

Aspect and tense in Katu of the Lao P.D.R.

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Katu is a Mon-Khmer language spoken by approximately 37,000 people in Vietnam and by 15,000 in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao P.D.R.). In Vietnam the Katu live in Quang Nam and Thua Thien provinces. In the Lao P.D.R. they are across the border from Quang Nam mainly in Kalum district in Xe Kong province, as well as in Salavan province. I have already described Katu affixes in the Lao P.D.R. in Mon-Khmer Studies Vol. 28. Now I wish to describe another feature of these affixes, namely the aspect markers. These were not found in Katu in Vietnam (hereafter referred to as Katu-VN.) There are both perfective and imperfective aspect markers, which are further distinguished for aspect. Perfective aspect markers can express both past completive and present completive aspect, while imperfective aspect markers express continuative aspect. An interesting feature is that nouns as well as verbs can have past and present completive aspect markers.

1. Perfective aspect markers on verbs

Perfective aspect markers are frequently used on verbs. They can further be divided into past completive aspect and present completive aspect. The past completive aspect is mainly marked by *sar* prefix, and less frequently by *yar*; *sar* occurs with both transitive and stative verbs.

1A. Past completive aspect

Examples of *sar* :

yoh	'to spill'	saryoh	'already spilled'
lo	'to ruin'	sarlo	'already ruined, destroyed (words etc.)'
yoh	'to peck'	saryoh	'already pecked'
yeel	'to argue'	saryeel	'already argued'
kuul	'to wrap around'	sarkuul	'already wrapped around'
teek	'to tear'	sarteek	'already torn'
leej	'to mourn'	sarleej	'already mourned'
klɔɔc	'to finish'	sarklɔɔc	'already finished (work, life)'
leh	'to free'	sarleh	'already freed'

Stative verbs :

kol	sarkol	'to be already twisted'
li	sarli	'to be even'

Examples of *yar* :

yiiis	'to collect sap'	yaryiis	'already collected sap'
yiiik	'to hoe'	yaryiik	'already hoed'
yiiin	'to conceal'	yaryiin	'already hid(talk)'
yiiŋ	'to hang up'	yaryiŋ	'already hung up'
yiiil	'to look for fish'	yaryiil	'already looked for fish'

An example of a stative verb is :

yəət	'to be undecided'	yaryəət	'already undecided'
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1B. Present completive aspect

Perfective aspect markers on verbs may express present completive aspect by the use of prefixes. The most frequently used is *tar*, while *ya* is used less frequently. Many verbs which can occur with *tar* can also occur with *sar*, and the same verbs which occur with *ya*, can also occur with *yar*.

Examples of *tar* :

bil	'to lose'	tarbil	'lost now'
phoc	'to pull'	tarphoc	'pulled out now'
leeng	'to mourn'	tarleeng	'mourned now'
?boon	'to acquire'	tar?boon	'acquired now'
vʏt	'to get rid of'	tarvʏt	'got rid of now'
dos	'to stub'	tardos	'stubbed now'
phɔ?	'to go one'	tarphɔ?	'went one after the other'

Examples of *ya* :

yiiŋ	'to hang up'	yayiiŋ	'hung up now'
yiiik	'to hoe'	yayiiik	'hoed now'
yiiir	'to drip'	yayiiir	'dripped now'
yçh	'to peck'	yayçh	'pecked now'
yiiil	'to suck'	yayiiil	'sucked now'
yɸn	'to sway'	yayɸn	'swayed, swung now'
yak	'to weave'	yayak	'woven now'
yuul	'to hang'	yayuul	'hung now'

2. Imperfective aspect markers on verbs

These are expressed by the use of a prefix which comprises an initial consonant which matches the initial consonant of the verb it occurs with and the vowel *a* or *i*. The prefixes include: *a*, *ba*, *bi*, *ca*, *ka*, *la*, *ma*, *na*, *ra*, *ri*, *si*, *ta*, *va*, *ya*.

Examples :

aʔeeʔ	'to ask many times'
bibuah	'to keep on grumbling'
babil	'to keep losing'
caca	'to keep on eating'
kakah	'to keep on looking'
mamɔɔc	'to keep hunting'
mamong	'to continue living'
nanyɽl	'to keep singing(women)'
papi	'to continually speak'
rareet	'to be continually tired'
rareet	'to boil continually'
riram	'to keep dancing'
saset	'to speak a lot on the same subject'
sisɔɔt	'to harvest rice for many days'
tatak	'to continue to work'
tatiik	'to continually dig for food(animal)'
vava	'to echo many times'
vavak	'to dip something many times'
vavyɽc	'to continue to go'
yayuul	'to keep hanging don'
yayɔh	'to peck continually'
yayɽn	'to sway, swing continually'

3. Completive aspect markers on nouns

Katu-Lao also has past and present completive aspect markers on nouns. This is not surprising since verbaliser prefixes occur on nouns in Katu, as described in Costello (1998). The prefixed noun has the meaning of being involved in an action as the subject, object, or instrument.

3A. Past completive aspect

This is marked by the prefixes *ar* and *sar*, *sar* being the most frequently used. Many of the verbs which occur with *tar* present completive aspect, also occur with *sar* past completive aspect.

Examples of *sar* :

neh	sarneh	'a hammer (already used)'
naac	sarnaac	'a whip (already used)'
nhoh	sarnoh	'muntjak deer (already dead)'
niih	sarniih	'stick for beating drum, gong (already used)'
miat	sarmiat	'a ring (already worn)'
laang	sarlaang	'shoulder (already dead)'
kyu?	sarkyu?	'scissors (already used)'
klaah	sarklaah	'sheet, layer (already made)'
boh	sarboh	'beak of bird (already dead)'
rung	sarrung	'jail (already used)'
ngyu	sarngyu	'a chair (already made)'

Examples of *ar* :

aap	araap	'jaw (already dead)'
ngyl	arngyl	'tree stump (already hewn)'
nang	arnang	'sorcery (already blown)'
kuuh	arkuuh	'stony ground (already in place)'

3B. Present completive aspect

This aspect also occurs with nouns and is marked by the prefixes *tar* and *kar*. The prefix gives the meaning to a noun of "something which has been involved in an action recently". Many of the nouns which occur with *sar*, can also occur with *tar*.

Examples of *tar* :

neh	tarneh	'hammer (while using it)'
nhoh	tarnhoh	'muntjak deer (recently killed)'
niih	tarniih	'stick for beating drum, gong (recently used)'
miat	tarmiat	'a ring (being worn)'
poh	tarphoh	'meat from animal's back (recently cut)'
kal	tarkal	'section (recently cut)'
kyu?	tarkyu?	'scissors (recently used)'
nu	tarnu	'wedding feast (recently held)'
cyn	tar cyn	'ritual between 2 villages (recently held)'
le	tarle	'drum (recently played)'
aap	taraap	'jaw (recently killed)'
rung	tarrung	'jail (recently used)'
koh	tarkoh	'iron stand for fire (recently put in place)'

Examples of *kar* :

nuuk	karnuuk	'necklace'
hɔɔʔ	karhɔɔʔ	'area of villages'
vaang	karvaang	'empty space'
vaang	karvaang	'a circle'
ding	karding	'a bell'
kliang	karliang	'locked'
lias	karlias	'stub of branch'
tenh	kartenh	'ashes in field (recently burned)'

4. Conclusion

As we have seen Katu spoken in the Lao P.D.R. makes use of perfective and imperfective aspect markers on verbs and nouns. These aspect markers can be further subdivided into past completive and present completive markers.

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