

Grammar of Modal Auxiliary in Emowha Dialect of Igbo

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Abstract

The auxiliary verb which is a subcomponent of the verb phrase is categorised into primary auxiliary and modal auxiliary. Modal auxiliary signals obligation, compulsion, negation, probability etc in a sentence. This work works the grammar of modal auxiliary in Emowha dialect adopted attested and introspective method of data collection and interlinear morpheme-by-morpheme glosses method of data analysis and explored the schema for sentence configuration as conceived by Chomsky's standard theory of (1965) which places grammatical categories such as aspect, tense, negation, mood under auxiliary mode as theoretical framework. We found out that Emowha dialect marks modal through morphological inflection and notion, the OVS is prominent in obligation and process forms, and they have three realizations respectively. Further the negative mood can be marked through overt inflection and tone alternation. Finally, the inceptive indicative modal-dno is realised through interfixation. This present work concludes that in discussing mood in the dialect, the tripartite grammatical theory of mood, aspect and tense cannot each be neatly discussed in isolation of each other as mood can be marked by overt inflection or through tense and aspect.

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Background to the Study

The verb is a very important element in grammatical analysis. It is a part of universal grammar as it is found in all human languages. The verbs as the head of the predicate part of the sentence, specifies action and state of being. The verb pervades all the levels of language study in its different forms and thematic. From semantics, it is classified into action and static, morphology sees verb as regular and irregular and syntactically, it is classed as lexical (main) and auxiliary. Chomsky (1965) Aspects of the theory of Syntax (the standard theory) cited in Ndimele (1992, .15) gave sentence configuration as

$S \rightarrow NP - Aux - VP$. He also claims that grammatical features of modals, auxiliaries, negation, tense and aspect markers are accommodated in the auxiliary node. Ndimele (1999, 107), Leech and Svartrik (2002, p. 252) are in agreement with the above regarding the constituent of auxiliary node. Similarly, Crystal (1997, p. 35) cited in Onumajuru (2015, p. 133) argues that auxiliary “is used in the grammatical classification of verbs to refer to the set of verbs, subordinate to the main lexical verbs, which help to make distinction in mood, aspect, voice, etc”. Though in contemporary study of grammar, the aux (auxiliary node) has been renamed as infl (inflection node) having tense and agreement, also an obligatory part of the sentence. The mood in a sentence most times plays a thematic role as it specifies the motive of the speaker. Kari (2015, 127) observes that:

Mood has to do with the attitude of the speaker towards his/her utterance. The speaker's attitude may be that of certainty or doubt. The speaker may also issue a command or ask a question. These different attitudes of the speaker are sometimes referred to as indicative, dubitative, imperative and interrogative moods.

Mood also has close affinity with aspect - which shows how an event took place: continues, completed or at inception stage, since in some languages the same grammatical elements are used in mark them. In fact, Katamba (1993, p. 223) opines that 'conceptually, the categories of mood, tense and aspect are not entirely independent of each other. So, they are often simultaneously signalled by the same form'. Also in some languages, the presence of some modal elements could signal some grammatical function in the main verb. Ndimele (2003) reports the concept of OVS (open vowel suffix) occurring with the main verb in Echie language.

This present work highlights and explores the grammatical features that signal mood, it also discusses the relationship between aspect and modality in Emowha dialect. The data are got through two ways:

- (1) From conversation with people and textbooks (attested data).
- (2) The Writers intuitive knowledge of the dialect as a native speaker (introspective data).

The data presentation and analysis were based on interlinear morpheme-by-morpheme method.

Theoretical framework

Chomsky's standard theory of (1965) conceives sentence configuration as $S \rightarrow NP - Aux - VP$. Where, S - sentence, NP - Noun Phrase, Aux - Auxiliary and VP - verb Phrase. In sentence the auxiliary is seen as helping the main verb to make its full meaning. 'A VP is the largest expression or the maximal projection of the verb' (Ndimele 1999, p. 122). The auxiliary and the main verb combine to form verb complex which performs different grammatical functions in a sentence. The auxiliary verbs are divided into modal, aspect, passive be and dummy do (Aarts 2001, p.36). Similarly, Ndimele (1993, p.113) argues that 'the main grammatical categories that are associated with the verb are tense, aspect and mood'. He further claims that the time concept runs through these verbal categories. Also, Emenanjo (2015) discussed auxiliary verbs in Igbo to include tense, aspect, polarity, voice and negation which are different dimensions of mood. Further Mbah (2011, p.20) argues that there are six auxiliary verbs in Igbo which include na, ga, ka, ji, ma and do. Mbah observes that the first three are found in standard Igbo and the other three auxiliary verbs are dialectal.

Theory of Mood

The mood is a subcomponent of the auxiliary in the verbal system. Mood helps to specify the meaning of utterance of a speaker, judging from whether it is a command, obligation etc. Katamba (1993, p. 222) argues that 'mood also an inherent verbal category. Its function is to describe an event in terms of whether it is necessary, possible, permissible, desirable, and the like'. He further adds that 'many languages, including English, indicates modality syntactically using auxiliary modal verbs like must, can, may and ought'. Similarly, Leech and Svartvik (2002, p. 256) referring to English modal claim that 'the modal auxiliaries do not have -s forms, -ing forms, or-ed participial. Can, may, shall, will, have the special past forms could, might, should, would. The other modal auxiliaries (must, dare, need, ought to, used to) do not have such forms. In classifying verbs in Igbo, Emenanajo (2015, p. 416) class modals and auxiliaries under defective verbs, He argued that they are 'defective in their morphological paradigms and irregular in their syntactic behaviour'. In terms of function, in Onicha Igbo 'modal auxiliaries can be used in expressing both the affirmative and the negative, with perfective notions, just as the primary auxiliaries are used' (Onumajuru 2015, p.137). Modals interact/intersect with other verbal categories such as tense and aspect to make meaning in a sentence.

Tense

Tense is a verbal category that situates action, event or state within a time frame. Kari (2015, p. 125) claims that 'tense refers to the variations in the form of verbs that correlates with differences in time. Tense is often viewed as a tripartite division of time into past, present and future' However, Emenanjo (2015) claims that Igbo has only one clear-cut tense system in all its dialects, which is the past tense. (p.450) specifically observes that 'If future is treated as a tense rather than a mood, then, future is the other well-marked tense in Igbo. If future and past are tenses then past-in-the-future is the third tense system in Igbo'. The relevance of the above is that the tense system outside the past in Igbo intertwine with mood, and this underlies the importance of the mood in Igbo verbal system.

Aspect

Aspect is grammatical moments within verbal action that specifies whether an event/action runs through time, ended or still relevant. 'Aspect is concerned with the manner in which verbal action is experienced by the speaker. Verbal action may be seen as complete or incomplete' (Kari 2015, p. 126). Similarly, Emenanjo (2015, p. 447) observes that aspect 'is the grammaticalization of duration in terms of inceptive, habitual, progressive (imperfective), completive (perfective) etc'. He further claims that aspect in Igbo is signalled by tone morphemes, auxiliaries and inflectional suffixes. (p. 454) presents aspect as perfective and imperfective. While imperfective house Aktionsarten and aspectual, aspectual has to do with progressive and habitual. Also, Ndimele (2003) discussing inflectional morphology in Echie (a language in the same group with Igbo) claims that 'the verb root can undergo a series of modifications in order to signal a variety of aspectual or temporal notions'. Ndimele treated such grammatical concepts of factative, progressive, present perfect, pluperfect, the open vowel suffix; the prohibitive suffix and the negative suffix as the aspect that can be expressed in Echie language.

Modals in Emowha

Modals in Emowha could signal a whole range of grammatical meaning from selfishness, obligation, inception, negation to necessity.

Obligation/Compulsion/Certainty

1. Chimezule sé é Snéríí sukulu
PN aux- ovs go-mod school
Chimezule must go to school
2. Chimezule sa á laduríí oro
PN aux-ovs go-Reach-mod home
Chimezule must go home
3. Chimezule só ó gburíí mgbidi
PN aux-ovs jump-mod fence
Chimezule must jump the fence

The foregoing sentences reveal that the aspectual features have three realizations: sé, sá, and so and their OVS markers – é, á and ó which are a replica or harmonize with the vowels of the auxiliary markers, as is the case with Igbo and its many dialects. "The OVS is very common. It is found in a number of constructions such as operatives, hortatives, conditionals, serial verb constructions, negative constructions, embedded classes, etc" (Ndimele 2003, p.48). Also on the constructions, while the aspectual markers are placed immediately before the main verb, the obligation/compulsion (mood) indicative 'rírí' is morphologically inflected on the main verb. The modal indicative 'kwesiri' is sometimes used interchangeably with 'rírí'.

4. I kwesiri o la oro
Isg mod.Inf-go home
You are expected to go home

However, the difference in semantics is that while - rírí posits that the referent is duty-bound or must do a particular thing 'kwesiri' appeals to the referent to see the glaring necessity/need to do something or behave in a particular way. For instance, sentence no.4 claims that the referent is supposed to travel home, but whether he travels or not is another thing. Also consider:

5. Omegu o la oro
 Necessity inf-Go home
 It is necessary to go home

In the context of usage 'Omegu' and 'Kwesiri' have the same meaning of necessity but not as forceful of that of obligation and certainty as used in the dialect.

Process

This indicates an action or event that was started and in process/progress but has not ended.

6. O né é shi wiri
 3sg aux-OVS cook food
 S/he is cooking
7. O na a za oro
 3sg aux-ovs sweep house
 He is sweeping the room
8. O no o mú ɛnu
 3Sg aux-ovs learn trade
 He is learning a trade

The data above show three realizations of the auxiliary Verb (be): né, na and nó and their harmonizing OVS which copy the vowels of the auxiliary (be). The sentences indicate actions or events that are started and taking place at the moment of speaking (imperatives). In the above examples models are not morphologically inflected using suffixes but are got through aspectual features.

Inceptive

Inceptive in Emowha are signaled by the grammatical elements of - dno and zorule. Consider the following sentences.

- 9a. We bile e tne eri
 3Plu aux-ovs dance music
 They are dancing
- b. We bi dnole e tne eri
 3Plu aux-incep-perf ovs inf.-dance
 They have started to dance to the rhythm of music

10. We Zorule ubi
 3Plu go perf farm
 The have started going to the farm

From example no.9b above the inceptive indicative modal is morphological inflected, forming an interfix in the auxiliary verb in no.9a. In no.10, the modal function is a notional one as it is not morphological inflected. Also the verb 'zorule' is direction or movement verb that does not collocate with a noun that doesn't pertain to place.

Benefactive

The benefactive signals that someone benefits from the action of the indicative element. Emowha lect uses the modal- huru to mark benefactive.

11. Ndah snehuru sukulu –
 PN Go-mod. School
 Ndah go to school for yourself/Ndah get educated for yourself.

From the sentence above, Nda was not only encouraged to be educated but there is that sense of selfishness which was smacked off by the suffixing of –huru modal indicative.

Negation

Negation as a verbal element can be used to deny affirmation or proposition. Emowha dialect marks negation in two ways: morphologically by suffixing a negative indicative and the phonological process of alternating tones.

- 12a. Nte sneru ahia
 PN Go-rv(pst) market
 Nte went to the market.

- b. Nte sne ge ahia
 PN Go-mod(neg) market
 Nte didn't go the market

- 13a. Udochi sé é mé a
 PN mod-ovs do it
 Udochi will do it

- b. Udochi sé è mè a
 PN mod-ovs(neg.) do it
 Udochi will not do it

From the foregoing examples, no.12b negated the affixation of 12a by the morphological insertion of the negative modal indicative –ge. In no. 13a and b respectively, the words that constitute the sentences are the same. However, the tone mark makes the difference.

While the affirmative construction in 13a bears high tone, in the negative sentence in 13b, the modal bears high tone, the harmonizing OVS bears low tone to correspond with the verb that also is low toned.

Modals in Emowha can also be used to express probability, possibility and assurances or finality.

14. Uchechi weruike sne
 PN can/may Go
 Uchechi can go

15. O só ó buru
 It may-ovs be-rV
 It may be/it can be

16. O rile wiri
 3sg eat-perf food
 He has eaten food

b. O ri ko le wírí
 3sg eat-mod-perf food
 He has for sure eaten food

From the examples above, sentences 14 and 15 express possibility and probability and sentence 16b that is derived from that of 16a expresses finality and assurance with the modal interfix indicative (ko) attached between the verb and its perfective aspect.

Findings and Discussion

After a careful analysis of data presented in this work, we found the following:

- 1.) Modals in Emowha are morphologically and notionally marked.
- 2.) The OVS and their three realizations are prominent in Emowha.
- 3.) The negative mood can be marked morphologically and phonologically.
- 4.) The inceptive indicative modal-dno always comes as interfix.

Emowha dialect marks modality through morphology and notion. The marking of mood via morphology indicates that the construction has an overt inflection or a bound grammatical element that is attached to the verb as in the case of -riri obligation/compulsion indicative in nos. 1-3, the benefactive/selfish modal indicative-huru in no. 11 and negative indicative -ge in no 12b. The notional mood comes when there is no grammatical bound element indicating modality attached to verb in the sentence, but the Speaker's attitude tends to be that of obligation, permissible, probability, negative, etc, and this is made possible by the interlocking relationship between the tense and aspect in the construction. Further OVS is prominent in Emowha dialect as it continues to reoccur in obligation/ compulsion and process mood. It comes in three realizations and harmonises or copies the vowels of the auxiliary verbs. This process is evident in nos.1,2,3,6,7,8 etc.

Also, this work realised negative mood through the morphological way of suffixing the negative modal indicative –ge to the main verb, as in no.12b and the phonological process of alternating tones in sentences. Consider that in no.13a the auxiliary, OVS and the main verb are marked high tone but in 13b the OVS and the main verb were marked low tone which resulted in negation. Lastly, the inceptive modal indicative –dno functions as interfix attached between the auxiliary and the perfective aspect, as in no.9b.

Conclusion

Having presented and analysed the data, we hereby conclude that the objectives of this paper which is to explore the grammatical features that contribute to making modality and the manifestation of modality in the dialect are relevant. Also, the mood as a verbal category should not be analysed in isolation but with reference to the twin grammatical categories of tense and aspect, as mood that are not realised with overt morphological modal indicative is realized through tense and aspect.

OVS – Open Vowel Suffix
3Plu – Third person plural
Incept – inceptive
Perf – perfective
Mod – mood
Neg – Negation
3sg – Third person Singular
Inf. – Infinitive (to)
Pst – past
V – factitive
Aux – Auxiliary
Asp – Aspect
PN – Proper Noun

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