

Interdisciplinary Journal of Linguistics
Volume [14] 2021, pp. 24-29

**ASSAMESE ASPECTUAL MARKERS WITH
REFERENCE TO THEIR PRAGMATIC USE: A STUDY**

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Abstract

This paper is an empirical investigation on the aspectual markers in Assamese and aims to analyze how the pragmatics plays a crucial role in determining the meaning of these markers. There are two basic form of aspects in natural languages namely perfective and imperfective but scrutinizing these basic forms with its functions and context of appearance there is an alternative view point which indicates the diverse nature of aspects and all these could be captured only by analyzing the pragmatics of its appearance in any language. Thus, the aspectual markers have become important means for organizing the pragmatic context. We are examining all the aspectual markers in an alternative view point. However, analyzing the Assamese language data; Assamese has three straightforward aspectual markers: '-is', '-i-As' and '-i-t^hAk' which are recognized till now. This paper is an attempt to look into these makers to describe how they convey different aspectual meanings, such as those of perfectivity and imperfectivity in different contexts.

Key Words: Pragmatics, Aspectual marker, Perfectivity, Imperfectivity and Assamese language.

Introduction

Aspects in linguistics generally refers to that phenomena which describe the grammatical functions of a verb; specially, the duration of the type of the temporal activity denoted by the verb. The Aspect system and how it functions based on the insights drawn from referencing the internal context of the structure of an action. Assamese has an extensive and productive set of aspect markers which are expressed either as affixes on the main verb, or on a tense copula alike tense marker. However, aspect basically denotes the notion of “continuity”, or “completion”. Hence, we find basic two aspectual distinction of perfective and imperfective. But according to Comrie (1976); “Aspect is an inter-morphemic recurrent particle that have taken to be aspect

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markers of the different ways of viewing internal temporal constituency of situation.” Accordingly, this paper is an attempt to analyze the Aspectual Markers in Assamese with the reference of Pragmatics. As per now we come to know Assamese has three basic aspectual markers; ‘-is’, ‘-i-As’ and ‘-i-t^hAk’. These convey different meanings in different context. The aspect markers of Assamese ‘-is’, ‘i-As’ and ‘-i-t^hAk’ are the intermorphemic recurrent particle in Assamese. These intermorphemic recurrent particles are formed in a usual grammatical situation and in a particular pragmatic situation behave differently. Although all the perspectives mainly related to the grammatical situation of aspectual makers in the language. So, this paper primarily focuses on the basic aspectual distinction of perfective and imperfective with the reference of their use in pragmatic contexts.

Methodology

The data for this study comes from the researcher who himself is a native speaker of Assamese. Besides this, language data has been collected from secondary sources like literature reviews of various scholars’ written specially in Assamese and in other languages. The current work is undertaken within the framework of descriptive Grammar.

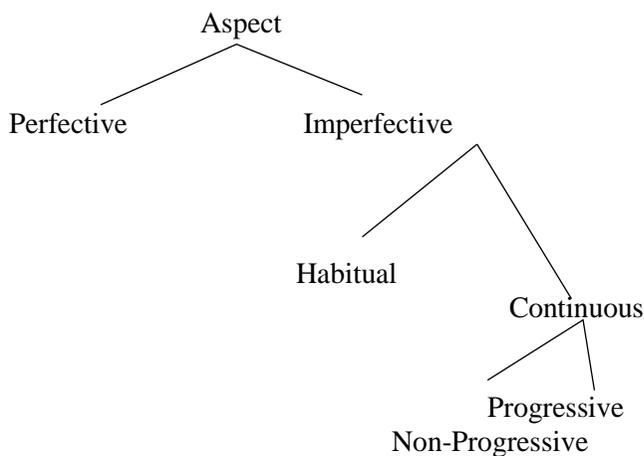
Objective of the Present Work

Assamese is a major Indo Aryan language of north-eastern state of Assam with more than 15.3 million speakers as first language and a total of 20 million including people who speak it as a second language as per the Census Report 2011. Despite it being considered as a major language; Assamese lacks works with a modern linguistic approach in the sense of minimize works. This paper discusses and analyzes verbal suffixes in Assamese with special focus on aspectual markers of the language. This paper also examines the structural and pragmatic connotation of aspectual marker of Assamese because Assamese is the one of the major and dominating language of North-East. This study will be helpful for working on other language of North-Eastern part of India.

Review of the Related Literature

In extensive research on the aspectual markers and on the concept, there have been many disagreements against a fairly standard assumption as well as a common existence of two kinds of aspects in the field of Linguistics; namely the grammatical aspects and situational aspects. Taking these two divisions as the

basics of aspect analysis in a language; many scholars have worked on it. Among these; Comrie's (1976) aspect analysis could be considered as the prominent one; where he observed aspect as the internal temporal structure of a situation which is independent of any relationship to the time. Likewise, he differs tense and aspect as situation internal time and situation external time. Comrie also proposes the hierarchical taxonomy of aspectual categories as follows:



Binary Classification of Aspect Realization (adapted from Comrie 1976:25)

Klein (1994) proposes an alternative time relational analysis, which puts aspect in parallel to tense. In particular, both tense and aspect are defined in terms of temporal relations such as before, after, simultaneous. They only differ in what is related to what. So, he defines aspects as the relationship between time of situation holds and time assertion; whereas tense is defining as the relationship between the time at which the utterance is made and the time period at which a situation holds true. Likewise, many scholars had worked on the aspect and the aspect markers in many languages. No major work has been conducted on the aspect analysis in Assamese language yet. Some of the works such as Kakati (1941), Goswami (1982), Borah (2010, 2011) give a little outlook on the aspectual markers while working on the Assamese language. According to Goswami (1982); the present progressive and/or present perfect inflection is '-is' (e.g. kha-is-e) and the past progressive and/or the remote past tense inflections are '-is' plus '-il' (e.g. k ha-is-il) in Assamese. According to Kakati (1941), there is only one periphrastic tense which functions both as present progressive and present perfect

From the given example the realization of progressive aspect –i-As also indicates past perfect or past continuous in context like:

- (4) xi ahutE mOi pOrh-i As-il-u
 he come-durt lsg-NOM study-perf. asp-PST-1

‘While he came I was studying.’

Simultaneously, affixing this morpheme conveys the aspect of imperfectivity as well:

- (5) xi OhAr pAsOt mOi pOrh-i As-il-u
 he come-Poss after lsg-NOMstudy-imperf.asp-PST-1

‘While he came I was studying.’

Recurrent Particle - i-t^hAk’ in Pragmatics:

‘i-t^hAk’ the aspect marker indicates being limited or relatively permanent. As in (6) and (7)

- (6) tAi pOrh-i-t^hAkE.
 she read-imperf.ASP3

‘She reads anytime’

- (7) tai g^hOrOt pOrh-i-t^hAk-il.
 she house.LOC read.perf.asp.PST.3

She was reading at home.

Findings

The main implications of these finding are to show that the aspectual markers are important means for organizing discourse as shown in the following table.

Aspect	Aspect Marker	Pragmatic role	Meaning of Markers
Comparative	‘-is’	Perfect/Imperfect	To exist
Continuity	‘i-As’	Perfect/Imperfect	Relatively temporary
Continuity	i-t ^h Ak	Perfect/Imperfect	Relatively Permanent

Conclusion

Usually we can’t and don’t spot all the prospects when we study on a linguistics element. Every aspects of each element in linguistics is important to understand a language accurately. This paper exhibits an important point which we have frequently missed out by only analyzing the aspectual markers and by

ignoring the discourse and pragmatic phenomena of aspectual markers in Assamese language. This paper presents a brief but a critical observation of pragmatics analysis of the field of aspectual structure and brings new insights in the area of linguistics for the further research.

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