Tense and Aspects in Tyap and English

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Abstract
This study examines the formation of Tense and Aspect in English and Tyap with a view to predicting the likely areas of difficulty Tyap learners of English as a second language may encounter while learning the use of tense and aspect in English. The study adopted Carl’s analytic comparison model. Descriptive approach was employed in the analysis of the data collected and contrast of those linguistic features that are present in English with those in Tyap with the view to showing areas of differences. The findings show that the difference between Tyap and English language lies in the use of inflections. While English uses the following inflections -“s” or –“es” in simple present tense and “-d” or “-ed” as simple past tense, the Tyap uses the uninflected form of the verb. Also, the present tense is not used in relation with the person(s) acting as the subject of the sentence in Tyap language, whereas in English, the present tense is used in relation with the person(s) acting as the subject of the sentence. The present tense used with the 3rd person singular takes the inflected form of the tense morpheme or verb, which is either “-s” or “-es”. The results are used to make conclusions about the linguistic relationship that exist between the two languages. The study therefore, recommends that language teachers should concentrate on the areas of differences in both languages while teaching and then use appropriate teaching methods and teaching aids to ensure the learners effective understanding.

Introduction
This paper examines the challenges of using English tense and aspect by Tyap. Studies have shown that learning a second language can undoubtedly be quite challenging. Grammatically, it has been observed that the use of tenses is one major area where the performance of second language learners is woeful (Ibe, 2007). This is as a result of the differences inherent in both the native and the target languages (Fisiak, 1981). Tyap is a language in Nigeria spoken by the Atyap ethnic group as first language while English is spoken as foreign as well as second language in the nation. English and Tyap are two distinct languages with different linguistic rules of tense and aspect formation. It can be said that the tense and aspect differences in English and Tyap languages create the challenges for the Tyap learners of English as second language.

The Atyap (kataf) people are found in Zangon-Kataf, Kaura and Kauru Local Government Areas of Kaduna State. The Atyap derived their name from their language, Tyap, a descriptive name meaning “the people who speak Tyap”. Before now, the Atyap people were commonly known to the world as the “Katab” or “Kataf” people, a name given to them by their Hausa neighbours as a result of the large quantity of camwood (Katambari in Hausa) which the Atyap used as an important item of trade in olden days. According to Dauke (2004), the history of the Atyap people, as is commonly told in oral tradition, is the story of a people who migrated from the “East” from where they later settled around present day Katsina. Because of the search for greener pasture and protective enclaves, the Atyap are said to have continued their long migration southward to their
present location where they fought and displaced the Atsam and Attachirak and first settled around Mabatado (present day Zangon Kataf town). Hence, the name Zango-Kataf which means transit camp in Kataf Land.

**Grammar**

The knowledge of grammar is important for learners learning a second or a foreign language because it will enhance the learning process of the language both in form and meaning. This is because the use of language is governed by grammar (Basaeed 2013; Jdetawy, 2011). Hedge (2000) ascertains that recent years have seen a resurgence of interest in the role of grammar in English language teaching. This means the importance of grammar in language cannot be overemphasize. Without grammar, people would have only sound, pictures and body language to communicate meaning. However, effective grammatical rules can help learners use language with better proficiency and confidence.

Chomsky (1959) posits that grammar for native speakers is in their brains and they can use it to make as many sentences as possible. He sees grammar as innate ability that even children from a fairly early age are able to produce number of utterances which a competent speaker of the language will recognize as grammatically well formed. This implies that the speakers must have learned or acquired the grammatical rules by virtue of which the utterances that they produce are judged to be well formed or not. When it comes to foreign or second language learners the situation seems to be a bit different considering that they already know a language, (mother tongue) and they will build a new one on it. So if a learner wants to be as competent as the native speaker, he/she should have some capacities such as the ability to distinguish grammatical from ungrammatical sentences. The learner should also be able to produce and understand an infinite number of grammatical sentences, and identify syntactically ambiguous sentences.

Boadi, et al and Tomori (as cited in Lamidi 2000) discuss four types of meaning related with grammar. First, grammar is the quality of the knowledge of a language that a speaker has; that is, the speaker’s competence in the use of a given language like English, Tyap, Jju, Igbo Hausa, Yoruba and so forth. Second, the term grammar is used to mean a book that spells out the morphological and syntactic rules of a particular language. Morphology is the study of the structure of word; that is, the study of the rules governing the formation of words in a language. Syntax on the other hand is the study of the rules governing the formation of linguistic units larger than the words. These linguistic units include phrases, clauses, sentences and paragraphs. So any book that explains all these and helps learners to understand such language is known as grammar book. Third, grammar is also used to mean the descriptive statements about the structures of a language. By structures we mean the morphological and syntactic structures. This is where we talk about expression as being grammatical or ungrammatical depending on whether or not such expression confirms with the pattern inherent in that language. Finally, grammar is used to refer to the body of prescriptive statement about usages that are considered acceptable and those that are not acceptable in a given Language.
Virtually, all languages have agreed with this last definition and any deviation from the prescribed norms will amount to ungrammatical utterances in the language. At this point, grammar can be defined as the art of speaking and writing correctly. Therefore, for Tyap learners of English to be able to communicate effectively in the English, they would require to learn the grammar of English language.

Tense and Aspect
Tense as a linguistic category is expressed in Adetugbo (1979) as a grammatical modification expressed by inflectional or other changes in the time (relative to the time of utterance of an action or existence of the state). This notion of time is from a semantic viewpoint as in Asher (1994), which is shared by many linguists like Quirk et al (1985) who prefer to treat tense as a category realized by verb inflection. However, Joos (1964), onions (1978) and crystal (1991) have used the terms ‘unmarked and ‘marked’ for the finite and non finite verb respectively.

Afolayan (as quoted by Bida in Ayodabo and Butari 2013) has it that the verb group is the part of the clause where the system of tense is organized and realized. He views the tense as being ‘past’, ‘present and ‘future’ rather than as two terms ‘past’ and ‘present’ as considered by other linguists. Adejare (1996) contends that traditional grammarians assume that, there are those tenses referring to the three time frames that exist in its notional philosophy. This traditional categorization can be extended to include conditional tense thereby giving four basic tense forms. Wherever the term is used, it refers to the form a verb takes to relate action or event to time. Tense in languages admits various categorizations based on the grammatical analysis of such a language (Lyons, 1979). The dichotomy could be between the future and non-future or past and non-past, present and non-present. Similarly, the distinction could be based on the motion of proximity to yield a dichotomy of proximate versus non proximate.

The term aspect on the other hand is traced to its origin in Slavic languages as Binnick (1990) notes that the term “aspect” is a loan word from the Slavic (Russian vid). It is etymologically connected with the words ‘view’ and ‘vision’. The etymological root of aspect is spect-, which means ‘see, look at, or view’. This characterization of aspect as view, vision or look at finds expression in a vast number of contributions in linguistics (Smith, 1991). Hockett (1968) refers to aspect as having to do with the location of an event in time, but with its temporal distribution or contour. The use of spatial expression “temporal distribution or contour” stresses the temporal nature of aspect. So does Jakobson (1971), who views aspect as “the temporal values inherent in the activity or state itself”. On the other hand, aspect is also characterized in terms of the internal temporal constituency of a situation (Comrie; 1976, Dahl; 1985, IEL; 1992

Olaofe (1982) says aspect is the way a speaker looks at the predication he makes; that is, whether the action or event is completed (inclusive or perfective), or whether the action or event is complete (intrusive or perfective). In English, the intrusive (imperfect) aspect which denotes happening and is non-committal with respect to the completion or non-completion of the action marked by the expanded forms BE+V)—ING) in the verb cluster , and (V-ing) in the English verb cluster. The
inclusive (perfect) aspect, which signals reference of the whole predication or event rather than part and non-committal as to the continuation of the even expressed by the predication up to the moment of coding is signaled by the absence of the expanded forms; that is, any of the following verb forms v-d, v-t, and v-n which may function alone or be preceded by some forms of verb to have (has, have, had) and verb to be (am, is, was, were and are)

Aje (1979) shares the same view with Quirk et al (1973) and Comrie (1976) that there are two parts of aspect in English: the perfect and progressive aspects. The non-perfective aspect usually presents the totality of a situation without reference to its internal temporal constituency. The whole of the situation is presented as a single unanalyzable whole, with no attempt made to divide it into its various phases.

Aspect is a fully grammaticized, obligatory, systematic category of languages, operating with general oppositions such as that of perfective and non-perfective (Rothstein 2004). The most common possibilities are PERFECTIVE which indicates that the situation is to be viewed as a bounded whole, and IMPERFECTIVE, which in one way or another looks inside the temporal boundaries of the situation. These aspects are usually expressed by the inflections, auxiliaries or particles. In English there are four aspects according to which the tenses can be conveniently sorted.

1. The simple aspect: It does not relate to the flow of time and merely states whether or not such an action occurs.
2. The progressive (or continuous) aspect: it views the action in the process of happening, being in the middle of things and not having completed.
3. The perfect aspect: It views the action as having been completed before another point in time. The action is finished but may influence what follows it.
4. The perfect progressive aspect: This combines the qualities of the progressive and the perfect aspect. It views an action as an on-going one that has been going on until a certain point in time and having been completed up to that point. It may influence what follows.

Thomas (1993) posits that English language has two forms of tenses only, the present and the past. The present is associated with or without ‘s’ and the past with 'ed' for regular verbs while the past tense for irregular verb are realized in different ways. For instance, the past tense of eat is ate, and the past tense of build is built and the like. He also identifies the use of the simple present, simple past and the perfect forms to indicate time relations of various actions and the use of the auxiliary verb 'will' only to indicate a future time action.

Quirk et al (1990) see time as a universal non-linguistic concept which can be expressed using verb tenses. They see time in three divisions, the present, the past and the future which are respectively expressed using various verb forms. Quirk et al (1974), Afolayan in Tomori (1977) and Quirk et al (1990) share similar views on the use of the English tense. In their views, the
English tense is used to express time. They opine that the three terms of tense - the present, past and future are realized by changes in the verb form to match the time concept rather than application of rules of tense formation. Quirk et al (1990) categorize the expression made with the simple present tense to mean the state at present, the habitual present and the instantaneous present which are used with static and dynamic verbs to refer to state of affairs and activities respectively.

**Methodology**
The methods used to elicit and collect information for this study were introspection, unstructured interview and non-participant observation. The method of introspection engaged the researchers in deep thought about Tyap linguistically. The researchers relied on their knowledge of the language as native speakers and as well as their expertise and skill in understanding how the language works. Based on these attributes, they were able to generate some data used in the study.

In a study like this, it is inevitable to elicit information from the native speakers of Atyap who are in the majority not familiar with the subject matter (Tense and Aspect). This necessitated the use of unstructured interview in order to elicit relevant linguistic information from the native speakers of the language. The interview covered oral questions on how to express certain Tenses and Aspect in the Atyap language and other valid information about the Tyap language. Respondents were asked questions in an informal way as questions were flexible and not structured. During the interview, respondents felt relaxed and expressed themselves freely with less restrictions placed on them by the researcher. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and the researcher was able to obtain valid first-hand information from the way respondents expressed themselves in the Tense and Aspect.

There was also the use of non-participant observation. In linguistic research, the idea of obtaining linguistic data that is spontaneously generated by the speakers of a language is paramount. Consequent upon this, the study used the method of non-participant observation to collect first hand information that was spontaneous and ‘natural’. In many instances of the observed conversations and discussions, the researchers only noted privately how the native speakers expressed themselves in the various Tenses and Aspects in their conversation.

In analyzing the data, the researchers first identified the Tenses and Aspects according to the two main categories (present and past) and further sub-classified them into their appropriate classes (simple, progressive and perfect).

A simple descriptive approach was employed in the analysis of the data collected. Thus, the procedure followed is a synthesis of the analytic comparative model of Carl. Carl (1998) holds that any linguistic analysis involves two stages: First, there is the stage of description when each of the two languages is described on the appropriate level. The second stage is the stage of juxtaposition for comparison.
The study is therefore based on a description of English Tense and Aspect processes and finally a comparison of those processes that are present in English with those in Tyap with a view to clarifying areas of differences. The results were used to make some conclusions about the linguistic relationship that exist between the two languages: English and Tyap.

**Presentation and Discussion of the English and Tyap Tense and Aspect**

**Simple Present Tense**

The simple present tense in English is a type of tense used to denote action that does not indicate when it is expected to end. There are different ways of using the simple present tense:

To express habitual actions. Examples:

1. My father usually gets up at six o’clock.
2. He plays table tennis.

To express general truths. Examples:

1. The sun rises from the east.
2. Honesty is the best policy.

The Tyap simple present tense on the other hand is also used to show actions or events that are occurring in the present, but not necessarily indicating when the action is ending. Unlike English, the simple present tense in Tyap does not attribute its uses with the grammatical person of pronouns. That is, the verb form in the 3rd person singular is not inflected in any way. This means the 1st, 2nd and 3rd person pronouns take the uninflected form of the verb. For example;

1. N/A/Zi/Ba chat nam
   - I/You/We/They like meat
2. A chat nam
   - He/She like meat (Transliteration) He/She likes meat (English equivalent)
3. N/A/Zi/Ba chong chod kuzang ladi
   - I/You/We/They go church every Sunday (Transliteration)
   - I/You/We/They go to church every Sunday (English equivalent)
4. A chong chod kuzang ladi
   - He/She go church every Sunday (Transliteration)
   - He/She goes to church every Sunday (English equivalent)

The above examples show that the verbs “chong” (go) and “chat” (like) do not undergo any morphological changes with the persons, where as in English, -“s” and – “es” are added to the base verbs go+es = goes and like+s = likes. Also, there is no distinction between genders in Tyap. “A” pronoun is used for both ‘he’ and “she” of the English language. The morpheme marker of the English simple present tense is only identifiable when the tense is considered in relation to its use with the "person" for example, when the tense is used with the 3rd person singular, the tense is marked by an 's' with its allomorphs. The other persons, that is the 1st and 2nd take the uninflected form of the tense morpheme. The English simple present tense
The morpheme has three allomorphic variants /s/, /z/ and /|z/. The Tyap simple present tense on the other hand is not identifiable in relation to its use with the 'person'. That is to say that the 3rd person singular is not inflected with any of the allomorphic variants. This means that both the 1st, 2nd and 3rd persons take the uninflected form of the tense morpheme. The Atyap learner of English is likely to have difficulty in differentiating between the gender, the addition of the –“s” morpheme to the verb’s stem of the third person singular.

**Present Progressive Tense**

The present progressive tense is a type of tense that is used to denote an action currently in progress. This tense is formed in English by adding the “–ing” morpheme to the verb’s base form and with “am” “is” or “are” depending on the person of the pronoun acting as subject. example

i. I am writing  
ii. You/We/They are writing  
iii. Musa is writing  

The present progressive tense in Tyap is marked by the morpheme “shya di”. The morphemes come before the action word and they are often used for all the persons of the pronoun (1st, 2nd, 3rd person pronouns). For instance;

5. N shya di lyuut.  
6. A/Zi/Ba shya di lyuut  
7. Musa shya di lyuut.

On this aspect of the tense the Tyap learner of the English may likely have difficulty is the appropriate use of the auxiliary verbs (verb To Be) ‘am’ ‘is’ and ‘are’ which are completely absent in the tyap language.

**Present Perfect Tense**

The present perfect tense is an action that took place within a period of time and extends to the present moment. In English this form of tense is marked by an inflected ‘d’(freed) or ‘ed’ (passed) as in the past tense with regular verbs, and other forms with irregular verbs (eaten) then the addition of auxiliary verbs “have” or “has” conditioned by the nature of the subject. The 3rd person singular is marked by the addition of the auxiliary “has” while other persons are marked by the auxiliary ‘have’ in the sentence. For example:

i. I/You/We/They have bought meat  
ii. He/ She has bought meat  
iii. I/You/We/they have danced  
iv. Haruna has danced
The Tyap present perfect tense is formed with the marker “kan” which is the equivalent of the English auxiliaries “have” and “has”, used for all the person of pronouns. The marker often precedes the verb. For example:

8. N/A/Zi/Ba kan san nam  
   I/ You/ We/ They have bought meat
9. A kan san nam  
   He/She has bought meat
10. N/A/Zi/Ba kan song  
    /They have danced
11. Haruna kan song  
    Haruna has danced

The challenge that a Tyap learner is likely to face here is with the use of “have” and “has” whereas English distinguishes between singular and plural pronouns, Tyap does not and therefore the learner may be confused as to when the use of “have” or “has” is appropriate.

Again, the verb stem does not change in the Tyap language but English verb changes to the past participle which may constitute another problem to the learner also.

**Simple Past Tense**

The simple past tense is used to express an action that happened in the past. It is formed in English by an inflected “-d” or “-ed” morphemes for regular verbs while the irregular verbs take other forms as its past tense. For example:

i. I/You/We/They played football
ii. He/ She played football

The equivalent of the simple past tense in Tyap language is realized by using the base form of the verb. In other words it is obtainable by the addition of zero morphemes to the verb. For instance:

12. N/A/Zi/Ba nat amali  
    I/You/We/They go home (Transliteration)
    I/You/We/They went home (English equivalent)
13. A nat amali  
    He/she go home (Transliteration)
    He/she went home (English equivalent)
14. N/A/Zi/Ba li Agwaza  
    I/You/We/They see God (Transliteration)
    I/You/We/They/saw God (English equivalent)
15. Lekwot li Agwaza  
    Lekwot see God (Transliteration) Lekwot saw God (English equivalent)

Here, the challenging area for the Tyap learner is the inflectional changes of the verbs in English. Tyap verbs do not inflect for the past simple tense therefore, the allomorphs of the past /id//d//t/ and vowel mutation will be difficult for the learner to master.

**Past Progressive Tense**
This form of tense indicates activities that have already happened in the past and have been completed before the time of mention. It is formed with the help of an auxiliary verb ‘was’ or “were” depending on the person of the subject of the sentence, and giving the main verb an “ing” ending. For example:

i. I was cooking food
ii. You/We/They were cooking food
iii. He/She was cooking food

On the other hand, the past progressive in Tyap is marked with the morpheme “ku” with the progressive marker “shya di” preceding the verb. For example

16. N ku shya di lyuut        I was writing
17. /A/Zi/Ba ku ly shya di uut   You /We/They were writhing
18. A ku shya di lyuut             He/She is writing

The “ku” and “shya di” morphemes are equivalent to English “was” and “were” and ‘ing” morphemes respectively the structure of this tense (subject before predication) may not present any learning difficulty but the distinction and appropriate use of “was” and “were” may be a challenge since it is not found in the learners language while “ku” is used for both singular and plural subjects in Tyap, English uses “was” for singular subjects and “were” for plural subjects

**Past Perfect Tense**

The past perfect tense refers to a non-continuous action that was already completed in the past. Such sentences are formed by using the past form of the auxiliary verb “to have” (had) followed by the past participle form of the verb.

i. I/He/She had written
ii. You had written
iii. We/They had written

The past perfect equivalent in Tyap is regularly marked by “ku” morpheme added to the verb just as in the case of the present perfect, “kan”; as equivalent to “had” plus the past tense morpheme joined to the main verb in English.

19. N/A/ku wan jinjok/A/ ku wan jinjok       We/They/You had cooked Beans
20. N/A ku lyuut                               I/He/She had written
21. Zi/Ba/A ku lyuut                          We/They/You had written

The Tyap has the “ku” as the equivalent of English “had” to express the past perfect tense. The source of difficulty for the learner may be the inflectional changes of the verbs in English. Tyap do not inflect their verbs.
**Discussion of the Findings**

It was observed in English that, simple past tense is formed with the help of suffixes such as “–d” and “-ed” for regular verb; consonant and vowel mutation for irregular verbs. In Tyap, the uninflected verb form is used to form the simple past tense. Also, the present tense is not used in relation with the persons of the noun or pronoun in Tyap, whereas in English language, the present tense is used in relation with the persons of the noun or pronoun. For instance, when the present tense is used with the 3rd person singular it takes the inflected form of the tense morpheme or verb, which is either ‘s’ or ‘es’. These morphological changes that take place in English to form simple past tense and simple present tense but not in Tyap language will be difficult areas to learn by the Tyap learner of English as a second language.

It has also been observed that the reason some Tyap learners of English performed poorly is because they transferred their ideas of L1 into English. The L1 interference has therefore contributed to their wrong use of English tense and aspect. In order to help the learner out of this situation, all the tense forms of English should be thoroughly taught using situational illustrations that will drive the message home. For instance, in teaching the simple present tense, it will be ideal if the teacher tells the learners the different situations in which this tense form is used, followed by adequate and regular practice. The learners should be aware of the fact that each tense form is used for different constructions. As such, there will be need for the teacher for instance, help learners to try to differentiate between the uses of “has” “have” and “had”. Finally, the learners should be made to know and to understand the verb form that is used for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd persons respectively.

**Conclusion**

Learning a new language involves the transfer of existing habits that are found in the target language. The learner of a second language therefore, should be conscious of the problems he may encounter while learning a second language. Therefore, a Tyap learner of English tenses is likely to have difficulty in the areas of inflections. While English language uses the following inflections – “s” or “es” when using the present tense and “d” or “ed” while using the past tense, the Tyap speaker uses the uninflected form of the verb. Also, the inability of the Tyap learners to use the auxiliary verbs: *is, are, were, was, has, have, and had* correctly is another area of concern to Tyap learner of English as second language. The auxiliary verbs *is, are, was, and were* are used for both the present and the past progressive and also *has, have* and *had* used for both the present and the past perfect tenses. Therefore for a Tyap learner of English to be effective in the knowledge of English Tense and Aspect, he/she must understand the use of English tense indicators as the basis of the tense formation in English.
References


