Classificatory Analysis of Serial Verb Constructions in Fulfulde Maare

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Abstract: This paper is a classificatory analysis of serial verb constructions (henceforth SVCs) in Fulfulde Maare (henceforth FM). Fourteen (14) FM sentences were classified within seven headings: Locative/Directional, Manner, Purposive, Resultative, Circumstantial, Temporaneity and Negative Construction. The researchers used native speaker’s intuition and unstructured interview in collecting data for this study. In this paper, it is observed that some verbs in SVCs share the same Tense, Voice, Aspect and Polarity whereas some do not. The model of approach adopted for this research is Lawal (1989).

I. Introduction

Serial Verb Constructions also known as verb serialisation or verb stacking, is a syntactic phenomenon in which two or more verbs or verb phrases are strung together in a single clause. They are widespread in Creole languages, especially in the languages of West Africa, Southeast Asia, Amazonia, Oceanic, and New Guinea, Dixon (2006). It is a common feature in African languages, particularly Niger-Congo languages such as Yoruba, Edo, Nupe, Akan, Ewe, Ibibio, Igbo, Yimas, Yatye, Degema, etc. (Heine & Leyew 2008). The phenomenon of Serial Verb Constructions has been a subject of interest among linguists for sometimes since Christaller 1875. Thus, many grammatical descriptions of serial verb constructions have appeared in the literature. So far, three major phases of the investigations on SVCs in languages have emerged:

Phase 1: 1875 to early 1960s – As part of the pedagogical issues on the grammar and initial description of some languages (Christaller 1875, Balmer & Grant 1929, Westermann 1930, Westermann & Bryan 1952, Stewart 1963 and others).


A historical account of the studies on SVCs would reveal a period of about one hundred and thirty six (136) years of continued relevance and sustained interest, (Omachonu, 2011).
Fulfulde Maare is a sub-dialect of Fulfulde spoken in Borno state and its surroundings. Mohammadou (1997). Arnott, (1970) in his classification of Fulfulde dialects mentioned Borno Fulɓe as part of Central Northern Nigerian dialect. Although his classification was challenged by Girei (2009), where he reveals many aspects of Fulfulde dialects that were not mentioned by the previous scholars on the language. He identifies fifteen different individual dialectal features found operating in the area of his research. Some dialects are recorded for the first time while others have been peripherally mentioned in other dialectological works on Fulfulde. Thus, Girei ibid, maintains that there is no clearly stated practical geographical dialects boundary within the area covered by his research. He calls Fulfulde Maare as Keesu/Maare Gulumba. He then mentions some local government areas where the dialect is spoken. These include; Ngala, Dikwa and Maiduguri. Blench, (1994) in his circular version, listed Fulɓe clans in Nigeria alphabetically and mentioned Borno’en as a general term for Fulɓe from Borno. Stenning, (1959:33), cited in Mohammadou, (1997:261), Opines that, “Under Arɗo Sali, the Mare Fulɓe established in Borno probably since the 15th century, had refused to enter the holy war and side with GoniMukhtar. They had remained faithful to the Mai, but did not display the same loyalty to Muhammad Elkanemi who had Arɗo killed and his community exterminated”, according to Brenner (1973:33).

On the position and location of Fulɓe Maare in Borno; Low’s Sketch (1972:73), cited in Mohammadou, (1997:288) illustrating his findings which are stated in the following terms: “The Fulani Mare were so called, it appears from the place-name of one of their two known loci of wet (and perhaps dry) season habitation- the Mare or Dilara plain on the southern banks of Lake Chad. Their other known side was in Damaturu-Gaiba-Daya zone of west Bornu. Arɗo of this category (Fulɓe Mare) provided the royal houses of Missau, Jema’are and Adamawa emirates “.

The Fulɓe Maare are said to have acquired the name ‘Mare’ only during the last hundred years and the separate sections that they have nothing in common except the long residence together in Bornu, Reed, (1932), cited in Mohammadou, (1997), Mare or (F. Maare) considered by some writers as a synonyms to Dilaara. The name has an equivalent in the Kanuri word märe, an emphatic particle meaning approximately ‘of course’ (Cyffer and Hutchison 1990: 119). The etymology given nowadays in Borno of ‘Fulɓe Maare’ is that some Fulɓe groups were named so because of their frequent use of the Kanuri term märe. Such a superficial explanation does not have a ground. A possible origin of the nickname could be related to the town Marte, Mare being an older variant or an alternation of this place-name, an ancient Sao city on the south western shore of Lake Chad, which has survived up to present. The town was much known to Fulɓe pastoralists who used to spend the dry season in its environs, Mohammadou, op’cit.

II. Serial Verb Constructions

Westermann, (1930) was one of the early linguists who hinted about the notion of SVCs. He writes as follows: “A peculiarity of Ewe is that we often find a row of verbs one after the other. The chief features of this are that all the verbs stand next to each other without being connected, that all have the same tense or mood, and that in the event of their having a common subject and object, these stand with the first, the others remaining bare” (Westermann 1930: 126) cited in Agbedor, (1994:1).

Matthews and Yip, (1994) says that the SVC is one of the most important and productive pattern in Cantonese syntax. They affirmed that SVC in Cantonese is a simple concatenation of verbs. The core function of SVC is to serialize the event of the component verb of the construction and to conceptualize the component event as a single, unified event, (Baker1989, Chung 1993, Collins 1997 etc.). Matisoff, (1969:71), cited in Ejele (1992) puts it as:

“SVCs serve to provide in a uniform way the sort of information that in surface grammar of languages like English is handled by a formally desperate array of subordinating devices; complementary infinitives, -ing complements, modal auxiliaries, adverbs, prepositional phrases, even ‘who’ subordinate clauses”.

Serial Verb Constructions consist of two verbs (or verb phrase), that occur in sequence without an intervening conjunction (subordinating or coordinating) between the verbs. The following sentences illustrate frequent type of serializing verb construction in Krio, Finney (2004).

1. I hai klos gi im pikin
   He buy clothes give his child
   ‘He bought some clothes and gave his child’

2. A tek nef kut di bred
   I take knife cut the bread
   ‘I cut the bread with knife’

The SVC in (17) uses the second verb phrase (give his child) in order to express benefactive interpretation. In (18) the serializing verb ‘take’ is used in order to get an instrumental interpretation. Both of these constructions contrast with the English equivalents. The English sentences need either a relative clause or coordinate conjunction to express the same meanings, Finney (2004).
Ejele (1992) observes that although SVCs have complex syntactic structure being internally made-up of a number of verbs, it functions syntactically as a whole/unit with respect to syntactic processes like negation, question and verbal categories like tense and aspect. Semantically, the SVCs function as a bundle of information which is itself made-up of the meaning contributed by the composite verbs.

3. Ėfe ré ọpìà hián érán
   Efe take cutlass cut wood
   ‘Efe used the cutlass and cut the wood’.

4. Ėfe dédigue tué âbá le.
   Efe kneel down greet father her
   (i) Efe knelt down to greet her father (purposive)
   (ii) Efe knelt down and greeted her father (purposive)
   (iii) Efe knelt down greeting her father (simultaneous)

Dorie (1997:291) puts it that:

“A single serial verb complex describes what is conceptualized as a single event: this is repeatedly reported to be a clear intuition of native speakers, and can be demonstrated through semantic analysis. It follows that a serial verb complex can often be best translated into a non-serializing language using a single, mono-verbal clause”.

Fannami, (2001) examines some of the characteristic features of the SV Cs in Kanuri where he maintains that some SVCs in Kanuri are similar to what Lawal, (1989) and others call Purposive, Resultative, Circumstantial and Temporality SVCs. The SVCs in Kanuri have indeed exhibited unique features in SVCs which may be different from those in other Languages. This is attributed to the agglutinative nature of Kanuri verbs and the fact that Kanuri is a strictly verb final language.

Lawal (1989) divides SVCs in Yoruba into two groups. The first is the group in which one of the verbs cannot function as an independent verb in a sentence. This group of SVCs constitutes a small class which she calls the prepositional SVCs. In the second group of SVCs consisting of several classes, both verbs can function as independent verbs in a sentence. She calls this group self-standing SVCs.

Baker and Stewart (2002), investigate the synthetic properties of Serial Verb Constructions (SVCs) consisting of two transitive verbs that seem to share a single direct object, as found in Edo, Nupe, and Yoruba. They discuss this construction in three Niger-Congo languages; that is, Yoruba, Edo and Nupe.

Lin, (2004) asserts that, Serializing languages refer to those demonstrating serial verb constructions (SVCs), while non-serializing languages are those having secondary predicates. Taiwanese is a language that has both constructions and thus hardly can be clearly defined as one or the other type of language.

Drozdik (2008) states that the SVC is most currently presented as a construction consisting of two or more verbs or verb phrases without any subordinating or coordinating conjunction (the exclusion of conjunctions seems to be the major source of controversies about the SVC structure).

Drozdik (2008) affirms that an SVC must have:

- Only one expressed subject.
- At most one expressed direct object
- One specification for tense/aspect (only on the first verb or on both verbs but semantically one specification/or only one second verb).
- Only one possible negator
- No intervening coordinating conjunction
- No intervening pause possible.

On the features and characteristics of SVCs, Sebba, (1987) mentions that SVCs have at least the following properties or characteristics:

a. They have only one overtly expressed (syntactic) subject;
b. They contain two or more verbs without overt markers of coordination or subordination;
c. The actions expressed by the verbs are either simultaneous or consecutive, and all verbs are interpreted as having the same tense;
d. Negation, whether marked once or more than once, applies to the whole string;
e. Tense, aspect, mood and polarity (or whichever of these a particular language has) are either marked only on the first verb, or else each verb in the string is marked as having the same tense, aspect, mood and polarity; f. Either the semantic subject of Vi is the subject of Vi+1, or the object of Vi is the semantic subject of Vi+1. Dixon (1997) states that the feature of SVCs is as follows: 1), an SVCs consist of more than one verb, 2) there is no mark of linkage or subordination in an SVC, 3) Each verb in an SVC may also occur as the sole verb in a clause. 4) an SVC functions like a single predicate; 5) an SVC will generally have its own transitivity value, 6) there must almost always be (at least) one argument shared by all the verbs in an SVC; 7) the verbs in an SVC
may make up one word, or may remain separate words; 8) asymmetrical SVCs tend to be grammaticalized and symmetrical SVCs tend to be lexicalized; 9) although most SVCs in a language involve just two verbs, in most languages there can be three or more verbs involved. Based on the above features, SVC is based on Semantic-grammatical category chain. Semantically, it describes two or more than two actions or behaviour made by the same subject. Grammatically it refers to a construction in which two or more successive verbs are joined together with no connecting particle, clitic, etc. It describes a complete event which may be composed of more than one sub-event which can be encoded and conceptualized as interrelated and connected in accordance with a certain order.

Aikhenvald (2006:1) integrates in her work previous ideas about SVCs (Foley and Olson 1985, Durie 1997, Crowley 2002, etc.), having as a result the following definition:

“An SVC is 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. They are monoclusal; their intonation properties are the same as those of a monoverbal clause and they just have one also share core and other arguments. Each component of an SVC must be able to occur on its own right”.

Omachonu (2011), states that SVCs are clearly recognisable and highly productive grammatical constructions in Igala. It is robust and productive syntactic process in the language. It is different from other closely related multi-verb constructions because they are mono-clausal and the VPs in SVCs are construed as occurring within the same temporal frame. The verbs share a common subject and object, expressing a single overall event, argument and grammatical categories such as aspect, expressing a single over all events, argument and grammatical categories such as aspect, mood and modality from a unit with the first verb, with the exception of negation, which in most cases follows the last verb in the series. He continues that SVCs in Igala serve to convey a broad range of semantic notions which are tandem with the culturally recognisable activities and world view of the people. He gave examples (5) and (6) on SVCs in Igala as follows:

5. Audu a la oje je.
   ‘Audu buys/buying food to eat’.
6. I che omi gwe eju
   3sg scoop water wash eye
   ‘He/She fetched water to wash his/her face’.

Lord (1993) rightly observes, there are various types of serial verb constructions even in a single language and there are cross-linguistic variations such that the properties of SVCs in one language may not map whole sale onto those of another language (See also Ameka 2005). Consequently, the descriptions of SVCs, in many instances, had appeared not quite adequate either because of the intricacies of the constructions or the tendency on the part of the researcher to address or concentrate on only one particular problem or a few of such problems in a language or across languages. Hence, the questions concerning the nature of verb serialization in languages arise again and again like the phoenix birds from the flames.

Furthermore, according to Heine & Leyew (2008), serial verbs do occur outside Africa and particularly common in African languages especially in Niger-Congo. Heine & Leyew (2008:298) states that serial verbs can be define loosely as;

“Constructions in which two or more verbal lexemes combine without any overt indication of a dependency between them: none of the verbs is morphologically marked as dependent, no conjunction between them”.

Or more narrowly as;

“constructions that involve two or more verbs but that, taken as a whole, have the behaviour of a single predicate, and not that of a construction involving distinct predicates in some dependency relation”.

Major, (2014) shows that SVCs in Ibibio fit in with the typological literature on SVCs on both syntactic and semantic grounds, he provides a more exhaustive list of SVCs in Ibibio that were not covered before.

### III. ANALYSIS OF SVCs IN FM

Self-Standing SVCs has been the subject of controversy by many scholars both in terms of their source analysis and classification. They are verbs that can stand independently and function as main verb in sentence. The suffixes attached to the verb root were described based on Breedveld, (1995). The verb root (VR) is underlined andin some sentences the verbal extensions are abbreviated as (Ext) and conjugational suffix as (CS). Below are the classification of SVCs in FM and their analyses.

**Locative/Directional Constructions**

In this construction the verbs that show the location in SVCs do not occur as first verb in the series rather preceded by the verb(s) of the main event which are usually verbs of action. Let us consider the following examples under this type:
Sentence (8) is an imperative sentence because it expresses command. There are four main verbs in the sentence that is, ‘umm’ ‘stand’, ‘nang’ ‘perform ablution’, ‘juul’ ‘pray’, ‘dill’ ‘go’. All of them are intransitive verbs because they take no object in the sentence. The first three verbs are verbs of action or main event, while the last verb ‘dill’ ‘go’ show the location/direction. The Noun ‘saare’ ‘house’ functions as adjunct and is the final location/destination of the subject. The verbs share the same subject ‘Hamman’. All the four verbs in the sentence have the same tense which is present tense, active voice, incompletive aspect and affirmative polarity.

### Manner Constructions

These are sentences that express the manner in which an action or process is carried out or perceived. In manner construction, the first verb usually describes the manner while the second verb indicates the main action or process. Manner construction simply answers the question how the action took place. Let us examine this in the example (10 and 11) that follows:

8. **Ali njiang-id-ii dill-i luumo.**
   
   **VR-Ext-CS**
   **VR-CS**
   
   Ali read go market

   ‘Ali finished reading and went to the market’.

Sentence (9) is a declarative/statement sentence. It has two main verbs i.e. ‘njiang’ ‘read’ and ‘dill’ ‘go’. The suffix –id- in the first verb ‘njiang-id-ii’ is a verbal extension. While the suffixes –ii- of the first verb and that of the second verb mark voice, aspect and polarity. All the verbs share the same subject ‘Ali’, tense (past tense), active voice, completive aspect and affirmative polarity. The first verb indicates the main action and the second verb show location/direction of the subject. The Noun ‘luumo’ ‘market’ functions as adjunct.

9. **Hassan don dar-i saan-i esum.**
   
   **VR-CS**
   **VR-CS**
   
   Hassan is stand greet in-law his

   ‘Hassan greeted his in-law while standing’. Sentence (10) is a declarative sentence. It has two main verbs, i.e. ‘dar’ ‘stand’ and ‘saan’ ‘greet’. The first verb is an intransitive verb because it has no any object in the sentence. The second verb is a transitive verb with an object ‘esum’. The first verb ‘dar’ ‘stood’ describes the manner of how the action of greeting was performed. The second verb ‘saan’ ‘greet’ indicates the main action or event. Both the verbs in the sentence share one subject ‘Hassan’ and the same tense (past), active voice, completive aspect and affirmative polarity.

10. **Ali don tur-ii loot-a**
    
    **VR-CS**
    **VR-CS**
    
    Ali is bow washing

   ‘Ali is bowing down and washing’.

Sentence (11) is a declarative sentence. It has two main verbs, i.e. ‘tura’ ‘bow’ and ‘loot’ ‘wash’. Both the verbs are intransitive verbs. The first verb ‘tura’ ‘bow’ describes the manner of how the action of washing was performed. The second verb ‘loota’ ‘washing’ indicates the main action or event. Both the verbs in the sentence share the same subject ‘Eemad’. The first verb ‘turi’ ‘bowed’ is in past tense, active voice, completive aspect, and affirmative polarity. The second verb ‘loot-a’ is in present tense, active voice, incompletive aspect and affirmative polarity.

In the examples (10 and 11) above, the first verbs in the sentences shows how the subject performs the main action.

### Purposive Constructions

This is a construction that denotes purpose. In this construction it is the second verb that denotes the purpose. Let us examine this in examples (12 and 13) below:

11. **Umaru umm-i tagg-i daago.**
    
    **VR-CS**
    **VR-CS**
    
    Umaru stood roll mat

   ‘Umaru stood up and rolled the mat’.

Sentence (12) is a declarative sentence. It has two main verbs i.e. ‘umm’ ‘stand’ and ‘tagg’ ‘roll’. The first verb is an intransitive verb because it takes no object in the sentence. The second verb is a transitive one with an object ‘daago’ ‘mat’. The verb ‘umm’ ‘stood up’ describes the main action, process or event. The second verb ‘tagg’ ‘coil’ denotes purpose. The verbs share the same subject ‘Umaru’ and the same tense (past). Both the first
verb ‘umm-i’ and the second verb ‘tagg-i’ are in active voice. The verbs are in completive aspect and affirmative polarity.

Eemad fetched water washed cloth his
‘Eemad fetched water and washed his cloth’.

Sentence (13) is a declarative sentence. It has two main verbs i.e. ‘nyed’ ‘fetch’ and ‘loot’ ‘washed’. Both the first and the second verbs are transitive verbs because each of the verbs takes an object in the sentence. The first verb ‘nyed’ ‘fetched’ takes an object ‘ndiyam’ ‘water’. The second verb ‘loot’ ‘washed’ takes an object ‘limce’ ‘cloth’. The first verb ‘nyed’ ‘fetched’ describes the action or process. The second verb ‘loot’ ‘wash’ describes the action which denotes purpose of fetching water. The verbs share the same subject ‘Eemad’ and the same tense (past), active voice, completive aspect and affirmative polarity.

In sentences (12-13) mentioned, the second verbs denote the purpose of the action which was presented by the first verb.

**Resultative Constructions**

This is another type of constructions in which the second verb denotes the result or consequence of the action which was performed by the first verb or verb phrase. This can be examined in the sentences below:

13. Aise nyaam-i nyiirii haar-i.
Aise ate food satisfied
‘Aise ate food and was satisfied’.

Sentence (14) is a declarative sentence. It has two main verbs, i.e. ‘nyaam’ ‘eat’ and ‘haar’ ‘satisfy’. The first verb ‘nyaam’ ‘eat’ is a transitive verb because it takes an object ‘nyiirii’ ‘food’ in the sentence. The second verb ‘haar’ ‘satisfied’ is an intransitive verb because it takes no object in the sentence. The first verb expresses the action and the second verb denotes the result or consequence of the action performed by the first verb. In this sentence, the second verb ‘haar’ ‘satisfy’ denotes the result of ‘nyaam’ ‘eat’ which is our first verb in the sentence. The verbs share the same subject ‘Aise’ and the same tense (past), active voice, completive aspect and affirmative polarity.

Alii pushed me fell I
‘Ali pushed me and I felled down’.

Sentence (15) is a declarative sentence. It has two main verbs, i.e. ‘duhny’ ‘push’ and ‘doɔyɔ’ ‘fall’. The first verb ‘duhny’ ‘push’ is a transitive verb because it takes an object ‘yam’ ‘me’ in the sentence. The second verb ‘doɔyɔ’ ‘fall’ is an intransitive verb because it takes no object in the sentence. The first verb expresses the action and the second verb denotes the result or consequence of the action performed by the first verb. In this sentence, the second verb ‘doɔyɔ’ ‘fall’ denotes the result of ‘duhny’ ‘push’ which is our first verb in the sentence. The verbs share the same subject ‘Alii’ and the same tense (past), active voice, completive aspect and affirmative polarity.

**Circumstantial Construction**

Circumstantial refers to the circumstance or context under which a given state of affairs or event occurs. Thus, in circumstantial constructions the focus is on the circumstance under which the action takes place. One of the verbs in the SVCs usually denotes the action or main event while the other verb provides the context or circumstance under which the action takes place.

Ali is passing beat me with cane
‘Ali beat me with cane when passing’.

Sentence (16) is a declarative sentence. It has two main verbs, i.e. ‘saal’ ‘pass’ and ‘fi’ ‘beat’. The first verb ‘saal’ ‘pass’ is an intransitive verb because it takes no object in the sentence. The second verb is a transitive verb with an object ‘yam’ ‘me’. The first verb ‘saal’ ‘pass’ describes the circumstance under which the action of beating took place. The second verb ‘fi’ ‘beat’ denotes the main action or event. The verbs share the same subject ‘Alii’ and the same tense (past) but different voice; the first ‘saal-oo’ with the suffix –oo- is in middle voice. The second verb ‘fi’ ‘beat’ is in active voice. The verbs share the same aspect (completive) and polarity (affirmative).
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   VR-CS  VR-CS
   Hajja is eating is speaking
   ‘Hajja is speaking while eating’.

Sentence (18) is a declarative sentence. It has two main verbs, i.e. ‘nyaam’ ‘eat’ and ‘yewt’ ‘speak’. The first verb ‘nyaam’ ‘eat’ is a transitive verb. The second verb ‘yewt’ is an intransitive verb. The first verb ‘nyaam’ ‘eat’ describes the circumstance under which the action of speaking took place. The second verb ‘yewt’ ‘speak’ denotes the main action or event. The verbs share the same subject ‘Hajja’ and the same tense (present), active voice, incompletive aspect and affirmative polarity.

**Temporaneity Constructions**

This type of construction deals with time of action expressed by the sequence of verbs. It simply defines the temporal sequence of events. That is the actual time of the happening or process of action. This can be examined in the sentences below:

17. Eemad  nyaaә  nyiiri  daan-i.
   VR-CS  VR-CS
   Eemad ate food slept
   ‘Eemad ate food and slept’.

Sentence (18) has two main verbs, i.e. ‘nyaam’ ‘eat’ and ‘ðaan’ ‘sleep’. The first verb ‘nyaam’ ‘eat’ is a transitive verb with an object ‘nyiiri’ ‘food’. The second verb ‘daan’ ‘sleep’ is an intransitive verb because it takes no object in the sentence. The first verb ‘nyaam’ describes the time of occurrence of action of the second verb. This simply means that the action of sleeping occurs after eating. The verbs share the same subject ‘Eemad’ and the same tense (past), active voice, completive aspect and affirmative polarity.

18. Abdu  nang-i  juul-i  dill-i.
    VR-CS  VR-CS  VR-CS
    Abdu catch pray went
    ‘Abdu performed ablution, prayed and went’.

Sentence (19) has three main verbs, i.e. ‘nang’ ‘catch’ ‘juul’ ‘pray’ and ‘dill’ ‘go’. All the verbs in the sentence are intransitive verbs because they take no object in the sentence. The first verb ‘nang’ ‘catch’ (performed ablution) express the first sequence of event. The second verb ‘juul’ ‘prayed’ state the time of prayers which occur after performing ablution. The third verb ‘dill’ ‘went’ express the third sequence of event which occur after the time of prayers. The verbs share the same subject ‘Abdul’ and the same tense (past), active voice, completive aspect and affirmative polarity.

In temporaneity construction, the first or two initial verbs specify the time of the action of the second or third verb. This can be examine in sentences (18) and (19) where the verbs in sentence (18) ‘nyaam’ ‘eat’ specifies the sleeping occurs after the time of ‘eating’. In sentence (19) ‘nang’ ‘perform ablation’, ‘juul’ ‘pray’, entails that the ‘going’ occur after the two processes of ‘performing ablution and praying’.

**Negative Construction**

This construction was not mentioned by Lawal (1989). It is another type of SVCs which takes negation markers in their verbs. The negative markers are suffix to the first verb, second verb or both verbs in the SVCs. This can be exemplified in the sentences below:

    VR-CS  VR-CS
    Isa go Neg bought corn.
    ‘Isa did not go to buy corn’.

Sentence (20) is a declarative sentence. It has two main verbs, i.e. ‘yah-aay’ ‘didn’t go’ with negation suffix ‘aay’ ‘didn’t’ and ‘sood’ ‘buy’. The first verb ‘yah-aay’ ‘didn’t go’ is an intransitive verb because it has no object in the sentence. The second verb ‘sood’ ‘buy’ is a transitive verb because it takes an object ‘gawri’ ‘corn’ in the sentence. The first verb ‘yah-aay’ ‘didn’t go’ take the negation marker ‘aay’ ‘didn’t’ and make the sentence to be in negative polarity. The second verb ‘sood’ ‘buy’ describes the second sequence of event in the sentence. The verbs share the same subject ‘Isa’ and the same tense (past), active voice, completive aspect and affirmative polarity.

    VR-CS  VR-CS  VR-CS
    Hamman is lying eat Ngt drink Ngt
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‘Hamman is sick and is neither eating nor drinking’.
Sentence (21) is declarative sentence. It has three main verbs, i.e. ‘waal’ ‘lie’, ‘nyaam-ata’ ‘not eating’ ‘ata’ is a
suffix stands for negation and ‘yar-ata’ ‘not drinking’. All the verbs in the sentence are intransitive verbs
because they take no object in the sentence. The second and third verbs take negation marker ‘ataa’ ‘not’ in
the sentence. The first verb ‘waal’ ‘lie’ describes the first sequence of event in the sentence. The second and third verb
describes the subsequent event with a negation suffix ‘ataa’ ‘not’. The verbs share the same subject
‘Hamman’ and the same tense (past), active voice. The first verb ‘waal-i’ ‘lied’ is in completive aspect. The
second verb ‘nyaam-ataa’ is in negative incompletive aspect. The third verb yar-ataa is in negative incompletive
aspect. The first verb ‘waal-i’ ‘lied’ is in affirmative polarity. The second verb ‘nyaam-ataa’ and the third verb
‘yar-ataa’ are in negative polarity.

IV. CONCLUSION

Serial Verb Constructions behave differently in different languages. In FM they are series of two or
more verbs or verb phrases sharing the same subject and expressing series of events and action in a sentence.
However, the sequence of actions or events must be presented orderly i.e. first verb, second verb, third verb and
fourth verbs. If the verbs are used interchangeably in SVCs it yield ungrammatical sentence. In this paper,
SVCs in FM were classified under seven headings based on Lawal classification. The last heading (negative
construction) is found operating in FM and it was not mentioned by Lawal in his classification of SVCs in
Yoruba.

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