

THE STRUCTURE OF SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS IN ÀRÙM SARKI

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Abstract

This study investigates the structure of verb serialisation in Àrùm Sarki, a Platoid language spoken in North Central, Nigeria. The study is descriptive, and interviews were conducted with ten (10) competent native speakers, and the data collected were analysed descriptively. The findings show that Àrùm Sarki has a distinctive structure of serial verb constructions, as the combination of certain verbs has a meaning different from the separate verbs. For instance; *ná* ‘go’ and *hèndè* ‘walk’, when combined as *náhèndè* means ‘travel’. Also, *dè* ‘hold’ and *ba* ‘come’ combined as *dèba* means ‘bring’. Hence, the findings also reveal that serial verb constructions in Àrùm Sarki are structurally monoclausal and semantically integrated as the language users must use such combinations to be very communicative in such regard. The study concludes that verb serialisation is a common phenomenon in Àrùm Sarki, as verbs in the language can co-occur. The study recommends further studies on the syntax of the language for language teaching, learning, documentation and development purposes.

Keywords: Syntax, Verb, Verb Phrase, Verb Serialisation and Àrùm

Introduction

The importance of language for people cannot be overemphasized, because it is a means of conveying meaningful information, and the meaning derived from such information is partially realized in the structure of the language; in other words, syntax, which according to Yusuf (2007), is the level of linguistics that concerns how morphemes and words combine to form larger grammatical units. Ndimele (2008) points out that knowing the grammar of a language involves several pieces of information, including knowledge of pronunciation, vocabulary, sentence formation, single meanings of words and long expressions, and the appropriate context in which the word or words are used in a specific expression. Therefore, the importance of a study on the structure of language cannot be overemphasized.

Linguistic studies of the structure of language, particularly, verbs, verb phrases and serial verb construction in languages such as English, Igbo, Yorùbá and Hausa have been widely studied extensively. Regrettably, a language like Àrùm has not received the much

linguistic scientific attention it deserves, especially in the area syntax of the language in terms of verbs, verb phrases and verb serialization; despite existing documentation of Àrùm, particularly in relation to its orthography and classification. However, knowing the verbs, verb phrases, and verb serialization of the above languages cannot be taken as such and applied successfully in Àrùm, because these languages are completely different; hence, the motivation for this study on verb serialization in Àrùm, as the study examines the structural properties of serial verb constructions in Àrùm Sarki.

Verb serialization is a linguistic phenomenon where two or more verbs are used in a sequence within a single clause, functioning together to convey a unified action or event. According to Ilori (2010:215), serial verbal construction (SVC) or verb serialization 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”. Invariably, SVCs have couple of verbs that are not linked together with any coordination. Apart from that there is only one

overt subject in the construction. Collins (1993:56) as cited in Olabode and Oye (2016) also defines SVC as “a succession of verbs and their complements (if any) with one subject and one tense value that are not separated by any overt marker of coordination or subordination”.

Olabode and Oye (2016) point out that SVC is one of the features of most West African languages, manifested in many Nigerian languages in the Kwa language family. Creissels et al (2008:113) described serialization as a type of complex predicates that is very common in a restricted area including Kwa languages and Western Benue-Congo languages. Similarly, the phenomenon of verb serialization has been reported for many languages in West Africa, Southeast Asia, Amazonia, Oceania, the Caribbean and New Guinea (Aboh, 2015:269). Verb serialization has been described as a property of universal grammar (UG) (Waheed, 2021). It occurs in these languages and can reflect syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic relationships among the verbs. Therefore, studies on this aspect of the structure of language become imperative for language teaching, learning, documentation and development. This work will help to contribute to the dearth of literature on this language, especially on the syntactic analysis in terms of verb serialization in Àrùm.

As classified by Blench (2012), Arum belongs to the Ninzic sub-branch of the Plateau languages, under the East Benue Congo sub-classification of the Benue Congo family, subsumed in the Proto-Niger Congo. Arum, pronounced [àrùm], is used to refer to the people as well as the language that they speak. The people and the language are sometimes called *Àlòmò* especially by the Hausa traders/settlers. Eberhard et al. (2020a) reports that the people are found in Sanga LGA of Kaduna State, but some natives say that this was before the creation of Nasarawa State. However, the people are located in the Northern part of Nasarawa State. They are found majorly in Wamba Local Government Area in settlements such as Mararaban Gongo, Chessu, Sisinbaki, Arum Sarki, Turkwa, and so on. There are also pockets of speakers in Kaduna State in areas such as Agameti in Sanga Local Government area. The

Arum people are bounded to the North by the Numana and Kulere, to the East by Rindre, to the west by Rindre and Buh and to the South by Rindre and Kantana.

There are three (3) major dialects of Àrùm: Chessu, Sarki and Gbinzi. While all the dialects are mutually intelligible, some are more intelligible than others. These dialects are spoken in Wamba Local Government Area of Nasarawa State as well as in Sanga Local Government Area of Kaduna State in North-Central and North-Western geopolitical zones of Nigeria, respectively. However, this study is based on the Àrùm Sarki dialect of Àrùm language. The Àrùm Sarki is the Central dialect of the language since it is considered the dialect with the least adulteration and infiltration of borrowed words. The dialect has since been adopted by the Àrùm language and Orthography Committee as the dialect in which the Arum literature is based (Muniru, Decker, Eju, Innocent and Onoja, 2021; The Word for the World Initiative, 2022). Besides, the dialect has the higher number of speakers compared to the other dialects. It is used sparingly in churches and Primary Health Care centres. It is also used in markets around Arum speaking areas. In schools, outside the classroom, this language though prohibited, is spoken by some pupils/students. It is also used to briefly broadcast the major news of the day just like other languages on Nasarawa Broadcasting Service (NBS) and Option FM station, as it has become a norm in Nasarawa State in recent times (Muniru, Decker, Eju, Innocent and Onoja, 2021). This study therefore concentrated in Arum Sarki in Wamba Local Government Area of Nasarawa State which has the majority of Arum Sarki native speakers.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to examine the structural and syntactic properties of serial verb constructions in Àrùm Sarki. Specifically, the study investigates the structural patterns, semantic relationships and grammatical properties of verbs occurring in serial constructions.

Literature Review

Syntax

Etymologically, the term syntax is to combine words into group words or sentences, and

words groups into sentences. It deals with how sentences are constructed, and users of human language employ a striking variety of possible arrangements of the element in sentences. Hence, syntax is a central component of human language. It is the study of the principles and processes by which sentences are constructed in particular languages.

The study of syntax is the study of how words combine from phrases and ultimately sentences in languages. Because it consists of phrases that are put together in a particular way, a sentence has a structure. The structure consists of ways in which the words are organized into phrases and the phrases are organized into larger phrases. Thus, syntax is the study of the structure of sentences. It is the study of how words are arranged to form sentences. The term of syntax has been defined by many linguists; Crystal (1980: 345) defines syntax as the study of the rules governing the way words are combined to form sentences in a language. In this sense, syntax is opposed to morphology, the study of word structure. In alternative definition, syntax is the study of the interrelationship between elements of sentence structure, and of the rules governing the arrangement of sentence sequence (Sunubi, 2016). Just as minimal units of speech form the data for phonetics and phonology, and morphemes are the minimal units in morphology, the sentence, made up of phrases and words are the minimal units of study in syntax. Words in a language must be arranged according to the rules of that language to make meaning. These rules are innate and internalized rules and constitute the knowledge that a native speaker has of his or her language. Thus, Roberts (1964: 1) defined syntax as a field of grammar that examines the relationship of words in sentences and ways of arranging words. Traditionally, it refers to the branch of grammar dealing with the ways in which words, with or without appropriate inflections, are arranged to show connections of meaning within the sentence. Syntax can also be defined as part of grammar that represents a speaker's knowledge of sentences and their structures in a language.

However, the syntax of a language is the set of properties which determine the construction

of sentences in that language. If a sentence is constructed according to those properties, it is well formed or grammatical. If a sentence is constructed in violation of those properties, it is ill-formed or ungrammatical. The study of syntax involves uncovering those properties of language which are involved in the construction of grammatical sentences in particular languages. Syntax could be seen as the rules guiding how words are put together to form sentences in a language. It is the rules for how words are arranged to form phrases, clauses, and sentences in a language. It is like the framework that holds a sentence together according to rules for how words, phrases and structures fit. It determines what makes a valid, well-formed sentence. When we speak our native language, we intuitively know which combinations of words form grammatically correct sentences and which do not. Thus, what factors determine the permissibility of these combinations? How are languages similar or different in constructing sentences? These are the questions that syntactic analysis aims to answer.

Verb

Verbs are words whose prototypical function is to predicate; that is, to state something about a referent (Searle, 1969; Croft, 1999; Croft, 2001). The best examples of verbs are actions, events, and processes (Givón, 1984: 52), but verbs frequently convey static meanings as well, such as location or knowledge. In terms of distribution, the prototypical function of a verb is to serve as the head of a clause. Typologically, it is common for verbs to mark the grammatical categories of tense, aspect, mood, polarity (negative/positive), evidentiality (source of knowledge), epistemic modality (attitude towards the statement), event number, verb class, or grammatical relations (information about the participants in the clause and their relations to one another) (Haspelmath, 2001; Dixon, 2010). Hieber (2020) noted that nouns also indicate grammatical relations; it is quite common for North American languages to indicate grammatical relations on both nouns and verbs. An important difference is that markers of grammatical relations on nouns indicate their own role in the clause, while markers of grammatical

relations on verbs indicate the roles of their arguments in the clause.

Verb Phrase

The verb phrase is a phrase headed by a verb. Without a verb, a sequence of words does not constitute a verb phrase. A verb phrase is therefore, the name of the construction that can appear as the verb element within a clause (Crystal, 2008: 101). Yusuf (1997: 8) asserts that a verb phrase (VP) is the category that codes the participants in the events or state described by the verb. This means that the Verb Phrase (VP) is a phrase headed by a verb and may contain its complements, modifiers and other grammatical elements.

According to Chirah (2024), a verb phrase refers to a group of related words that “consist of a verb and its modifiers”. It is also regarded as a verbal phrase that can also operate as the direct object of the subject, the indirect object of a verb, the complement of the object and the object of the preposition as well as function in opposition to another verb phrase. Thus, verb phrases are groups of words and morphemes containing a lexical verb that conveys the most important lexical information, usually along with other morphemes, grammatical and/or lexical, bound and/or free. He stresses further that, verb phrases refer to the events in which entities are involved and are specified by the central item - the lexical verb. Lamidi (2008) acknowledges the above and adds that the verb phrase may contain elements, including the aspect ‘marker’ which serves as the ‘specifier’, while other optional phrasal categories like NP, PP, AP and so on, serve as its complement or adjunct. In a similar perspective, Yusuf (1997) submits that the verb phrase has been rendered in the phrase structure rules as head verb, its complement and any number of adjuncts.

According to Cook (1988), the head parameter is “a principle of syntax concerning the position of heads within phrases, e.g. nouns in NPs, verbs in VPs, etc.” Likewise, Chomsky (1965) suggests that the position of heads could be specified once, for all the phrases in a given language. According to him, rather than a long list of individual rules specifying the position of the head in each phrase type, a single generalization

suffices: ‘heads are last in the phrase’ or ‘heads are first in the phrase’. From this submission, it is obvious that, ‘there are two possibilities for phrases; head left or head right’ (Cook, 1988). He maintains further that, a language has the heads on the same side in all its phrases. Therefore, it is pertinent to state that the Àrùm language is not an exception to this fact.

Verb Serialization

Verb serialization is generally defined as a linguistic device by means of which two or more verbs or verb phrases are juxtaposed without any linker. The output of verb serialization is called “serial verb construction”, henceforth SVC. Serial verb constructions (SVCs) as defined by George (1975), is when two or more verbs follow each other, sharing the same subject without any intervening conjunction. According to Baker (1989) serial verb phrase is a sequence of a string of verbs or verb phrases within a single clause that express simultaneous or immediately consecutive actions, have a single grammatical subject, have no overt connective markers, and are understood as having the same grammatical categories. In a related development, Omachonu (2006), says, that SVC consists of two or more consecutive verbs in which the verbs take only one subject. According to him, Igala is a serial language; as most sentences contain serial verbs, since there is no infinitive or morphosyntactic marker present to indicate a subordinating relationship between the two verbs in a typical serial verb construction in the language. In Igala, Omachonu (2006) identifies two structural types of serial verbs constructions, which are concomitant SVCs and coordinate SVCs. He further asserts that, in concomitant type, a string of verbs in series forms a natural predicate; whereas in coordinate SVCs, two or more verbs are used following a particular sequential ordering with additive value. Serial verb construction is used to express a wide range of a semantic notions in Igala language, such as instrumental, benefactive, directional/locative, sequential, causative and comparative (Omachonu, 2006). Baker (1989: 513) describes SVC as a construction in which a sequence of verbs appears in what seems to be a single clause. According to him, there is usually one tense/aspect specification for

the whole chain of verbs. The verbs in a SVC are also believed to have a single structural subject and they share logical arguments. However, following widely accepted criteria in the literature, serial verb constructions in languages exhibit the following properties (Durie, 1997; Aikhenvald, 2006):

- i. Monoclausality (no overt clause boundary markers),
- ii. A single overt subject,
- iii. Absence of coordinating conjunctions,
- iv. Shared tense, aspect, and polarity values across verbs,
- v. Semantic integration into a single complex event.

Empirical Review

A number of studies relating to verb serialization in Nigerian and African languages are reviewed to identify the gaps that exist in literature as well as establish the landmark contributions of the present study. Babarinde (2013) examined “Serial Verb Construction in Yoruba.” The study undertakes a critical examination of the phenomenon of serial verb construction in Yoruba with a view to correcting certain misconceptions and misleading issues concerning serial verb construction in Yoruba. Using descriptive method of analysis, the study discovers that serial verb construction in Yoruba is not classifiable into just same-subject and causative types and that some causative verbs may also be first verb of a serial verb construction with identical semantic and syntactic consequences. The resulting serial verb construction in each case is not always analysable to show that the object of the first verb is at the same time the logical subject of the verb. This study is related to the present study in its focus on verb phrase structure but differs in that it fails to account for what actually form the constituents of the Yoruba verb phrase, as well as a simple schema to show it.

Musa (2018) conducted a “Classificatory Analysis of Serial Verb Constructions in Fulfulde Maare”. The study investigates the phenomenon of serial verb construction in African languages anchoring on the observation that, some verbs in Serial Verb Constructions share the same Tense, Voice, Aspect and Polarity whereas some do not

and that Serial Verb Constructions behave differently in different languages. Data for the study is made up of a selection of fourteen Fulfulde Maare sentences, which were classified under seven headings: Locative/Directional, Manner, Purposive, Resultative, Circumstantial, and Temporaneity, collected through native speaker’s intuition and unstructured interview. Findings of the study indicates that Fulfulde Maare has 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 is presented orderly; that is, first verb, second verb, third verb and fourth verbs. The research concludes that the last heading (negative construction) is found operating in Fulfulde Maare. This study is related to the present study in its focus on verb phrase structure but differs in that it fails to account for what actually form the constituents of the Fulfulde Maare verb phrase, as well as a simple schema to show it.

ThankGod and Ngulube (2022) examined “Serial Verb Construction in Abua.” The study investigated the existence of SVC in the Abua language of Abua-Odual LGA in Rivers State, Nigeria, and if it does, the study intends to correct certain misconceptions and misrepresentations in the account for SVC. The study elicited data from respondents, analyzed the data and identify SVC in the Abua language. The study found out that SVC involves two principal verbs sharing one predication and one argument. At the same time, these main verbs share value for tense, aspect and represent a single event. This distinctive syntactic and semantic characteristic of SVC fosters serious theoretical challenges. This study evinces that characterizing SVC and making generalizations about its typology is indeed a difficult call to make. The evidence from the data suggests a number of properties that SVC language must have. Based on these underlying semantic and syntactic properties of SVC, the study asserts that the Abua language has SVC. This study is related to the present study in its focus on verb phrase structure but differs in that it fails to account for what actually form the constituents of the Abua verb phrase, as well as a simple schema to show it.

Nwode and Evbuomwan (2024) described

Verb Serialisation (VS) in Ezaa dialect of the Igbo language. Data were drawn from both primary and secondary sources. Descriptive method, content analysis, systematic review and interpretive tools were employed in the analysis of the gathered data. The Chomsky's Minimalist Program is adopted for its theoretical framework and used as the lens for realising that Ezaa possesses VS, because it meets the Universalist conditions for being a VS language or dialect. The analysis shows that the phenomenon of VS obtains and operates shabbily in Ezaa, thereby exhibiting peculiar and general constituents and features like inadequate tense marking, implicit negation marker, ordering structure and minimalism, and object sharing and deletion. The study concludes that VS obtains and operates in Ezaa in both specific and general contexts. Among others, it recommends that Ezaa younger generations should be taught their dialect. Besides, they should consistently make efforts to master VS and other linguistic aspects of their dialect. This study is related to the present study in its focus on verb phrase structure but differs in that it fails to account for what actually form the constituents of the Chrambo verb phrase, as well as a simple schema to show it.

Bebey (2025) examined "serial verb constructions in Chrambo (Bambalang): A bantoid language of North-West Cameroon". The study attempts to describe the syntactic structure of Chrambo multiple verb constructions using the Chomskyan generative theory and a descriptive-analytical approach. Analyses of data from secondary sources indicate that Chrambo exhibits a variety of serial verb constructions: instrumental, aspectual, sequential and directional. The study reveals that Chrambo exhibits consecutivisation among processes of serial verb constructions. It is demonstrated that when they occur in series, all the verbs do not always count as one verb in this Bantoid language; however, the grammatical features and negation apply to the entire sentence. The study demonstrates that SVCs, in this language, play a number of roles such as TAMs marking, verb valency indication, motion expression, direction indication, and so on. This study is related to the present study in its focus on verb phrase structure but differs in that it fails to

account for what actually form the constituents of the Chrambo verb phrase, as well as a simple schema to show it.

Jelili (2025) examined "Serial Verb Construction in Ìgáṣí" using both syntactic and semantic structures. Ìgáṣí is an endangered language spoken in the Akoko North Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria. The data for the research were sourced from the native speakers of the language, and their utterances were recorded for transcription. The study deploys the Minimalist Program for its analysis. The findings show that serial verb constructions in Ìgáṣí are mono-clausal, and the actions or state of affairs conveyed by the verbs in SVC constructions show that they occur within the same temporal semantic frame. It is shown that verbs in SVC are symmetrical and asymmetrical based on the semantic and grammatical content. It is also argued that the subject DeterminerPhrase of SVC with causative and performative agents are generated at Spec-vP (outer core vP) while those with theme theta subjects are generated at Spec-VP (inner core VP). This study contributes to the existing studies on SVC and brings to the fore the documentation of an endangered language. This study is related to the present study in its focus on verb phrase structure but differs in that it fails to account for what actually form the constituents of the Ìgáṣí verb phrase, as well as a simple schema to show it.

What flows from the foregoing review essentially is that literature abounds on Serial Verb Construction (SVC) in Nigerian and African languages, and while Nigerian indigenous languages (Àrùm inclusive) share certain syntactic affinities with each other and with other foreign languages such as English, there are significant differences in their syntax, especially the serial verb construction, worthy of linguistic enquiry which renders problematic the notion of linguistic universals and underscores this research description of verb serialisation in Àrùm. Hence, this study investigates the structural patterns, semantic relationships and grammatical properties of verbs occurring in serial constructions in Àrùm Sarki.

Methodology

This study is a descriptive study and the qualitative research design is adopted for this study. Data for this work were collected using primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include the native speakers of Àrùm Sarki dialect of Àrùm language from Wamba Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Oral interviews were conducted with ten (10) respondents from the ten (10) council wards of Wamba Local Government Area of Nasarawa State: Arum, Mangar, Gitta, Nakere, Konvah, Wayo, Wamba West, Wamba East, Kwara, and Jimiya; who were selected as respondents based on their competence and vast knowledge of Àrùm sociolinguistics and are Arum-English bilinguals. The respondents' gender includes nine (9) males and one (1) female with ages range between forty (40) and seventy (70) years. On their educational background, all of the respondents were graduates from higher institutions. In terms of their occupation, three (3) of the respondents were language teachers, two (2) were civil servants, three (3) were lecturers, and two (2) community leaders. A non-structured interview approach was adopted in which questions were flexible and open-ended to enable the researcher to balance sets of observations and statements against each other. The respondents were given consent form to sign and questions were asked by the researcher on the

verb and verb phrases in Àrùm and the structure and components of the verb phrases in the language, with assurance of the anonymity of their response. The Olympus WS-852 Digital recorder was used to record the interviews with the respondents as well as other relevant data and observations, for further transcription. The secondary sources on the other hand, include: The SIL Comparative African Wordlist containing 1700 words, revealing a lot of verbal and verb phrase features of the language, scholarly works on verb serialization in Nigerian and African languages in textbooks, journals and the internet, as well as some published and unpublished materials on Àrùm language. However, the data collected were analyzed descriptively, based on the data collected from native speakers of the language and those collected from secondary sources. This involved preparing a checklist of possible verbs and verb phrase structure in the language as this helps in determining which verb constituents are productive in the language and to sieve the relevant data for analysis. This is followed by the compilation of relevant lists of Àrùm verbs and verb phrases and linguistic analysis of syntactic structure, features and components of the verb phrases in Àrùm. Hence, the analysis focuses on the syntactic structure that underlies verb serialization in Àrùm Sarki.

Results

This section of the study presents and analyzes data that showcases the syntactic structure underlying verb serialization in Àrùm. The data illustrate how SVCs are employed to encode motion-purpose, manner-result, perception, and resultative event types in Àrùm Sarki.

1. *nzámé ná hẹ̀ndẹ̀ rẹ̀ ménàtísààfòfònoíkúna dẹ̀ ba nno*

If 1sg.go walk DEF, 1sg will buy bread soft hold come you
'If I travel, I will buy you soft bread'

In data (1) above, verb serialisation occurs in *náhẹ̀ndẹ̀* and *dẹ̀ba*. In the former, *ná* 'go' and *hẹ̀ndẹ̀* 'walk' combine in the language to mean *náhẹ̀ndẹ̀* 'travel', which is a special case of verb serialisation in Àrùm. For a native speaker to put into usage the verb 'travel', 'go' *ná* and 'walk' *hẹ̀ndẹ̀* must be used together. In the latter, however, there is no special meaning attached or extracted from the combination of the verbs *dẹ̀* 'hold' and *ba* 'come', as in the case of the former. It is just a natural way of expression in the language. However, it means *dẹ̀ba* 'bring'. So, the speaker, in this case, literally means 'he would bring soft bread from the journey'.

2. *mé nàtè gbó ná nè gú àmbià ékpá*
1SG FUT run go to take cutlass
'I will run to go and get a cutlass.'

The construction in data (2) exemplifies a motion–purpose SVC. The verbs *gbó* 'run' and *ná* 'go' encode motion, while *gú* 'take' introduces the purpose of the motion. Although, *nàtè* functions as a future marker, it scopes over the entire verb complex, provides evidence for integration which reflects monoclausality. Structurally, the sequence forms a tight verb cluster in which *gbó* specifies the manner of motion, *ná* encodes directionality, and *gú* introduces the goal-oriented action. Semantically, the construction does not describe three independent events but a single, temporally unified action: running somewhere in order to obtain an object. The absence of any conjunction or complementizer reinforces the serial nature of the construction.

3. *á gbó ánàté édé ávàh ré*
3SG run FUT catch dog DEF
'He will run and catch the dog'

The data (3) illustrates a motion–result SVC, where the first verb *gbó* 'run' denotes the initiating action and the second *édé* 'catch' expresses the resultant event. The future marker *ánàté* occurs internally within the verb complex, but its interpretation extends to both verbs, indicating a shared tense value. Importantly, *ávàhré* 'the dog' is interpreted as the object of *édé* 'catch' but is semantically linked to the entire serial event. The running is pragmatically understood as instrumental to the act of catching. This demonstrates argument sharing, a defining feature of SVCs in Àrùm.

4. *má átsímó édé ákrófìrì nà*
3PL jump catch something clean
'They jumped and caught something clean.'

In the data (4), *átsímó* 'jump' functions as a manner verb, modifying the action expressed by *édé* 'catch'. Rather than describing two separate events, the construction encodes 'how' the catching was achieved. The serialisation reflects a manner–action SVC, in which the first verb provides adverbial information normally expressed by adverbs in non-SVC languages. The object *ákrófìrì* 'something' is selected only by the second verb but semantically applies to the whole complex predicate.

5. *á néré ànzá nà kyángùrè ré*
3SG look see writing man DEF
'He looked and saw the man's writing.'

This construction in data (5) represents a perception-based SVC, where *néré* 'look' and *ànzá* 'see' form a tightly integrated perceptual sequence. The first verb encodes a deliberate perceptual act, while the second expresses successful perception. The serialisation signals aspectual progression from attempt (look) to achievement (see). There is no temporal break between the verbs; rather, they are interpreted as stages of a single perceptual event.

6. *ányìfá ré bá bù ná áfìyá*
3SG.DEF come go to home
'The girl came and went home.'

Data (6) shows a directional SVC, combining deictic motion verbs. *bá* 'come' and *bù* 'go' are not contradictory here; instead, they encode a change of spatial orientation relative to discourse context, with *ná* 'to' marking direction towards the goal *áfìyá* 'home'. The serial verb sequence expresses a single journey

rather than two separate movements. This type of serialisation is typical of languages that grammaticalise motion through verb sequencing rather than prepositions.

7. *má áǵú kwáràbá ré áhwrá*
3PL take bottle DEF break
'They took the bottle and broke it.'

The construction in data (7) exemplifies a resultative SVC, where the first verb *áǵú* 'take' introduces an action that directly leads to the result expressed by the second verb *áhwrá* 'break'. The object *kwáràbá* 'the bottle' serves as the shared argument of both verbs, even though it is overtly expressed only once. The breaking is interpreted as the outcome of the taking action, forming a single causally linked event.

Discussion

This study unveils the mode of verb serialization in Àrùṁ. The analysis reveals that, Àrùṁ language has a peculiar structure of verb serialization, where two or more verbs can occur in expressions; and such combinations of verbs, in most cases tend to have implications on meaning, which is to convey a particular meaning that a single verb used would not address. For instance, *ná* 'go' and *hèndè* 'walk', combined as *náhèndè* means 'travel'. Also, *dè* 'hold' and *ba* 'come' combined as *dèba* means 'bring'. Hence, the language users must use such combinations to be very communicative in such regard. This therefore, demonstrates that serial verb constructions in Àrùṁ Sarki are structurally monoclausal and semantically integrated. This finding is in accordance with previous studies such as Durie (1997), Baker (1989), Omachonu (2006) and Aikhenvald (2006) that also found monoclausality and semantic integration in Serial Verb Constructions (SVC) in different Nigerian and African languages. The analysis also reveals that the language exploits verb serialization to encode motion, manner, purpose, perception, and result without recourse to conjunctions or subordination. Àrùṁ Sarki SVCs display consistent properties such as: single subjecthood (all verbs share the same subject), unified tense/aspect marking (temporal markers apply to the entire verb series), argument sharing (objects may be associated with only one verb syntactically but are interpreted across the construction), and event unity (the constructions encode a single macro-event rather than multiple independent actions). Typologically, Àrùṁ Sarki aligns with core serialising languages, where SVCs are productive and form a central strategy for clause structure rather than a marginal or stylistic

phenomenon. These findings are in conjunction with that of previous studies such as Babarinde (2013), Musa (2018), ThankGod and Ngulube (2022), Nwode and Egbuomwan (2024), Bebey (2025) and Jelili (2025) that also found varying syntactic features of Serial Verb Constructions (SVC) in different Nigerian and African languages. However, the findings confirm that SVCs are not merely juxtaposed verbs but constitute a fundamental grammatical mechanism in Àrùṁ Sarki for packaging complex events into single clauses.

Conclusion

Serial Verb Constructions (SVCs) constitute a prominent syntactic strategy in Àrùṁ Sarki for encoding complex events within a single clause. As is typical of SVC languages, Àrùṁ Sarki allows multiple verbs to occur in a monoclausal structure without overt coordination or subordination markers, sharing a single subject and forming a unified predication. These constructions enable the language to express sequences of actions, manner, direction, purpose, or result as a single macro-event. Àrùṁ Sarki serial verb constructions (SVC) exhibit the following properties: monoclausality (no overt clause boundary markers), a single overt subject, absence of coordinating conjunctions, shared tense, aspect, and polarity values across verbs, and semantic integration into a single complex event. However, the findings demonstrate that verb serialization is an established grammatical pattern in Àrùṁ Sarki, with serial verb constructions serving several syntactic and semantic functions.

Recommendations

The study recommends that further research should be carried out in the area of Àrùṁ syntax so as to present the language curriculum planners and

teachers with the basic grammatical tools for pedagogical materials for language teaching and learning. This will contribute to the documentation, description and revitalisation of

Àrùm and support the development of pedagogical and literacy materials.

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