

Verb Morphology in Kisan

A. K. Kujur, Ph.D. Scholar

Abstract

The empirical evidence of morphological complexities in Kisan language indicates the formations of verb in finiteness, causation and passivization. It highlights some salient properties of Kisan as a language of Dravidian family. A complex variety of inflectional markings in verb morphology provides a subtle identity to the language. Non-Dravidian language changes in Kisan language are the outcomes of its contact situation with the neighbouring languages belonging to Indo-Aryan and Austro-Asiatic language families.

Key words: Verb Morphology, Finiteness, Causation, Passivization

Introduction

The topography makes Kisan (formerly known as kuṅḥa) speech variety very unique and prominent. Geographical location of Kisan in Orissa presents a fascinating linguistic landscape and thus reflects the complex and very rich case of language restructuring. Genealogically the language belongs to Dravidian family. Researchers have worked on the Dravidian spoken in Central and North regions; however, almost no work has been done in Kisan. (Perumalsamy, 2002) records the speech variety in the Linguistic Survey of India as spoken mainly in the districts of Sundergarh and Sambalpur situated in the northwest Orissa. As per the 1991 Census, the number of speakers in India is 162,088 and Orissa alone has 160,704. The number is on the decline as the speakers are moving rapidly to dominant languages like Oriya and Hindi. Kisan will no doubt be gradually used as the second language in the near future.

The present article attempts to present the morphological intricacies in finites, non-finites, causation, and passive structures in Kisan. The detail account of the verb forms contributes in the development of the overall knowledge system that the native-speaker of Kisan

possesses. We are able to excavate the hidden linguistic rules of Kisan language which would further help to find the missing link with aboriginals of with other social groups in the area.

Methodology

The language use is limited to social gathering and mode of communication among elder people. As a result, language finds narrow place among younger generation. The work is done based on the tools used in traditionally descriptive linguistics. The study on Kisan language is undertaken with extensive interactions among the speakers, asking informants to gather and validate the data. Some of the regional libraries are visited to find out any written book, articles or any relevant data. Leaders (locally known as *Raja Dewans*) of Kisan tribe are approached for elicitation of the data because they are traditionally considered to be having every bit of knowledge about Kisan. Given the sociolinguistic situation of Kisan, it is really hard to find the language which is spoken without any borrowed words or borrowed minimally. It is mostly surrounded by the languages belonging to Austro-Asiatic and Indo-Aryan language families. This adds to the problems of describing a language scientifically.

Finiteness

Though the difference between finite and non-finite forms is one of the most complex domains of grammatical description however Traditional Grammarians have divided verb forms into two major classes such as finite forms which include indicative, subjunctive, optative and imperative and non-finite forms are infinitives, participles and gerunds. This distinction is based on two main characteristics: (a) the verbs ability to appear as the main verb of a clause and (b) the agreement of verb forms with other constituents of a clause. These are the kind of verbs which limit their agreement with the available arguments in a sentence. They are restricted by the inflections for conjugations. A finite verb form contains only suffixes in Kisan expressing a large variety of meanings. It is consisted of three major constituents such as stem + tense/aspect/mood + pronominal suffix and the last constituent having an agreement with the subject noun phrase in person, number and gender. (Steever, 1988) defines finiteness¹ as a grammatical category and it

¹ The Serial Verb Formation in the Dravidian languages by Sanford B. Steever highlights that Finiteness is considered as grammatical property. pp 2.

conjugates verbs with NPs in a sentence by the help of morphological inflections of tense, aspect and mood.

Structure of Finite Verb Forms

A finite verb form consists of a verb stem followed by one or more suffixes. Most finite verb forms are either perfective or imperfective. Perfective and imperfective forms differ in meaning and have a different inflection, a different stem, or both. Finiteness consists of the ability to license structural case in subject position and the possible presence of agreement marking on the verb. Finiteness is thus a purely syntactic property.

Tense in non-past in Kisan is generally marked by /-d-/ or /-n-/ in present tense and /-ɔ/ in future tense. The verbs in past tense are marked by /-k-/ , /-c-/ , or /-a/ . For examples:

1a. nm ammu hap-d-ae.
you-2MS-NOM water-ACC drink-PRES-2MS
'We ate rice.'

1b. hub-Rar j^hara hap-n-ae.
they-3NPI-NOM wine-ACC drink-PRES-3NPI
'We ate rice.'

1c. em manDɪ on-k-am.
we-1MPI-NOM rice-ACC eat-PST-1MPI
'We ate rice.'

In examples (1a, b & c), the grammatical morphemes such as /-d-ae/, /-n-ae/ and /-k-am/ are inflected to the verb roots /hap/ 'drink' and /on/ 'eat' respectively to show the conjugation with subject NPs 'You', 'They' and 'We'. The verb ending grammatical morpheme possesses an ability to change the form of finite verb. The morpheme /-dae/ can agree only with the first person masculine singular in the present tense. It does not have any scope of agreement with any other subject or object NPs in a sentence and thus, we can say these verbs are completely finite in terms of agreement.

Indicative Form of Finite Verbs

Kisan language has pronominal inflections in the verb ends for 1st person and 3rd person singular; however, for 2nd person and 3rd person plural, these are affixed with modification. These inflections are used to mark the person and number of subject NPs.

In the present tense, markers for gender and tense are manifested through a set of morphemes for singular forms such as /-dan/, /-dar/ and /-das/ for masculine, /-en/, /dɪ-/ and /i/ for feminine and /-dam/ or /-nar/ for plural depending on different persons. Gender and tense are marked to show finiteness of the verbs through morphemes /-kan/, /-kae/ and /-ias/ for masculine and /-ian/, /-ki/, /-iad/ for feminine in the past tense. For examples:

2a. en tət^ha hend-k-an.
i-1MS-NOM mangoes-ACC buy-PST-1MS
'I bought mangoes.'

2b. en tət^ha hend-i-an.
i-1FS-NOM mangoes-ACC buy-PST-1FS
'I (*Male*) bought mangoes.'

2c. nin tət^ha hend-k-i.
i-1FS-NOM mangoes-ACC buy-PST-1FS
'I (*Female*) bought mangoes.'

The sentences (2a), (2b) and (2c) are in simple past; however, the markers differ in accordance with the person, number and gender they refer to. This kind of rigidity affirms the finiteness of the Kisan verbs in the past tense.

In the future tense, finite verbs have a similar temporal inflection /-ɔ-/ for both masculine and feminine genders in the 1st person unlike in present and past tenses. For example:

3a. en bar-ɔ-n.
i-1NS-NOM buy-FUT-1NS
'I will come.'

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A. K. Kujur, Ph.D. Scholar
Verb Morphology in Kisan

The example (3a) does not differentiate between genders provided it is addressed by a male speaker; however, verb inflection in 2nd person would be different had it been spoken by a female speaker. The morpheme /-ɔ-/ explicitly marks the future tense and followed by the pronominal inflections.

Subjunctive Form of Finite Verbs

In order to express a wish or a condition we use subjunctive mood. The verbs used here do show agreement with the intended subjects. For examples:

4a. em-hae-d inna bar-ɔ-r.
i-POSS wife-3FS-NOM today come-FUT-3FS
'My wife will come today.' (Addressed by husband)

4b. em-hae-s inna bar-ɔ-r.
i-POSS husband-3MS-NOM today come-FUT-3MS
'My wife will come today.' (Addressed by wife)

In the third person singular, we usually have /bar-ɔ-s/ and /bar-ɔ-d/ 'Come' for masculine and feminine respectively; however, they take the third person plural form to show a sense of honor.

Imperative Form of Finite Verbs

The verb forms under imperative mood show the verb agreement with the subject NPs. For examples:

5a. nala isan.
dance-PRES-2MS here-LOC
'Dance here.'

5b. nalk^hu kamu.
work-ACC do-PRES-2FS
'Do the work.'

The above examples exhibit the formation of imperative sentences the suffixing /-a/ for masculine and all plural forms as in (5a) and /-u/ as in (5b) for feminine singular form. The main verbs agree with the covert Subject NPs in person, number and gender.

Non-Finite Verb

The very notion ‘non-finite verb-form’ implies that these are forms that lack (finite) tense/mood and person inflection, but do have at least some nominal inflectional properties. The participles have full nominal inflection in number, case, and possessive. Because they are basic verbs, they also inflect for voice.

It is free from finites but not as free as infinitives. Aspect is the only feature that is in non-finite verbs. It is devoid of tense and agreement. In English, auxiliary verbs carry the tense, person, number and gender leaving the main verbs in the sentence without any agreement with the subject NPs.

Infinitives

The infinitive verbs lack tense, aspect and mood (TAM) and person, number and gender (PNG) and so do not reveal anything about the agent of the verb activity. There are unlimited verbs and non-restricted. They are insensitive in selecting clauses and remain unchanged. These are formed by adding /-a/ ‘to’ to the verb root form such as /bec-a/, ‘to play’; /paR^h-a/, ‘to study’; /bar-a/, ‘to come’; /em-a/, ‘to bathe’; /meh-a/, ‘to call’.

- 6a. kukko-s bec-a ka-al-d-as.
boy-3MS-NOM play-INF go-IMPERF-PRES-3MS
‘Boy is going to play.’

In example (6a), the infinitive /bec-a/ ‘to play’ does not conjugate with any constituent in the sentence as it does not have TAM or PNG for conjugation. “To play” says nothing about agent of the action nor shows any reference to time of action. The verb roots /ka/ ‘go’; /bed/ ‘want’ and /bar/ ‘come’ are also known as bare infinitives as they do not carry any kind of inflections for verb agreement.

Gerund

It functions as the verb noun. It refers to the action of the verb and has potential to take the place of accusative form. It applies the suffix /-a/ to the root of the verb to construct gerund.

- 7a. hu-sin genda beca-ge meh-k-an.
he-ACC hockey play-GER call-PST-3MS
'I called him for playing hockey.'

The postposition /ge/ indicates a gerund in (7a). It is the main differentiating factor between gerund and infinitival constructions. It helps the verb form to get gerundial impact in the sentence.

Participle

It plays the role of an adjective and qualifies nouns. Its functions are divided into present participle which is also called imperfect participle and past participle also known as perfect participle. Apart from aspect, participles do not possess any other grammatical inflections.

Present Participle

- 8a. sita-d paR^h-na kukae
Sita-3FS-NOM study-PRES-PART girl
'Sita is a studying girl.' (studious girl)

Past Participle

- 8b. hend-ka bohi eŋ-gan ci-a
buy-PST-PART book-DAT i-ACC give-IMP
'Give the bought book to me.' (Book that is bought.)

Nonfinite verb /paR^h-na/ 'studying' (8a) sentence functions as an adjective to qualify the noun 'girl'. It clearly marks the imperfect aspect in the present participle. On the other hand, /hend-ka/ 'bought' (8b) has perfect aspect. It is a past participle. All these morphemes do not have any potential to mark gender and number in the aforementioned sentences.

Passivization

The analysis of voice by the traditional grammarians was based on affectedness and this has been revived by (Klaiman, 1991). The assumption is that the subject does not control the

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A. K. Kujur, Ph.D. Scholar
Verb Morphology in Kisan

action but is affected by it. The passive voice is employed as the strategy for handling situation in which objects of the verb action are treated as the subjects and so the subject is viewed as the endpoint and not the initiator of the verb segment (Croft, 1991). Because the initiator of the verb predicate can never be direct object in the same clause as per the clausal order hypothesis.

Kisan stands out as a unique speech variety for having the passive through suffix -r- in Dravidian languages. This is in opposition to earlier assumption that passive voice is alien to the Dravidian language family. This is in contrary to the remarks made by (Caldwell, 1956) “...None of the Dravidian dialects possesses any passive particle or suffix or any means of expressing passivity by direct inflectional changes...”

- 9a. paɪsa-d eps-r-i-d
money-3NS-NOM lose-PASS-PRES-3FS
'Money is lost.'
- 9b. mannu-d k^hat-r-a-d
tree-3NS-NOM fall-PASS-PST-3FS
'Tree fell down.'

The passive verbs in (9a & b) are formed through an insertion of consonant /-r-/ between the root and the inflectional end of the active voice. Tense in passive sentences is morphologically marked differently as /-i-/ for present and /-a-/ for past. The passive constructions are without an overt agent irrespective of their tenses. The passive verbs agree with the person, number and gender of the derived subjects. In English these verbs would be in past participle and followed by the preposition 'by' in the passive sentences.

Causativisation

Causative verb is a verb which creates the process of the causation in the sentence increasing the number of the arguments. It indicates an action that the subject does not directly perform, but rather causes to happen, perhaps by causing some other agent to perform the action. A causative is a linguistic expression that contains in semantic/logical structure a predicate of cause, one argument of which is a predicate expressing an effect (Paine, 1997).

Patterns of Forming Causative Verbs

There is a definite process of causativisation through which intransitive or transitive verbs are transformed into causative verbs with the suffix of /-ta/ to the base form of the verbs.

The basic patterns of formation from intransitive to causative verbs could be as:

Table-1a

Intransitives	Causatives
/co-na/ 'to rise'	/co-ta-na/ 'to cause someone to rise'
/handr-na/ 'to sleep'	/handra-ta-na/ 'to cause someone to sleep'
/er-na/ 'to see'	/er-ta-na/ 'to make someone see'
/teŋ-na/ 'to say'	/teŋ-ta-na/ 'to make someone say'
/alk ^h -na/ 'to laugh'	/alk ^h -ta-na/ 'to cause someone to laugh'

The process of causation from intransitives to causatives is not regular as some of the intransitives cannot be changed into causatives; verbs like /bar-na/ 'to come', /ka-na/ 'to go' etc. The inflectional suffix /-ta-/ is used is to derive causative verbs from both intransitive and intransitive verbs.

Table-1b

Transitives	Causatives
/haɽ-na/ 'to steal'	/haɽ-ta-na/ 'to help someone to steal'
/hap-na/ 'to drink'	/hap-ta-na/ 'to cause someone to drink'
/moh-na/ 'to eat'	/moh-ta-na/ 'to cause someone to eat'
/d ^h ar-na/ 'to catch'	/d ^h ar-ta-na/ 'to ask someone to catch'
/modra-na/ 'to forget'	/modra-ta-na/ 'to cause someone to forget'

Conclusion

The inflections used in Kisan verb morphology point out some of the features of agglutinative language. Their occurrence may not be follow a uniform pattern across languages

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A. K. Kujur, Ph.D. Scholar
Verb Morphology in Kisan

but resembles in most of the languages of Dravidian family. An attempt has been made to analyse the different set of inflections in the formation of verb structures in the language. Kisan language substantially emphasizes on the gender-based inflections.

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A. K. Kujur, Ph.D. Scholar
Department of Linguistics
Berhampur University
Ganjam-760007
Odisha
India
akk.ling@buodisha.edu.in

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