SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS IN DEGEMA, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT   Serial verb constructions in Degema have not been studied, regarding characteristics such as type of serial verbs, range of semantic notions that can be expressed by these verbs and position of tense-aspect-polarity markers in relation to these verbs. It is noted in this paper that serial verb constructions in Degema belong to the type called "concordial" serial verbs. Tense-aspect markers occur after the verb or after an object pronoun that begins with a consonant. In some cases, tense-aspect marking on the initial verb is repeated after non-initial verbs. Also noted is the fact that there need not be agreement in tense between verbs in series, contrary to what has often been claimed in the literature on serial verbs.

Key Words: Serial verbs; Degema; Concordial serial verbs; Clitics; Linking type of serial verbs.

INTRODUCTION

Degema is an Edoid language of the Benue-Congo sub-family of the Niger-Congo phylum. Williamson and Blench (2000: 31) provided a recent classification of Benue-Congo languages, although the internal classification of Edoid was not shown. About 22,000 people speak Degema in the communities of Usokun-Degema and Degema Town (Atala)[1], which are located in the Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State of Nigeria. These communities each speak a variety of Degema that corresponds to the name of the community where it is spoken. The Usokun-Degema people speak Usokun, while the Degema Town people speak Atala. Degema data in this paper are based on the Usokun variety.

SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS

Serial verb constructions (SVC's) are a notable feature of many West African languages. Let it, however, be mentioned that these constructions are by no means restricted to languages of Africa, as they are also reported to occur in some languages of Asia such as Mandarin Chinese (Li & Thompson, 1973) and Lahu (Matisoff, 1973). Many publications exist in which SVC's in West African languages are discussed: Ansre (1966), Bamgbose (1974), Lord (1977), Williamson (1965; 1989) and Kari (1997b; 2000).

"A serial verb" or "a serial verb construction" has often been defined as "… a type of construction in which two or more verbs are strung together without an overt connective morpheme" (Ndimele, 1996: 127). Furthermore,

verbs in an SVC, which are not linked by a conjunction, are claimed to "share a common surface subject and one or more common aspectual/tense/polarity markers" (Williamson, 1989: 30).

1. Serial Verb Constructions in Degema

Discussion on SVC's in Degema is very scanty. Kari (1997b) made the observation that there are cases where two or more verbs with a common subject occur in series in Degema. In Kari (2003), SVC was briefly discussed with reference to the possibility of deleting subject and non-subject clitics attached to verbs that occur in series.

1.1. Defining SVC in Degema

The only two examples of SVC in Kari (1997b) have a substantive subject and a subject clitic that co-refers with the substantive subject. If the definition of what constitutes an SVC in Degema is based on the examples given in Kari (1997b: 60), then many constructions that are possible SVC candidates will be left out. There are many constructions that have one substantive subject but with more than one subject clitic, which co-refer with the substantive subject. These constructions, like the examples of SVC given in Kari (1997b) have no overt connective morpheme. Leaving out constructions with more than one subject clitic will rob us of some interesting facts about SVC's in Degema. For this reason, I will define an SVC in Degema as a verb construction where two or more verbs occur in series with one or more subject clitics co-referencing the substantive subject. Williamson (1989) calls this type of SVC "concordial" SVC. I will discuss some of the characteristics of this type of SVC in Degema.

1.2. Concordial SVC in Degema

SVC's in Degema belong to a type of SVC, which Williamson (1989) calls "concordial" SVC. What distinguishes this type of SVC from other types, such as the "unmarked" SVC and "consecutive" SVC discussed by Williamson, is that "… each verb refers back to the subject by means of a concordial marker or pronoun" (Williamson, 1989: 30).

1.2.1. Types of Concordial SVC in Degema

On the basis of the concordial subject clitics attached to verbs in the concordial SVC in Degema, I would like to distinguish between the concordial SVC with only one subject clitic and that with more than one subject clitic.

1.2.1.1. Concordial SVC with One Subject Clitic

Concordial SVC with one subject clitic is a type of SVC where the only

subject clitic that occurs in the serial construction precedes the initial verb. Example (1) illustrates this type of SVC (See key to the abbreviations below.):

(1)   Ohoso ọ=tá   ḍẹ́=n   isen.[2]
       Ohoso 3SgSCL=go buy=FE fish
       "Ohoso went and bought fish"

In (1), there are two verbs **tá** "go" and **ḍẹ́** "buy" in series and one subject clitic that concords with the subject N(oun) P(hrase) Ohoso in person and number. The subject clitic precedes the initial verb **tá** "go". In the concordial type of SVC with one subject clitic, tense and aspect markers attach to the last verb in past constructions such as positive factative and perfect constructions,[3] as in (2a) and (3a), but none on the same verb in the negative counterparts of these constructions, as in (2b) and (3b):

(2a)   Ohoso o=yî   kótú=n óyi.   (Positive Factative)
       Ohoso 3SgSCL=come call=FE him
       "Ohoso came and called him"

(2b)   Ohoso ó=yi   kótú óyi.   (Negative Factative)
       Ohoso 3SgSCL.NEG=come call him
       "Ohoso did not come and call him"

(3a)   Ohoso o=yî   kótú=té óyi.   (Positive Perfect)
       Ohoso 3SgSCL=come call=PE him
       "Ohoso has come and called him"

(3b)   Ohoso ọ́=ma   yi   kótú óyi.   (Negative Perfect)
       Ohoso 3SgSCL.NEG=UAUX come call him
       "Ohoso has not come and called him"

In non-past constructions, such as (4a) and (4b), the last verb is bare in contrast to (2a) and (3a). Details such as tone pattern and shape of subject clitics in positive and negative constructions are ignored (Kari, 2003: 148):

(4a)   Tatane mọ́=tá   ḍē̩ îsén.   (Positive)
       Tatane 3SgSCL=go buy fish
       "Tatane will go and buy fish"

(4b)   Tatane ọ́=ta   ḍẹ isen.   (Negative)
       Tatane 3SgSCL.NEG=go buy fish
       "Tatane will not go and buy fish"

1.2.1.2. Concordial SVC with More than One Subject Clitic

This type of concordial SVC has one substantive subject and a concordial subject clitic that precedes each of the verbs, initial and non-initial, in series,[4] as in example (5) (see Schachter, 1974 for a discussion of a similar phenomenon in the Akuapem dialect of Akan, Ghana):

(5)   Ohoso o̩=gbíyé=n   ēnám o̩=kíyé=n   óyi.
          Ohoso 3SgSCL=kill=FE animal 3SgSCL=give=FE him
          "Ohoso killed an animal for him"

In (5), the factative enclitic attaches to the initial and non-initial verbs in series. In this regard, it is interesting to note that there are some concordial SVC's with more than one subject clitic where the factative enclitic is optionally present after the initial verb. Such SVC's are those that have initial verbs followed by a pronoun object complement that begins with a consonant. Compare (6) and (7) with (5), (8) and (9):

(6)   Ivioso o=kótú   mé=ēn o̩=kpérí=n   īnúm.
          Ivioso 3SgSCL=call me=FE 3SgSCL=tell=FE something
          "Ivioso called me and told (me) something"

(7)   Ivioso o=kótú   wó̩=ōn o̩=kpérí=n   īnúm.
          Ivioso 3SgSCL=call you=FE 3SgSCL=tell=FE something
          "Ivioso called you and told (you) something"

(8)   Ivioso o=kótú=n   óyi o̩=kpérí=n   īnúm.
          Ivioso 3SgSCL=call=FE him 3SgSCL=tell=FE something
          "Ivioso called him and told (him) something"

(9)   Ivioso o=kótú=n   éni o̩=kpérí=n   īnúm.
          Ivioso 3SgSCL=call=FE us 3SgSCL=tell=FE something
          "Ivioso called us and told (us) something"

In (6) and (7), there are two occurrences of the factative enclitic. The first is after the object pronoun, which begins with a consonant, instead of after the initial verb, while the second is after the non-initial verb. In (8) and (9), also with double occurrences of the factative enclitic, however, the first is after the initial verb, while the second is after the non-initial verb. The reason for the occurrence of the enclitic after the initial verb in (8) and (9) instead of after the object pronoun is that the object pronoun begins with a vowel. In other words the phonological structure of the object pronoun in (8) and (9) prohibits encliticization to the (initial) verb. This behaviour of the factative enclitic and, indeed, all enclitics in Degema is discussed in Kari (1997b; 2001; 2002a; 2003). The behaviour of the factative enclitic in example (5) is the same as that in (8)

and (9) because the (common noun) object NP begins with a vowel:

Examples (5)-(9) are all positive concordial SVC with more than one subject clitic. In negative concordial SVC with more than one subject clitic, the factative enclitic is absent from all the verbs in the series, as in (10), (11), (12) and (13):

   (10)   Ivioso ó=kotu   me (ọ=)kperi   inum.
           Ivioso 3SgSCL.NEG=call me (3SgSCL=)tell something
           "Ivioso did not call me and tell (me) something"

   (11)   Ivioso ó=kotu   wọ (ọ=)kperi   inum.
           Ivioso 3SgSCL.NEG=call you (3SgSCL=)tell something
           "Ivioso did not call you and tell (you) something"

   (12)   Ivioso ó=kotu   ọ́yi ọ=kpéri   inúm.
           Ivioso 3SgSCL.NEG=call him 3SgSCL=tell something
           "Ivioso did not call him and tell (him) something"

   (13)   Ivioso ó=kotu   éni ọ=kpéri   inúm.
           Ivioso 3SgSCL.NEG=call us 3SgSCL=tell something
           "Ivioso did not call us and tell (us) something"

Another noteworthy observation that can be made as regards (10)-(11) is that the concordial subject clitic preceding the non-initial verb is optionally present[5] in (10) and (11) but obligatorily present in (12) and (13). When the subject clitic preceding the non-initial verb is obligatorily present in (10) and (11), the tone pattern of the non-initial verb and its complement is identical to what obtains in (12) and (13), although this is not shown in (10) and (11):

1.3. The Derivation of the SVC in Degema

The SVC in Degema is derived from two or more underlying sentences by deleting all but the first subject NP in the serial construction. I consider example (1), repeated below as (16), as deriving from (14) and (15):

   (14)   Ohoso ọ=tá=ān.
           Ohoso 3SgSCL=go=FE
           "Ohoso went"

   (15)   Ohoso ọ=ḍé=n   īsén.
           Ohoso 3SgSCL=buy=FE fish
           "Ohoso bought fish"

   (16)   Ohoso ọ=tá   ḍé=n   isen.
           Ohoso 3SgSCL=go buy=FE fish

"Ohoso went and bought fish"

To derive the SVC in (16), a deletion transformation applies to delete the substantive subject Ohoso along with its associated subject clitic in (15). Next, another deletion transformation applies to delete the factative enclitic in (14). Following these deletions, the SVC in (16) is left with only one substantive subject and one subject clitic co-referencing it. The sentence is also left with only one manifestation of the factative marker.

1.4. Concordial SVC in Degema as a Linking SVC

In this section, I will examine the concordial SVC in Degema in light of Bamgbose's (1974) characteristics of the linking type of SVC. These characteristics are "reference", "sequence and consequence", "negation", "case" and "tense and aspect". It appears that the five features associated with the linking type of SVC, to a large extent, characterize Degema SVC's. I will begin by looking at the first characteristic, which is "reference".

1.4.1. Reference

> "In a serial verbal construction, it is necessary that the analysis should reveal which NP a verb refers to, as this is crucial to the meaning of the construction. There is no problem about the first verb in the construction for its reference is always to the preceding subject. In the case of the non-initial verb, however, there are different possibilities of reference …" (Bamgbose, 1974: 21).

Consider examples (17) and (18a), in the light of the quotation above:

(17) Tatane ọ=sá=n   ēnám   o=gbíyé=ēn.
      Tatane 3SgSCL=shoot=FE animal 3SgSCL=kill=FE
      "Tatane shot an animal dead"

(18a) Ohoso ọ=kpérî   ḅáāw   é=yī.
      Ohoso 3SgSCL=tell themFE 3PlSCL=come
      "Ohoso told them to come"

In Degema SVC's the reference of the verb, initial and non-initial, to the subject NP, initial and non-initial, is shown by the concordial subject clitic that attaches to the verbs in question, as in (17). For this reason, the reference of the non-initial verb in Degema SVC's is as clear as that of the initial verb, unlike Yoruba on which Bamgbose's (1974) analysis is based. In (18a), the initial and non-initial verbs refer to different NP's. By the definition of an SVC as a construction in which two or more verb in series share a common surface subject, (18a) is not an SVC. The underlying reason why (18a) is not an SVC is that it is a complex sentence in which the complementizer and the substantive subject of the non-initial verb have been optionally deleted, as a

comparison of (18a) and (18b) shows:

(18b)   Ohoso   o̩=kpéri̩   bá̩w   má̩mū   ba̩w é=yī.
        Ohoso   3SgSCL=tell themFE that   they 3PlSCL=come
        "Ohoso told them that they should come"

Example (18b) proves convincingly that (18a) is not an SVC. It is, therefore, clear why the verbs in (18a) refer to different NP's.

1.4.2. Sequence and consequence

   Bamgbose (1974: 23) notes that verbs in a serial verb construction form a sequence which, when reversed, results in a meaning difference. This accords with Carol Lord's observation that 'the typical semantic interpretation of a serial verb construction [as in Nupe and Yoruba] is usually an action and result comprising a single event' (Lord, 1977: 148) (brackets added).

In Degema SVC's, it appears the sequence of verbs cannot even be reversed. An attempt to reverse the verb sequence results in ungrammaticality, which is indicated by placing an asterisk before the ungrammatical sentence, as (19b) shows:

(19a)   Tatane o=kpény   wá̩āy.
        Tatane 3SgSCL=wash spreadPE
        "Tatane washed and spread (something)"

(19b)   *Tatane o̩=wáy kpéēny.

The reason for the ungrammaticality of the sequence of verbs in (19b) is that since one may wash clothes, for instance, before spreading them (put out to dry), it is unnatural, at least in the culture of the Degema people, to spread out clothes before washing them.

   Consider an SVC in which verbs are marked for consequence:

(19c)   Tatane o̩=d̩é̩   vírésé=tē.
        Tatane 3SgSCL=buy cause to finish=PE
        "Tatane has bought the quantity available of something"

(19d)   *Tatane o=vírésé d̩é̩=tē.

The action of the non-initial verb (finishing) results from that of the initial verb (buying). This also has an implication for the natural sequence of verbs, which results in the ungrammaticality of (19d). It is not natural for the Degema people to finish off what is bought before buying it.

1.4.3. Negation

As rightly observed by Bamgbose (1974), negation in an SVC must be related to underlying sentences. In Degema SVC's, the verbs share the high tone that signals negation in negative sentences. This high tone is marked on only the subject clitic preceding the initial verb in the series. In the underlying sentences from which the SVC is derived, the high tone that signals negation anchors on the subject clitic in each of the sentences, as the sentences are independently negated. Consider the SVC (20c) with the underlying sentences (20a) and (20b) from which its is derived:

(20a) Jzakume[6] ó̩=tam   i̩d̩iyom.
       Jzakume   3SgSCL.NEG=chew food
       "Jzakume did not chew food"

(20b) Jzakume ó̩=d̩ony   i̩d̩iyom.
       Jzakume 3SgSCL.NEG=swallow food
       "Jzakume did not swallow food"

(20c) Jzakume ó̩=tam   i̩d̩iyom o̩=d̩óny.
       Jzakume 3SgSCL.NEG=chew food   3SgSCL.NEG=swallow
       "Jzakume did not chew food and (did not) swallow"

In the SVC in (20c), the series of verbs is negated by the high tone on the subject clitic preceding the initial verb. The high tone that signals negation treats the verb sequence as a unit. The sentences in (20a) and (20b), however, are independently negated, as revealed by the presence of the suprasegmental negative morpheme on each of the subject clitics in the two sentences. The Degema data in (20), thus, confirms the claim by Bamgbose (1974: 25) that negation is related to underlying sentences. Without postulating this for Degema, it may be difficult to account for the fact that verbs that do not have an overt subject clitic in negative SVC's are also negated, as in (21c):

(21a) Jzakume ó̩=kotu   me.
       Jzakume 3SgSCL.NEG=call me
       "Jzakume did not call me"

(21b) Jzakume ó̩=kaku[7]   me̩ inum.
       Jzakume 3SgSCL.NEG=show me something
       "Jzakume did not show me something"

(21c) Jzakume ó̩=kotu   me kake   inum.
       Jzakume 3SgSCL.NEG=call me NEG.show something
       "Jzakume did not call me and (did not) show (me) something"

As can be seen, only the initial verb of the SVC appears to be negated in (21c).[8] Nevertheless, the non-initial verb also has a negative sense, as revealed by the underlying sentence in (21b).

1.4.4. Case

It is believed that there is case matching between NP's in an SVC and those in underlying sentences from which the SVC derives, even when a deletion has taken place. In Degema, this is very clear especially with NP's in the nominative case. Consider the following sentences:

(22a) Ohoso ó=kotu   éni.
       Ohoso 3SgSCL.NEG=call us
       "Ohoso did not call us"

(22b) Ohoso ọ́=kake   éni inum
       Ohoso 3SgSCL.NEG=show us something
       "Ohoso did not show us something"

(22c) Ohoso ó=kotu   éni ọ=káké   înúm.
       Ohoso 3SgSCL.NEG=call us 3SgSCL.NEG=show something
       "Ohoso did not call us and (did not) show (us) something"

Example (22c) is a conflated version of (22a) and (22b). The case of the subject NP's in (22a) and (22b) is retained in (22c) even after the deletion of the subject NP in the second predicate. That there is case matching between the NP's is shown by the underlying meaning associated with concordial subject clitics that are co-referential with the NP's. Both subject clitics agree with the substantive subject in nominative case.

1.4.5. Tense and Aspect

Verbs in a serial construction are often said to agree in tense and aspect (Williamson, 1965, cited by Bamgbose, 1974; Ndimele, 1996). However, Bamgbose (1974: 27, citing Bendor-Samuel, 1968) notes that in Izi, an Igbo dialect spoken in Nigeria, it is not obligatory that there be agreement in tense and aspect between the verbs in a serial construction. Preliminary investigation in Degema also shows that this agreement need not hold for all SVC's. There are SVC's where the tense of the second verb is different from that of the first verb. Consider the following sentences:

(23a) Tatane o=kótú=n   óyi.
       Tatane 3SgSCL=FE him
       "Tatane called him"

(23b)   Tatane mọ́=kpérí   ọ́yi inum.
        Tatane 3SgSCL=tell him something
        "Tatane is telling him something"

(23c)   Tatane o=kótú=n   ọ́yi mọ́=kpérí   înúm
        Tatane 3SgSCL=callFE him 3SgSCL=tell something
        "Tatane called him and is telling (him) something"

Example (23c) reveals that the underlying sentences (23a) and (23b), from which (23c) is derived, have different tenses. The tense of sentence (23a) is past whereas that of (23b) is non-past. This asymmetry in tense is reflected in the serial verbs in (23c). Degema thus provides further support that there need not be agreement in tense and aspect in verbs in SVC's.

I have shown the extent to which SVC's in Degema are characterized by the features associated with the linking SVC discussed in Bamgbose (1974). It is sufficiently clear from what is presented that concordial SVC's in Degema are the linking type of SVC.

1.5. Semantic Types of SVC in Degema

In what follows, I discuss semantic types of SVC that feature in Degema. These include benefactive, comparative, accompanimental, instrumental, locative, sequential, abilitative, consequencial, simultaneous event and duration. The data below will be useful in the discussion on which verbs follow or precede other verbs in serial constructions in Degema.

1.5.1. Benefactive SVC

This SVC suggests that the oblique object benefits from the action carried out by the subject. The oblique object in (24) is the object pronoun **ọyí** "him" after the non-initial verb, which benefits from the action of buying (a shirt) carried out by the subject NP of the initial verb:

(24)   Breno ọ=dẹ́   ké[9]=n ọ́yi ọ́sama.
        Breno 3SgSCL=buyFE give=FE him shirt
        "Breno bought a shirt for him"

1.5.2. Comparative SVC

In this type of SVC, two NP's are compared to determine which of them has more or less attributes than the other, as in (25). The subject NP of the initial verb has more or less attributes than the second NP. The initial verb in this SVC is always a stative verb:

(25)   Breno o=sóm   fiyé   wǫ́=ōn.
       Breno 3SgSCL=be good   be more than   you=FE
       "Breno is handsomer than you"

1.5.3. Comitative SVC

The comitative SVC expresses the meaning of "go together with". The subject NP of the initial verb goes with the object NP of the same verb to some destination:

(26)   Breno o=ḍúw   mé tą́=ān.
       Breno 3SgSCL=follow   me go=FE
       "Breno went with me"

1.5.4. Instrumental SVC

In this type of SVC, the subject NP of the initial verb brings about some change in the physical state of the object NP of the non-initial verb with the aid of an instrument:

(27)   Breno ǫ=vón   óge   o=fiyá=n   úḍinw yǫ.
       Breno 3SgSCL=take machete 3SgSCL=cut=FE rope   DEF
       "Breno cut the rope with a machete"

1.5.5. Accompanimental SVC

This SVC has the meaning of 'take along with'. The subject NP of the initial verb takes the second NP of the same verb to some location. This SVC in Degema differs from the comitative in which the subject NP of the initial verb goes with the object NP of the same verb to some destination:

(28)   Breno ǫ=vón   ātónw o=yî=īn.
       Breno 3SgSCL=take clothes 3SgSCL=come=FE
       "Breno brought some clothes"

1.5.6. Locative SVC

"Locative is a case role which describes the direction or spatial orientation of the action or state expressed by the verb. The direction or spatial orientation depicted by the verb(s) may be towards or away from the speaker. The locative case role is often expressed by the help of 'positional' verbs … which describe the location of the various subjects" (Ndimele, 1996: 133).

In (29), the positional verbs are **siré** "run" and **tą́** "go":

(29)   Breno o=síré   tá̰=n   mú éki.
        Breno 3SgSCL=run go=FE to   market
        "Breno ran to the market"

1.5.7. Sequential SVC

In the sequential SVC, the initial verb expresses the fact that the subject NP will be the first to carry out the action or achieve the state of the non-initial verb before the object NP, as example (30) shows:

(30)   Breno mó̰=tútú   mḛ́ ɖḭ ḭɖiyōm.
        Breno 3SgSCL=be first me eat food
        "Breno will eat first before me"

1.5.8. Abilitative SVC

This SVC is used to express the notion of "ability", whereby the subject NP of the initial verb is able to carry out the action of the non-initial verb, as in (31):

(31)   Breno mó=nwáné   tá̰ ḇá̰a.
        Breno 3SgSCL=be able go there
        "Breno can go there"

1.5.9. Consequential SVC

In this type of SVC, the action of the first verb results in the consequence or state of the second verb. Example (32) shows that the death or killing of the animal results from the action of shooting (the animal):

(32)   Breno o̰=sá=n   énám yo̰ o=gbíyé=ēn.
        Breno 3SgSCL=shoot=FE animal DEF 3SgSCL=kill=FE
        "Breno shot the animal dead"

1.5.10. Simultaneous Event SVC

The verbs in this type of SVC express the idea that the actions depicted by the initial and non-initial verbs take place at the same time, as (33) illustrates:

(33)   Breno o̰=ɖḭ=n   ḭɖiyōm o̰=vó⁽¹⁰⁾   mó=réré   mú úsuweny.
        Breno 3SgSCL=eat=FE food   3SgSCL=take 3SgSCL=walk on road
        "Breno is eating while working"

1.5.11. Durational SVC

Bamgbose (1986: 33) says of the durational SVC as one in which "…the

action or state of the first verb continues until the action or state of the second verb is attained", as revealed by (34):

(34) Breno o̩=kél   a̩ŵîyē o=méné=n   úmene.
      Breno 3SgSCL=begin dawn 3SgSCL=do=FE work
      "Breno worked from dawn (till unspecified point in time)"

1.5.12. Refusal SVC

The refusal SVC expresses the fact that the action or state of the verbs in series was deliberately not initiated, as revealed by (35):

(35) Breno ó=meme   mene úmene.
      Breno 3SgSCL.NEG=agree do   work
      "Breno refused to work"

1.6. Positional Relationship between Verbs in Series

In this section, I will consider the position that verbs or class of verbs in an SVC tend to occupy in relation to each other in Degema.[11]

1.6.1. Verbs that Tend to Precede Other Verbs in Series

The following verbs or classes of verbs tend to precede other verbs or classes of verbs in series:

d̩úw	"follow"	comitative
tu̩tú	"be first"	sequential
vó̩n	"take"	accompanimental/instrumental
stative verbs (só̩m, bú̩w, etc.)	"be good, be big, etc."	comparative
nwané	"be able"	abilitative
dynamic verbs (d̩é, mené, etc.)	"buy, do, etc."	benefactive
memé	"agree"	refusal
ké̩l	"start"	durational
dynamic verbs (d̩í, fé̩ny, etc.)	"eat, urinate, etc."	simultaneous
positional verbs (siré, b̩ór, etc.)	"run, throw, etc."	locative

1.6.2. Verbs that Tend to Follow Other Verbs in Series

The following verbs or classes of verbs tend to follow other verbs or classes of verbs in series:

tá̩, yí	"go, come"	comitative
dynamic/stative verbs (d̩í, bú̩w, etc.)	"eat, be big, etc."	sequential

tá, yí	"go, come"	accompanimental
fiyé/kél, túl	"surpass, reach"	comparative
dynamic verbs (tá, mené, etc.)	"go, do, etc."	abilitative
ké/ke̩[(12)]	"give"	benefactive
dynamic verbs (mené, tá, etc.)	"do, go"	refusal
dynamic verbs (mené, reré)	"do, walk, etc."	durational
vó̩[(13)]+dynamic verbs (reré, etc.)	"walk, etc."	simultaneous
positional verbs (tá)	"go, etc."	locative

1.7. The Phenomenon of Sharing in SVC's

One of the claims made with respect to the SVC and which is often used in its definition is that verbs in a serial construction share one surface subject and one or more common tense, aspect and polarity markers (Williamson, 1989: 30; Ndimele, 1996: 129). The fact that SVC's in Degema share a common surface subject is clear from what I have discussed so far in this paper. In 1.2.1.1, I pointed out that in an SVC with one subject clitic, tense and aspect markers attach to the last verb in past constructions such as positive factative and perfect constructions. In what follows, I will examine tense and aspect and negative sharing in Degema SVC's.

1.7.1. Tense and Aspect Sharing

Tense and aspect markers that occur in Degema SVC's are shared by the verbs in series. Consider examples (36) through (37):

(36a) Imanete o=yí=īn.
        Imanete 3SgSCL=come=FE
        "Imanete came"

(36b) Imanete o=kótú=n   ó̩yi.
        Imanete 3SgSCL=call=FE him
        "Imanete called him"

(36c) Imanete o=yí   kótú=n ó̩yi.
        Imanete 3SgSCL=come call=FE him
        "Imanete came and called him"

(36d) *Imanete o=yí=n kótú=n ó̩yi.

(37a) Ohoso o=yí=tē.
        Ohoso 3SgSCL=come=PE
        "Ohoso has come"

(37b)   Ohoso o=kótú=té   ọ́yi.
        Ohoso 3SgSCL=call=PE him
        "Ohoso has called him"

(37c)   Ohoso o=yí   kótú=té ọ́yi.
        Ohoso 3SgSCL=come call=PE him
        "Ohoso has come and called him"

(37d)   *Ohoso o=yí=tē kótú=té ọ́yi.

In (36c) and (37c), the factative and perfect enclitics, which respectively mark tense (past) and aspect (perfect), occur after the non-initial verbs. Nevertheless, these morphemes are shared by both the initial and non-initial verbs. A look at the sentences from which (36c) and (37c) are derived shows that the verbs are independently marked for tense [in (36a) and (36b)] and aspect [in (37a) and (37b)]. In the resultant SVC's, however, there is only one factative marker in (36c) and only one perfect marker in (37c). The factative and perfect enclitics that attach after the initial verbs in (36a) and (37a) respectively are deleted because they are identical to the ones that attach after the non-initial verbs, just like the subject of the non-initial verb in (36b) and (37b) is deleted because it is identical to that of the initial verb. Since the sentences from which (36c) and (37c) are derived are both past and perfect respectively, the grammar deletes one of the morphemes and allows the verbs in (36c) and (37c) to respectively share the only occurrence of the factative and perfect morphemes. These deletions explain why (36d) and (37d) are ungrammatical.

Although the occurrence of more than one factative or perfect morpheme is not possible in SVC's that have one subject clitic, it is possible in those that have more than one subject clitic, as I noted in 1.2.1.2. Consider examples (38) through (39):

(38a)   Tatane o=kótú=n   ọ́yi ọ=kpérí=n   īnúm.
        Tatane 3SgSCL=call=FE him 3SgSCL=tell=FE something
        "Tatane called him and told (him) something"

(38b)   *Tatane o=kótú ọ́yi ọ=kpérí=n īnúm.

(39a)   Tatane o=kótú=té   éni o=kpérí=tē   īnúm.
        Tatane 3SgSCL=call=PE us   3SgSCL=tell=PE something
        "Tatane has called us and told (us) something"

(39b)   *Tatane o=kótú éni ọ=kpérí=tē īnúm.

The reason for the occurrence of the factative and perfect enclitics on each of the verbs in series is due to the presence of an object pronoun that begins with

a vowel (cf. 1.2.1.2, examples (6) and (7)). SVC's which have more than one subject clitic and which have initial verbs with an object pronoun are ungrammatical if there is only one occurrence of the factative or perfect enclitic, as in (38b) and (39b). In spite of the dual occurrence of the factative and perfect enclitics in (38a) and (39a), respectively, the SVC's can still be considered as sharing the factative and perfect morphemes since there is agreement in tense and aspect in the sentences under consideration.

1.7.2. Negative Sharing

Negation in Degema, like tense and aspect, is expressed by a complex interaction of tone and clitics and auxiliaries (Kari, 2003: 153). In all negative sentences in Degema, there is always the presence of a high tone that signals negation. In simple sentences, the negative high tone anchors on the subject clitic. In SVC's, this high tone anchors on the subject clitic before the initial verb but shared by all the verbs in series (see Section 1.4.3). The verbs in series are not independently negated. This is seen in the fact that SVC's where two or more subject clitics occur have only one negative high tone on the subject clitic preceding the initial verb, while the tone on the subject clitic before non-initial verbs is low, as revealed by example (40c). Any attempt to negate serial verbs independently, like when the verbs occur in the respective simple sentences (40a and 40b) from which the SVC in (40c) derives, renders the sentence ungrammatical, as shown in (40d) where there are two negative high tones — one before the initial verb and the other before the non-initial verb:

(40a)   Ohoso ọ́=von   ẹ́lege.
        Ohoso 3SgSCL.NEG=take knife
        "Ohoso did not use a knife (to do something)"

(40b)   Ohoso ọ́=fiya.
        Ohoso 3SgSCL.NEG=cut
        "Ohoso did not cut (something)"

(40c)   Ohoso ọ́=von   ẹ́lege ọ=fiyá.
        Ohoso 3SgSCL.NEG=take knife 3SgSCL.NEG=cut
        "Ohoso did not use a knife to cut"

(40d)   *Ohoso ọ́=von ẹ́lege ọ́=fiya.

The sharing of the high tone that signals negation suggests that the negative high tone renders the SVC a unit.

CONCLUSION

   From the data and the discussion on SVC's in Degema, it is clear that Degema serial verbs belong to the type called "concordial serial verb" or what is sometimes referred to as the "Mande serial construction" (Wedekind, 1972). Like the Akuapem dialect of Akan a concord marking morpheme precedes each of the verbs, initial and non-initial, in series in Degema. Tense-aspect markers in Degema SVC's occur after the verb or after an object pronoun that begins with a consonant. Like what obtains in Twi, Ghana, tense-aspect marking on the initial verb is repeated after the non-initial verbs in series in Degema. Also of interest is the observation in Degema that there need not be agreement in tense between all verbs in series, contrary to what has often been claimed in the literature. What this suggests is that agreement in tense-aspect-polarity should not be a universal defining feature of serial verbs. The present author studied the positional relationship between verbs in series in Degema and found that verbs such as **tụtú** "be first" (sequential), **dụ́úw** "follow" (comitative), **vọ́n** "take" (instrumental) and **nwané** "be able" (abilitative) tend to precede other verbs in series, while such verbs as **ké/kẹ́** "give" (benefactive), **fiyé, kél** "surpass" (comparative) and **tạ́** "go" (locative) tend to follow other verbs in series.

NOTES

(1) "Atala" is the indigenous name of the Degema Town people. This name also refers to the variety of Degema that they speak.
(2) Degema data are transcribed using orthographic symbols. In this transcription, only the first vowel of a simple word that contains non-expanded vowels is dotted. It is then assumed that all the vowels in the word are dotted. This is done for the sake of convenience. The subject clitic forms a phonological word with the following verb and since it agrees with the vowels of the verb in expandedness or non-expandedness, it is dotted when the verb contains non-expanded vowels (cf. Abangwo, 1996). In this paper, clitics are separated from their hosts by "=". Only high (´) and downstepped high (ˉ) tones are marked. Low tone is unmarked for the sake of convenience.
(3) For a detailed discussion of past vs. non-past constructions in Degema, see Kari (2003).
(4) The Degema example in (5) is similar to genuine SVC in Twi, Ghana, where verbs in a series have the same tense, mood, or polarity. Ansre (1966) shows that in Twi, morphemes marking tense, aspect and polarity occur on each of the verbs in series. It appears from some of the examples in Ansre (1966: 32) that a morpheme marking a particular grammatical category is duplicated on the serial verbs.

(5) This observation that the co-referential subject clitic is optionally present (before the non-initial verb) is contrary to my claim in Kari (2002c: 187) that subject clitics in Degema are not subject to deletion under identity, unlike words. Kari (2003: 231) observed that deletion of the subject clitic before non-initial verbs in SVC's is possible in Degema but that deletion of the subject clitic is not possible in simple predicates.

(6) The digraph "Jz" is pronounced [dʒ] by Usokun speakers but [z] by Atala speakers. For comments on this digraph, see Abangwo (1996) and Kari (1997a).

(7) This is a variant form of the verb **kạké** "show" that occurs before object pronouns that begin with a consonant. The form **kạké** occurs before object pronouns that begin with a vowel and elsewhere.

(8) The presence of only one high tone, which signals negation in (21c), results from the fact that the non-initial subject clitic with the high tone is deleted in the SVC (by a transformation that deletes identical elements). It should be borne in mind that Degema clitics do not have inherent tones. It should not be interpreted from my discussion in this paper that clitics in Degema have inherent tones. Whichever tone they eventually bear depends on the context in which they occur in the surface structure of the sentence (Kari, 2002b; 2002c; 2003).

(9) This is an allomorph of the verb **kị̣yé** "give", which occurs before object pronouns that begin with a vowel.

(10) This is an allomorph of **vọ́n** "take", which occurs before a word that begins with a consonant.

(11) For a similar discussion on the positional relationship between verbs in series, see Faraclas (1996).

(12) See note 9.

(13) See note 10.

ABBREVIATIONS

3PlSCL=3rd person plural subject clitic
3SgSCL=3rd person singular subject clitic
DEF=definite article
FE=factative enclitic
NEG=negative
NP=noun phrase
PE=perfect enclitic
SVC=serial verb construction
UAUX=unfulfilled auxiliary

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