

Serial Verb Constructions in Hijazi Arabic: A Lexical-Functional Grammar Approach

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المخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة تراكييب الأفعال المتسلسلة (SVCs) في اللهجة الحجازية المحكية في مدينة الطائف ضمن إطار النظرية الوظيفية المعجمية (LFG). فعلى الرغم من التوثيق الواسع لوجود هذه التراكييب في لغات متنوعة من الناحية النمطية كاللغات الأوربية، والتايلاندية، والماندرين الصينية، إلا أن دراساتنا وتوثيقها في اللهجات العربية لا يزال قليل. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل البنية الصرفية التركيبية وآليات تشارك المعاملات والاعتماد الوظيفي في تراكييب الأفعال المتسلسلة في اللهجة الحجازية. وتُظهر نتائج التحليل أن اللهجة الحجازية تُجسّد الخصائص النمطية الأساسية لهذه التراكييب، ومنها: الأحادية الجمالية (monoclausality)، وغياب أدوات العطف والموصولات، وأنماط قوية من تشارك الفاعل والمفعول به بين الأفعال المتسلسلة. ومن خلال الاستفادة من البنية المتوازية في النظرية الوظيفية المعجمية (LFG)، توضّح الدراسة كيف تُسهم آليات التحكم الوظيفي، وتركيب المسند، ورسم خريطة بنية المعاملات في تمثيل التكامل التركيبي والدلالي لهذه التراكييب. وتسهم هذه النتائج في إثراء الدراسات النمطية لتراكييب الأفعال المتسلسلة، كما تدعم تطوير النظرية في نظرية (LFG) من خلال إبراز قدرتها على تمثيل تعقيدات التراكييب متعددة الأفعال في اللهجات العربية.

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Abstract

This study investigates Serial Verb Constructions (SVCs) in the urban variety of Hijazi Arabic, specifically as spoken in Taif, within the framework of Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG). Although SVCs are well-documented in typologically diverse languages such as Yoruba, Thai, and Mandarin, their presence in Arabic dialects has received comparatively limited formal analysis. This study examines the morphosyntactic structure and argument-sharing patterns of SVCs in Hijazi Arabic, focusing on their monoclausal behavior, lack of overt coordinators or complementizers, and consistent subject sharing. Drawing on LFG's parallel architecture, the analysis demonstrates how functional control, predicate composition, and argument structure mapping capture the syntactic and semantic integration of these constructions. The findings contribute both to the typology of SVCs and to the theoretical development of LFG by illustrating its applicability to multi-verb constructions in underexplored Arabic dialects.

Keywords: *Serial Verb Constructions (SVCs), Hijazi Arabic, Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG), argument sharing*

Introduction

This study investigates Serial Verb Constructions (SVCs) in Hijazi Arabic, focusing on their syntactic and functional properties within the framework of Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG). It focuses on the urban variety of Hijazi Arabic spoken in Taif (see Alzaidi, 2014 for more information about the syntactic properties of this dialect). The term "Serial Verb Construction" was first introduced by Stewart (1963) to describe verb sequences in Akan, a Kwa language spoken in West Africa. While Stewart's definition was originally tailored to West African morphosyntax, the concept has since been typologically generalized to encompass structurally similar verb sequences across unrelated language families, including Creoles (Sebba, 1987), Southeast Asian languages (Bisang, 1992), and Oceanic languages (Crowley, 2002). This typological expansion has brought into focus constructions in languages such as Yoruba (Stahlke, 1970) and others across Africa, Asia, and the Pacific, highlighting the cross-linguistic diversity and functional convergence of SVCs (Lord, 1991).

SVCs are defined as constructions where two or more verbs occur within a single clause without overt coordination, subordination, or complementizers, sharing arguments and often expressing a single event (see Haspelmath, 2016 for an overview). While extensively studied in African, Asian, and Creole languages, Arabic dialects have received limited attention in formal syntactic analyses, with the exception of Jordanian Arabic (JA) (Altakhaineh & Zibin, 2018; Al Khalaf & Al-Khawaldeh, 2024), Palestinian Arabic (Hussein, 1990), Najdi Arabic (Alotaibi, 2023), and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) (Alotaibi, 2021). Hijazi Arabic, with its bare verb sequences, flexible argument-sharing, and restrictions on tense/aspect marking, presents a compelling case for examining SVCs (Sieny, 1972). Unlike Classical Arabic, which relies heavily on coordination (Ryding, 2005; Alotaibi, 2021), Hijazi Arabic allows verb sequences in one clause without conjunctions, challenging the assumption that Arabic lacks genuine SVCs; an issue that will be elaborated in the section on Hijazi Arabic.

This study adopts the LFG framework to formally analyze Hijazi Arabic SVCs, focusing on monoclausality, argument-sharing mechanisms, and syntactic configurations. LFG's separation of constituent structure (c-structure) and functional structure (f-structure) effectively models the syntactic and functional integration characteristic of SVCs without resorting to transformational operations.

The objectives of this study are to (1) identify the structural properties of SVCs in Hijazi Arabic, distinguishing them from coordination and subordination, and explore the typological implications of Arabic SVCs within the broader landscape of multi-verb constructions, (2) develop an LFG-based analysis mapping the interaction between c-structure and f-structure, and finally (3) examine argument-sharing constraints, focusing on subject and object roles.

By providing empirical data and a formal syntactic account, this study contributes to Arabic linguistics and theoretical syntax, demonstrating that Arabic dialects can exhibit verb serialization patterns consistent with serializing languages, thereby expanding the empirical scope of LFG. The structure of the paper is as follows: the Background and Literature Review section surveys prior studies on SVCs across languages, including Arabic dialects, and outlines the principles of LFG used to analyze the Hijazi data. The section titled Hijazi Arabic describes key grammatical properties of the dialect, with a focus on the morphosyntactic behavior of SVCs. The LFG Analysis of Hijazi SVCs section provides a detailed syntactic treatment of the constructions, highlighting monoclausality and argument sharing. This is followed by the Discussion, which compares the present analysis with previous syntactic accounts of SVCs in other Arabic dialects. Finally, the Conclusion summarizes the findings and outlines directions for future research.

Background and Literature Review

Serial Verb Constructions: Cross-Linguistic Perspectives

SVCs have been documented extensively across typologically diverse languages, particularly in Creole, Niger-Congo, and Sino-Tibetan families (Sebba, 1987; Lord, 1991; Crowley, 2002). In these languages, SVCs represent a structurally entrenched strategy for expressing complex events within a single clause, often without overt markers of coordination or subordination. Their grammatical centrality in these systems, especially in encoding motion, causation, manner, and aspectual contours, has made them a central object of study in typological and syntactic theory.

In Creole languages, SVCs often arise through contact-induced simplification and the reanalysis of syntactic boundaries, resulting in paratactic structures that favor serialization over embedding (Sebba, 1987). In many Niger-Congo languages, including Yoruba and Akan, SVCs are structurally integral to the verbal system, functioning as a primary strategy for expressing complex predicate-argument relations, such as motion, causation, instrumentality, and sequencing, within a monoclausal domain (Givón, 1975). Similarly, in Southeast Asian languages such as Thai, SVCs play a productive role in encoding sequentiality, directionality, and complex event structure through tightly integrated verb sequences (Thepkanjana, 1986).

Despite their prevalence in these canonical domains, SVCs are not exclusive to them. Constructions exhibiting serialization-like properties have been noted in other languages, including English and various Arabic dialects. However, the extent to which such constructions conform to cross-linguistically motivated definitions of SVCs remains debated. Haspelmath (2016) proposes that SVCs should be approached as a comparative concept, rather than a rigid grammatical category. This framing allows for typological generalization while accommodating language-specific variation in morphosyntactic implementation.

Consideration of English shows that it represents a non-canonical illustrative case (Baker, 1989; Bauer & Renouf, 2001; Payne, 2011; Miller, 2014). While English is not generally classified as a serializing language, it does permit verb sequences, such as light verb constructions and resultatives, that superficially resemble serialization:

- (1) John came running.

In this example, *came* encodes a motion predicate, while *running* contributes manner. Although this construction reflects event integration and surface adjacency, it fails to meet canonical criteria for serialization. The second verb is morphologically dependent (i.e., a participle), lacks full syntactic independence, and is embedded in a subordinate structure. As Haspelmath (2016) notes, canonical SVCs require each verb to retain autonomous predication status and to contribute structurally and semantically as an independent verb within a single clause. The English example thus serves as a typological foil rather than a genuine instance of serialization.

In contrast, Thai provides prototypical SVCs that satisfy core diagnostic criteria (Thepkanjana, 1986; Bisang, 1992; Muansuwan, 2000; Sudmuk, 2005; Takahashi, 2009). Verbs in Thai SVCs occur in direct succession, share a single subject, and co-occur without coordinators or complementizers. Furthermore, tense and aspect morphology is typically confined to the initial verb, a hallmark of monoclausal status:

- (2) /Kháw pay s ùu ?ahǎan/ Thai
he go buy food
"He went (and) bought food."

This construction illustrates not only argument sharing but also tense/aspect asymmetry and the absence of syntactic linkage, all indicative of serialization. To further clarify the distinction, compare the SVC in (2) with the coordinated structure below:

- (3) /Kháw pay sùu ʔahǎan/ Thai
 he go buy food
 "He went (and) bought food."

Here, the presence of the conjunction *léəo* introduces clausal segmentation. Each verb may carry independent tense/aspect features, and argument sharing becomes optional. This exemplifies the structural and interpretive discontinuity that differentiates coordination from serialization.

Building on Haspelmath (2016), the following four features are widely accepted as definitional for SVCs:

1. **Argument Sharing:** At least one core argument, typically the subject, is shared across the serialized verbs.
- (4) /Nákrian maa nǎj sùan/
 student come sit garden
 "The student came and sat in the garden."
2. **Monoclausality:** The verb sequence forms a single clause, lacking coordination, subordination, and independent tense marking on non-initial verbs.
3. **Event Integration:** The verbs jointly contribute to a unified conceptual event, rather than expressing two temporally or semantically distinct actions.
- (5) /Chǎn tâaw kìn lûuk/
 I travel eat fruit
 "I traveled and ate fruit."
4. **Tense/Aspect Marking Asymmetry:** Tense and aspect are typically marked on the first verb only; subsequent verbs remain morphologically unmarked.
- (6) /Nó kàp rót pây talàat/
 he drive car go market
 "He drove the car to the market."

This pattern, found across SVC languages such as Thai, Yoruba (*ó lọ rà* 'he went and bought'), and Akan, supports the typological claim that SVCs operate within a unified tense-aspect domain (Givón, 1975, pp. 89–92).

Taken together, these features define the structural and functional cohesion that characterizes canonical serialization. Although surface configurations may vary, these core properties remain cross-linguistically robust and provide a principled basis for identifying and analyzing SVCs. The present study adopts this typological framework to assess whether Hijazi Arabic exhibits constructions that qualify as true SVCs, and to explore how such constructions may be formally modeled within the architecture of LFG.

Serial Verb Constructions in Arabic Dialect

The phenomenon of SVCs in Arabic dialects has received sporadic descriptive attention, often limited to specific dialects without a unified theoretical framework. Studies on dialects such as Najdi Arabic (Ingham, 1994), Sudanese Arabic (Miller, 2003, 2009), and Moroccan Arabic (Benmamoun, 2000) have documented multi-verb constructions that typologically resemble SVCs. In Najdi Arabic, sequences like (*ra:h ʔakal*) 'he went (and) ate' exhibit hallmark properties of SVCs, including the absence of overt coordinators and the

sharing of arguments across verbs. Ingham (1994) notes that such sequences often involve motion verbs followed by lexical verbs, suggesting a degree of event integration characteristic of canonical SVCs. Similarly, Miller (2003, 2009) identifies motion-resultative constructions in Sudanese Arabic, where verbs of motion precede action verbs without conjunctions, as in (*mša šrab*) ‘he walked (and) drank’. In Moroccan Arabic, Benmamoun (2000) observes causative constructions like (*xalla yktib*) ‘he made (him) write,’ where the causative verb governs another finite verb, reflecting argument-sharing properties typical of SVCs. However, these studies frequently refrain from explicitly labeling these constructions as SVCs, leaving their formal syntactic status underexplored.

The case of Jordanian Arabic (JA) provides compelling evidence for the productive nature of SVCs within Arabic dialects, challenging the prevailing view that Arabic lacks canonical serialization. Recent data from JA reveal robust SVC patterns characterized by monoclausality, where verbs within the series form a single predicate with no syntactic dependency or embedding between them. This monoclausality is confirmed by the ungrammaticality of inserting complementizers or relativizers between verbs, highlighting the absence of syntactic subordination. Additionally, JA SVCs exhibit the absence of overt coordinators or subordinators, a defining feature that distinguishes them from coordinated or subordinated structures. Inserting such linkers not only alters the intended meaning but often results in ungrammaticality, underscoring that coordination or subordination mechanisms are not operative in these constructions.

Moreover, JA SVCs demonstrate clear argument-sharing properties, where verbs share core arguments, typically the subject, without additional syntactic markers. This parallels argument-sharing patterns observed in well-documented SVC languages like Thai. Tense and aspect marking in JA further reinforce monoclausality. While tense is generally consistent across verbs within the construction, JA permits aspectual mismatches; a phenomenon observed in languages such as Khwe and Cantonese (Aikhenvald, 2005). This aspectual flexibility indicates that, despite morphological variation, the verbs function as part of a unified predication structure.

Interestingly, the investigation of SVCs in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) reveals related yet distinct multi-verb structures. While MSA exhibits constructions that superficially resemble SVCs, such as those involving *kān* and its sisters, as well as appositional verb structures (*Al-Badal*), these often diverge from canonical SVCs. According to Alotaibi (2021, 2023), *kān* and its sisters function more as auxiliaries, providing tense or aspectual information without contributing to event integration, thus distinguishing them from true serial verbs. For example, in the sentence /*kān-a yalʕbu*/ ‘he was playing,’ *kān-a* provides tense information, while *yalʕmalu* carries the lexical content, with no event integration beyond the auxiliary-lexical verb relationship. Conversely, *Al-Badal* constructions exhibit properties more closely aligned with SVCs when the verbs denote a single, complex event, share the same subject, and occur within a single clause. Consider the example /*dakhala wa ʔaḥaḍ-a maqʕad-an*/ ‘he entered and took a seat,’ where the verbs share the subject and form a unified event without overt coordination. These constructions maintain unified tense and aspect markers, resist independent negation, and disallow the co-occurrence of pronouns with their antecedents within the same clause, reinforcing their monoclausal nature.

Furthermore, Alotaibi (2023), focusing on Najdi Arabic, a central Saudi dialect, identifies robust SVC characteristics, including single predicate behavior, single event semantics, monoclausality, shared arguments, and unified grammatical categories. In Najdi Arabic, verbs within SVCs cannot be separated by coordinators or subordinators without altering the intended meaning, and negation applies to the entire construction, not individual verbs. Additionally, serialized verbs maintain their lexical independence, supporting their classification as genuine SVCs rather than auxiliary-based constructions.

Despite these descriptive accounts, there remains a significant gap in formal syntactic analyses that situate these constructions within broader theoretical paradigms. Most existing studies either adopt a descriptive approach or apply transformational generative frameworks that often treat such constructions as biclausal, involving covert coordination or subordination. However, recent analyses, such as Alotaibi (2021) and Al Khalaf and Al-Khawaldeh (2024), offer compelling alternatives through the application of Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG) and the Cartographic Program, respectively. Alotaibi's LFG approach effectively captures the monoclausal nature of SVCs in Arabic by focusing on functional structure (f-structure) and complex predicate formation, demonstrating how serialized verbs in MSA share arguments, unify tense and aspect, and operate within a single clause without relying on syntactic movement or transformational operations. In contrast, Al Khalaf and Al-Khawaldeh (2024) employ the Cartographic Program to analyze SVCs in JA, arguing that these constructions are monoclausal, with verbs occupying distinct functional projections within an extended VP spine. Their analysis highlights how V1, often a motion verb, functions from a closed class in the little v position, while V2 occupies the main V head, enabling argument sharing and unified negation scope within a single clause. Together, these approaches highlight the potential of LFG and cartographic syntax to account for the syntactic and functional dependencies characteristic of SVCs in Arabic dialects, providing a more nuanced understanding of their structural properties.

Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG)

LFG, as originally proposed by Bresnan (1982) and further developed in subsequent work (Bresnan, 1982; Dalrymple, 2001, Dalrymple, Lowe, & Mycock, 2019), offers a robust theoretical framework for modeling complex predicates and argument-sharing constructions across languages. LFG adopts a non-derivational, constraint-based approach that separates the representation of constituent structure (c-structure) from functional structure (f-structure). This bifurcation enables nuanced analyses of constructions where surface syntax (word order and hierarchical phrase structure) does not straightforwardly correspond to underlying grammatical functions.

LFG is guided by key hypotheses, including the Lexical Integrity Hypothesis, which posits that the internal structure of words is inaccessible to syntactic rules, and the Parallel Correspondence Hypothesis, which maintains that different levels of syntactic representation (c-structure and f-structure) are interconnected through functional mappings. Additionally, the Functional Coherence Hypothesis ensures that all grammatical functions are consistently linked within the functional structure, while the Functional Completeness Principle mandates that all required grammatical functions are present in the structure.

The c-structure captures the surface syntactic configuration of a sentence using context-free phrase structure rules, reflecting hierarchical relations among constituents. As for the f-structure, it encodes grammatical functions (e.g., SUBJECT, OBJECT), predicate-argument relations, and morphosyntactic features such as TENSE, ASPECT, and AGREEMENT. These structures are linked through functional annotations (e.g., $(\uparrow\text{SUBJ}) = \downarrow$), specifying how syntactic constituents correspond to grammatical functions.

A central mechanism in LFG is argument-sharing, where multiple predicates can share the same grammatical argument(s) within a single functional structure. This mechanism is particularly relevant for constructions where verbs function independently in terms of predicate structure but are functionally integrated through shared arguments. Additionally, LFG employs the concept of functional uncertainty to account for cases where the syntactic position of an argument is flexible or underspecified. Functional uncertainty allows the grammar to model relationships where an argument may occupy different syntactic positions without altering its functional role. This flexibility is crucial for capturing cross-linguistic variation, especially in languages with fluid word orders.

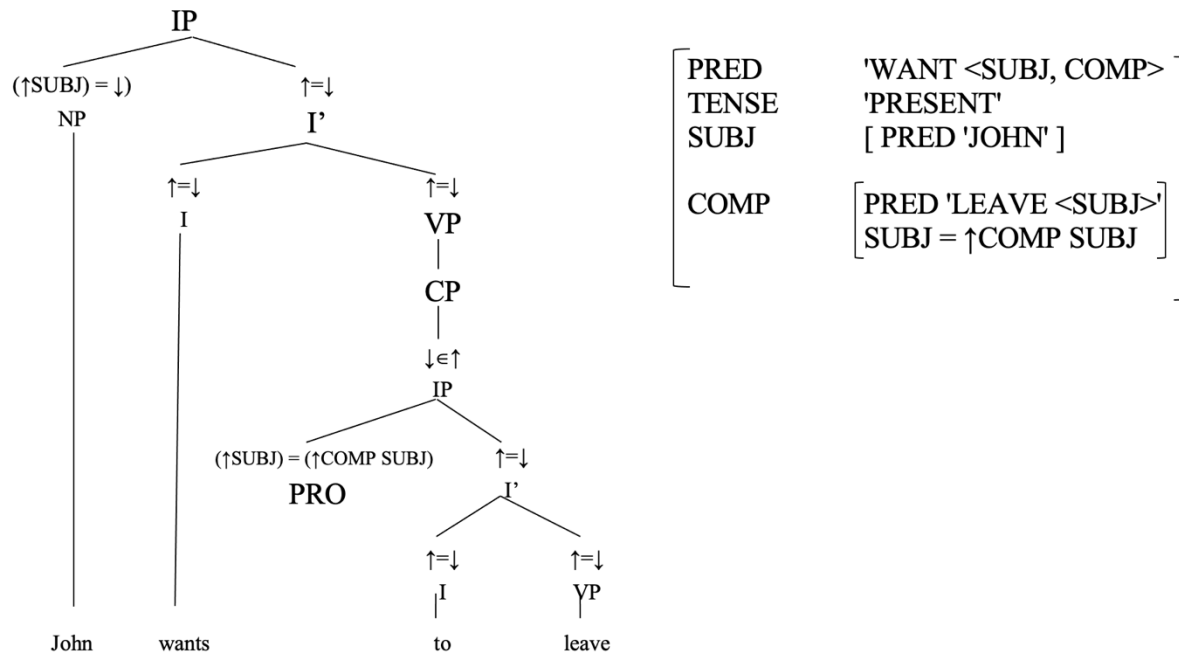
Unlike movement-based syntactic theories, such as the Minimalist Program, which rely on transformations to account for multi-verb constructions, LFG accommodates argument-sharing through functional structure mappings without assuming syntactic displacement. This is particularly advantageous when analyzing SVCs, where verbs maintain structural independence but functional integration. Consider the simple English sentence:

(7) John wants to leave.

In this example, we have two verbs (*wants* and *leave*), forming a control construction where *John* is both the subject of *wants* and the understood subject of *leave*.

c-structure:

f-structure



Functional annotations:

- $(\uparrow \text{SUBJ}) = \downarrow$ links *John* to the SUBJ in the f-structure.
- $(\uparrow \text{PRED}) = \text{'WANT <SUBJ, COMP>}'$ indicates that *wants* is the matrix predicate.
- $(\uparrow \text{COMP}) = \downarrow$ links the embedded IP (containing *to leave*) to the COMP function.
- $(\uparrow \text{SUBJ}) = (\uparrow \text{COMP SUBJ})$ represents functional control, where the subject of the matrix predicate (*John*) controls the subject of the embedded predicate (*leave*), which is syntactically realized as *PRO*.

The c-structure represents the hierarchical arrangement of words and phrases. *John* is the subject (NP), *wants* is the matrix verb (V), and *leave* functions as the embedded infinitival clause. In the f-structure, *wants* and *leave* are distinct predicates, and the subject of the embedded verb (*leave*) is represented as *PRO*, functionally controlled by the subject of the matrix verb (*John*). This control relation is formalized as $(\uparrow \text{SUBJ}) = (\uparrow \text{COMP SUBJ})$, which ensures functional identification between the two grammatical functions without implying syntactic identity or movement.

This framework captures the syntactic independence of the predicates while modeling their semantic and functional integration. LFG's ability to represent control structures without resorting to transformations makes it well-suited for analyzing complex predicate phenomena.

LFG's architecture has been successfully applied to a wide range of syntactic patterns, from complex predicates in Bantu languages (Alsina, 1996) to light verb constructions in South Asian languages (Butt, 1995). Its principles of functional completeness and coherence ensure robust and consistent grammatical representations.

Furthermore, LFG's typological flexibility provides the necessary tools for cross-linguistic analysis, positioning Hijazi Arabic within the broader landscape of languages exhibiting serial verb constructions. The theory thus offers a well-motivated framework for capturing both structural independence and functional integration in multi-verb constructions.

Hijazi Arabic

Introduction

Hijazi Arabic exhibits a range of syntactic properties that distinguish it from both Classical Arabic (CA) and MSA. The canonical word order is SVO (Subject-Verb-Object), though VSO (Verb-Subject-Object) is also attested, especially in focus constructions and topicalization contexts (see Alzaidi, 2014; Alzaidi et al., 2019 for an overview of how information structure is reflected in Hijazi-Arabic syntax). For example:

- | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------|------------------------|-------|
| (8) | /Zayd ʔakal
Zayd eat.PST | il-khubz/
the-bread | (SVO) |
| | "Zayd ate the bread" | | |
| (9) | /ʔakal Zayd
eat.PST Zayd | il-khubz/
the-bread | (VSO) |
| | "Zayd ate the bread" | | |

Both structures are grammatical, with subtle pragmatic distinctions reflecting focus and discourse prominence.

Unlike MSA, Hijazi Arabic does not make extensive use of case morphology. Instead, it relies on word order and verbal agreement to encode grammatical relations. It also allows flexible constituent ordering, especially in *wh*-questions and focus environments, where discourse-motivated fronting replaces formal movement. This syntactic flexibility contributes to the viability of SVCs, permitting sequences of bare verbs within a single clause; an uncommon property in Semitic syntax.

Tense and aspect in Hijazi Arabic are marked via inflection, distinguishing perfective and imperfective aspects. Consider the following examples:

- | | | |
|------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| (10) | /huw yiktib
he write.PRS | risāla/
letter |
| | "He is writing a letter." | |
| (11) | /ʔana katabt
I write.PST | risāla/
letter |
| | "I wrote a letter." | |

In (12), the imperfective *yiktib* denotes ongoing action, whereas the perfective *katabt* in (13) indicates completion. This distinction is central to temporal interpretation.

- | | | | |
|------|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| (12) | /humma
they | rāyihīn
go.PTCP | yisāfirūn/
travel.PRS |
| | "They are going to travel." | | |

The participial *rāyihīn* ("going") and imperfective *yisāfirūn* ("travel") together form a near-future expression, reflecting aspectual layering, a construction highly relevant for SVC analysis.

Properties of Serial Verb Constructions (SVCs)

Morphosyntactic Constraints

SVCs in Hijazi Arabic show clear monoclausal behavior. One defining trait is the absence of overt coordination (e.g., *wa* 'and') or subordination (e.g., *ʔinna*). Instead, multiple verbs are linearly juxtaposed within a single clause:

- (13) /hu:w ra:h ʔakal/
 he go.PST eat.PST
 "He went (and) ate."
- (14) /ʔana ji:t ʃaribt ma:ʔ/
 I come.PST drink.PST water
 "I came (and) drank water."

In both examples, the verbs occur in sequence without any overt coordinator (e.g., *wa* 'and') or complementizer, and both verbs share a single overt subject. This surface pattern suggests serial verb behavior, but a more robust argument for monoclausality can be made by applying standard SVC diagnostics (Haspelmath, 2016). First, tense is marked only on the first verb (*ra:h*, *ji:t*), while the subsequent verb(s) occur in the default perfective form (*ʔakal*, *ʃaribt*) without independent tense marking. This tense asymmetry is typical of monoclausal serial constructions. Second, the sequence resists independent negation of each verb; rather, a single negation operator (e.g., *ma*) scopes over the entire verb string (e.g., *ma ra:h ʔakal* 'he didn't go and eat'), reinforcing a unified clause domain. Third, insertion of a conjunction between the verbs (*ra:h wa ʔakal*) alters the pragmatic or temporal structure, indicating that the two events are less tightly integrated. Together, these diagnostics support the conclusion that the constructions in (15) and (16) are indeed monoclausal SVCs in Hijazi Arabic.

Moreover, these constructions show tense/aspect asymmetry. Typically, only the first verb bears overt tense marking.

- (15) /hu:w ra:h yiktib risa:la/
 he go.PST write.PRS letter
 "He went (and) wrote a letter."

Here, *ra:h* is marked for past tense, while *yiktib* remains in the present. Such asymmetry aligns with cross-linguistic diagnostics for monoclausality and distinguishes these constructions from coordinated or biclausal structures.

Verb ordering in SVCs is not arbitrary. The first verb often functions as a motion, light, or causative verb, introducing an event frame:

- (16) /hu:w ʔa:wal yiftaḥ ilba:b/
 he try.PST open.PRS the-door
 "He tried to open the door."
- (17) /ʔana ʃilt ilba:b rama:itu/
 I carry.PST the-door throw.PST-it
 "I carried the door (and) threw it."

Reversing this order often results in ungrammaticality due to violations of event sequencing constraints:

(18) */ʔana rama:itu ʃilt ilba:b/

(Ungrammatical: intended "I carried it (and) threw the door.")

These constraints support analyzing the verb series as functionally integrated rather than loosely conjoined.

As discussed in the section on cross-linguistic perspectives, four key properties define canonical SVCs: argument sharing, monoclausality, event integration, and tense/aspect unification (Haspelmath, 2016). The Hijazi Arabic examples presented here exhibit all four. Verbs share a single overt subject (argument sharing), occur without coordination or subordination (monoclausality), represent a single complex event (event integration), and show tense/aspect asymmetry; where only the first verb is marked for tense. These features collectively support the classification of these constructions as SVCs in the typological sense.

Argument Structure and Functional Dependencies

A defining feature of Hijazi Arabic SVCs is subject sharing, where a single subject functions as the grammatical subject for multiple verbs within the same clause. This is central to maintaining the monoclausal nature of SVCs and aligns with cross-linguistic findings on argument-sharing SVCs (Lovestrand & Ross, 2021).

(19) /hu:w ra:h ʔakal/
 he go.PST eat.PST
 "He went (and) ate."

(20) /humma ra:hu ʔakalu/
 they go.PST eat.PST
 "They went (and) ate."

Hijazi Arabic exhibits both event-chaining and argument-sharing SVCs, which are integral to understanding the syntactic and semantic dynamics within the language. Event-chaining SVCs involve verbs that represent distinct but sequential events, maintaining a temporal progression where each action logically follows the other. Consider the following example:

(21) /hu:w qa:m ʔaxaɖ ilkita:b/
 he get-up.PST take.PST the-book
 "He got up and took the book."

In this example, the sequence of actions is clearly delineated: the subject first performs the act of getting up, followed by the act of taking the book. This sequential relationship reflects how such constructions encode temporally ordered events within a single clause. Conversely, argument-sharing SVCs exhibit verbs that share core arguments, thereby forming a single complex event rather than a sequence of discrete actions. This is evident in the following example:

(22) /ʔana ha:walt ʔaftaħ ilba:b/
 I try.PST open.PRS t he-door
 "I tried to open the door."

Here, the subject *ʔana* is shared between the verbs *ḥa:walt* "tried" and *ʔaftah* "open", illustrating how the two verbs operate within a unified argument structure to express a singular, cohesive event. This interplay of event sequencing and argument sharing underscores the syntactic versatility and semantic richness of SVCs in Hijazi Arabic.

In conclusion, SVCs in Hijazi Arabic exhibit key morphosyntactic constraints, such as monoclausality, tense asymmetry, and strict verb ordering, alongside argument structure properties like subject and object sharing. These features align with typological observations across serializing languages while reflecting unique syntactic and semantic properties inherent to Hijazi Arabic. This foundational analysis paves the way for the in-depth LFG analysis presented in the following section.

LFG Analysis of Hijazi SVCs

In this section, an in-depth LFG analysis of SVCs in Hijazi Arabic is presented. Building on the morphosyntactic properties and argument structures outlined in the previous section, this analysis focuses on how functional structure (f-structure) captures the syntactic and semantic properties of SVCs, particularly regarding argument sharing, functional dependencies, and the monoclausal nature of these constructions. The theoretical foundations of LFG (presented in the section on Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG)) provide a robust framework for modeling both event-chaining and argument-sharing phenomena observed in Hijazi Arabic.

Subject Sharing in Hijazi Arabic SVCs

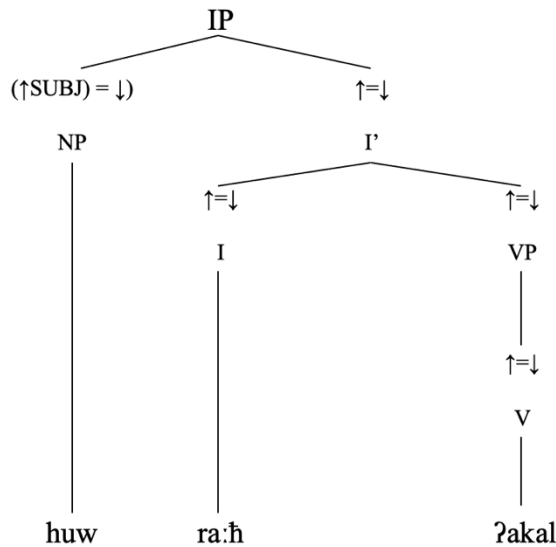
This section focuses on constructions where a single subject functions as the grammatical subject for multiple verbs within the same clause. Subject sharing is a fundamental property of SVCs in Hijazi Arabic, reinforcing their monoclausal nature. While subject sharing represents a specific type of argument-sharing, it differs from the broader scope discussed in the section on argument-sharing constructions, which considers the simultaneous sharing of multiple core arguments.

Subject sharing is a defining characteristic of SVCs in Hijazi Arabic. In these constructions, a single subject functions as the grammatical subject for multiple verbs within the same clause, reinforcing the monoclausal status. LFG models this through functional structure (f-structure) sharing, where both predicates map onto a unified SUBJ feature, satisfying functional completeness and ensuring functional coherence.

- (23) /hu:w ra:h ʔakal/
 he go.PST eat.PST
 "He went (and) ate."

The c-structure tree with functional annotations:

c-structure



f-structure

PRED	'GO+EAT <SUBJ>'
TENSE	'PAST'
SUBJ	[PRED 'PRO']

Functional annotations:

- (↑SUBJ) = ↓ links huwa to the SUBJ in the f-structure.
- (↑PRED) = 'GO' and 'EAT' unified under a complex predicate.

This unified SUBJ node reflects functional completeness by maintaining a single subject that fulfills the grammatical requirements of both verbs. The complex predicate 'GO+EAT' highlights the integration of events.

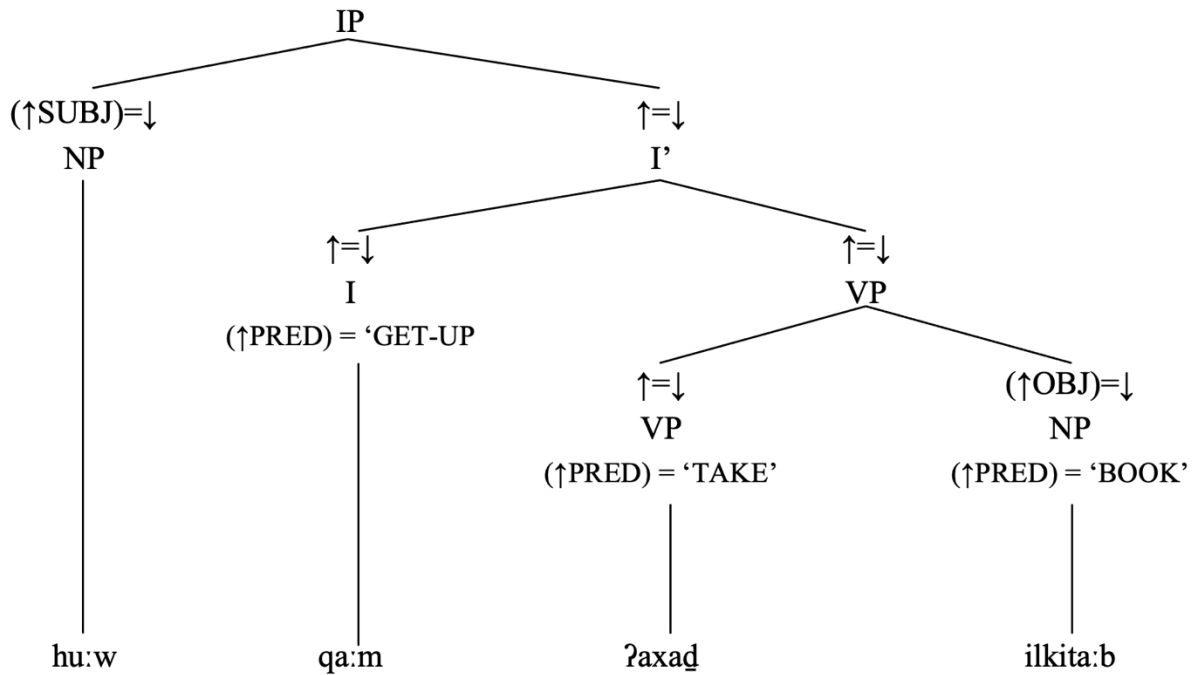
Event-Chaining SVCs

Event-chaining SVCs involve sequential events with shared or distinct arguments. These constructions are modeled in LFG by linking distinct predicates within the f-structure while maintaining shared arguments where applicable. The monoclausal status of such constructions is supported by the absence of overt coordination and the unified tense domain.

- (24) /hu:w qa:m ?axaḍ ilkita:b/
 he get-up.PST take.PST the-book
 "He got up and took the book."

The c-structure tree with functional annotations:

c-structure:



f-structure:

PRED ₁	'GET-UP <SUBJ>'
SUBJ	[PRED 'PRO' (hu:w)]
PRED ₂	'TAKE <SUBJ, OBJ>'
OBJ	[PRED 'BOOK']
TENSE	'PAST'

Functional annotations:

- (↑SUBJ) = ↓ links *hu:w* to SUBJ.
- (↑OBJ) = ↓ links *ilkita:b* to OBJ.

This construction represents an event-chaining Serial Verb Construction in which two predicates - *qa:m* 'got up' and *?axaḏ* 'took' - occur within a single clause, executed by the same subject (*hu:w*). In Lexical-Functional Grammar, both verbs contribute independent predicate-argument structures, but they are functionally unified by sharing the same SUBJ and occurring under a single TENSE domain. The f-structure reflects this by listing both predicates and associating them with the same SUBJ. While two predicates occur, they do not violate functional coherence, because they are part of a monoclausal construction with consistent subject reference and tense scope. This aligns with LFG analyses of SVCs in other languages (cf. Alsina 1996).

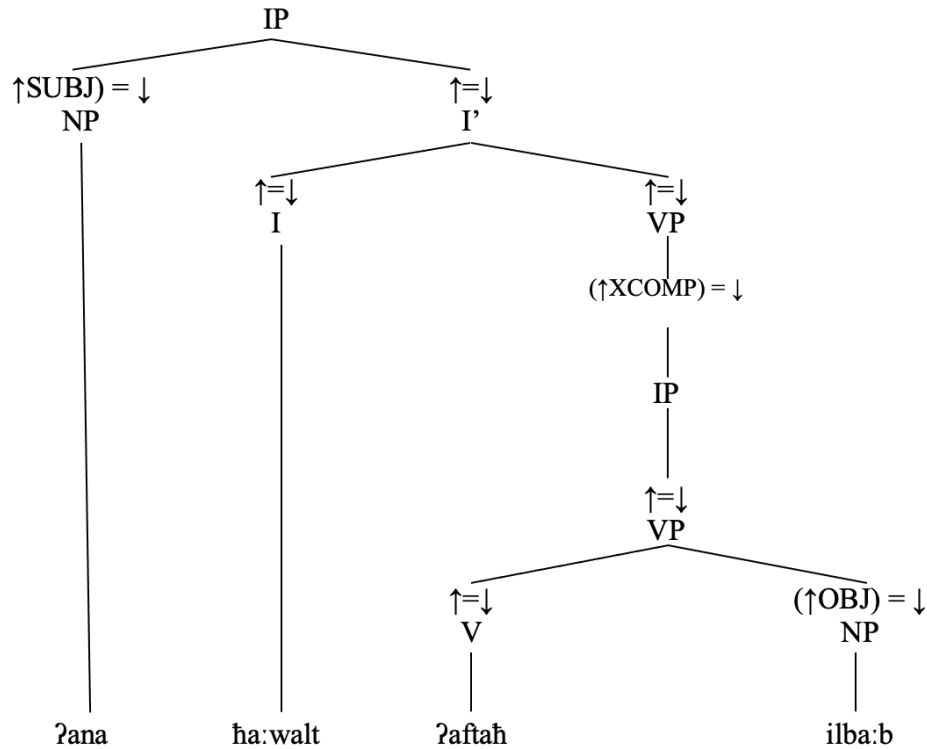
Argument-Sharing SVCs

This section synthesizes the concepts of subject and object sharing discussed earlier in the analysis of subject-sharing and event-chaining constructions. Argument-sharing SVCs involve verbs that are tightly integrated, sharing multiple core arguments simultaneously (e.g., subjects and objects) to form a single complex event. Unlike the earlier analyses that focused separately on subject sharing and event chaining, this section highlights the interaction and co-dependency of shared arguments, providing a comprehensive view of how argument structures operate within Hijazi Arabic SVCs.

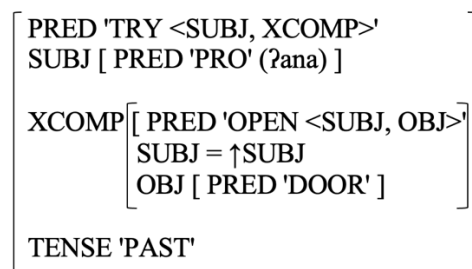
(25) /ʔana ha:walt ʔaftaħ ilba:b/
 I try.PST open.PRS the-door
 "I tried to open the door."

The c-structure tree with functional annotations:

c-structure:



f-structure:



Functional annotations:

- (↑SUBJ) = ↓ links ʔana to the SUBJ in the f-structure.
- (↑PRED) = 'TRY <SUBJ, XCOMP>' indicates that ha:walt is the matrix predicate and selects an open complement.
- (↑XCOMP) = ↓ links the embedded IP (ʔaftaħ ilba:b) to the XCOMP function, signaling a functionally controlled complement.
- (↑XCOMP OBJ) = ↓ links ilba:b to the OBJ of the embedded predicate.
- (↑XCOMP SUBJ) = ↓SUBJ indicates functional control, where ʔana (the matrix subject) also functions as the understood subject of ʔaftaħ.

This representation maintains the monoclausal nature of the construction within the LFG framework. The matrix verb *ḥa:walt* 'tried' selects a functionally open complement *ʔaftaḥ ilba:b*, forming a complex predicate. The subject *ʔana* is not structurally repeated but functions as the understood subject of the embedded verb via functional control, represented as ($\uparrow$ XCOMP SUBJ) = $\uparrow$ SUBJ. The noun *ilba:b* serves as the object of *ʔaftaḥ* alone. This structure captures both the argument-sharing dependency and the functional embedding characteristic of subject-control constructions in LFG.

Discussion

The LFG framework effectively captures the structural and functional properties of SVCs in Hijazi Arabic, providing a nuanced account of argument-sharing, event-chaining, and functional dependencies. LFG's architecture, particularly its separation of constituent structure (c-structure) and functional structure (f-structure), allows for precise modeling of predicate-argument relationships across languages without resorting to syntactic movement (Bresnan, 1982; Dalrymple, 2001; Dalrymple, Lowe & Mycock, 2019). This section systematically compares the LFG analysis of Hijazi Arabic SVCs with those proposed by Alotaibi (2021) for Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Al Khalaf and Al-Khawaldeh (2024) for Jordanian Arabic, highlighting both theoretical alignments and analytical divergences.

In the analysis of Hijazi Arabic, subject and object sharing are modeled through unified functional structures within the f-structure, with event-chaining and argument-sharing distinctions represented through separate but interconnected predicate structures. The application of functional equations allows for precise modeling of argument distribution, emphasizing the monoclausal nature of SVCs without syntactic transformation. This approach aligns with Alotaibi's (2021) LFG-based analysis of MSA, where complex predicate formation is similarly central. Both analyses underscore the role of argument-sharing, unified tense/aspect marking, and functional completeness in reinforcing monoclausality. However, while the Hijazi Arabic data highlight a broader range of SVC types, including event-chaining constructions, Alotaibi's focus remains more constrained, emphasizing auxiliary-lexical verb relationships and appositional structures in MSA (Benmamoun, 2000; Ouhalla, 2005), where tense and aspect agreement tend to be more rigid than in Hijazi Arabic.

In contrast, Al Khalaf and Al-Khawaldeh's (2024) analysis of JA diverges from the LFG framework by adopting principles from the Cartographic Program within Generative Syntax. Their approach posits a fine-grained syntactic hierarchy involving multiple functional projections to account for verb asymmetry, negation scope, and argument distribution. Unlike the LFG analyses for Hijazi Arabic and MSA, which rely on f-structure to model monoclausality and control, the cartographic analysis derives monoclausality through an extended VP spine enriched with projections such as AspP and ModP. This syntactic stratification enables a detailed account of asymmetrical SVCs, in which V1 typically serves as a light or motion verb from a closed class, and V2 as a core lexical verb from an open class (Aikhenvald, 2005; Bisang, 2009). By contrast, the Hijazi Arabic analysis treats both verbs as full lexical predicates without strict class-based asymmetry, unified under a single functional domain.

Despite these methodological differences, all three analyses converge on key findings regarding core SVC properties: monoclausality, argument sharing, tense/aspect unification, and resistance to syntactic coordination or subordination (Haspelmath, 2016; Aikhenvald, 2005; Crowley, 2002; Bisang, 2009). These shared properties suggest the potential for a synthetic theoretical model that integrates both functional and configurational insights. At the same time, the analytical differences reveal limitations within each framework; LFG's function-based model may underrepresent the fine-grained hierarchical structure of verb sequences, while cartographic models might overlook the role of functional control and predicate unification in explaining the semantics of SVCs.

The Hijazi Arabic data contribute significantly to the typology of SVCs and extend the empirical reach of LFG beyond well-documented languages. They also challenge long-held assumptions about the syntactic conservatism of Arabic, particularly as represented in Classical Arabic and MSA (Benmamoun, 2000; Ryding, 2005). Furthermore, the inclusion of tense, aspect, and semantic roles in the f-structure strengthens the explanatory scope of the analysis, in keeping with LFG's principles of functional completeness, coherence, and universality (Dalrymple, 2001; Dalrymple, Lowe & Mycock, 2019). In LFG, these features are modeled as attribute-value pairs associated with predicates, with semantic roles mapped onto argument functions like SUBJ and OBJ. This contrasts with the cartographic framework, in which tense, aspect, and role interpretation arise from the syntactic positioning of arguments within a layered clause structure.

Ultimately, while LFG emphasizes functional integration and non-transformational representation, and the Cartographic Program highlights configurational precision, both offer valuable perspectives on the nature of multi-verb constructions in Arabic. Together, they frame a cross-dialectal understanding of serialization that accommodates both syntactic and functional variation.

Conclusion

This study has presented a focused syntactic analysis of SVCs in Hijazi Arabic, specifically the urban variety spoken in Taif, within the framework of LFG. The findings reveal that this dialect exhibits robust SVC patterns marked by monoclausality, the absence of overt coordinators and complementizers, and consistent argument sharing across serialized verbs. The data confirm that Hijazi Arabic accommodates a range of SVC types, including motion-based, event-chaining, and argument-sharing constructions, all unified through shared syntactic subjects and asymmetrical tense/aspect marking.

The application of LFG has proven particularly effective in modeling these constructions without relying on transformational operations. Through mechanisms such as functional control, XCOMP mappings, and predicate-argument alignment, the analysis captures the syntactic and semantic integration characteristic of serialized verbs in Hijazi Arabic. This reinforces LFG's suitability for representing complex predicate structures in underexplored languages and dialects.

Future research should further investigate SVCs across other Arabic dialects using formal frameworks like LFG and the Cartographic Program to identify typological convergence or variation. In addition, psycholinguistic and corpus-based studies could offer insights into native speaker processing of serialized constructions, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of multi-verb syntax in Arabic. By expanding both the empirical and theoretical dimensions of the field, such work will enrich the typology of serial verb constructions and refine our models of predicate composition in Arabic and beyond.

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