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Abstract

This research gives a general overview of the aspect in Igikuria language. Generally aspect is divided into perfective and imperfective. 'The imperfective is further divided into habitual and continuous' (Comrie, 1976:25). The continuous is further divided into progressive and non progressive aspects. In Igikuria language, the aspect is divided into perfective and imperfective. The perfective is divided into perfect and perfective. The imperfective is divided into progressive, habitual and repetitive. The feature checking of the Minimalist Program is shown to demonstrate how movement checks inflectional features of aspects for their correctness against their syntactic position in the constituency of a sentence.

Keywords: Perfective Aspect, Imperfective Aspect, Repetitive Aspect, Habitual Aspect, Progressive Aspect, Movements.

Introduction

Guthrie (1967:48) puts Igikuria in group 40 together with Ekegusii, Logooli(Kenya) Zamaki (Tanzania). Luhya(Kenya). Abakuria live both in Kenya and Tanzania. In Kenya they live in kuria district and in Tanzania they live in both Mara and Musoma districts.

The homeland of the Abakuria is between river Migori to the east and Estuary of river Mara to the West. On the eastern side, the area stretches from Migori district in South Nyanza to Musoma district of Tanzania on the western side. To the south, the land borders the Transmara district on the Kenya side and Nguruma area in Tanzania. To the north is Lake Victoria. The immediate neighbors are the Abagusii, Maasai, Ngurumi.This paper is based on the Abakuria who live in Kenya.The language spoken is Igikuria.

Meaning and form of aspect needs to be put into perspective. There is the semantic concept of time reference (absolute and relative) which may be grammaticalised in a language. i.e. a language may have a grammaticalised tense that expresses time reference in which case we say that language has tense. "Many languages lack tenses i.e. do not have grammaticalised time reference though probably all languages can lexicalize time reference, the same way languages can grammaticalise the temporal constituency of a situation in which case we say the language has aspect"…(Comrie, 1976:6).

Comrie (1976:3) defines an aspect as_ _ "different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation…" This can be viewed as either complete or incomplete.

The following diagram shows the various forms of Aspects

```
                        ┌─────────┐
                        │ Aspect  │
                        └────┬────┘
              ┌──────────────┴──────────────┐
        ┌──────────┐                  ┌─────────────┐
        │Perfective│                  │ Imperfective│
        └──────────┘                  └──────┬──────┘
                          ┌──────────────────┴──────────────┐
                    ┌──────────┐                      ┌────────────┐
                    │ Habitual │                      │ Continuous │
                    └──────────┘                      └─────┬──────┘
                                        ┌───────────────────┴──────────┐
                              ┌─────────────────┐              ┌─────────────┐
                              │ Non-progressive │              │ Progressive │
                              └─────────────────┘              └─────────────┘
```
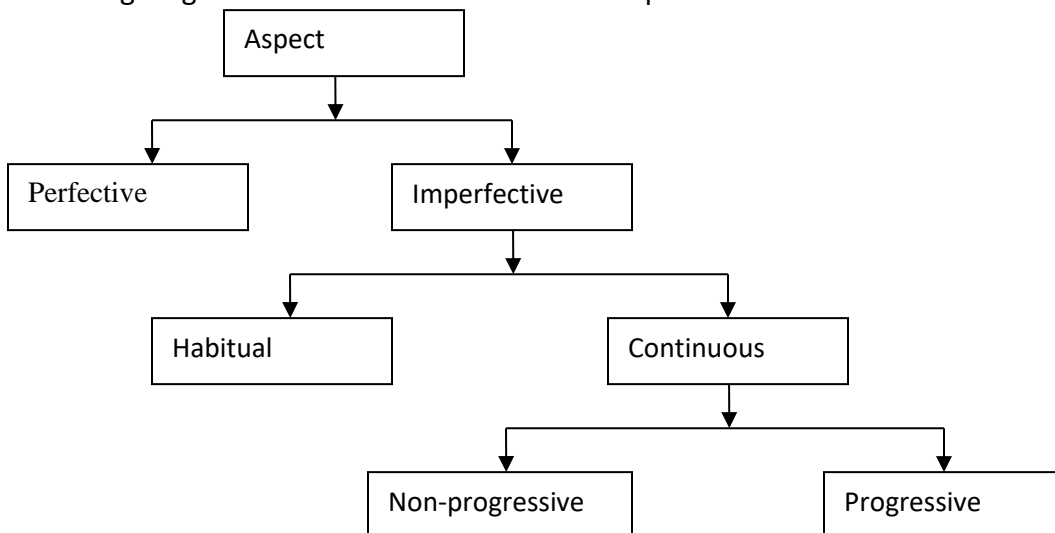
Figure I : Adapted from Comrie (1976: 25)

Dahl (1985) carries out a research project on tenses, aspects and moods and creates a data base with very relevant comparable data on the tense and aspect systems of many languages. This study seeks to investigate tense and aspect in Igikuria and Dahl's contribution is relevant to this research because it will help in showing the distinction between tense and aspect categories that are expressed morphologically, and those expressed by auxiliary constructions.

Igonga (1991) carries out a synchronic comparative analysis of the phonological, lexical, and morpho-syntactic aspects of Ekegusii, Lulogooli and Lwitakho

Nzioka (2007) carries out a study on the Kikamba tense and aspect under the Minimalist Program. She proposes that aspect and tense features exist in this language. Kikamba is a Bantu language like Igikuria and relevant data on its tense and aspect will be used in this study. This study too adapts the Minimalist Program hence makes use of theoretical aspects of MP. Nzioka finds out that tense and aspect do overlap in Kikamba and so this will be used to show how the same occurs in Igikuria.

Mbugua (2008) in her study of the morpho-syntax of the Maasai Valence using the Minimalist Approach provides relevant information to this study since it will base its analysis within the Minimalist framework. Data on feature-checking for agreement during movement is used.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is a general set of assumptions about the nature of phenomena. To understand theoretical framework, an analysis of theories has to be made. For this study, theoretical frame work is The Minimalist Program.

The Minimalist Program is built on the theory of principles and parameters which in a nutshell is principle of economy in derivation and representation. Movement is directed by the interacting principle of economy, the Minimal link conditions, the principle of procrastinate and Greed.

The Minimal link condition states that movement is only possible into the nearest only position. Procrastinate makes sure that movement only takes place if there is need for it and if it is licensed by any morpho syntactic or lexical evidence from the language. Additionally, the Last Resort principle guarantees that a short movement is preferred over a longer one. Related to it, is the Greed Principle, which is some sort of self-serving Last Resort. It ensures that movement is only possible if the requirements for movement of the element are satisfied in terms of spell-out and convergence (Chomsky, 1995:200) these principles have possibilities for variation called parameters. In other words languages vary in the parametric values they select for each parameter in question. Minimalist program can be summarized as syntactic representation that minimizes levels of representation and adopts a justified structure. This theory is appropriate for my study because Igikuria language is agglutinative and has strong morphology.

Research Methodology
This study uses analytical research design which uses facts or information already available and analyses these to make critical evaluation of the material data .The data in this study was collected from Igikuria native speakers and verified with Abakuria professionals who are more competent native speakers. Data was collected through oral interview and use of questionnaires. The library was also a source of information which provided theoretical content on the Igikuria language. This study uses purposive sampling as a method whereby the researcher purposively targets a group of people believed to be reliable for the study (Kombo and Tromp 2006: 82). For this study the number included ; twenty teachers; ten primary school teachers and ten secondary school teachers, Igikuria speakers of over eighteen years old, professionals both men and women (primary and secondary school teachers from Abakuria tribe) were involved. These informants are all native speakers of Igikuria language.Data Analysis is done in terms of the features of the verb structure that reveal the Igikuria Aspect .

Findings-aspects in Igikuria Language
The Perfective Aspect
An event is perfective if at the axis it has been completed, terminated or accomplished (Givon 1984:276)

The Perfective Aspect in Igikuria
In Igikuria the perfective aspect marks a completed action and co-occurs with the distant past and recent past tense which is both distinguished by tone whereby the high-low tone on the first syllable followed by the low tones on the subsequent syllables brings out the recent past while low-high on the first syllable followed by high tones on the subsequent syllables bring out the distant past.

1a)   John n- a – re –ey- e   ︿ ` ` `
 John- focus –AGRs –Asp-VR – fv
                 'John ate' (Recent past)
            1b)   John n- ǎ- ré - -éy – ĕ

John- focus- AGRs – Asp-VR – fv
'John ate' (distant past)

Creation of Heads

The co- occurrence between aspect and tense shown will necessitate creation of ASP head only for feature checking to enable the derivations of acceptable sentences in the Minimalist Program this is due to the fact that the principle of economy does not allow structures which are unnecessary. In the above cases focus, AGR, tense and aspect heads will be built to enable feature checking.

b) The Movements

The verb undergoes four movements. From the base position in the VP it's moved to aspect head to feature check for aspect, then to tense ASP head to feature check for tense which will be marked by the tone then to AGRS for agreement with the subject. The TON head is created to take care of the right tone and finally to focus head to feature check for focus. The subject John moves from specifier head of the VP to the specifier head of the AGRs for agreement checking and finally lands at the specifier head of the focus phrase .FOC. p. for the nominative case Hence the principle of full interpretation is taken care of. It is therefore clear that the perfective aspect co- occurs with the past tense in Igikuria language.

The Perfect Aspect

Baybee et al (1994:316) says the perfect aspect refers to an action that took place earlier on and produced a state that either lives on or whose consequence or relevance persists. The event is understood to occur before reference time but remains relevant to the situation of the reference not necessarily the moment of speaking. In Igikuria the perfect aspect is marked by the morpheme "rag" which is realized in the present, past and the future.

Perfect Aspect in the Present

The perfect aspect in the present in Igikuria is marked by the morpheme marker *rag.* This indicates that the action is complete but its effect is still being felt. This is indicated as shown in the Igikuria sentence
below.

 2a) John-a-rag-ey-e
     John-AGRs-ASP-eat-fv
    'John has eaten'

In the minimalist program there will be creation of ASP head the TNs will not be created because it's not morphologically marked.

The verb undergoes two movements, from its base position in the VP its moved to aspect head to feature check for aspect then to agreements AGR head for agreement with the subject. The subject moves from the Specifier head of the VP to the specify head of the AGRS p to case check for nominative case.

The Past Perfect

There is introduction of "wanyore" (had), this assists to work the past perfect tense. Although the event ended in the past its effect was felt until the time of speaking, the sentence below shows the example in the Igikuria language.

2b)   John wanyore - o – rag – ey – e

                      John had – AGRs – ASP-eat – fv

                'John had eaten'

a) Creation of Heads

The tense head is not created because there is no morpheme marker for tense however the Mod. Head is created to capture the auxilia*ry wanyore* in structure building; the primary principle of the MP is the formation of heads where only visibly marked morphemes are moved for feature checking in positions that are checking domains. Verb features are all checked for elimination since the MP does not allow morphological features that are not licensed. The AGRs head is also created to take care of the agreement. Spec heads are created under VP and Mod phrase to take care of the noun phrase (John).

b) The Movements

The verb undergoes three movements, from the base position in the VP its moved to aspect head to feature check for aspect;, then to AGRS head for agreement with the subject. (The subject John) moves from the head specifier of the VP to the specifier of AGRs p to feature check for nominative case.

Perfect Aspect in the Future

The Igikuria marks the perfect aspect in the future; this can be seen in the sentence below

3a)   N – indi – ch – a   nyoor – o- rag –ey – e

IPs – will – come – fv   When – AGRs – Asp-eat – FV.

'I will come when you will have eaten'

The event above occurs continuously and completely in future before the second event is realized yet at the time of occurrence of second event; the effects of the first event will have to be felt. The events described both occur in future the second event will closely follow the first one in future

The Imperfective Aspect

Givon (1984:276) perfective and imperfective contrast on the terminal boundary of events as well as its relationship to the time axis. In the imperfective aspect the events are continuous while in the perfective the events are complete as shown in the figure below.

                  A…………

                          events

               B…………….................

Time axis
Figure II : shows contrast between perfective and imperfective (Adapted from Givon (1984:277)

The letter A-represents continuation of an event .The letter B-represents general time axis .The event progresses even at the time marked by the black dot on the time axis which shows an internal point of view of time of speaking. There is durative /continuous, habitual, the repetitive and future aspects.

Durative/ Progressive Aspect
Saeed (1997:117) progressive is used when speaker wishes to express event that is viewed as on going. It is divided into three past, present, future progressive aspects.

The Past Progressive Aspect
In Igikuria the past progressive aspect co-occurs with the past tense which is marked by tone that distinguishes between recent past and distant past tenses. This is shown in the sentences below.
4a)   John n-à-rè-ko`–ragèr-a
           John FOC –AGRs-PST-eat -fv
           'John was eating' (recent past).
4b)   John n-a-re -ko-rager-a
             John FOC-AGRs- PST- eat-fv
            'John was eating' (distant past).

The Present Progressive Aspect
The progressive is marked by auxiliary "are" (now) which is put after the main verb hence not an affix to the main verb. This is shown in the Igikuria sentence below.
4c)   John n-ko-rager-a are
             John FOC -AGRs-eat-fv-ASP
                'John is eating now'
a) Creation of Heads
The tense head is not created because there is no morpheme marker for tense. In structure building, a primary principle of the MP is the formation of heads where only visibly marked morphemes are moved for feature checking in positions that are checking domains. Verb features are all checked for elimination since the MP does not allow morphological features that are not licensed. This is to meet the requirements of the Principle of Full Interpretation and the Principle of Economy .The ASP head is created to take care of the aspect *are* that is used .AGRs head is created to take care of the agreement. The morpho-syntactic nature of the MP allows inflectional properties to be accorded to the verbs and nouns in the lexicon.
b) The Movements
The verb "nkorugera" undergoes two movements, first from the base position of the VP to the AGRs head to feature check for the right agreement, then to the FOC head for the right focus. Then 'are' undergoes one movement from the VP position to the aspect head to feature check for the right aspect. The noun 'John' moves twice from the spec VP to the spec under AGRsP to

feature check for the right agreement then to the Spec under FOC.P to feature check for the right focus.

The Future Progressive Aspect

This aspect indicates events taking place in future and continues. It is marked by the auxiliary "ndinyora" (will be) which denotes the future progressive aspect. This is shown the Igikuria sentence below

5)   John ndinyora –n-ko-rager-a

        John -ASP -FOC –AGRs-eat –-fv

             'John will be eating'

a) Creation of Heads

In this case the ASP head is created to feature check for the right aspect, AGRs head is created to feature check for agreement. The FOC head is created because there is use of morpheme for focus that gives the right focus. The morpho-syntactic nature of the MP allows inflectional properties to be accorded to the verbs and nouns in the lexicon.

b) The Movements

The verb "nkoragera" undergoes two movements from the base position of the VP to the AGRs head to feature check for the right agreement with the subject and finally to the focus head to check for the right focus .John undergoes two movements from spec in VP position to the spec in the AGR_s P to check for the agreement and finally to the spec under FOC. P.

4.5. The habitual aspect

Comrie (1976:27-28)says this is the situation which is characteristic of extended period of time , so extended that the situation referred to is viewed not as incidental property of the moment but precisely as a characteristic feature of a whole period. This is categorized into past, present and future in Igikuria.

The Past Habitual Aspect

This indicates the event has repeatedly been taking place in the past and has the potential of happening again in the future. The distant past and recent past are distinguished by the tone whereby if the high tones are placed on the syllables then the distant past is realized while low tones on the syllables bring out recent past. The word *rwisoronswi* is used to denote the habitual aspect. The Igikuria sentence below shows the past habitual aspect.

6)   John n-ko -rager –a-re rwisoronswi

        John FOC -AGRs –eat- fv-PST -ASP (Always)

        'John used to eat habitually'

The habitual aspect is marked by the past *"re"* qualified by adverbial "*rwisoronswi*"(always)

a) Creation of Heads

The tense head is created because there is *re* the morpheme marker for tense hence the creation of the tense head. In structure building, a primary principle of the MP is the formation of heads where only visibly marked morphemes are moved for feature checking in positions that are checking domains. Verb features are all checked for elimination since the MP does not allow morphological features that are not licensed. This is to meet the requirements of the Principle of Full Interpretation and the Principle of Economy .The ASP head is created to take care of the

aspect *rwisoronswi* that is used .AGRs head is created to take care of the agreement. The morpho-syntactic nature of the MP allows inflectional properties to be accorded to the verbs and nouns in the lexicon.

b) The Movements

The verb "nkoragerare" undergoes three movements, first from the base position of the VP to the TNS head to feature check for the right tense, then to the AGRs head to feature check for the right agreement then to FOC head for the right focus. Then 'rwisoronswi' undergoes one movement from the VP position to the aspect head to feature check for the right aspect. The noun 'John' moves twice from the spec VP to the spec under AGRsP to feature check for the right agreement then to the Spec under FOC.P to feature check for the right focus.

4.5.2 The present habitual aspect

The events take place repeatedly though may not be taking place at the present. This aspect combines with present progressive aspect in the present habitual aspect in Igikura the aspect *rwisoronswi* begins the sentence .The use of rwisoronswi denotes the present habitual aspect as shown on the sentence below.

7)   Rwisoronswi John – n-ko –rager-a

         ASP - John -FOC-AGRs – eat-fv

          'John eats always'

The Future Habitual Aspect

The future habitual aspect co- occurs with future tense together with the aspect denoted by rwisoronswi as shown below.

8)   John n –a-ra –rager-a rwisoronswi.

         John FOC –AGRs-TNS- eat-fv- Asp

'John will always eat

The Repetitive /Distributive Aspect

Repetitive is closely related to the habitual, except that it denotes an action that is done on and on. The reduplication of verb root indicates the repetitive aspect. This aspect is categorized into past, present and future.

The Past Repetitive Aspect

The marker is "re"in the auxiliary, the main verb is reduplicated

9)   John n-a –re-nko – rager – a –ger-a

         John – Foc – AGRs-PST-– eat-fv-asp – fv (reduplicate)

 "nkoragera" moves from base position in the VP to focus head to feature check for focus. John moves from spec in the VP position to spec under FOC.P

4.6.2 The present repetitive aspect

This indicates that action is taking place repetitively at the present.

10)   John – n – ko-rager-a – rager – a

         John – FOC -AGRs – eat-fv-asp- fv (reduplicate)

          'John is eating' (repetitively)

The Future Repetitive Aspect

This indicates that the action takes place in the future and there is reduplication of the verb root.

11)   John n- a-ra-rager –a-rager -a

              John Foc –AGRs-TNS-eat-fv-Asp-fv

              'John will eat' (Repetitively)

Conclusion

The Igikuria has both perfective and imperfective aspects which are divided into perfect, perfective, progressive, habitual and repetitive. In Igikuria language perfective aspect co-occurs with the past tense the present progressive aspect uses the auxiliary *are,* the habitual aspect is marked by *rwisoronswi.* The past habitual aspect co-occurs with the past tense, the repetitive is also marked by reduplication of the verb root. The past repetitive also aspect co-occurs with the past tense.

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