

Tense and Aspect of the Mashi Verb Phrase



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ABSTRACT: This study focused on the tense and aspect

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on Mashi Verb Phrase in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). DRC is one of the most countries with linguistic diversity. Makomo (2012) observes that 200 and 300 languages are spoken in DRC. The sociolinguistic environment of DRC is thus multilingual where French is minority dominant language which is spoken alongside the four official national languages (Maalu-Bungi et al, 2010; Makomo, 2012). DRC is one of the countries with four national languages: Kiswahili, Kikongo, Lingala and Tshiluba which were promoted by the colonial power as inter-ethnic communication languages and languages of the education and evangelization. However, a worrying trend about linguistic policy of the DRC is marked by the colonial ideology that promotes multilingualism without caring about locally spoken languages such as Mashi.

This paper focuses on the VP of the Mashi language or Shi, a Bantu language of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Guthrie 1967). Mashi is also a Bantu language of Zambia and Angola. Mashi was assigned by Guthrie to Bantu group K.30. Mashi language falls under the Niger-Congo languages and under the Volta Congo languages. Mashi language is grouped together with languages such as Luimbi, Samba, Kwangali, Luyana, Mbowe, Mbukushu, Simaa, Lunda, Ruund, Salampasu, Fwe, Kuhane, Totela. In DRC, Mashi is one of the languages spoken in Kivu alongside with Kiswahili. The people who speak Mashi are known as Bashi (Hammarström, Forkel and Haspelmath, 2017). They are the largest tribe in South Kivu, whose capital city is Bukavu. Mashi is not isolated but survives with other local languages which are used in South Kivu province (Maho, 2009). Mashi's Language family is Niger-Congo > Atlantic-C and it is native to the Democratic Republic of Congo with approximately 660,000 speakers (Maho, 2009). Mashi language being a Bantu language is agglutinative (Bynon-Polak (1975) that is inflectional and derivational morphology and other word formation processes are done by concatenating morphemes onto root or existing words together. For instance, Bantu word structures consists of both prefixal and suffixal morphological slots. It is true for Bantu languages that use conjunctive writing system, i.e., a system where morphological elements are orthographically realized connected or combined as a single word (Derek, 2008). Bantu words have a complex morphological structure, which is highly evident in verbs.

Little literature shows features of Mashi Language. Bynon-Polak (1975) in his study of the grammar and phonology of Bantu languages shows such as Mashi have roots plus meaningless formal extensions that need to be distinguished on purely formal basis into root and formal suffix. Some of this expansions in Mashi language include (-ik, -id, -uk) which are morphological identical to the suffixes (-um, -in and -ut). Byenda (2000) observes that Mashi verbs are made of structures such as -CVC-, -CV-, and VC. His research was based on three main points which are the nominal form, the adjectival and the pronominal forms. Mushagalusa Cizungu (2018) focused on contrastive analysis of conditional sentences in English and Mashi in order to predict possible difficulties a Shi learner of English may face in learning conditional sentences in English. Mushagalusa Cizungu discussed three main types of conditions in both English and Mashi.

The knowledge on local languages such as Mashi is not properly documented. Studies on Mashi language have been done from an applied linguistic perspective where researchers have attempted to carry out a contrastive analysis study. However, there exists a research gap in terms of the features of Mashi language from a morphosyntactic approach and more on the Verb phrase which is an obligatory element in the Mashi sentence. The purpose of this research is thus to document the features of tense and aspect of Mashi Verb phrase. The paper focuses on the structure of elements of the Mashi verb phrase. The analysis focuses on the identification of the elements of VP and highlights their morphological forms and the syntactic patterning of Mashi VP elements and their co-occurrence possibilities. Thus, the study makes a linguistic contribution in syntax by highlighting some morphosyntactic properties of Mashi language. This study therefore makes a contribution to theoretical studies of syntax by exploring the nature of the Mashi VP

Tense and Aspect of the Mashi Verb Phrase

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study applied Chomsky's (1995; 2000) minimalist program that accounts for the interface between morphology and syntax. Minimalist program focuses on structure building process that involves the computational component. The computational component selects lexical items from the lexicon to come up with a structural description. The lexicon contains all the lexical and morph-syntactic information about nouns and verbs. That is, through the numeration a set of morph-syntactic and lexical is taken from the lexicon. This process in minimalist theory is called merging; projections and partial trees. Through merging the structure building process transports information from lexicon to interface level. The aspect of merging was applied in the analysis of constituents of the Mashi VP.

The minimalist theory is also used to account for structure of Mashi VP since it focuses on the lexical heads that are assumed to be fully inflected forms (stem plus inflectional affixes). The forms carry a feature associated with the inflectional affix. The aspect of the functional head is also key in analysis of inflectional morphology. Chomsky (2000) argues that the morphological features in general triggers movements of lexical elements to position in the functional domain and checking whether the features associated with the inflection match the features represented in the functional heads. Chomsky (2000) observes that the checking process ensures that lexical items which are represented in the sentence structure carry appropriate features. The checking entails a focus on grammatical and inflectional features; that is whether they are correct in terms of syntactic positions. The Mashi language is agglutinative, therefore the future checking principle is analysed to show the aspect of Agreement (AGR, Tense (TNS), and Inflection (INF).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This research adopts descriptive research design to analyze the morphosyntactic features of the Mashi VP. This design suits this study since it aims at describing the morphosyntactic elements of the Mashi VP. Thus, the study is qualitative in nature.

3.2 Area of study

This study was carried out in Bukavu town, South Kivu province in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Bukavu town is predominantly occupied by Mashi speakers. It was easier to get a sample of respondents to check the well-formedness of the data generated. This site was preferred due to its authenticity and validity of data.

3.3 Sampling techniques and sample size

Through purposive sampling the researchers sampled 15 speakers of Mashi language who are competent. The proposed study being a qualitative study 15 participants were considered a representative of the entire population (cf. Rubin, 1987). The youngest informant was 45 years old. The sample was used to check the authenticity of the linguistic structures generated by the researcher and to verify the data.

3.4 Data collection Instruments

Native speaker's intuition or introspection (cf. Chomsky, 1957) and verification check lists were used to gather as much information as possible about the Mashi VP. Introspection is a qualitative method of collecting data where the researcher looks inwards on the data to be collected, relies on individual thoughts, intuitions and ability. The researchers used the native speakers' competence to generate appropriate data displaying Mashi VP structures with the morphosyntactic features being investigated and different types of verbs. Checklists were used for verification purposes. The informants were expected to verify the data generated by the researcher. With the same view Crystal and Davy (1960) notes that the use of native speakers to check data generated is important to provide suggestions on the internal organization of language which might have been ignored or overlooked if one relied solely on researcher's introspection.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data analysis is qualitative. The data collected were arranged in paradigms such as lexical items appearing in isolation as well as in phrases and sentences. The researchers described Mashi VP structure that displayed morphological features of tense and aspect. The researchers also described and interpreted affix that reflected morphological forms and syntactic patterns.

4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF TENSE AND ASPECT IN MASHI VP

This section focuses on analysis of tense and aspect in Mashi Vp. The analysis focuses on the inflectional forms for tense and aspect and establishes how the forms are distributed in the verb phrase. Thus the interaction of tense and aspect in the verb is investigated. Trask (1999) observes that every language is capable of expressing limitless distinctions of time. Tense relates to the time of action thus it is grammaticalization of time. In Mashi tense is discussed in terms of present, past and future time.

Tense and Aspect of the Mashi Verb Phrase

4.1.1 Present Tense in Mashi VP

Present tense denotes the present moment and coincidence of the time of situation (Comrie, 1985). That is, present tense locates an event at the present moment. In Mashi, the present tense is always indicated by *-ma-* which is affixed between the personal pronoun prefix and the verbal root. There is also the final *-a* as illustrated below:

- (1) Buhendwa a-ma-ish-a.
Buhendwa NOUN/3PS-PProPref-PRES-come-fv
Buhendwa comes
- (2) Na-ma-nyu-a amishi
1PS-PRES-drink-fv
I drink water.”

The analysis of sentence 1 and 2 shows, the present tense in Mashi is marked by the morpheme (*-ma*). The minimalist program theory dictates that the creation of heads for feature checking by overt morphemes, thus the creation for tense head is necessitated since tense is overtly marked. The presence of the morpheme [*-ma*] which marks tense necessitates the movement of the head for future checking hence creating tense.

4.1.2 Past Tense in Mashi VP

The past tense is the location of the situation prior to the present moment (Comrie, 1985). That is, the past tense is used with verbs denoting an event that occurs prior to the moment of speaking. The past tense in general shows that the action took place and completed in the past. The Mashi past tense is marked by *-ir-* and *-ag-*. The morphemes are affixed to the verb root to show that the action was done and completed in the past. Mashi language places the past tense in three locations. That is, the action in the past may be seen as having taken place in the immediate, recent or remote past depending on when the action took place and how long ago it was from the time of speaking. The immediate past tense shows an action that took place some moments before the time of utterance or earlier in the same day as illustrated by the past tense marker *-ire-* in the following sentences:

- (3) Aishaga sezi
a-ish-ag-a sezi
She/he came in the morning

In the above sentence the immediate past tense is denoted by the use of adverbial phrase of time and the tone of the sentence. This sentence ends with a distinctive low tone on the last syllable of the verb. Following the minimalist program, the morpho-syntactic realization of aspect by the suffixation of morpheme necessitates movement to the aspect head for feature checking hence enabling the derivation of correct and acceptable sentences. The verb in the sentence *Aishaga sezi* has morphemes that mark focus and subject agreement and heads are created to enable feature checking for these features.

The second type of tense in Mashi is recent Past. The recent past tense locates an action that took place the day before today (yesterday) as shown in the sentence below:

- (4) Omukazi yali ishire
Ali- ish- ir - e

The recent past tense is marked by the morpheme (*ir-*) which co-occurs with perfective aspect suffix (*-e*). Thus, basing on minimalist program the morpho-syntactic realization of aspect by the morpheme [*-ir*], necessitates movement to the aspect head for feature checking. The tense is marked by the morpheme. The verb also has morphemes that checks for subject agreement and heads.

The third type of Mashi past tense is remote past tense. Remote past tense locates an action that took place sometimes earlier than yesterday as illustrated below:

- 5) Mukage a-f-ir-e.
Mukage/NOM/3SG-PProPref-PST-die-fv
His wife died.
- (6) Ba-mal-ir-e boshi amasomo
3PL-PST-finish-fv
They all finished studies
- (7) Wa-sheb-ir-e omukazi mwinja
2SG-PST-marry-fv
You married a beautiful woman.

The verb in the recent past undergoes several movements as illustrated by the morphemes. While *a-*, *Ba-*, *wa-*, *mwa-* are verbal prefixes standing for subjects. *-f-*, *-mal-*, *-sheb-*, and *-yamb-* are verb roots. In all sentences above, *-ir-* is the past tense marker that is followed by the final vowel. There is no change either with negative or interrogative sentences with the past tense marker; the

Tense and Aspect of the Mashi Verb Phrase

negative marker, *nta-*, or interrogative marker, *ka-*, is placed at the beginning of the sentence. The distinction between the immediate past tense and remote past tense in Mashi language is marked by tone.

4.1.3 The Future Time

The Mashi Verb also shows future time. The verb in future time marks an event or an action described by the verb as not having happened yet, but expected to happen in the time to come.

The future time in Mashi may be immediate and distant future. The morpho-syntactic realization of future tense in Mashi is by the affixation of the morpheme *-ishi-* to the verb root that necessitates movement to the TNS head for feature checking. A TNS head to which the verb will be moved to feature check for appropriate tense in the structure building process is created.

The future time is the tense that describes a future event or state of being. It sometimes expresses a plan. The future time is expressed in Mashi by affixing *-ishi-* to the verb root. The future time marker is sometimes produced as *-shi-/chi-* without affecting the meaning of the verb or the aspect that is expressed as illustrated in sentence 9 to 14 below:

8) Na-ishi-guh-a omuneke.

1SG-FUT-give-fv

I will give you a banana.

9) Ka-rhwa-ishi-hing-a amahemba?

INTERRO-1PL-FUT-cultivate-fv

Will we cultivate sorghum?

10) O-rha-ishi-hik-a duba.

2SG-NEG-FUT-arrive-fv

You will not arrive rapidly

11) Mwa-ishi-hek-a enshoho zinyu.

2PL-FUT-bring-fv

You will bring your sacs.

12) Wa-chi-n-yerek-a enjira.

2SG-FUT-show-fv

You will show me the way.

13) Ba-shi-mp-a omugati

3PL-FUT-give-fv

They will give me bread.

The data analysis above show that *Na-*, *-rhwa-*, *O-*, *-mwa-*, *wa-* and *ba-* are personal pronoun prefixes. In sentences (9), (10), (11), and (12) the verbal roots are *-guh-*, *-hing-*, *-hik-* and *-hek-* and *-a* is the final tense marker. The future time marker is *-ishi-* that is inserted between the personal pronoun prefixes and the verbal roots which is followed by the final tense marker *-a*. There is the interrogative form with sentence (10) where we have the interrogative marker *ka-* and there is the negative marker *-rha-* that is used in sentence (11). In sentence (13) *-chi-* is used instead of *-ishi-* and *-shi-* is used in sentence (14) for the same purpose of expressing the future time when inserted between the personal pronoun prefixes and verbal roots.

The future time is also expressed in Mashi without using the future time marker when the speaker uses an adverb of time for precision.

Consider the following sentences:

- Larha aisha *lwakabirhi*.

My father will come on Tuesday.

- Arhagenda *irhondo*

He will not go on Sunday.

- Kalibirha *bijingo?*

Will he run in the evening?

In the above sentences *a-* is the personal pronoun prefix and *-ish-*, *-gend-*, *-libirh-* are the verbal roots. The final tense marker is *-a*. *Lwakabirhi* (on Tuesday), *irhondo* (next day) and *bijingo* (in the evening).

The future time is also used to express some aspects in Mashi:

- The causative aspect

16) Rhwa-ishi-sam-is-a abantu boshi oku buhya

1PL-FUT-dance-CAUS-fv

We will make all people dance at the wedding.

Tense and Aspect of the Mashi Verb Phrase

17) Nta-ishi-yamb-is-a omwana.

1SG-NEG-FUT-wear-CAUS-fv

I will not make the child wear.

18) Ka-wa-ishi-yumbak-is-a enyumpa yawe?

INTERRO-2SG-FUT-build-CAUS-fv

Will you have your house built?

To comment a bit on these verbal forms *Rhwa-*, *Na-* and *-wa-* are the personal pronoun prefixes; *-ishi-* is the future time marker and the verbal roots are *-sam-*, *-yamb-* and *-yumbak-* while *-is-* is the causative marker of Mashi verb phrases as we mentioned before with other tenses. The negative marker with the first person is *-ta-* but always combined with *Na-* the first person personal prefix people always produce *Nta-* i.e sentence (17) is negative.

The analysis in section 4 shows the morphosyntactic features of tense in Mashi and its morphological realization in the verb phrase. The data analyzed reveals that, the tense system of Mashi has three basic tenses: past, present and future time. The analysis of the data collected also show that Mashi language subdivides its time line according to its understanding of the time frame. The analysis shows that the past tense is reflected in three forms immediate, recent and remote past tenses and that Mashi language marks its tense morphologically and by suprafixation of grammatical tone.

4.2. Aspect in Mashi VP

This section focuses on the realization of aspect in Mashi verb phrase. Aspect deals with different representations of time within an event. An analysis of morphosyntactic features of the Mashi Verb clearly shows a distinction between tense and aspect. As such while aspect deals with different representations of time within an event; tense deals with the representations of the time that contains the event. The internal temporal constituency of a situation can be viewed as either complete or incomplete. The analysis of tense is based the minimalist program where the focus is on feature checking. In Mashi, an event can be described as either being complete or incomplete. Thus, the Mashi aspect may be perfective, perfect, and imperfective as further discussed in the sections below:

4.2.1 Perfective Aspect

The perfective aspect views a situation in its entirety. That is, an event in perfective aspect is viewed as terminated or completed at the time of speaking. This means that the perfective aspect has the implicit meaning of past tense. Perfectivity indicates a completed action. In Mashi the perfective aspect is shown by the morpheme (-ag-).

(19) Jane ashembukanga

a-shembuk-ag-a

Jane jumped.

The analysis above shows that the perfective aspect is marked by the morpheme [-ag-] which co-occurs with the immediate past tense and remote past tense. Basing on the minimalist program occurrence of an aspect marking morpheme compels the creation of the head showing aspectual features that leads to creation of the correct VP that is in the past tense. Perfective aspect implies that the event is in the past tense.

4.2.2 Perfect Aspect

The data collected also reflects the perfect aspect (anterior aspect). The perfect aspect refers to a past situation where the event is seen as having some present relevance or consequence (for dynamic verbs) or to a situation which started in the past and continues into the present (for stative verbs). The perfect aspect combines with tense to bring out the speakers meaning. The perfect aspect in Mashi is marked by the suffixation the morpheme [-ag-] to the verb root and it co-occurs with the past tense as illustrated below:

20) Na-shuk-ag-a omutuga gwani ene sezi.

1SG-PERF-wash-fv

I have cleaned my car this morning.

21) Nakagishuka omutuga gwani ene sezi

1SG-PERF/PROG-wash-fv

I have been washing my car this morning

22) Aganze a-hing-ag-a ishwa lyage

Aganze/NOM/3SG-PERF-cultivate-fv

Aganze had cultivated his field.

Na-, *a-*, *mwa-* are personal pronoun prefixes. They stand for names of people such as in sentence (20) where *-a* stands for the subject *Aganze*. *-hing-*, *-shuk-*, *-ly-*, and *-derh-* are verb roots. The perfective aspect in Mashi is shown by *-ag-* as the perfective marker in general. It is hard to discriminate the present and past perfect because both of them use the morpheme *-ag-*. People distinguish them with adverbial phrases of time such as *in the morning*, *in the afternoon*, *today*, *last week*, *that year*, etc. Another aspect which helps

Tense and Aspect of the Mashi Verb Phrase

to distinguish the past and present perfect is the fact that old native speakers use different intonations to talk about either present or past perfect. For sentences which are in progressive with the perfective aspect the morpheme *-kag-* is placed between the personal pronoun prefix and the verb root and then comes the final tense marker *-a*.

4.2.3 Imperfective Aspect

The data collected revealed imperfective aspect which denotes the internal constituency of events and represents the middle phase of events with the beginning and the end left unspecified. The imperfective aspect denotes a situation which is incomplete at the time of speaking. That is, the situation is viewed from within. Mashi language classifies the imperfective aspect in to two divisions: the progressive and the habitual.

4.2.3.1 The progressive aspect

The progressive aspect is used when a speaker wishes to express a past, present or a future event or situation that is viewed as ongoing and it is associated with dynamic verbs rather than stative verbs. In Mashi verb phrases this aspect is made by the morpheme (*-li-*) that is infixes between the personal pronoun that appears twice and the verbal root as illustrated in the sentences below:

- 23) Ba-li-ba-imp-a.
PRON3PL-PROG-PProPref-PRES-sing-fv-a
They are singing
- 24) Larha na nyama ba-li-balongol-a
PRON3PL-PROG-PProPref-PRES-quarrel-fv-a
Daddy and mummy are quarrelling.
- 25) A-kabwa- ka-li-ka-hiv-a omulindyé
DET-PRON1SG-PROG-PProPref-PRES-chase-fv-a
A dog is chasing a moose.

In sentences (23), (24) *Ba-* are the personal pronoun prefixes because the subject '*Larha na nyama*' can be replaced by *Ba-* while *a-* plays the same role in sentence (24); *-imp-*, *-longol-*, and *-hiv-* are verbal roots and *-li-* is the progressive marker. The progressive aspect in Mashi may be Present, past or future. The present progressive aspect denotes an action that is in progress at the time of speaking as shown in sentence 23 to 25.

The past progressive aspect on the other hand refers to events that were going on in the past at the time of reference. The past progressive aspect is marked by co-occurrence of the past tense morpheme [ko-] with the imperfective aspect morpheme as in *Larha na nyama ba-kazilongol-a*. The verb '*kazingi*' plus the verb root shows the past progressive aspect. The progressive aspect is also considered as continuous aspect due to the fact that the action is performed without a break along with the speech in the past. The progressive aspect of Mashi is expressed by *-kazigi-* that is affixed to the verb root as illustrated below:

- 26) Na-kazigi-lam-a e Nguba.
1SG-PST-live-PROGR-fv
I was living at Nguba
- 27) Rwabaduka-a-kazigi-rhwer-a emirhi.
Rwabaduka/NOM/3SG-PST-grow-PROGR-fv
Rwabaduka was planting trees.
- 28) O-rhubwa rhu-rha-kazigi-mok-a.
DET-rhubwa/NOM/3PL-PST-bark-NEG-PROGR-fv
- 29) Ka-mwa-kazigi-li-a ebishimbo?
INTERRO-2PL-PST-eat-PROGR-fv
Were you eating beans?

From the above sentences *Na-*, *a-*, *rhu-*, and *-mwa-* are personal pronoun prefixes. In sentences (26) and (27) the subjects are nouns which are replaced by pronouns which are affixed to verb roots. In sentence (28), *Ka-* is the interrogative marker that is affixed to the personal pronoun *-mwa-* sentences and *-a* is the final tense marker. As we mentioned before *-kazigi-* is the progressive aspect marker as it is the case in the above sentences and *-a* is the final tense marker.

Some Mashi speakers use *-kagi-* instead of *-kazigi-* without affecting the verb root meaning.

Example:

- Nakagiyubaka olugurhu
I was building the compound.
- Ntakagiyunva bwinja.
I was not listening well.

Tense and Aspect of the Mashi Verb Phrase

- Kawakagiderha mpu nkurhabale?

Were you saying that I help you?

The progressive aspect with the future time in Mashi is chiefly expressed by the habitual Mashi future marker *-shiba-* as illustrated below:

In the following sentences:

30Mwa-shiba-mwa-dug-a obuntu.

2PL-FUT-make-PROGR-fv

You will be making ugali.

31Ka-ba-shiba-ba-yend-a enshogo?

INTERRO-3PL-FUT-cook-PROGR-fv

Will they be cooking vegetables?

31A-rha-shiba-a-hing-a ishwa lyage.

3SG-NEG-FUT-cultivate-PROGR-fv

He/she will not be cultivating his/her field.

The above analysis show that *mwa-*, *-ba-* and *a-* are personal pronoun prefixes; *-shiba-* is the progressive markers with the future time in Mashi. One thing to note is the fact that the personal pronoun is repeated in the same structure before having the verbal roots. *-dug-*, *yend-* and *-hing-* are verbal roots and *-a* is the final maker. Sentence (31) is interrogative reason why the interrogative marker *-ka-* introduces the question and sentence (31) is negative. This is seen through the use of *-rha-* in the verb phrase.

4.2.3.2 Habitual aspect

The analyzed data revealed habitual aspect that expresses an event that happens at regular intervals from time to time though it may not necessarily be taking place now. This aspect describes an action that is done as a habit or on regular basis. It is also called 'timeless habitual'.

In Mashi verb phrases, a habitual action or aspect is always mentioned by the morpheme *-na-* that is affixed to the verbal root to show the present tense.

32Malume-a-na-kol-e oku bitaro

NOUNMalume3SG-PProPref-ASP/HABIT-PRES-work-fv-e

My uncle works at the hospital.

33Ka-mu-na-fuluk-e bijingo?

INTERRO-PProPref-ASP/HABIT-PRES-go back-fv-e

Do you go back home in the evening?

In the above sentences (32) and (33) *a-* and *-mu-* are personal pronoun prefixes while *-kol-* and *-fuluk-* are verbal roots. The habitual aspect marker *-na-* occurs between the verb roots and the personal pronoun prefixes. The present tense may express a habitual action in Mashi without using an affix; it means ϕ affix.

34) A-rha-derh-a Mashi

2SG-NEG-PRES-speak-fv-a

He/she does not speak Mashi

35) Rhu-sharh-a- ngasi- bijingo

1PL-PRES-play-fv-a-ADV-NOUN bijingo

We always play in the evening.

The above verbal forms show that *a-* and *rhu-* are personal pronoun prefixes while *-derh-*, *-sharh-* are verb roots; in (34) *-rha-* is the negative morpheme and *-a* in both sentences is the final tense marker. All the above sentences express habitual action without using *-na-* that is known as the morpheme that is inserted between the personal pronoun prefix and the verb root.

People use the habitual aspect when speaking about actions which regularly take place at a particular moment. As far as the habitual aspect is concerned in Mashi, the suffix *-ag-* is inserted between the verb root and the tense final marker.

36) Ba-gend-ag-a bijingo.

3PL-PST-go-HABIT-fv

They used to go in the evening.

37) Rhwa- ish-ag-a omu mutuga

3PL-PST-come-HABIT-fv

We used to come in a car.

38) Mu-rha-yufir-ag-a omu lukoma

2PL-NEG-PST-weed-HABIT-fv

Tense and Aspect of the Mashi Verb Phrase

You didn't use to weed in the banana plantation.

39) Ka-wa-som-ag-a amaruba?

INTERRO-2PL-PST-read-HABIT-fv

Were you used to read letters?

In the above sentences *Ba-*, *rhwa-*, *mu-*, and *-wa-* are verbal prefixes with their respective verbal roots *-gend-*, *-ish-*, *-yufir-*, and *-som-*. In sentence (37) *-rha-* is the negative marker while *ka-* in sentence (39) is the interrogative marker. Within all the above sentences *-ag-* is the past habitual marker in Mashi verb phrases. We also have the final tense marker *-a*.

Repetitive aspect is closely related to the habitual aspect in that it denotes an action that is done on and off. The action is seen as a series of repeated events or occurrences as illustrated below:

40) A-ma-ham-a-ham-a- nka- ka-bu-a.

2SG-PRES-ASP-DUPL-jump-fv-a

He over jumps like a dog.

The reflexive aspect on the hand shows that the doer of the action undergoes the effect of the action on himself.

41) Na-ma-chi-t-u-a omunwe

3SG-PRES-REFL-cut-fv

I cut myself a finger.

42) O-mu-a-n-a- a-ma-chi-lis-a.

DET-muana/NOM/3SG-REFL-eat-fv

The kid feeds himself/herself

In Mashi the reflexive aspect is marked by *-chi-*. In the above sentences *Na-*, *-a-*, *-na-*, are personal pronoun prefixes; they are followed in most cases by *-chi-* and then after the verb root which is the action from which the reflexive aspect is shown. The causative aspect on the other hand shows that the speaker arranges for the action to be done as shown in 43 below:

43) Ndi- na-hing-is-a ishwa lyani.

1SG-PRES-PROG-cultivate-CAUS-fv

I am having my field cultivated

The last feature of aspect in Mashi is reciprocity aspect. The reciprocal aspect expresses the reciprocity of actions between two persons or members of a given organization. For Mashi verb phrases the reciprocal aspect is marked by the suffix *-an-* that is inserted between the verbal root and the tense final marker.

44) Abo-bakazi ba-rhabal-an-ag-a okuhinga.

DET-bakazi/NOM/3PL-PST-help-RECIPR-fv

Those women helped each other to cultivate.

In the above verbal forms *Ba-* is the personal pronoun prefix that is affixed to the verbal roots *-rhabal-*, *-siman-*, and *-rhol-*.

CONCLUSION

The analysis above focused on aspect in Mashi VP and its morphological realization in the verb phrase. From the data analyzed, it has been observed that Mashi has an aspect system of the following basic aspects: perfective, perfect, imperfective, repetitive, causative, reflexive and reciprocity aspects. The data revealed that an event in perfective and perfect aspects is viewed as terminated or completed at the time of speaking. This means that these two aspects have an implicit meaning of past tense and therefore co-occur with the past tense. Imperfective aspect contrasts with perfective aspect in that a situation is regarded as incomplete at the time of utterance.

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