

Object-Sharing as Symmetric Sharing: Evidence from Serial Verb Constructions and Predicate Clefting

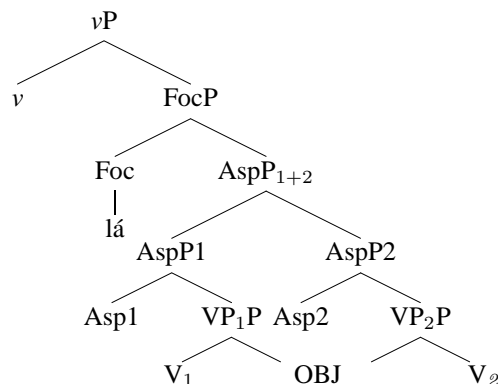
1. Introduction: Serial Verb Construction (SVC) is observed in various languages of the world. Among various types of SVCs, “object-sharing” SVCs have been of particular theoretical interest, precisely because of the issue of how to formally represent object-sharing (Baker 1989, Collins 1997, 2002 etc.). Baker (1989) proposes that object-sharing involves syntactic sharing by two verbs, whereas Collins (1997) proposes that SVCs are composed of a VP-shell structure and “sharing” actually involves a null pronoun coreferential with the “shared” object. In this paper, we argue, that object-sharing SVCs in Dàgáárè (a Gur language spoken in Ghana) must have a syntactic *symmetric sharing* structure and add to empirical support for Baker’s original insight of “double-headedness” and object-sharing. The evidence comes from particular cases of object pied-piping in predicate clefting in SVCs in Dàgáárè, which has not been observed in other languages.

2. Basics of Object-Sharing SVC in Dàgáárè: SVCs with object-sharing in Dàgáárè is illustrated in (1). For object-sharing type SVCs in Dàgáárè, it is not possible to insert an overt pronoun after the V2, as shown in (2a). In overt coordination counterparts (2b), it is possible to insert an overt pronoun. This suggests that object-sharing in Dàgáárè does not involve a null pronoun, contra Ewe (Collins 1997). Furthermore, the fact that it is not possible for the past tense particle to appear on the second verb unless it is overtly coordinated shown in (3) also indicates that the object-sharing SVCs in Dàgáárè are not an instance of covert coordination.

3. Predicate Clefts in Dàgáárè: Dàgáárè, as many other (West) African languages do, allows Predicate Cleft Constructions (PCC). As shown in (4b), predicate clefting realizes two copies of the predicate: a nominalized predicate in [Spec, CP] and an original predicate in-situ. Interestingly, predicate clefting can also be applied to SVCs in Dàgáárè, yielding various patterns. In contrast with some other West African languages, either V1, V2, or V1+V2 can undergo predicate clefting in the object-sharing SVCs, as shown in (5) (see Bodomo 2004 for Serial Verb Nominalization.). Now, the important insight that Dàgáárè provides us is that the shared object can undergo pied-piping with either V1 or V2 (or both), as shown in (6), which strongly indicates that the object forms a syntactic constituent with either verb.

4. Object Sharing as Symmetric Sharing: The fact that the object can form a syntactic constituent with either V1 or V2 in SVCs in Dàgáárè poses a serious problem for the previous analyses. This kind of constituency is totally unexpected under the standard asymmetric structures. Under Baker’s ternary structure, it is not clear how V1 and OBJ can form a syntactic constituent, excluding V2, given that a ternary branching is set-theoretically represented as $\{x, y, z\}$. Furthermore, the postulation of the null pronoun as the object for V2 makes it even harder to explain why V2 and OBJ can undergo clefting together.

We propose, building on the insight of Baker (1989) and in particular Citko’s (2005) multi-dominance theory as well as a copy theory of movement, that object-sharing in Dàgáárè involves syntactic *Symmetric Sharing*, as represented below (the first verb adjoins to the particle *lá* (perhaps at PF), which derives the correct word order and solves the linearization problem).



We demonstrate that this symmetric object-sharing structure can naturally explain the pied-piping of the direct object under predicate clefting in SVCs. Adopting the theory of predicate cleft and nominalization proposed in Hiraiwa (2005), the clefting of V1+OBJ and the clefting of V2+OBJ are equally handled as a movement of a syntactic constituent (VP1P and VP2P, respectively). The proposed theory also explains the ungrammaticality of (2a), since there is only one occurrence of the object, which occupies the object positions of both of the verbs.

Examples:

- (1) ò dà sé lá néné òò (*lá).
3Sg. Pst roast F meat eat F
'He roasted meat and ate it.'
- (2) a. ò dà sé lá sɪŋkáá òò (*á).
3Sg. Pst roast F groundnut.Pl eat them
'He roasted groundnuts and ate them.'
- b. ò dà sé lá sɪŋkáá, à òò (á).
3Sg. Pst roast F groundnut.Pl Cnj eat them
'He roasted groundnuts and ate them.'
- (3) a. ò dà sé lá néné (*dà) òò.
3Sg. Pst roast F meat Pst eat
'He roasted meat and ate it.'
- b. ò dà sé lá néné, à (dà) òò.
3Sg. Pst roast F meat Cnj Pst eat
'He roasted meat and then ate it.'
- (4) a. ò dà dá lá bóó. b. **dááó** lá ká ní dà dá bóó. c. **bóó dááó** lá ká ní dà dá.
1Sg. Pst buy F goat buy.Nml F C 1Sg. Pst buy goat goat buy.Nml F C 1Sg. Pst buy
'I bought a goat.' 'It is buying that I bought a goat.' 'It is buying a goat that I bought.'
- (5) a. ò dà sé lá néné òò.
3Sg. Pst roast F meat eat.
'He roasted meat and ate it.'
- b. **sééó** lá ká ó dà sé néné òò.
roast.Nml F C 3Sg. Pst roast meat eat
'It is roasting that he roasted and ate meat.' (V1)
- c. **óó** lá ká ó dà sé néné òò.
eat.Nml F C 3Sg. Pst roast meat eat
'It is eating that he roasted and ate meat.' (V2)
- d. **sé-óó** lá ká ó dà sé néné òò.
roast-eat.Nml F C 3Sg. Pst roast meat eat.
'It is roasting and eating that he roasted and ate meat.' (V1+V2)
- (6) a. **néné sééó** lá ká ó dà sé òò.
meat roast.Nml F C 3Sg. Pst roast eat
'It is roasting meat that he roasted and ate.' (clefting of V1+OBJ)
- b. **néné óó** lá ká ó dà sé òò.
meat eat.Nml F C 3Sg. Pst roast eat
'It is eating meat that he roasted and ate.' (clefting of V2+OBJ)
- c. **néné sé-óó** lá ká ó dà sé òò.
meat roast-eat.Nml F C 3Sg. Pst roast eat.
'It is roasting meat and eating it that he roasted and ate.' (clefting of V1+V2+OBJ)

Selected References:

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