Purpose and instrumentality in Akan

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1.0   Two constructions

I'll be discussing two very similar constructions in Akan, exemplified below. The examples on the left are traditionally termed serial verb constructions (SVCs); the ones on the right were called *de*-serialization by Osam 2008.

(1)   a.   me noaa   nam dii   yɛ
      1s cook.PST fish eat.PST YE
      'I cooked and ate fish.'

   b.   me bɛ- noa nam a- di
      1s FUT cook fish INF eat
      'I will cook and eat fish.'

   c.   {noa/*di} na   me noa   nam di
      cook/*eat FOC 1s cook fish eat
      'It's cooking I do to the fish and eat it.'

   d.   me n-   noa nam n- di
      1s NEG cook fish NEG eat
      'I didn't cook and eat fish.'

(2)   a.   me de sekan no twaa   nam
      1s DE knife DEF cut.PST fish
      'I cut the fish with a knife.'

   b.   me de sekan no   bɛ- twa nam
      1s DE knife DEF FUT cut fish
      'I will cut the fish with a knife.'

   c.   {twa/*de} na   me de sekan twa nam
      cut/*DE   FOC 1s DE knife cut fish
      'It's cutting I do with the knife to the fish.'

   d.   *me de sekan no n-   twa nam
      1s DE knife DEF NEG cut fish
      Intended: 'I didn't cut the fish with a knife.'

	SVCs	DE
Past tense	Realized twice (optionally)	Realized once
Other tense/aspect	First verb, plus infinitive	Second verb, no infinitive
Focus doubling	Only first verb	Only second verb
Negation	Both verbs (usually)	*

Prior analyses of both of these constructions treat them as some kind of embedding structure:

- Aboh 2009, Martin 2010: In SCVs, V_1 embeds TP_2

- Martin 2014: DE is a functional element in the verbal projection

Neither of these analyses fully capture the syntactic facts. I'd like to argue for a more unified analysis.

1.1   Overview of this talk

- The meaning and nature of *de*-serialization.

- What SVCs in Akan are (and aren't)

- *de*-serialization as impoverished serialization.

2.0 *de*-serialization

2.1 *What* DE *means*

Above, I portrayed *de*-serialization as expressing instrumental arguments, but this isn't all it does.

As far as I have been able to determine, all readings of this construction behave identically under all morphosyntactic tests.

2.2 *Causative* DE

(3) a. adaka no   si   fam   so
         box   DEF sit ground on
         'The box is on the ground.'
     b. me de adaka no   si   fam   so
         1s DE box   DEF sit ground on
         'I put the box on the ground.'

Per Martin 2014, the causative reading is available for all and only unaccusative verbs. Unergatives, for instance, get an obligatory instrumental reading:

(4) a. akwada no   re-   huri
         child   DEF PROG jump
         'The child is jumping.'
     b. #Ama de akwada no   re-   huri
         A.   DE child   DEF PROG jump
         Intended: 'Ama made the child jump.'
         Actual: 'Ama jumped using a child.'

2.3 *Marginal readings*

The instrumental and the causative are by far the most common uses, but there are three more:

- With at least verbs of motion, comitative readings are also available:

(5) a. **Instrumental context**: I rode my bike home.
     b. **Comitative context**: I put my bike in the trunk of my car and drove home.
     c. me de me bike kɔɔ   fie
         1s DE 1s bike go.PST fie
         'I biked home.' *or* 'I took my bike home.'

- A very small number of ditransitive verbs have an alternate form using *de*-serialization.

(6) a. Kofi maa Ama buuku no
     b. Kofi de buuk no   maa   Ama
         K.   DE book DEF give.PST A.
         'Kofi gave the book to Ama.'

(7) a. Kofi twerɛɛ Ama kraata
     b. #Kofi de kraata twerɛɛ   Ama
         K.   DE letter write.PST A.
         Intended: 'Kofi wrote Ama a letter.'
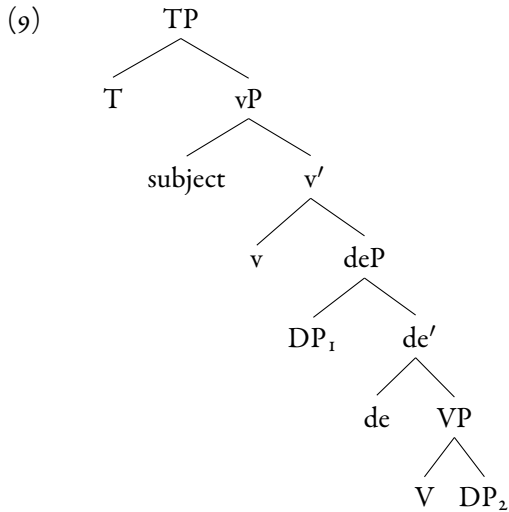   Actual: 'Kofi used a piece of paper to write Ama.'

- And then just about any verb can take certain 'manner adverbial' sorts of modifiers.

(8) a. me de mrika   kɔɔ   epono
         1s DE running go.PST school
         'I went to school quickly.'
     b. Kofi de ntoboasiɛ twaa   nam
         K.   DE care   cut.PST fish
         'Kofi cut fish carefully.'

- Martin 2014 argues that DE is a functional element in the verbal projection, having a meaning like 'cause' or 'enable':

(9)
```
                TP
              /    \
            T       vP
                  /    \
            subject     v′
                      /    \
                     v      deP
                          /    \
                       DP₁      de′
                              /    \
                            de      VP
                                  /    \
                                 V     DP₂
```

- This makes the prediction that the two DPs should be in a c-command relationship. This is supported by binding facts:

(10)   Me de akokɔ baa   biara kyee   ne   barima
       1s DE chicken female every catch.PST 3s.GEN male
       'I used every female chicken to catch its mate.'   Quantifier binding

Example (10) is due to Martin.

(11)   Kofi de kaa no sɛee   neho
       K.   DE car DEF destroy.PST itself
       'Kofi used the car to destroy itself.'   Condition A

2.5   *An unexpected constituent*

However, focus fronting turns up something unexpected under this analysis. The next two examples present an overview of focus fronting in Akan.

(12)   a.   Enora   Ama hunu Kofi
            yesterday A.   saw K.
            'Ama saw Kofi yesterday.'
       b.   Ama na   enora   ɔ   hunu Kofi
            A. FOC yesterday 3s.AN saw K.
            'It's Ama that saw Kofi yesterday.'

(13)   a.   Enora   adaka no   sii fam
            yesterday box   DEF sat ground
            'The box was on the ground yesterday.'
       b.   Adaka no   na   enora   ɛ   sii fam
            box   DEF FOC yesterday 3s.INAN sat ground
            'It's the box that was on the ground yesterday.'
       c.   fam   na   enora   adaka no   sii   Ø   yɛ
            ground FOC yesterday box   DEF sit.PST 3s.INAN YE
            'It's the ground that the box was on yesterday.'

Focus fronting can target all of the DPs in *de*-serialization, but also something else: It appears that we can front the [S de DP₁] substring, leaving behind a non-matching resumptive.

I'll remain neutral as to whether any of these are real fronting or base generation + control.

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(14) me de Ama na   enora   ɛ   kɔɔ   fie
      1s DE A.   FOC yesterday 3s.INAN go.PST home
      'It's Ama that I took home yesterday.'

- Under an analysis that puts DE in the clausal spine, this substring should not be a constituent.

- In fact, the problem is deeper than that: Any structure that has DP_1 c-commanding DP_2 should not allow this constituency.

- The resumptive pronoun is in subject case, suggesting that whatever we've moved has some status similar to a subject.

3.0 AKAN SVCs

3.1 *Purposive clauses*

Akan SVCs typically carry a meaning something like purposive infinitive clauses in English:

(15) Ama re-   kɔ dwom a-   hunu Kofi
      A. PROG- go market INF- see   K.
      'Ama is going to the market to see Kofi.'
      (*'Ama is going to the market and seeing Kofi.')

- Overt infinitive marking is obligatory on the second verb, except...

- Past tense is optionally realized twice:

(16) Ama kɔɔ   dwom hùnu   Kofi
      A. go.PST market see.PST K.
      'Ama went to the market to see Kofi.'
      or: 'Ama went to the market and bumped into Kofi.'

(17) Ama kɔɔ   dwom a-   hunu Kofi
      A. go.PST market INF- see   K.
      'Ama went to the market to see Kofi.'
      *'Ama went to the market and bumped into Kofi.'

- Past tense doubling affects meaning: When past tense doubles, purposivity is optional. I believe this to be structural ambiguity.

- Martin 2010 shows that there is a robustly-available covert coordination in Akan, but that extraction from it is impossible.

- (16) is ambiguous between covert coordination and SVC.

- This predicts that if we extract from the past-doubling form in (16), we'll force a purposive reading. This seems true:
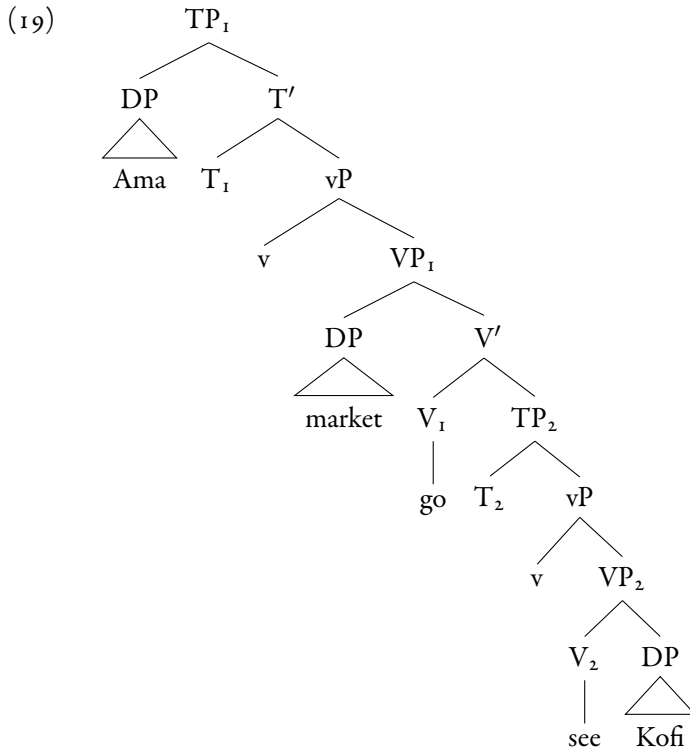
(18) dwom na   Ama kɔɔ   hùnu   Kofi
      market FOC A.   go.PST see.PST Kofi
      'It's the market that Ama went to to see Kofi.'
      *'It's the market that Ama went to and bumped into Kofi there.'

- Generalization: SVCs in Akan seem to be purposive infinitives (with some strange exception made for the spellout of past tense).

Covert coordination is always available in the past tense; speakers vary as to whether they except it in other tenses.

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Aboh 2009 argues that SVCs are embedding structures:

(19)

```
            TP₁
          /      \
        DP        T′
        /\       /    \
      Ama   T₁      vP
                   /    \
                  v     VP₁
                      /     \
                    DP       V′
                    /\      /    \
                market  V₁     TP₂
                         |    /    \
                        go  T₂     vP
                                  /    \
                                 v     VP₂
                                      /    \
                                    V₂     DP
                                     |     /\
                                    see  Kofi
```

- As with Martin's analysis of *de*-serialization this predicts the right c-command relationships between DPs.

(20) Ama kɔɔ   abaya biara fie   hunu   no
      A.   go.PST girl every home see.PST her
      'Ama went to every girl's$_i$ home to see her$_i$.'   Quantifier binding

(21) Ama kɔɔ   no hunu   Kofi
      A.   go.PST him see.PST K.
      'Ama went to him·$_{i/j}$ to see Kofi$_i$'   Condition C

Possesors can generally bind out of their possesum in Akan, not just for quantifier binding.

- It also seems to capture the fact that negation of the first verb can scope over the second.

(22) Ama re-   n-   kɔ dwom a-   hunu hwee
      A.   FUT- NEG- go market INF- see   anything
      'Ama won't go to the market to see anything.'

For arguments that *hwee* is an NPI, see Kobele & Torrence 2006. NPIs in Akan are strong, requiring clausemate negation.
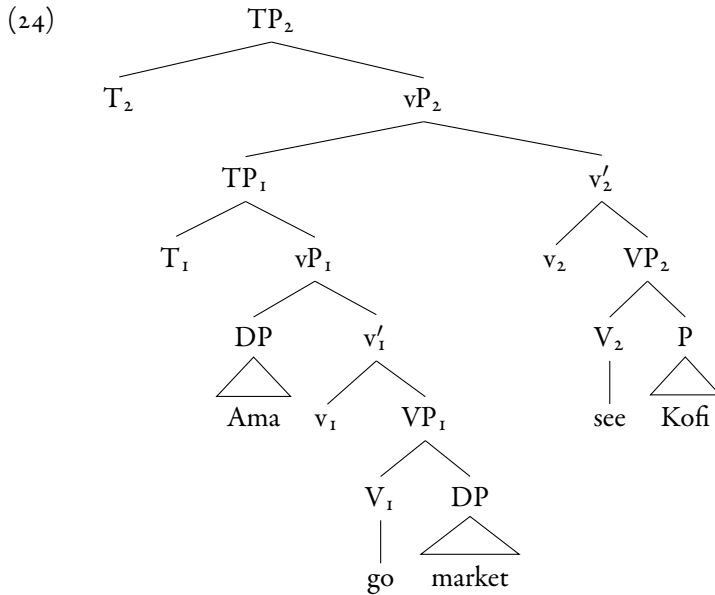
3.3   The unexpected constituent again

SVCs seem to allow SV₁O to be fronted, leaving behind a non-matching resumptive:

(23) Kofi noaa   nam na   ɛ   didii   yɛ
      K.   cook.PST fish FOC 3s.SUBJ eat.PST YE
      'It was cooking fish that Kofi did to eat it.'

The 'YE' particle is a kind of verbal resumption; see Kandybowicz (to appear) for details.

- As with *de*-serialization, the embedding analysis does not predict that this constituency should be possible.

- If we take seriously the idea that the unexpected constituent is in some sense a subject, this suggests:

(24)

```
                        TP₂
                 ┌───────┴───────┐
                T₂              vP₂
                         ┌───────┴───────┐
                       TP₁              v'₂
                   ┌─────┴─────┐     ┌────┴────┐
                  T₁          vP₁   v₂       VP₂
                        ┌──────┴──────┐   ┌────┴────┐
                       DP            v'₁  V₂        P
                        △        ┌────┴────┐  │      △
                       Ama      v₁       VP₁ see    Kofi
                              ┌──────┴──────┐
                             V₁            DP
                              │            △
                             go          market
```

- I have no idea how to square this with the c-command facts, or the negation facts.

4.0   NEGATION AND DE

One of the biggest mysteries of *de*-serialization is that it is categorically unavailable under negation.

(25)   *me (n-)   de sekan no   n-   twa nam
       1s (NEG-) DE knife DEF NEG cut fish
       Intended: 'I don't use the knife to cut fish.'

We can shed at least a little light on this by combining an SVC with a *de*-serialization clause:

(26)   Ama a-   n-   tɔ   hwee   de Ø   a-   ma Kofi
       A. PST- NEG- buy anything DE 3s.INAN INF- give K.
       'Ama didn't buy anything for Kofi.'

- Negation (marked only on V₁) seems to have wide scope in (26), but DE is still available.

- Contrast this with form in which both negative and past double:

(27)   Ama a-   n-   tɔ   hwee   (*de) a-   m-   ma Kofi Ø
       A. PST- NEG- buy anything (*DE) PST- NEG- give K.   3s.INAN
       'Ama didn't buy anything for Kofi.'

- When negation is overtly present in the second VP, DE is impossible.

- Combined, these seem to suggest that the restrictions on DE+negation are morphosyntactic, not semantic.

- That is, *de*-serialization is not a positive polarity item. Rather, DE is just morphologically incapable of taking negation, for some reason.

4.1 Defective serial verb?

- A tentative conclusion: *de*-serialization is just a normal, purposive SVC, but with a morphologically defective first verb.

- In normal SVCs, VP_1 denotes some event which has the purpose of the event denoted by VP_2.

- DE brings along a kind of underspecified event – only the agent and the theme are specified.

- This generic event then has the purpose of the event denoted by the second verb.

5.0 Acknowledgements

6.0 Selected references

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