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On the Verbal Functional Categories in Kisukuma: Polysemous Perspectives

On the Verbal Functional Categories in Kisukuma: Polysemous Perspectives

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Abstract
This study investigates the semantics of the verbal functional categories in Kisukuma from a cognitive grammar perspective, highlighting their multifunctional roles in verbal constructions. The topic of verbal functional categories in Kisukuma is under-researched despite exhibiting a high degree of semantic flexibility, with meanings that vary according to phonological, syntactic, and contextual factors. The article used cognitive grammar theory whose selection depended on the semantic conceptualisation of the lexeme's meaning. That is to say, the meaning of the factor can be core and peripheral. This work used a descriptive approach to describe polysemous roles of the auxiliary. The study used six Sukuma native informants aged 50 -70 from the Geita rural District of Geita region, specifically from Nyamboge village. Three methods of data collection were applied, namely: focus group discussion, critical documents review, and intuitive knowledge. The data was analysed under cognitive grammar theory and presented using Leipzig Glossing Rules. It was found that verbal functional categories exhibit multifunctional roles in Kisukuma which are triggered by contextual, syntactic, and tonal shifts in the language. The findings underscore the dynamic interplay between form and function in Kisukuma, revealing that polysemy is not marginal but central to the auxiliary system. This research contributes to broader typological discussions on auxiliary polysemy in Bantu languages and informs theoretical models of grammaticalisation.

Introduction

This work investigates functors, being the auxiliary verbs found in the Kisukuma language, from a morphophonological perspective, focusing on how these verb auxiliaries are expressed in both morphological and phonological semantics, and pragmatic purposes among Sukuma native speakers. It examines the semantic relationship between tense-aspect use and how verb auxiliaries reveal time and temporal aspects, as well as how tone ties communicative temporal aspects. The study contributes to a broader understanding of the cultural and social importance of morphosyntax and tonal languages within African ethnopragmatic use. Several scholars have written in Kisukuma language, such as in Simon (2022, 2026), Mantondo (2003), Batibo (1976, 1985, 1991), Maganga and Schadeberg (1992), Richardson (1959, 1971), Muhdhar (2006), Lothi (2002), Say (2017), Sayi (201 7), Roberts, (1992) as well as Richardson &Mann, (1966) have investigated much on Kisukuma language yet auxiliary verbs have been ignored of which the current investigation desires.

Despite the existence of various literatures on the Kisukuma language, nothing has been reported and described on the manifestation of the Kisukuma verbal functional categories. Thus, such knowledge

has not been semantically addressed; this collocates with Booth, Colomb and Williams (2003, p. 59), who were of the opinion that 'a research problem is motivated not by palpable unhappiness, but by incomplete knowledge or flawed understanding. This means that not understanding things is the source of the problem in research; thus, solving it is not about changing the world but about understanding it better. This means that Kisukuma auxiliary verbs are sometimes not realised through particles but through tonological aspects; this needs to be documented in the rich literature. Such incomplete justification is in line with Strauss and Corbin (2008, p. 28), who argued that incomplete knowledge in technical and non-technical literature is one among the sources of the research problem, thus, the justification for the study on which the current paper is based.

Literature review in Kisukuma

Several scholars have written in Kisukuma language, as in Simon (2022), Matondo (2003), Batibo (1976), Muhdhar (2006), Maganga and Schadeberg (1992), Matondo (2003), Simon (2026) described the pragmatic roles of particle *sh* in Bantu and Kemunaskuma perspectives specifically using Relevancy Theory, which gears cognitive and communication inferences (Sperber & Wilson 1981, 1982, 1986b). The study found that the *sh* particle is a portmanteau morph factorising permission, compulsion role, emotive role, lexical role, numbers, caress role, requesting role, deverbal role, sanction role, and causer role. The author recommended that the same particle can be studied in the scope of its phonological manifestation domains; other syntactic particles, such as phrasal verbs, conjunctions, and prepositions, should be investigated to see how Bantu languages contribute to the development of phonological and syntactic theories. The current investigation goes beyond describing another function within the same language, namely the verb functional category as a syntactic particle in Kisukuma, a Bantu language spoken in Tanzania.

Batibo (1976) investigated Kisukuma phonology and morphology and reported 13 verb morphemes in Kisukuma through morphophonological analysis. Maganga and Schadeberg (1992) outlined the Kinyamwezi grammar and lexicon, a Kisukuma dialect, and Muhdhar (2006) investigated the Jinakiiya dialect of Kisukuma, focusing on the main verbs and their extensions in specific contexts. Following the same line of thinking, Matondo (2003) described tonal transfer in the Kisukuma language, based on the Jinakiiya dialect, and focused on how verbs, nouns, and reduplicative forms are affected by tone transfer under Optimality Theory. These scholars have provided extensive information on the Kisukuma language regarding main verbs, but ignore auxiliary verbs, which contribute to both syntactic and grammatical manifestations.

Theoretical literature

The study used Cognitive grammar theory, pioneered by Langacker (1982) and later adopted by other linguists, including Taylor (1990), Rosch (1978), and Kövecses (2002). All these scholars agree that meaning is conceptual, meaning that a word is not static but rather elastic. Cognitive grammar has tenets which built the theory as in (i) metaphor and metonymy (This means that the meaning of the lexeme stands for multiple meanings), (ii) monosemy and polysemy (the former describes a situation whereby a lexical item has a single sense or meaning and the the latter is the association of two or more related senses with a single linguistic form) (iii) the Prototype Model, this model posits that meanings are organised in a radial category with a prototypical (core) sense and various peripheral (extended) senses, (iv) compositionality Principle (the meaning of a complex expression results from the meanings of its constituent parts, this means that each morph extended from the base or verbal roots has its semantic scope where the combination of more than one linguistics particle predicts more than one meaning), Taylor (2002).

Methodology

The study employed a qualitative approach to analysing the semantics of Kiskuma verbal functional categories, together with a descriptive research design to describe the occurrences and semantic functions of each auxiliary verb investigated. The selection of this design is based on its ability to describe the semantic features of auxiliary verbs, including those triggered by tone. The study was conducted in Njigami village, located in Nyamboge ward of Geita rural district in the Geita region of Tanzania, where the residents speak Kisukuma as their first language. The pragmatist paradigm insists that a good linguist should attend to the natural setting of reality, as the researcher attends to the field. The investigation used six (6) Sukuma native speakers aged 50-70 and were selected purposively. Their selection was based on the criterion of being Multilingual Sukuma native speakers, as they speak both Sukuma and Swahili, both of which are spoken in Tanzania. Being multilingual, we were able to translate words between Kiswahili and Kisukuma. Three methods of data collection were applied to determine the form and meaning of auxiliary verbs in the language under discussion, namely: focus group discussion, critical document review (Bowern, 2008), and intuitive knowledge. The focus group discussion was conducted in two sessions, during which the researcher prepared Swahili sentences and asked the informants to translate them into their native tongue, the Sukuma tongue.

In the critical documents review, the researcher reviewed Sukuma documents, including the Sukuma language (Batibo, 2022), the role of tone in the structure of Sukuma (Richardson, 1959), and tonal transfer in Kisukuma (Matondo, 2003). These documents were ready, line by line, to examine the presence of form and tone that influence changes in tense or aspect over time. The data was analysed qualitatively by words, phrases and sentences. The use of the qualitative descriptive approach was relevant when information is required directly from those experiencing the phenomena in their natural context, by assessing the meanings participants describe that are pertinent to the semantics of auxiliaries. The analysis was therefore conducted by identifying auxiliary verbs through the lens of Cognitive Grammar Theory; in addition, the data were presented using the Leipzig Glossing Rule (Comrie, Haspelmath & Bickel 2008). The Leipzig Glowing Rule illustrates three levels of string representation: the word-order and/or parsing level, the literal translation level, and the free translation level. (Christian, 1982).

Discussion of the findings

This section presents and discusses the field data pertinent to two objectives of the study. The underlying question of how time is construed is usually addressed by drawing a timeline, in which the notion of "time flow" is illustrated via auxiliary particles as encoded in this study. The study revealed particles such as ku, tu, ta, la, tala, ka, li, ga, bhi and bhiza.

Ku: This is a verb functional category in the Kisukuma language whose English translation is 'will'. It is sometimes called a helping verb that indicates the future. In other words, the **future auxiliary verb** is a helping verb used to form the **future tense** of a sentence; it marks decisions made at a future time. Predictions promises or some kind of offers (Guthrie 1971). Consider the following example in the data below:

1. (a) Khamis a -***ku***-j-a ntondo bhungi
Khamis SP-aux-go-FV tomorrow next
'Khamis will go next tomorrow.'

(b) Bhabehi ba-***ku***-n-tul -a U-ngw'ibhi
Men SP-aux-OM-beat-FV SP-thief
'Men will beat the thief'

The data in 1 shows that ***ku*** is an auxiliary that indicates future time in space. It shows just a simple future time, which does not demarcate how long such an event will take. The same line of thinking can be evidenced from Sukuma literature data, Richardson in 2 below:

2. (a) *βa* ***-ku*** *βon -a*
SP -aux see-Fv
'They will see'

(b) *βa-**ku*** *sol-a*
SP-aux take-Fv
'They will take' Richardson (1959, p. 13)

The data from the Sukuma literature show that the prefix ***ku*** is an auxiliary in Kisukuma whose semantics denote future time location. In connection with cognitive grammar perspectives, Lakoff (1987, p. 583) also says, "the primary function of language is to convey meaning. A grammar should, therefore, show as directly as possible how parameters of form are linked to parameters of meaning". Therefore, ***ku*** is directly linked to future aspects of meaning in the language under discussion. However, there are constructions which are evident to multiple semantic perspectives (Croft & Cruse, 2004). This means that sometimes the particle ***tu*** has more than one meaning. Consider the following example in data 3 below:

3. *Tu* ***-ku*** *yomb-a* *wangu*
SP-aux say -Fv quickly
'We will say quickly | they will say'

The data in 4 has multiple meanings, in that the pronoun ***tu*** can function as '***we***' or as the diminutive '***they***' in the English gloss. When the Kisukuma language uses a single particle for future semantics, other languages like Ruhaya use more than one particle. This can be evidenced by Hewson, Nurse and Muzale (2000), who carried out a study on tense in Ruhaya; one of the Bantu languages forming the Rutara subfamily, along with other things, they presented auxiliaries that indicate future time as in (*tu-**raa**-gúra* 'We will buy') and far future (*tu-**ri**-gúra* 'we will buy).

Tu: This is one of the verb functional categories in the Kisukuma language of Tanzania, indicating expected negation. This functional verb category has variants, such as *tu* and *ti* forms; thus, users of the language use different forms depending on their preference. Semantically, it is used to show the future aspect in speech. Sometimes the negative auxiliary allomorph has variants, as in ti, which also indicates a negative prefix. Consider the following example in 4 data below:

4. (a) *U-makubhi* *a* ***tu**-j-a* *Kaya*
SP-Makubhi OM **aux**-go-FV home
'Makubhi will not go home'

(b) *U-nke* *a* ***-tu*** *-pel-a*
SP-wife OM **-aux** -run -FV
'His wife will not run'

(c) *βa-**t-íz**-a* *mangu*
SP (-aux)[2]-Fv quickly
'They shall not come quickly'

The data in 4 indicates that when ***tu*** is attached before the verb root, it shows a future aspect but in negation form. It must be noted that cognitive grammar handled the sense of ***tu*** through a theoretical

apparatus known as monosemy. This is because monosemy has been described as a situation in which a lexical item has a single sense or meaning (Taylor 2003, p. 102). Thus, ***tu*** and ***t(i)*** describe ***the*** future negation aspect of meaning.

La: This is another helping verb in the Kisukuma language of Tanzania, which indicates a (long) distance future. Semantically, it is used to show obligatory long-distance future action in speech, in which ***shall*** is applied at its English gloss. Consider the following example in 5 data points below:

5. (a) *A* *lá-j-a* *Kaya*
SP neg-aux-go-FV home
'He/she shall go home'

(b) *A* *ta-lá-j-a* *Kaya*
SP Neg-aux-go-FV home
'He/she shall not go home'

(c) *βa* *ta-lá -m-pe* *j-a*
SP Neg-aux-OM-run CAUS-FV
'They shall not make him go'

(d) *βa* *ta-l-íz-a*
SP Neg-aux-come-Fv
'They shall not come' (distance future)

The data in 5 shows that the auxiliary ***lá,*** whose English gloss is *shall,* shows a long-distance future. The data in 5 (b-d) show the same semantic scope as auxiliary ***lá,*** but with the addition of the negative prefix ***ta***. Cognitive grammar theory reflects the semantics of data 6 above through its theoretical apparatus, the *compositionality principle*, which holds that the meaning of a complex expression derives from the meanings of its constituent parts. In other words, the meanings of complex structures or expressions can be broken down into smaller and smaller sub-components until no further decomposition is possible, yielding a set of primitives (Langacker 1987, p. 87). This can be evidenced when ***ta*** has been combined with the formative ***lá*** *and houses* ***talá;*** the meaning of the first differs from the meaning when combined to form a complex expression.

Li: This is another verb functional category in the Kisukuma language, which has polysemous senses as encoded from a cognitive grammar perspective (Langacker 1987). These senses are determined by the preceding lexical lexeme in the sentence structure and can thus represent the simple future, past continuous, past perfect, or present continuous aspect. The data in 6 illustrates:

6.(a) *A* *lì-z-a* *Kaya* *I-haha*
SP aux-come-Fv home SP-now
'He (she) is coming home now'

(b) *A -li -z -a* *Kaya* *Ntondo*
SP -aux -come -Fv -home tomorrow
He (she) will come home tomorrow'

(c) *Bhabehi* *ba-lí-n-tul-a*
Men SP-aux-OM-beat-FV
'Men are beating him'

(d) *βa-li-βa-soma ga*
SP-aux-OM-read PF
'They had been reading

The data in 6a indicates auxiliary whose semantic sense is the present state. Therefore, the present tense manifested by the above auxiliary is "a situation at the present moment" (Comrie 1985, p. 38). While this is true, the data in 6b above indicates that the auxiliary *lì* indicates simple future time as a helping verb but in 7c and 4d they indicate a different thing of which in 4c indicates present continuous time, while this is true, the data in 6d present perfective progressive aspect being it past perfect continuous aspect. However, such an observation indicates polysemy according to cognitive grammar theory (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). The theory reflects with this example in the sense that semantic structure does not only refer to the semantic value of an expression, but also includes a wide range of other semantically related issues, such as the pragmatic aspects of meaning, that is, the meaning of an expression in relation to situational context (Taylor 20002, p. 20). With this regard, the auxiliary *lì* is polysemous in the language under discussion.

However, the Kisukuma language is mostly determined via lexical lexeme or space deixis expressions in time expressions, as in *haha* 'now' and *Ntondo* 'tomorrow'. This differs from other Bantu languages, whose aspect expressions are determined by a specific particle. This is the way natural languages vary in form, type and function (Evans & Green, 2006). Consider the following data 8 from Kiswahili, the language spoken in East Africa and Tanzania in particular:

7. (a) *Ni-**ta**-lim-a shamba langu kesho*
SP-FUT-cultivate-FV -field -my -tomorrow
'I will hoe my field tomorrow

(b) *Watoto wa-**na**-chez-a kiwanjani*
Children 3p-Pres-play-FV playground
'Children are playing in the playground

The data in 7 indicate two issues. The first is that different tenses (past, present and future) are expressed by individual markers occupying the same position as in ***na*** and ***ta*** above. Second, temporal adverbials such as *jana* 'yesterday' and *kesho* 'tomorrow' play a vital role in Swahili, supplementing tense markers (Kiango, 2000; Lusekelo, 2016).

Ku-bhiza: This is another form of complex functional verb category found in the language under discussion, which has been formed via simple future auxiliary form *ku* 'will' and perfective aspect *bhi* or *bhiza* 'have or been'. The semantics of this form of functional verb category are of two sides, one expresses progressive and the other perfective. Consider the following examples in data 8 below:

8. (a) *A-ku-bhiz -a Mu-nzila a-liz-a*
SP-[1]aux- [2]aux-FV PP-way OM-aux.come-FV
'He will be on the way coming'

(b) *A-ku-bhiz-a wi-z-a*
SP -aux[1]- aux[2]-FV OM-come-FV
'He will have come come'

(c) *A-ku-bhiz-a wi-z-a-ga*
SP-aux[1]- aux[2]-FV OM-come-FV-ASP
'He will have come come'

The data in 8 shows that in the Kisukuma language, there are two possible forms of helping verbs. Semantically, the meaning is determined by the lexical verb; this is because the auxiliary is multifunctional in the sense that it can reflect perfective or progressive. The ability of the lexeme to have two-dimensional senses reflects the cognitive grammar semantics, in which core and extended senses belong to the lexicon (Croft and Cruse 2004). This can be evidenced in 9 data points below:

9. (a) *βa-ku-bhi* *βa* *lí-j-a*
SP-[1]aux-[2]aux SP aux-go-Fv
'They will be going'
(b) *A-ku-bhi* *wà* *ne*
SP-aux[1]-aux[2] SP mine
'He/she will be mine'

The data in 9 indicates that the two auxiliaries are helping verbs, whose aspect is determined by the tone-bearing unit in this language. This reflects the cognitive grammar theory of particles, which are multifunctional, as in completion or progression (Cf. 9); thus, the fairly treated lexeme exhibits such behaviour. In the same spirit, polysemy has been described as the association of two or more related senses with a single linguistic form (Cf. Taylor 2003, p. 102), as illustrated in the data above (8 and 9).

Ka: This is another verb functional category construction in the Kisukuma language whose semantic content indicates the simple past. Sukuma native speakers sometimes use this particle to indicate perfective aspect; with these choices, the polysemous semantics of *ka* are exhibited. The knowledge of polysemous semantic structure not only concerns the semantic value of an expression but also encompasses a wide range of other semantically related issues, such as the pragmatic aspects of meaning, that is, the meaning of an expression in relation to situational context (Goldberg 2006). For more justification, consider the following example in the 10 data points below:

10. *(a)* *A-**ka**-j-a* *Kaya*
SP-aux-go-Fv home
'He/she had gone home'

(b) *A-**ka**-ly-a* *lipo*
SP-aux-eat-FV maize
'He/she ate Maize'

The data in 10 above show that the prefix ***ka*** indicates the alternative perfect aspect, where 3a indicates the past perfect aspect and 3b indicates the simple past aspect in the language under discussion. This data is accounted within the scope of cognitive semantics, as Taylor (1990) described a mental representation of a typical instance of a category, whereby entities are assimilated to the category on the basis of perceived similarity to the prototype. This means that the particle ***ka*** in Kisukuma indicates relationships among phenomena (meaning) that share some kind of relationship or similarity. Thus, the issue is past auxiliary (i.e., core), but the phenomena of progressive or perfective (i.e., periphery) are a matter of degree.

Ka-bhi(za): This is another auxiliary verb in the language under discussion, formed by the past auxiliary form -ka-, which implies 'had or was', and the perfective aspect *bhi* or *bhiza* 'have or been'. Consider the following examples in data 11 below:

11. (a) *A-ka-βiz-a* *Mu-nzila-alì-z-à*
SP-aux[1]- aux[2]-FV-PP way-OM-aux-come-Fv
'[1]He was on the way coming [2]He had been on the way coming'

(b) *A-ka-βiz-a* *wì-z- à*
SP-aux[1]-aux[2]-FV OM-come-Fv
'[1]He had had come [2]He had already come'

(c) [1]*A-ka-βi-ntale* [2]*A* *ka-bhiza-ntale*
SP-[1]aux-[2]aux-big SP [1]aux-[2]aux-small
'[1]He was small [2]He was small

The data in 12 indicate various manifestations of the progressive aspect, as evidenced by the use of multiple auxiliary verbs in the language under discussion. The first is an auxiliary ***ka*** for perfect and aspect, and the second is *βi* or *βiza* for either progressive or perfect aspect. To be specific, in 6a, it is used semantically as a single auxiliary, though morphologically it consists of two elements, namely ***ka*** and *βi*. It must be noted that the toned proceeding phrase *lì - z -à* has semantically contributed to hiding or making the second auxiliary to be in Citu. The data in 6b show two auxiliaries, both perfective, following the fact that the high tone HH in the toned lexeme *wìzà* has led to the two auxiliaries being regarded as having past perfect senses. The data in 6c indicate the options of the auxiliary *βi* and *βiza*; these auxiliaries are used interchangeably with the same semantic scope. The variations in these meanings challenge the satisfaction of the cognitive grammar theory (Cf. Taylor, 2000), which encodes multiple conceptualisations of language lexemes.

Ga: This is another verb functional category in the Kisukuma language of Tanzania, which semantically indicates perfective aspect, but when it is explained in the scope of cognitive grammar, this particle incurs more than one semantic scope. This is the conception of cognitive grammar theory, which examines lexemes within polysemous semantics (Rosch 1978). Let us consider first the function of gà pertinent to the perfective aspect in 13 below:

13. *(a)* *Wi-z-a*-gà
SP-come-Fv-PF
'He/she has come'

(b) *βa-j-a*-gà
SP-go-Fv-PF
'They have gone'

(c) *βa-n-tul-a*-gà
SP-OM-beat-Fv-PF
'They have beaten him'

The data in 13 indicates that ***gà*** in the Kisukuma language is an auxiliary verb that semantically expresses perfective action, specifically the present perfect aspect. The data in 14 differs from that of the Kiswahili language, in which the marker *-me-* marks the perfective aspect (Nurse, 2003, 2008). The choice of *gà* has various, or polysemous, meanings (Cf. Taylor 2003) apart from the perfect aspect as encoded in 14 above. Sometimes *gà* is used to indicate progressive aspects in the language under discussion, as indicated in the 15 data below:

15. *(a)* *βá-li-βá* *ng'wil -a*
SP-aux-SP OM-tell -Fv
'They had (already)told him'

(b) *βá-li-βá-n* *g'wil-a*-gà
SP-aux-SP OM-tell-Fv-PF
'They had been telling him'

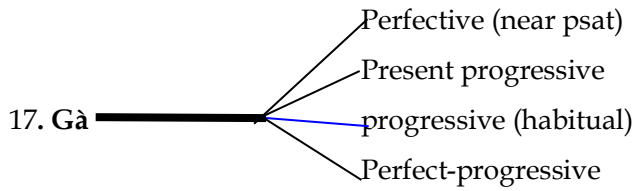
(c) *βá-li-βá-n* *g'wil-a-aho-wa* *jimija* gà-*shikolo*
SP- aux -SP OM-tell-Fv while SP-lost PFproperty
'They had been telling him when he has lost his property'

The data in 15 show that the *gà* particle in Kisukuma is polysemous, with meanings pertinent to time. 15a indicates the past perfect aspect, which has been presented by the helping verb ***li***. While this is true, 15b shows that they had been telling him; in other words, the addition of particle *gà* indicates progression. This is the same as data 15c, which shows that there are two events, one is in progress, and the other has been completed. The data in 16 can be captured within the cognitive linguistics in which meaning is not static, in Cognitive grammar, every linguistic enterprise should treat meaning as central, from this base, such centrality of meaning, Langacker (1987, p. 12) had this to say:`Meaning is what language is all about; the analyst who ignores it to concentrate solely on matters of form severely impoverishes the natural and necessary subject matter of the discipline and ultimately distorts the character of the phenomenon described'. This shows that the high (H) tone has centralised the meaning together with the addition of the perfective form (Cf. *gà*). A similar claim was anchored by a linguist, Heine (1997), who was of the opinion that the centrality of meaning comes with the observation that when using language, people are less worried about what kind of syntax or phonology to use than they are about how to encode the meanings they want to communicate in the best way possible (Heine 1997, p. 3). Thus, the speaker understands the meaning through the context in which the lexeme is used.

The other argument in this paper is that helping *gà* can co-occur in a compound structure, but in a different position; when they appear together, each has a different aspect pertinent to time. Consider the following example in the 16 data below:

16. *Wá-li-wá-n* *tul-a*-gà-*aho-wa* *ajima* *gà*
SP-aux-SP OM-beat-Fv-PF while collapse
'She has been beating him when (he) collapsed'

The data in 16 indicates a complex sentence in which one is complete while the other is partial. In the sentence, there is an appearance of two particles of the same nature (Cf. *gà*), the first shows a progressive aspect, while the second shows a perfective aspect. This behaviour captures the nature and properties of cognitive grammar theory (Cf. Taylor, 2003), which argues that a word's meaning can be encoded across multiple semantic domains. For more evidence, consider the figure in 1 below:



The data in 17 dwells polysemous perspectives of meaning as encoded in cognitive grammar theory (Taylor 2003). The description of this database is based on the conception that, despite the fact that speakers of a language have a finite number of conventionalised linguistic units, they can use these units to create new expressions which, sometimes symbolise unique conceptualisations but which hearers can still understand without difficulty (Langacker 1987, p. 87). It must be noted that the tonal shift in Kisukuma plays a significant role in determining various aspects related to the period. The same spirit is encoded in a polysemous perspective (Cf. Goldberg (1995), which accentuates the case in which a form (word) is paired with different but related senses.

Conclusion

The study has analysed the verb functional category in the Kisukuma language from a polysemous perspective, which revealed its multifunctional nature and semantic versatility. This is unlike in theories of generative grammar, where language is conceived of as a system of general rules, which do not, therefore, accommodate irregular and idiosyncratic phenomena in a natural manner (Cf. Langacker 2000; Lee, 2001; Sweetser, 1990). Kisukuma auxiliaries exhibit a range of meanings that are contextually determined, reflecting both grammatical and pragmatic nuances. Understanding these layers of polysemous senses not only enriches the description of Kisukuma grammar but also provides insights into how speakers navigate meaning through minimal lexical elements. Such findings, which describe polysemous flexibility, highlight the importance of examining auxiliary contextual meaning beyond their surface and literal functions, acknowledging their role in shaping discourse and communicative intent among the Sukuma speech community.

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