

SOME MULTIPLY PREFIXED ‘VERBS’ AS COVERT SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS

Introduction: It is typically assumed that only languages with poor or no verbal inflection, in which verbs can occur more or less uninflected, allow Serial Verb Constructions of the type found in, say, Edo (Baker/Stewart 2002, Veenstra/Muysken 2006, etc.), (1).

- (1) *Òzó ghá gbè èwé khièn.* (Edo)
 Ozo FUT hit goat sell
 ‘Ozo will kill the goat and sell it.’ (Baker/Stewart 2002)

This correlation appears to cover Slavic languages, which do not show such SVCs and in which the verb (unless packed inside a nominalization, etc.) must occur fully inflected, i.e. up to subject agreement. At the same time, syntactic theory has posited a number of null/silent verbs (Ross 1979, McCawley 1979, Riemsdijk 2002, Marušič/Žaucer 2006, etc.). Now, given that SVCs of the type in (1) are claimed to combine two VPs (or AspPs) under a single TP/AgrSP (i.e. two non-fully inflected verbs), the question arises whether one could not find SVCs in rich-verbal-inflection languages when one of the serialized verbs is a null verb; after all, assuming that the requirement for full verbal inflection (tense/subject agreement) is some sort of a PF condition, one could imagine that it need not apply if we are dealing with a phonologically null verb. In this talk, I argue that some multiply prefixed Slavic ‘verbs’, such as the one in (2), where the stacked prefix is one type of the measure *na-*, exhibit just such a situation, i.e. an SVC where one of two resultative VPs is headed by a null verb, and the two VPs occur under a single TP and AgrSP.

- (2) *Konduktor uže na-ot-ryvala biletikov.* (Russian)
 ticket-seller already on-off-tore tickets_{GEN} (Romanova 2007: 273)
 ‘The ticket-seller has prepared a lot of little tickets by tearing them off the roll.’

***Na-* = resultative:** Different studies of this measure *na-* have reached very different conclusions. Some see it as a resultative prefix (Piñón 1994, Babko-Malaya 1999, Biskup 2007), but remain silent about the structure of verbs where this *na-* stacks over another resultative prefix. But on the basis of its measure meaning or its ability to stack, others see this use of *na-* as a VP-external prefix (Perelstvaig 2006, Romanova 2007, Tatevosov 2007,2008, Ramchand 2004). When *na-* is an only prefix, however, the reasons for analyzing it as resultative are clearly compelling.

The strongest case comes from *na-*verbs with clearly unselected objects, (3d) (cf. Romanova 2007), or blocked objects, (3c), both of which are naturally explained if the object is introduced not by the verb but as the subject of a prefix-headed result predicate (Svenonius 2004).

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| (3) a. <i>molsti veliko krav</i>
milk _{INF} a-lot cows _{GEN} | b. # <i>molsti veliko mleka</i> (Slovenian)
milk _{INF} a-lot milk _{GEN} |
| c. # <i>na-molsti veliko krav</i>
on-milk _{INF} a-lot cows _{GEN} | d. <i>na-molsti veliko mleka</i>
on-milk _{INF} a-lot cows _{GEN}
‘obtain a lot of milk by milking’ |

The case is also made by such *na-*verbs with an unselected reflexive, (4), though these are—predictably—restricted to cases where the subject can be construed of as coming to be amassed somewhere in the manner of the action described by the verbal root, which makes them rare.

- (4) *V gostilno se je počasi (*na-)-kapljalo veliko najstnikov.* (Slovenian)
 into pub self is slowly on-trickled a.lot teenagers_{GEN}
 ‘Slowly, a lot of teenagers trickled into the pub.’

Less obviously, the case is also made by other types of unselected objects. One are cases like *na-letati 300 ur* (lit. on-fly 300 hrs) ‘accumulate 300 hrs of flying’, whose ‘300 hrs’ is often assumed to be an adjunct. But as shown by genitive of negation, such expressions can’t function as direct objects in the absence of *na-*, but they can function only as direct objects in the presence of *na-*, (5). This shows that *na-* introduces an argument, as is typical of resultative prefixes.

- (5) a. *Ta pilot letos še ni na-letal ✓tristotreh ur / *tristotri ure.* (Slov.)
 this pilot this-year still not-is on-flown 303_{GEN} hrs_{GEN} 303_{ACC} hrs_{ACC}
 ‘This year, this pilot has not accumulated the total of 303 hours of flying yet.’
- b. *Ta pilot letos še ni letal/letel *tristotreh ur / ✓tristotri ure.*
 this pilot this-year still not-is run_{DIR/NON-DIR} 303_{GEN} hrs_{GEN} 303_{ACC} hrs_{ACC}
 ‘This year, this pilot has not flown 303 hours yet.’

Na- = quantifier-like/VP-external? *Na-*verbs show some peculiar selection restrictions. Unless on the ‘kind’ reading, their internal argument cannot be a singular count noun (Piñón 1994, Filip 1999, Pereltsvaig 2006), (6a-b), and it must be nonspecific indefinite and as such not preceded by demonstratives or quantifiers like ‘all’ (Filip 2005, Pereltsvaig 2006), (6c). While some take this to warrant a quantifier-like account of *na-*, with *na-* merged VP-externally (Pereltsvaig 2006), the restrictions often hold with more plain-looking resultative verbs such as English *amass*, (6d-e).

- (6) a. *Juš je na-kradel 50 biciklov.* b. #*Juš je na-kradel (en) bicikel.* (Slovenian)
 Juš is on-stolen 50 bikes Juš is on-stolen one bike
 ‘Juš amassed 50 bikes by stealing.’
- c. #*Juš je na-kradel tistih biciklov/tiste bicikle.* d. #*Juš amassed those bikes.*
 Juš is on-stole those bikes_{GEN}/those bikes_{ACC} e. *Juš amassed one/a bike by stealing.*

As there is arguably no need for positing a quantifier-like element above the resultative VP of *amass*, there should be none for *na-*verbs either. Also, given the right pragmatics, the ban on singular count nouns and definites is actually cancelable, (7) (and again, the same holds of plain-looking resultatives like *amass*). This is unexpected on any quantifier-like account of *na-*, but not if *na-* heads a resultative small clause in the shape of a ‘there-be’-like predicate (‘be in quantity’) (cf. McNally 2009).

- (7) a. *Tistih 50 rožic, ki jih je Juš na-trgal včeraj, je ...* (Slovenian)
 ‘Those/The 50 flowers that Juš plucked/amassed yesterday are ...’
- b. [And how many did Juš manage to pluck/amass?] *Hja, Jušu je ratal pa na-trgat eno samo rožco.*
 ‘Well, Juš managed to pluck/amass one single flower.’

Stacked na-: If *na-* is resultative, what about (2), where *na-*’s input already has a resultative prefix? The meaning contribution of stacked *na-* seems the same, the internal argument of such verbs can’t be a singular count noun, must be nonspecific indefinite, etc., so this *na-* should also be an *amass*-like resultative. However, assuming that there can be just one resultative secondary predicate per verb (Goldberg 1995, Rappaport/Levin 2001, Ramchand 2008, etc.), each prefix in (2) must belong to its own verb, so (2) must contain a hidden verb. I will argue that the two resultative VPs are combined under a single TP/AgrSP (with just one set of tense/subject agreement inflection), quite like in the case of some SVCs. Such a structure can survive in Slavic when one of the verbs is null. And since a result predicate appears to presuppose a dominating VP (cf. Ramchand 2008), the null verb is recoverable through its resultative prefix *na-*.

Object sharing: Despite two resultative prefixes, (2) shows just one object. If each result predicate requires a subject (Ramchand 2008), then it can only be that the two result predicates in (2) obligatorily *share* their subject. This requirement is explained if just like one TP/AgrSP, there is just one sentential object licensing projection. This correctly predicts a split in the behavior of *na-*verbs with just *na-* and *na-*verbs with a stacked *na-*: when *na-* is the only prefix, it licenses objects that are unselected wrt its input (i.e. wrt the unprefixing verb root), (3); but since in strings with a stacked *na-*, the object is a shared argument of both prefixes, a stacked *na-* doesn’t license objects that are unselected wrt its singly prefixed input. In turn, the presence of object sharing in strings with a stacked *na-* confirms the proposed parallel between strings with a stacked *na-* and SVCs, since object sharing is well-attested in several types of SVCs (Veenstra/Muysken 2006).