

## GRAMMATICALIZED MODALS IN IBIBIO

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The major function of language is to provide interaction between persons by permitting the expression of social and individual attitudes, statements, and judgments etc., which include participation in linguistic interaction. The speaker's actual purpose in such a linguistic interaction may be classified more broadly to include informing, questioning, commanding, confirming as well as requesting confirmation, contradicting or just to maintain a channel of communication.

Words can be effectively understood by seeing through expressions to what they actually mean. Any language therefore, which possesses a grammatical device or a set of grammatical devices for marking a speaker's involvement in whatever he/she says can be said to have mood. The syntactic category of mood therefore is concerned with a speaker's personal involvement in or commitment to whatever is being said.

Quirk and Greenbaum (1973:40) say, "mood relates the verbal action to such conditions as certainty, obligation, necessity, possibility. This assertion is supported by Essien (1990), who views mood as "a grammatical category that is concerned with the actuality or factuality of a situation as contained in a speaker's attitude to or interpretation of the actuality/factuality of the content".

Lyons (1968:307) opines that mood has to do with the ways in which the 'attitude' of the speaker is grammatically marked in different languages while Afolayan (1977:117) sees it as:

the system that organizes the various interpersonal relationships among participants in any given environment. The clause or sentence in this respect is used to approve or disapprove, to express belief or doubt, to ask questions or give answers, to greet or command, to include within the social group or to exclude from it.

Mood, which is traditionally expressed in verbal morphology, is a verbal category that reflects the attitude of the speaker in the utterance or utterances that he/she produces. This grammatical category is in most cases realized by either "inflecting the verb or modifying it by means of auxiliaries" (Lyons 1968:307).

Unlike tense, which is a universal grammatical category, "mood is a grammatical category that is found in some, but not all languages" (Lyons 1977:848). Even in those languages (like *Ibibio*), which possess mood, the category



is expressed in many ways. Mood in the language may be expressed by the use of purely lexical categories (or what is commonly referred to as lexicalization) or by the use of grammatical forms (that is, grammaticalization).

In our treatment of the grammatical category of mood in this paper, we shall limit ourselves to those expressed by grammatical forms.

Some writers usually draw a distinction between mood and modality and sometimes between the two and mode. Allerton (1979:247) states that:

The traditional grammatical category of mood which is attached to the verb but seems to make a direct contribution to the character of the whole sentence, appears to have three related strands . . . modality which refers to the attitude the speaker takes towards the reality or truth of what is asserting: . . . mode (which) relates to the kind of utterances used by the speaker whether he is simply asserting (indicative mood) or perhaps asking a question (interrogative mood) or issuing a command (imperative mood) or expressing a wish (optative mood); (and) mood proper, in the sense of verbal categories relating to the grammatical status of the sentence.

While mood is a distinction of form or a particular set of inflectional form of a verb to express whether the action or state it denotes is conceived as fact or in some other manner (as command, possibility, wish, etc.), modality refers to the classification of logical propositions according to their asserting or denying the possibility, impossibility, contingency, or necessity of their content. Therefore, modality is mood grammaticalized and as such we will use the two terms interchangeably in this paper.

## **2.0 Grammaticalization and Lexicalization of Modals in Ibibio**

In order to fully understand the concept of grammaticalization and lexicalization of categories in any language, it is only proper to understand first what grammatical category is. This section attempts an explanation of what grammatical category is before explaining the two concepts of grammaticalization and lexicalization.

Grammatical category according to Trask (1993:122) is "any of various categories which are expressed by variations in the form of lexical or phrasal constituents". He goes ahead to mention the most frequently occurring grammatical categories in languages to include person, number, gender, case, tense, aspect, mood, voice, degree and deictic position. While deictic categories like person, tense, and deictic position express contextual features of an utterance, mood and aspect express the speaker's perception of certain characteristics of the proposition embodied in his/her utterance. Again, whereas number and gender represent the grammaticalization of certain perceived semantic features of referents or act as



reference-tracking devices, voice and case are used to express aspects of the internal grammatical structure of a sentence or to express the relative prominence of elements of the sentence.

Some of the grammatical categories mentioned by Trask above have content and as such are lexicalized in languages while others lack content and do not have lexical representation. Of all the mentioned categories, only voice does not seem to be available in Ibibio. Of the available ones, some are lexicalized while others are grammaticalized in the language.

Different languages of the world vary considerably in the way in which they group together or distinguish temporal, modal and aspectual notions. When these notions are expressed by way of some devices such as the use of particles or use of processes like affixation, process morphemes, suprasegmental processes etc., then this is referred to as grammaticalization (or grammatical notions). Grammaticalization according to Bussmann (1996:196) is "a process of linguistic change whereby an autonomous lexical unit gradually acquires the function of a dependent grammatical category".

Temporal, modal and aspectual notions are expressed, however, by means of lexical items. When this occurs, then we are dealing with lexicalization. Lexicalization therefore, means the integration of items into the lexicon of a language while grammaticalization has to do with the integration into the grammatical system of a language (cf. Comrie 1985: 10).

Bussmann (1996:279) views lexicalization from two major ways, that is, synchronically and diachronically. Synchronically, he states that lexicalization is "the adoption of a word into the lexicon of a language as a usual formation that is stored in the lexicon and can be recalled from there for use". This is in consonance with the view expressed by Comrie (1985). He distinguishes between two types of lexical entries at the synchronic level. These are the base words like *fence*, *lion* and complex words like *cookbook*, *fireman*), which belong to the lexicon and which the language holds ready as denotations for required concepts.

Diachronically, he states that lexicalization is "the historical process (and result) of semantic change, in which the original meaning can no longer be deduced from its individual elements". He cites the example of *neighbour*, which in old English was written *n-ahgebkr* meaning 'near dweller'.

The major distinction between grammaticalization and lexicalization can be explained using pragmatic opposition within either closed or open sets of alternative (cf. Lyons 1968, Martinet 1964). A closed set of items on the one hand is one, which is fixed in nature and is usually small in terms of membership. This would include person (personal pronouns), tense, aspect, mood, gender, etc. An open set of items on the other hand is one with a rather unrestricted,



indeterminately large membership. This includes the class of major parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs) and the class of minor parts of speech (conjunction, preposition, interjection etc).

Taking the distinction made above, therefore, grammatical items can be said to belong to the class of closed sets. Lexical items, which are classified according to the membership of the distributional classes, referred to in the grammatical values of the language and which are given in the dictionary associated with the grammar of the language, belong to the open sets.

One of the ways whereby grammaticalization can be achieved in languages is through the morphological process of affixation. Ibibio grammaticalizes quite a number of notions by affixation. However, these grammatical categories may or may not be realized by morphemes or words (lexical items) in all cases but constitute system of 'choices' in sentences. For instance, the present tense morpheme in Ibibio according to Essien in his publications on tense (cf. Essien 1983, 1990, 1991) may be *mé-* or *ḡ*. If *ḡ*, it is therefore not lexicalized in the language yet it is grammaticalized. Modals in Ibibio are either grammaticalized or lexicalized.

### 3.0 Grammaticalized Modal Markers in Ibibio

The expression of modality in Ibibio is chiefly through lexicalization and grammaticalization. For details on the lexicalized modals in Ibibio see Udosen 2004. In this paper, we treat the grammaticalized modals in Ibibio, which occur mainly as affixes.

#### 3.1 The use of affixation

Affixation is the process of word formation in which the stem is expanded by the addition of an affix. It is the concatenating of morphological elements, which, are non-words (affixes) or word roots either directly (e.g. hope-less) or with intermediate affixes (e.g. nation-al-ize) (cf. Bussmann 1996:10, Crystal 1992:275). It is the collective term, which expresses the types of formation that can be used only when added to another morpheme be it the root or stem (cf. Crystal 1985:10).

Affix types depend on the position in which they occur with reference to the root or stem of the word. Affixes are limited in number in any given language and include the following:

Prefixes - these are elements, which are added to the beginning of a root or stem;  
 Suffixes - these are elements which are added to the end or which follow the root or stem;

Infixes - these are elements, which occur within a root or stem.



A combination of non-autonomous prefix and suffix is sometimes referred to as a circumfix or ambifix while an interfix is a meaningless affix inserted between morphological elements.

The subcategories of the INFL in Ibibio, which are treated in this paper, that is, AGR, Tense, Aspect and Mood are usually inflections on the main verb. However, mood does not seem to make an elaborate use of affixation as AGR, Tense and Aspect. This is because some of the modal markers are lexicalized while others are grammaticalized. Yet modality in the language uses affixation all the same.

The use of modal affixes involves affixation itself and serial construction, which are treated in this section and the next section. In this section in particular, we will discuss two modal affixes: *kpà-* which is inflected on the root verb to mark willingness, probability, request and wish as well as *kpé-* which is inflected on the root verb to mark uncertainty, conditionality and probability.

### 3.1.1 The modal affix *kpà-*

This is one of the two identified modal affixes in Ibibio, which is inflected on the main verb (cf. Essien 1988, 1990 and Udosen 2004).

*Kpà-* is used to express the following moods: willingness, wish, probability, polite request. The most important functions of this modal affix are the expressions of willingness and probability. Let us consider the following example:

1. Òkôn á -  $\theta$  - kpé - kìm ñkányá, m -  $\theta$  - kpà - kwát òkòm  
 Òkôn 3/Sg/AGR-Pres-Mod-pierce mat, 1/Sg/AGR-Pres-Mod-scratch  
 roof  
 'If Òkôn prepares roofing mat, I will renovate the roof.'

In the above conditional sentence, the modal affix *kpà-* is used to express willingness. This presupposes that given the above construction, *kpà-* cannot be inflected on the verb to express a particular mood except there is a condition. The condition is usually carried by the first clause, which is the conditional clause. That is to say that the willingness to carry out an action is dependent on some condition.

The clause in which the modal affix *kpà-* appears can be moved to the subject clause without altering the meaning of the sentence. However, such movement does not move the subject NP itself if the NPs of the two clauses refer to one and the same person. The sentence in 2a becomes 2b below:

- 2a. Ēdèm á -  $\theta$  - kpé - nám útóm, Ēdèm á -  $\theta$  - kpà - níé òk<sup>^</sup>k



Ēdèm 3/Sg/AGR–Pres–Mod–do work, Ēdèm 3/Sg/AGR–Pres–Mod–have money

‘If Ēdèm should work, Ēdèm would have money.’

2b. Ēdèm á – θ – kpà – níé òk<sup>^</sup>k, á – θ – kpé – nám útóm

Ēdèm 3/Sg/AGR–Pres–Mod–have money, 3/Sg/AGR–Pres–Mod–do work  
‘Ēdèm would have money if he works.’

But if on the other hand the NP of the first clause is different from the NP of the second clause, then the entire clause, which carries the *kpà*– affix is moved by what is often called extra position or clausal alternation as shown below:

3. (Àmì) m – θ – kpà – kwát òkòm, Òkôn á – θ – kpé – kìm ñkányá  
1/Sg/AGR–Pres–Mod–scratch roof, Òkôn 3/Sg/AGR–Pres–Mod–pierce mat

‘(I) would repair the roof if Okon prepares the roofing mat’

Apart from expressing willingness and wish as discussed above, the modal affix *kpà*– is used to express probability as the following examples show:

4. Àniédí á – θ – kpé – kâ ídím, á – θ – kpà – yé ídém  
Àniédí 3/Sg/AGR–Pres–Mod–go stream, 3/Sg/AGR–Pres–Mod–wash body  
‘If Àniédí should go to the stream he probably would have a bath’

5. Ìkwō á – θ – kpè – kíd ífíá á – θ – kpà – bók éféré  
Ìkwō 3/Sg/AGR–Pres–Mod–see firewood, 3/Sg/AGR–Pres–Mod–renovate roof

‘If Ìkwō should see firewood, she probably would prepare soup’

The above sentences in 4 and 5 are in the present tense. If however, the sentences are in the past, it means therefore that the condition was not fulfilled. That is to say that the situation, which is carried by the main clause, did not hold after all as shown in the examples below:

6a. Afìdñ á – kpé – ké – yém éyínúfòk, á – kpà – ké – kíd  
Afìdñ 3/Sg/AGR–Mod–Past search child house, 3/Sg/AGR–Mod–Past see  
‘If Afìdñ had sought for a house help, she would have found one’

6b. Afìdñ á – màá– kpé – yém éyínúfòk, á – kpà – ké – kíd  
Afìdñ 3/Sg/AGR–Past–Mod–search child house, 3/Sg/AGR–Mod–Past see  
‘If Afìdñ had sought for a house help, she would have found one’

From the above examples, it means that *Afìdñ* did not search for a house



help. If she had done that, then she would probably have found one. That is, if *fiòñ* had fulfilled the condition of searching for a house help, then it is most probable that she would have found one.

### 3.1.2 The modal affix *kpé-*

From the discussion in 3.1.1, we have been able to ascertain that the affix *kpà-* is a modal affix in Ibibio. The modal expressions of *kpà-* are those of willingness, polite request, probability and wish. We also observed that the modal affix *kpà-* could only occur in conditional constructions. That is, there must be a conditional clause before *kpà-* can function.

In Ibibio language as observed by Essien (1988:49) "condition or dependence of the fulfillment of one or another as seen by the speaker, necessarily involves some doubt. If this is the case, the word or affix that expresses a conditional situation is a modal word or modal affix". This assertion by Essien qualifies *kpé-* as a modal affix.

As we observed earlier, *kpé-* is attached or prefixed to the verb in the conditional or subordinate clause. It is used to express the following moods: certainty, conditionality and probability.

One of the functions of *kpé-* as a modal affix is in the expression of certainty. That is, whether the speaker is certain about a situation or not. Let us consider some examples where this is expressed.

- 7a. Ábíá á – màá – *kpé* – ké – fiàd étáp, édîm í – *kpí* – ki – dèp – pé  
Specialist 3/Sg AGR–Past–Mod–Past spit saliva, rain 3/Sg/AGR–Mod–Past–fall–Neg  
'If the rain maker had spat saliva, it would not have rained.'
- 7b. Ábíá á – màá – *kpé* – ké – fiàd étáp, édîm á – *kpà* – ké – tr  
Specialist 3/Sg/AGR–Past–Mod–Past–spit saliva, rain 3/Sg/AGR–Mod–Past–stop  
'If the rain maker had spat saliva, the rain would have stopped'
- 8a. Údúák á – màá – *kpé* – ké – bóñ àkàm, ùdóñó í – *kpí* – kí – mùm – mó  
Údúák 3/Sg/AGR–Past–Mod–Past pray prayer, sickness 3/Sg/AGR–Mod–Past–hold–Neg  
'If Údúák had prayed, she would not have been sick'
- 8b. Údúák á – màá – *kpé* – ké – bóñ àkàm, ùdóñó á – *kpà* – ké – kùèñé  
Údúák 3/Sg/AGR–Past–Mod–Past pray prayer, sickness 3/Sg/AGR–Mod–Past–finish  
'If Údúák had prayed, her sickness would have finished'



The examples above are instances of unfulfilled conditions where certainty of the situations is expressed. Whereas the (a) parts of the examples express such certainty in the negative given a condition, the (b) parts of the examples express such certainty in the positive also given a condition. Given the conditions, the speaker is certain that the situation expressed in the examples would or would not have occurred.

We noticed from the discussion above that the modal affix *kpé-* is used to mark certainty or otherwise of a situation. This modal affix also occurs in conditional clause. Like *kpà-*, *kpé-* apart from expressing uncertainty also expresses probability as the following examples show:

9. *yò á - θ - kpé - kíd éféré, á θ, - kpà - díá ùsõñ*  
*yò* 3/Sg/AGR-Pres-Mod-see soup, 3/Sg/AGR-Pres-Mod-eat fufu  
 'If *yò* sees soup, he would eat fufu'

The certainty or otherwise of the modal affix *kpè-* is dependent on the tense, that is, the degree of certainty (either certain or uncertain) of the situation expressed by the conditional clause is relative to the tense of that conditional or subordinate clause.

10. *Údúák á - θ - kpé - ka úfókábàsì, á - yàá - bõñ àkàm*  
*Údúák* 3/Sg/AGR-Pres-Mod-go house god, 3/Sg/AGR-Fut-pray prayer  
 'If *Údúák* should go to church, she would pray'

From the above example, the tense of the main clause is in the future. Futurity on its own is one way of expressing the certainty or otherwise of a situation. Even though the modal affix itself occurs in the conditional clause, the certainty of the situation is carried/expressed in the main clause because of the tense of such main clause. It is therefore certain that should *Údúák* go to the church, she will pray.

However, in a situation where the tense is in the past, then this will ultimately lead to the non-fulfillment of the condition. This therefore means that the situation expressed by the conditional clause did not hold as shown in the example below:

11. *Údúák á - màá - kpé - ké - k úfókábàsì, á - kpà - ké - bõñ àkàm*  
*Údúák* 3/Sg/AGR-Past-Mod-Past go house god, 3/Sg/AGR-Mod-Past-pray prayer  
 'If *Údúák* had gone to church she would have prayed'

What the above sentence presupposes is that the action or situation of the conditional clause (that is, of *Údúák*'s going to church) did not hold therefore the action in the main clause certainly did not take place.



From the above discussion, it should be noted that when, the modal affix *kpé-* occurs in a conditional clause, then the tense of the main clause (which may optionally take another modal affix *kpà-*) may be either in the past or future as shown in examples 10 and 11 above.

The modal affix *kpé-* equally occurs in the negative in the expression of certainty and probability. This is evidenced in examples 12 below which is presented after the structure had undergone some morpho-syntactic processes.

12. Údúák í – míí – kpí – kí – kà – há úfókábàsì, í – kpí – kí – bòñ – ñó àkàm  
 Údúák 3/Sg/AGR–Past–Mod–Past–go Neg house god, 3/Sg/AGR–Mod–  
 Past–pray Neg prayer  
 ‘If Údúák had not gone to church, she would not have prayed’

This example simply implies that the condition, which is expressed in the conditional or subordinate clause (that is, of *Údúák*'s going to church) was actually met, therefore the situation in the main clause, which depended on the condition, also held.

#### 4.0 Conclusion

Mood is expressed in *Ibibio* in different ways. Modal markers may be lexicalized or grammaticalized. However, this paper treated the grammaticalized modals in the language. Whereas *kpà-* is used to express willingness, wish, probability and polite request, *kpé-* is used to express uncertainty and probability. The two modal markers can occur together especially in conditional sentences.

#### Abbreviations

1/Sg/AGR	-	First person singular agreement marker
3/Sg/AGR	-	Third person singular agreement marker
θ	-	Zero present tense marker
INFL	-	Inflection
Past	-	Past tense marker
Pres	-	Present tense marker
Future	-	Future tense marker
Mod	-	Modal marker
NP	-	Noun Phrase



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