

Perfectives in Ndengeleko; one or many?

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The Bantu language Ndengeleko (P11) of coastal Tanzania is rich in perfective post-root morphemes. Next to the common Bantu suffix –ile, we also see the quite common occurrence of –ike. With some verbs these suffixes are simply added to the verb root. With other verbs, however, they cause imbrication. Some examples are the following:

With imbrication:

ba-bonag-i-n-e 'they have met', from –bonagana 'to meet'

ni-tel-ii-k-e 'I have cooked', from –teleka 'to cook'

Without imbrication:

a-w-iile 'he has died', from –wa 'to die'

a-n-kem-ike (mwe) 'he called you (you pl.)', from –kema 'to call', a-n-kemi is also possible.

There is also a short perfective form –i, which is sometimes in free variation with –ile or –ike, as seen in the last of the examples above, and sometimes the only perfective form. Some verbs show stem modification in combination with the –i suffix. Moreover, there is a perfective form ending in –ine:

a-tekw-iine 'he broke (something)', from –tekwa 'to break (trans.)'.

In this paper, data and analysis will be presented which show that all varieties have developed from the same morpheme, although one may conclude that Ndengeleko has several perfective morphemes synchronically. Especially interesting is the addition of the suffix –ike when it is not the result of imbrication. As expected, the suffixation of –ile in combination with imbrication results in –ike when the last root consonant of a verb is k. It is more surprising that –ike can be added to a verb root without imbrication being involved. This is a very rare suffix indeed in a Bantu comparative perspective. It is claimed in this paper that the suffix

–ike behaves in analogy with the suffix –ile. It first occurred only as a result of imbrication, but has come to be 'overused' as an independent suffix.