Aspect marking in Dime

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Abstract

The main distinction of aspect in Dime is between -i perfective marker and imperfective marking which is expressed by grammaticalized forms of Copula. Primary aspect with imperfective marking extra distinctions can be made through reduplication. Future is expressed by an imperfective verb form.
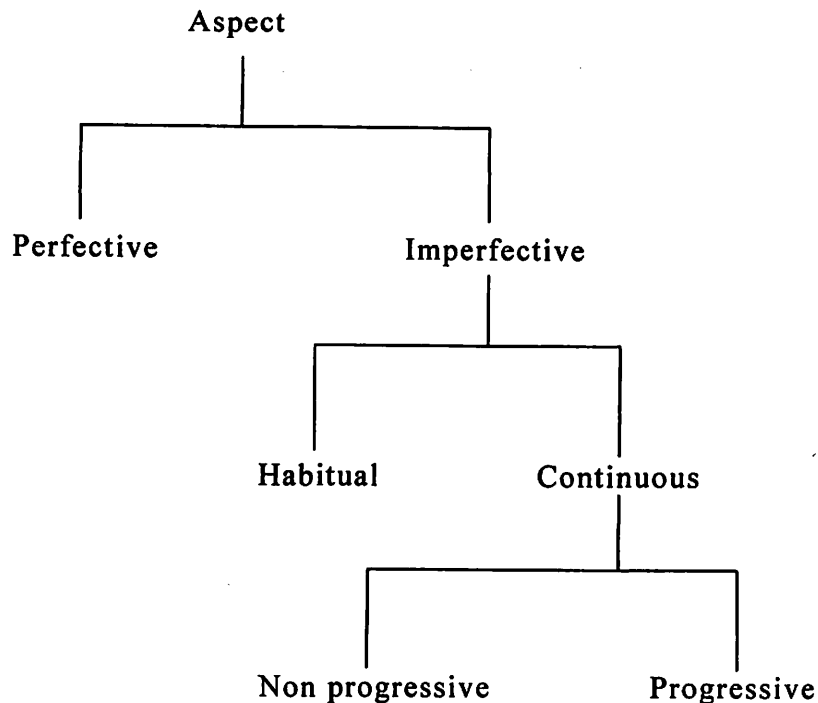
Interestingly properties of the verbal system are that no tense/aspect distinctions can be made in negative forms. Another interesting feature is that interrogative verb forms are reduced and as a consequence no person is marked on these forms. Otherwise person marking distinguishes between first person and the rest gender nor numbers are expressed.

1 Introduction

Dime is an endangered Omotic language which is spoken in the southern region of Ethiopia by a population of 5,400 (1994 census). The Dime language is not well documented. It is the least studied language among the south Omotic groups. The main source of information concerning Dime is the work of Fleming (1990). The Dime communities are permanent settlers and horticulturalists. There are two mutually intelligible dialects in Dime, *Us'a* and *Gerfa*. Data in this paper are mainly from the *Us'a* dialect.

This paper is a part of my PhD dissertation which is a description of Dime grammar. In this presentation we mainly focused on aspect marking in the language. We describe aspect system of Dime based on Comrie (1976) and Givon (1984). According to them the most typical

cross-linguistic aspectual opposition is the Perfective: Imperfective one. We used Comrie (1976: 25) classification of perfective/imperfective aspect opposition which is useful for the analysis of Dime data:

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                        Aspect
                          |
          _____|_____
         |                                 |
     Perfective                       Imperfective
                                           |
                              _____|_____
                             |                           |
                          Habitual                   Continuous
                                                          |
                                          _____|_____
                                         |                                 |
                                   Non progressive                   Progressive
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We have general remarks on the major finding of this presentation. The question whether a language has a tense or an aspect marking system is a poorly treated question in most Omotic languages. We assume that Dime has an aspectual marking system. The main distinction of aspect marking is between -i perfective marker and imperfective marking by grammaticalized forms of Copula. Extra distinctions of aspect are made through reduplication. Future is expressed by an imperfective verb form.

Interestingly properties of the verbal system are that no tense / aspect distinctions can be made in negative forms. Another interesting feature is that interrogative verb forms are reduced and as a consequence no person is marked on these forms. Otherwise person marking distinguishes between first person and the rest gender nor are numbers expressed.

2 Aspectual marking: Overview

Using suffixation and reduplication processes aspect and sometimes tense is expressed. In Dime the first person is distinguished from other

persons as demonstrated in the table below except for the progressive past.

Person	1	others
Imperfective	ʔad-déét	ʔad-déén
Progressive (prsent)	ʔad-ʔad-déét	ʔad-ʔad-déén
Progressive (past)	ʔad-ʔad-déén-ká	ʔad-ʔad-déén-ká
Perfective	ʔad-i-t	ʔad-i-n
Far Past	ʔad-ʔad-i-t	ʔad-ʔad-i-n

The major morphologically-coded distinction in Dime aspect system is between the perfective, which covers the completed (past), and imperfective, which covers the habitual, progressive, and non progressive (present/future). Thus, in the language there is an aspectual opposition between Perfective and Imperfective. We will discuss each in the following section:

2.1 Imperfective-*déé*

The imperfective aspect is marked by -déé- and -tub. The morpheme -déé- is used for all persons in verbal constructions. The morpheme -tub is used only in non-verbal clauses and as alternative for -déé for first person singular and plural subject in verbal constructions. -déé- is followed by the person markers -n or -t. The imperfective marker -déé- may have variant forms -t'éé, -téé, -éé due to consonant co-occurrence restrictions such as voicing, glottalization and consonant sequence restriction. The suffix -déé of the imperfective seems to have originated from the existential verb déén. The imperfective aspect indicates present, habitual and future.

2.1.1 Habitual

The habitual construction is expressed by using the imperfective marker -déé following the main verbs and using the word bindí 'always' which precedes the object.

Examples:

1. ná   bindí   naʁ-ó   t'ul-déé-n
    3SM.SUBJ   always   river-LOC swim-IPF-3
    'She always swims in the river'

2. nú   bindí   sul-im   ʔist-éé-n
    3SM.SUBJ   always   enjera-ACC eat-IPF-3
    'She always eats enjera'

3. ʔaté   bindí   naʁ-im   wuč'-déé-t
    1S.SUBJ   always   water   drink-IPF-1
    'I always drink water'

2.1.2 Non progressive (present / future)

Present or future construction is also marked by imperfective aspect. The cross-linguistic evidence suggests that the imperfective aspect often covers the present and future (cf. Givon 1984: 306). The imperfective form consists of the basic verb, the imperfective morpheme and the person marker. The paradigm of the verb ʔádi 'come' is shown below:

4.

ʔaté	ʔád-déé-t	'I will come / I come'
ʔaté	ʔád-tub	'I will come / I come'
wótu	ʔád-déé-t	'We will come / we come'
wótu	ʔád-tub	'We will come / we come'
yáay	ʔád-déé-n	'You will come / you come.'
yese	ʔád-déé-n	'You (PL) will come / you come'
nú	ʔád-déé-n	'He will come / he comes'
ná	ʔád-déé-n	'She will come / she comes'
kété	ʔád-déé-n	'They will come / they come'

As can be seen from the above examples, the verb ʔád 'come' is followed by the aspect marker -dée and it is also followed by the person marker -t or -n. In addition, the suffix -tub as in 6b is used to indicate the future in

verbal constructions, especially for the first person as a free variation with déén.

5. Paté   naʁ-ó   t'ul-déé-t
    1S.SUBJ   river-in swim-IPF-1
    'I swim in a river'

6a. Paté   naʁ-ó   t'ul-déé-t
    1S.SUBJ   river-LOC swim-IPF-1
    'I will swim in a river'

6b. Paté   naʁ-ó   t'ul-tub
    1S.SUBJ   river-LOC swim-IPF-1
    'I will swim in a river'

2.1.3 Progressive

To express the progressive aspect, Dime uses partial or full reduplication of the verb stem. The reduplicated stem is marked with the imperfective aspect. Consider the following progressive construction:

7. Paté   naʁ-ó   t'ul-t'ul-déé-t
    1S.SUBJ   river-LOC   RDP-swim-IPF-1
    'I am swimming in a river'

8. nú   sol-im   Pits-i-Pist-éé-n
    3SM.SUBJ   enjera-ACC RDP-eat-IPF-3
    'He is eating enjera'

9. kéte   Péh-ó   tiŋ-tiŋ-déé-n
    3PL.SUBJ   house-LOC   RDP-go-IPF-3
    'They are going home'

10. ná   la-laχt'-één
    3SF.SUBJ   RDP-die-IPF-3
    'She is dying'

The progressive aspect very commonly exhibits reduplication especially in disyllabic stems. Reduplication to express progressive aspect has two patterns. In one type the entire root is reduplicated as in 8 and 9, and in the other reduplication affects only the first CV sequence as in 10.

The progressive forms of the verb tiŋ 'go' for various subjects are shown below:

11.

ʔaté	tiŋ-tiŋ-déé-t	'I am going'
wótú	tiŋ-tiŋ-déé-t	'We are going'
yaay	tiŋ-tiŋ-déé-n	'You are going.'
yese	tiŋ-tiŋ-déé-n	'You are going'
nú	tiŋ-tiŋ-déé-n	'He is going'
ná	tiŋ-tiŋ-déé-n	'She is going'
kété	tiŋ-tiŋ-déé-n	'They are going'

If the reduplication of the verb stem in the above example is omitted, the construction expresses the future/present tense. For instance, ná tiŋ-déé-n 'she will go' is a future construction. Verb stem reduplication to express aspect is also observed in other Omotic languages, for instance, it is reported that Koorete, one of the Omotic languages in the Ometo cluster, has a verb paradigm in which the verb root is reduplicated to mark a different aspect (Azeb 1994: 11).

The copula morpheme déén-ká is used to express a past continuous action of the main verb. The progressive/continuous past construction is expressed by the reduplication of the verb followed by the copula déén and followed by the suffix -ká. The verbs are not inflected for person. Although the subject changes, the verb forms remain the same as illustrated in 12:

12.

ʔaté	t'ult'ul	déén-ká	'I was swimming'
wótu	t'ult'ul	déén-ká	'We were swimming'

yáay	t'ult'ul	déén-ká	'You were swimming.'
yese	t'ult'ul	déén-ká	'You were swimming'
nú	t'ult'ul	déén-ká	'He was swimming'
ná	t'ult'ul	déén-ká	'She was swimming'
kété	t'ult'ul	déén-ká	'They were swimming'

The function of the copula **déén** is extended to the function of aspect marker with some grammaticalization process. Thus, the copula marker plays an important role in marking aspect distinction in main verbs.

13a. **níts**   **déén**
child-DEF   exist
'There is a child'

13b. **ʔis-ko**   **níts**   **ʔah-ob**   **déén**
me-GEN   child   good-M   exist
'I have a good child'

As we observed from the above examples the copula **déén** expresses the locative and possessive constructions. It is inflected for person only where it suffixing to main verbs to mark aspect.

2.2 Perfective -*i*

The perfective aspect is mainly used to refer to completed actions. It is marked by the morpheme -**i**. The actual time difference between the completion of the action/event and the utterance affects the form of the verb. If the completion of an event was followed by a long duration, then the verb is fully or partially reduplicated. The following examples illustrate the perfective construction.

14. **nú**   **ʔini**   **sutsó**   **ʔád-i-n**
3MS.SUBJ   this   morning   come-PF-3
'He came this morning'

15. wetú   ʔád-i-n

     3PL.SUBJ   RDP-come-PF-3

     'We had come'

16. ʔatí   báys-im   dip   bós-i-t

     1S.SUBJ   food-ACC   just   finish-PF-1

     'I just finished the food'

17a. yá   nááʁi   ʔád-i-n

      2S.SUBJ   yesterday   come-PF-2

      'You came yesterday'

As can be seen from the above examples, the perfective morpheme -i- is followed by either the 2/3.SUBJ marker -n or the 1.SUBJ marker -t. The inflected forms for the personal paradigm with the verb ʔádi 'come' are shown in the following paradigm:

17b.

ʔaté	ʔád-i-t	'I came'
wótú	ʔád-i-t	'We came'
yáay	ʔád-i-n	'You came.'
yesé	ʔád-i-n	'You came'
nú	ʔád-i-n	'He came'
ná	ʔád-i-n	'She came'
kété	ʔád-i-n	'They came'

2.3 Far past

The remote past is expressed by reduplication of the verb stem and the addition of the perfective morpheme, as shown in (18a) and (18b).

18a. ʔaté   naʁ-ís-o   t'ul-t'ul-i-t
     1S.SUBJ   river-DEF-LOC RDP-swim-PF-1
     'I swam in the river (a long time ago)'

18b. nú   ʔád-ʔád-i-n
     3MS.SUBJ   RDP-come-PF-3
     'He had come long ago'

Consider the following examples that are demonstrated using the verb ʔád 'come' with different subjects.

18c.

ʔaté	ʔád ʔád-i-t	'I came long ago'
wótú	ʔád ʔád-i-t	'We came long ago'
yáay	ʔád ʔád-i-n	'You came long ago.'
yesé	ʔád ʔád-i-n	'You came long ago'
nú	ʔád ʔád-i-n	'He came long ago'
ná	ʔád ʔád-i-n	'She came long ago'
kété	ʔád ʔád-i-n	'They came long ago'

I observed that in positive constructions copula verbs and reduplication have an important role in expressing different aspectual meanings of the language, while in negative constructions tense or aspect is not marked.

2.4 Aspect and Negation

The verb morphology of Dime does not distinguish perfective-imperfective aspect in negative constructions. The verb shows only the negation marker /-káy/. This distinction seems neutral as shown below:

19. ná   ʔiní   ʔad-káy
    3FS.SUBJ   today   come-NEG
    'She does not come today'

20. ná   gaɣim   ʔad-káy
    3FS.SUBJ   tomorrow   come-NEG
    'She will not come tomorrow'

21. ná   nááɣi   ʔad-káy
    3FS.SUBJ   yesterday come-NEG
    'She didn't come yesterday'

22. wótu   gáɣim   wund'-k'áy
    1P.SUBJ   tomorrow   work-NEG
    'We will not work tomorrow' (as a rule)

The negative forms of the verb tíŋ 'go' in (23) show that the k of the negative marker changes to k' after ŋ.

23.

ʔaté	tiŋ-k'áy	'I do / will / did not go'
wótu	tiŋ-k'áy	'We do / will / did not go'
yáay	tiŋ-k'áy	'You do / will / did not go.'
yese	tiŋ-k'áy	'You do / will / did not go'
nú	tiŋ-k'áy	'He does / will / did not go'
ná	tiŋ-k'áy	'She does / will / did not go'
kété	tiŋ-k'áy	'They do /will / did not go'

The inflection of verbal suffixes: Summary

Singular Person	Verb suffix
1S / PL	-déé-t, -tub, -i-t, -ká / káy
2S / PL, 3S / PL	-déén, -i-n, -ká / káy

Subject agreement in Dime indicates only person which is in declarative sentence, distinguishes first person from second and third persons, while in

affirmative interrogatives indicates only person second person is distinguished from first and third persons

2.5 Aspect and Interrogatives

The forms of the perfective and imperfective polar interrogative correspond to their affirmative counterparts except for the deletion of the person marker and imposed intonation. On the other hand, the second person singular and plural interrogative construction use the morpheme -á as interrogative marker irrespective of aspects of the sentence as in (25b). Consider the following examples:

24a. mánte   sólu-s-im   k'om-déé-n
      mánte   enjera-DEF-ACC bake-IPF-3
      'Mánte bakes the enjera'

24b. mánte   sólu-s-im   k'omk'om-déé
      mánte   enjera-DEF-ACC RDP-bake-IPF:Q
      'Is Mánte baking the injera?'

25a. yáayí   sólu-s-im   k'om-déén
      2S.SUBJ   enjera-DEF-ACC bake-IPF-2
      'You will bake the enjera'

25b. yáayí   sólu-s-im   k'om-á
      2S.SUBJ   enjera-DEF-ACC bake-Q
      'Will you bake the enjera?'

26a. wotú   sólu-s-im   k'om-déé-t
      1PL.SUBJ   enjera-DEF-ACC bake-IPF-1
      'We will bake the enjera'

26b. wotú   sólu-s-im   k'om-déé
      1PL.SUBJ   enjera-DEF-ACC bake-IPF:Q
      'Shall we bake the enjera'

27a. mánte   sólu-s-im   k'om-i-n
     mánte   enjera-DEF-ACC   bake-PF-3
     'Mánte baked the enjera?'

27b. mánte   sólu-s-im   k'om-í
     mánte   enjera-DEF-ACC   bake-PF:Q
     'Did mánte bake the enjera?'

In the following paradigms as in (28a) and 28b) the imperfective / perfective declarative and imperfective / perfective interrogative can be compared which clearly demonstrates the major distinctions between interrogative and declarative constructions is the absence of person marker -n or -t in the interrogative structures.

28a.   **Imperfective declarative, Imperfective interrogative**

ʔaté	ʔad-déé-t	'I will come.'
ʔaté	ʔad-déé-	'Shall I come?'
wótu	ʔad-déé-t	'We will come.'
wótu	ʔad-déé-	'Shall we come?'
nú	ʔad-déé-n	'He will come.'
nú	ʔad-déé-	'Will he come?'
ná	ʔad-déé-n	'She will come'
ná	ʔad-déé-	'Will she come?'
kété	ʔad-déé-n	'They will come.'
kété	ʔad-déé-	'Will they come?'
yá	ʔad-déé-n	'You will come.'
yá	ʔad-déé-y-áá	'Will you (S) come?'
yesé	ʔad-déé-n	'You will come.'
yesé	ʔad-déé-y-áá	'Will you (PL) come?'

28b. Perfective declarative, Perfective interrogative

ʔaté	ʔad-i-t	'I came.'
ʔaté	ʔad-í	'Did I come?'
wótu	ʔad-i-t	'We came.'
wótu	ʔad-í	'Did we come?'
nú	ʔad-i-n	'He came.'
nú	ʔad-í	'Did he come?'
ná	ʔad-i-n	'She came.'
ná	ʔad-í	'Did she come?'
kété	ʔad-i-n	'They came.'
kété	ʔad-í	'Did they come?
yá	ʔad-i-n	'You (S) came.'
yá	ʔad-áá	'Did you (S) come?'
yesé	ʔad-i-n	'You (PL) came.'
yesé	ʔad-áá	'Did you (PL) come?'

Dime interrogative verbs drop the final person marking suffix -n or -t in both perfective and imperfective form. In both perfective and imperfective form also the suffix -áá is an interrogative marker following interrogative verbs by substituting the second person marker.

Conclusion

The major morphologically-coded distinction in Dime aspect system is between the perfective, which covers the completed (past), and imperfective, which covers the habitual, progressive, and non progressive (present / future). Thus, in the language there is an aspectual opposition between perfective and imperfective. Both the perfective and imperfective aspect markers are suffixed to the main verb followed by the person marker. In progressive aspect there is present and past distinction. The past progressive marker does not inflect for person. The completed perfective aspect has a distinction for short and long ago completed action or events.

Even though aspect is a dominate feature in Dime morphology, we observed that the language has also use some strategy to express past action using a process of reduplication and suffixation of the morpheme déén-ká to the verb in addition to aspect marker.

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