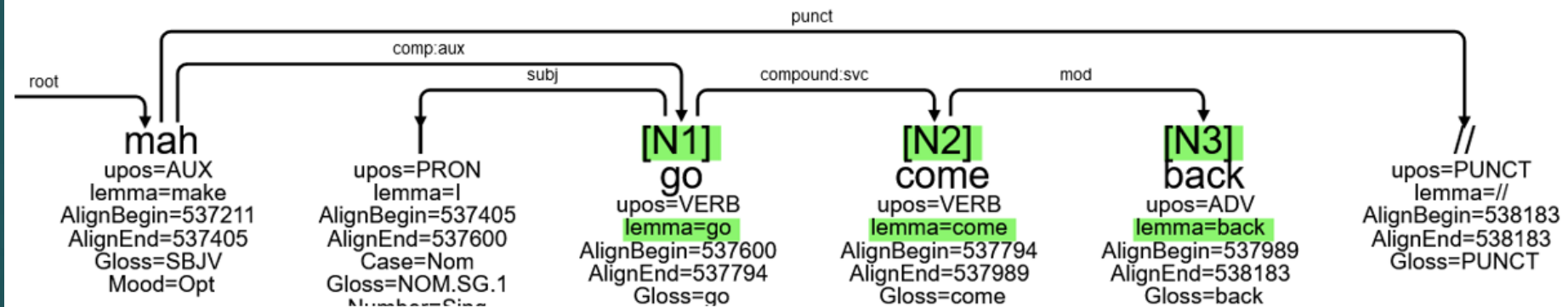
# SYMMETRIC SVCS

- ▶ “a set of (sub)events occurring in a temporal sequence or overlapping”. (Lovestrand 2018: 29). Not common in our corpus.

ABJ\_GWA\_10\_32

*Mah I go come back.*

Let me go and then come back.



# ASYMMETRIC SVCS

27

- ▶ In asymmetric SVCs, one of the verbs belongs to a restricted inventory, and this verb is modifying the other one, with modifying V2 constructions being the best known and more numerous.
- ▶ **Modifying V2**
  - ▶ **Direction:** *go, come, enter, comot* 'leave', etc.

BEN\_36\_11

*King con **call** di man **come** one day.*

So the king **called** the man **in** one day.

- ▶ **Valency increasing** (=dative): *give*

IBA\_02\_130

*De throw money give dem.*

They throw money at them.

- ▶ **Aspectual: Resultative**

IBA\_01\_152

*naim I con still do masters finish.*

Then, I went on to complete my Masters.

► **Comparative:** *pass, reach*

N1 = Comparee	V1 = Concept	V2 = Superiority Equality	N2 = Standard
<b>de</b>	read	pass/reach	me
<b>they</b>	are educated	more than/as much as	me

IBA\_01\_141

(...) **de** even *dey* **read** **pass** **me**.

'(...) they were even more educated than me.'

WAZL\_15\_14

Na **im** **bad** **pass**.

That's what is the worst.

IBA\_07\_130

Di guy **fine** **reach** me?

Is the guy as handsome as me?

# Modifying V1

- ▶ **Instrumental**, etc. : *take, use, carry*

LAG\_31\_40

no just **take** eye **look** tyre say [...]

'Don't just **look** at the tyre **with** your eyes and say [...]

- ▶ **Comitative**: *follow*

IBA\_03\_19

(...) *di circle of friends wey dem dey* **follow dey waka** (...)

the circle of friends they **are walking around with**, (...).

- ▶ **Attitude**: *sidon* 'sit down'

WAZK\_08\_57

(...) *na true sey* **de sidon talk** (...).

(...) it's true they **had a talk** on (...)

# SVC Focus split

Focus	V1	V2
V1 = modifier	NO	YES
V2=modifier	YES	NO

## Focused modified V1

BEN\_24\_51

e just **blow** am **come.**  
 3SG.SBJ just blow 3SG.OBJ come

'He/she just **blew** it in.'

**na** **blow** e blow am come.  
 FOC blow 3SG.SBJ blow 3SG.OBJ come

'He/she **really** blew it in'

\* **na** **come** e blow am come

## Focused modified V2

LAG\_31\_40

you **take** eye **look** tyre  
 2PL.SBJ take eye look tyre

'you **look** at the tyre **with** your eyes'

**na** **look** you take eye look tyre  
 FOC look 2PL.SBJ take eye look tyre

'you look at the tyre **well** with your eyes.'

(40c) \***Na** **take** you take eye look tyre.



# SERIAL VERBS AS SOURCE OF GRAMMATICALIZATION: TAKE : (MAZZOLI 2015)

1. Full verb
  2. Instrumental SVC
  3. Manner, place and time SVC )
  4. Conative modal Auxiliary
  5. Purposive SCONJ
- In this process, in stages (4) and (5), the verb take is undergoing phonological reduction through clipping, from [tɛk] (independent VERB and SVC V1) to the AUX and SCONJ [tɛ]

▶ Manner & Time SVC

IBA\_01\_74

*Which time dis woman take start school?*

**When** did this woman **start** school?

WAZA\_10\_74

*Na so we dey take speak am for here.*

**That's how** we speak it here.

▶ Conative modal Auxiliary

WAZA\_10\_68

*So all dose tings still take follow join.*

So all those things still **manage** to get together.

▶ Purposive SCONJ

BEN\_08\_68

*So you need to use hot water take wash am well.*

So you need to **use** hot water **to wash** it well.

# CONCLUSION

- ▶ We have excluded Complementing and Purposive constructions from SVCs
- ▶ Symmetric SVCs may have to be re-analysed as asyndetic coordinations, pending on proper prosodic analysis
- ▶ Focus splits SVCs into V1 & V2 modifying types
- ▶ The grammaticalization of take into modal AUX and purposive SCONJ (Mazzoli 2015) is confirmed by our corpus