

Communicative Functions of the Augment in Cigogo

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Abstract

This paper seeks to examine different functions of the augment in Cigogo (G11), a Bantu language spoken in central Tanzania. The data were collected through translational questionnaires, audio-recording of oral texts, and native speakers' grammaticality judgements of Cigogo texts. The analysis is guided by Lyons' (1999) theory of definiteness. The findings establish that the augment performs various linguistic and communicative roles in Cigogo. These include signalling definiteness, specificity, and anaphoric reference. It is further established that the augment functions as a topic marker in topicalized constructions. These findings contribute to the typological literature on the functions of the augment in Bantu languages.

Keywords: *Bantu languages, Cigogo, augment, definiteness, specificity*

Introduction

Bantu languages are known for their complex noun class system, which constitutes a noun class prefix and a noun stem. In many Bantu languages, a noun class prefix may be preceded by an element referred to as the augment (Nurse & Philippson 2003). According to Katamba (2003), across the Bantu zone, the augment, also called a pre-prefix or the initial vowel, is associated with a wide range of functions, including signalling definiteness, specificity, and focus. In Dzamba (C32), for example, Bokamba (1971) observed the presence or absence of the augment induces definite and indefinite readings,

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respectively as shown in (1).

- (1) a. *bá-tò*
2-person
'People'
b. *bà-bá-tò*
AUG-2-person
'The people' (Bokamba, 1971:218, glosses modified).

The example in (1a) appear without the augment, resulting in indefinite reading. This contrasts with (1b) where the affixation of the augment *bà* gives rise to a definite reading *bàbátò* 'the people.' In this context, the augment *bà* functions the same as the definite article *the* in English.

Cigogo displays a typical Bantu nominal morphology, permitting all nouns (except classes 14-18) to take an augment and thus yielding the structure AUGMENT + PREFIX + STEM, as displayed in the sentential contexts in (2) below.

- (2) a. *i-nghuku i-ku-ly-a-i-ma-tama*
AUG-9.chicken SM9-PRS-eat-FV AUG-6-maize
'The chicken is eating maize.'
b. *i-w-ana wo-demul-a-i-ci-tabu*
AUG-2-child SM2.FUT-tear-FV AUG-7-book
'The children will tear the book.'

Despite the widespread occurrence of the augment with nouns from different classes in Cigogo as illustrated in (2) above, the specific communicative roles performed by the augment in this language have not received significant attention in the literature. This paper, theretofore, seeks to examine different communicative roles performed by the augment in Cigogo. This paper proceeds as follows. The second section highlights the methodology employed in the study. The third section addresses the theory guiding the study. The fourth section presents a review of the literature on the subject at hand. The fifth part highlights the form of the augment, and the sixth section discusses the functions of the augment. The final section provides a conclusion.

Methodology

The data in this study were collected from a sample of 10 Cigogo native speakers from two villages, namely Iringamvumi and Mlowa Barabarani in Chamwino District, Dodoma Tanzania. The main criterion for the selection of informants was fluency in Cigogo, the target language, and Kiswahili, the communicative language. The data were collected from three sources, namely translational questionnaires (elicitation), text collection (audio-recording), and grammaticality judgements. Through translational questionnaire, informants were asked to translate 100 Kiswahili nouns, 50 phrases and 50 sentences into the target language. In audio-recording, 3 narratives about natural phenomenon were collected from 3 groups of respondents. Moreover, the participants were provided with a list of 30 sentences in Cigogo and they were asked to provide judgement on their grammaticality. This list was prepared by the first named author of this article since he is a native speaker of the language. Grammaticality judgement helped to gather informants' views on whether constructions with or without the augment could sound grammatically correct. The method also helped to obtain information regarding the distribution of the augment in nouns, conditions triggering its presence or absence, and its grammatical role.

Theoretical Underpinnings

This work is guided by Lyons' (1999) semantic theory of definiteness. It employs the four principles of definiteness namely, identifiability, familiarity, uniqueness, and inclusiveness. The choice of the theory is based on Lyons' argument that the distinction between definite and indefinite entities can be made with reference to such principles. Lyons (1999) adds that in many languages, a noun phrase may contain an element which seems to have a principal role of indicating the definiteness or indefiniteness of the noun phrase. The presence of such an element is attributed to the familiarity hypothesis and identifiability principle of definiteness. Such elements can either be lexical words like the English definite and indefinite articles (*the, a*) or affixes like the Arabic definite prefix *-al* and indefinite *-n*. In this

regard, it can be established that different languages have elements or affixes that express definiteness or indefiniteness. It is from this point of view that the augment has been associated with such role in different Bantu languages (see Bokamba, 1971; Mojapelo, 2007; Visser, 2008; Asiimwe, 2014). This theory is relevant to the present study since the study indicates that in Cigogo, among other roles, the augment functions to indicate definiteness.

The Augment in Bantu Languages

The augment is a widespread element across Bantu languages. It is an obligatory morphological segment that precedes a noun class prefix in some Bantu languages. This initial element has been referred to by various names depending on morphological, syntactic, pragmatic and semantic roles it plays, including the initial vowel (Mould, 1974), pre-prefix (Gregersen, 1967), specifier (Mkude, 1974), the augment (De Blois, 1970), initial element (Goodness, 2017), vowel of definiteness (Batibo, 1985), and weak determiner (Gambarage, 2013). In this paper, we consistently use the term augment following Katamba's (2003) argument that the element carries the augmentative function when used in various Bantu languages.

In Bantu languages, two major categories of augment languages are distinguished in the literature, namely default augmented languages and default augmentless languages (Ström & Miestamo (2020:3). In a default augmented language, the augment is used in all contexts except in certain limited environments where it is dropped, as in Nguni languages. This means that the occurrence of the augment in these languages is obligatory. In this category of languages, the augment plays the role similar to articles in English, such as expressing definiteness and specificity. On the other hand, default augmentless languages use the augment only in very specific contexts such as giving emphasis to nouns and other substantives like adjectives, possessives, and pronouns, as is the case in Eton (A71) and Luguru (G35). In this regard, Cigogo falls under the second category of default augmentless languages since the occurrence of the augment in this language is optional.

Discussion on the augment in Bantu languages has attracted the attention of a number of scholars, particularly regarding its origin, form, distribution and function (see De Blois, 1970; Hyman & Katamba, 1993; Progovac, 1993; Petzell, 2003; Asiimwe, 2014; Goodness, 2017; Hang'ombe *et al.*, 2019; Mwageni, 2019). Regarding its historical development, for example, De Blois (1970) argued that all Bantu languages had an augment at one stage of their development. This suggests that Bantu languages that do not have the augment at the present, such as Kiswahili (G42), KiN-kutsu (C73), and Kimatuumbi (P13) might have dropped it in the course of development (Maho 1999; Hang'ombe *et al.* 2019).

There are divergent views regarding what triggers the occurrence of the augment and its scope of occurrence within a clause. For example, Dewees (1971) argues that syntax triggers the presence of the initial vowel (augment) in Luganda (J15) while Mould (1974) argues that its presence is triggered by semantics or pragmatics. In the same vein, De Blois (1970) and Kadenge (2015) argue that in Proto-Bantu, the augment was used to express prominence or emphasis. Furthermore, in Tonga, the augment is not only found in nouns, but also in most of the substantives in their definite and/or emphatic forms (Hang'ombe, Mwiinde & Mweembe 2019).

With regard to its roles, the augment has been associated with a number of functions such as focality, definiteness, deixis and specificity (Petzell, 2003). Among these roles, specificity and definiteness have received a lot of prominence in the literature (see Bokamba, 1971; Mojapelo, 2007; Visser, 2008; Gambarage, 2013; Asiimwe, 2014). In the following section, we address the forms of the augment in Cigogo before proceeding to the analysis of its functions.

The Form of the Augment in Cigogo

As de Blois (1970) observed, the shape of the augment differs across languages. In some languages, such as Masaaba (JE31), both V and CV-shaped augments can be attested while in others, such Ganda (JE15) and Zulu (S42) the augment is consistently made up of a

vowel (Katamba, 2003). In Cigogo, the augment is consistently a vowel, which is either /i/ or /u/ subject to the vowel contained in the noun class prefix. Table 1 presents the Cigogo augments with their respective noun class prefixes and examples.

Table 1: Cigogo Augments and their Respective Noun Classes

Noun Class	Augment	Class Prefix	Example	Gloss
1	u-	mu-	u-mu-nhu	'person'
2	i-	wa-	i-wa-nhu	'persons'
3	u-	mu-	u-mu-bici	'tree'
4	i-	mi-	i-mi-bici	'trees'
5	i-	i-/li-	i-li-hapa	'thatch'
6	i-	ma	i-ma-hapa	'thatch' (plural)
7	i-	ci-	i-ci-nhu	'thing'
8	i-	vi-	i-vi-nhu	'things'
9	i-	N-	i-mhene	'goat'
10	i-	N-	i-zi-mhene	'goats'
11	u-	u-/lu-	u-lu-pinde	'bow'
14	u-	u-	Udoba	'laziness'
15		ku-	ku-lima	'to cultivate'
16		ha-	ha-canghya	'above'
17		ku-	ku-mu-gunda	'to the farm'
18		mu-	mu-malenga	'in the water'

As shown in Table 1 above, generally all nouns in Cigogo can take the augment, with the exception of nouns from classes 14 (abstract nouns), 15 (infinitives) and 16-18 (locative classes). The restriction in the occurrence of the augment with these noun classes can be attributed to phonological and syntactic factors. Phonologically, Cigogo does not tolerate the succession of two vowels, thus nouns in class 14, which begin with a vowel, block the affixation of the augment. It is for the same reason that nouns in classes 5 (i-/li-) and 11 (u-/lu-) which have two prefix options (V and CV) only take the CV option when the augment is attached. The syntactic restriction applies to the nouns in class 15 (ku-infinitives). Although these nouns syntactically function as nouns, they have got some verbal characteristics. As such, they restrict the occurrence of the

augment since by nature the augment does not attach to verbs. In the following section, we address the different communicative roles of the augment in Cigogo.

Communicative Functions of the Augment

As stated earlier, the augment has received a considerable attention in the literature, with a focus on its form, distribution, and function (see De Blois, 1970; Hyman & Katamba, 1993; Progovac, 1993; Petzell, 2003; Mojapelo, 2007; Visser, 2008; Asiimwe, 2014; Mwangeni, 2019). Nevertheless, the function of the augment in Bantu languages has been much debated and its role seem to vary across languages. Some scholars treat the morpheme as the English definite article (the); thus, its use in Bantu languages is assumed to indicate the definiteness and indefiniteness of referents. For example, Petzell's (2003:6) study suggests that "historically, the pre-prefix functioned as a pronoun or definite article in Kagulu (G12)". She further argues that the function of the augment in Kagulu(G12) is licensed by both syntax and semantics. In the same vein, De Blois (1970) posits that the augment was used to show prominence to referents. Thus, these observations suggest that the augment has been associated with various roles such as marking definiteness, specificity, prominence or emphasis, deixis, and focus. It is therefore insightful to further this discussion on the role of the augment in Bantu by bringing in data from Cigogo. The data that we collected reveals the following communicative roles of the augment in Cigogo.

The Augment as a Marker of Definiteness

Lyons (1999) proposed three strategies employed by languages to express definiteness; these include morphological (through affixes), syntactic (through nominal dependents such as demonstratives and possessives), and discourse-pragmatic methods (through discourse cues). In Cigogo, two of these methods are attested, namely morphological and syntactic methods. Morphologically, definiteness is expressed through the augment. In (3a) and (4a) below, the presence of the augment induces a definite reading while

its absence in (3b) and (4b) yields an indefinite interpretation.

- (3) a. *i-nghuku i-ku-ly-a ma-tama*
AUG-9.chicken SM9-PRS-eat-FV 6-maize
'The chicken is eating maize.'
- b. *nghuku i-ku-ly-a ma-tama*
9.chicken SM9-PRES-eat-FV 6-maize
'A chicken is eating maize.'
- (4) a. *i-mi-kalile mi-pya*
AUG-4-life 4-new
'The new life'
- b. *mi-kalile mi-pya*
4-life 4-new
'New life'

Expression of definiteness through the augment as observed in Cigogo has been reported in several other Bantu languages, including Dzamba (C32) (Bokamba, 1971), Bemba (M42) (Givon, 1978), Sesotho (S33) (Mojapelo, 2007), isiXhosa (S41) (Visser, 2008), Runyankore-Rukiga (JE14) (Asiimwe, 2014), and Kibena (G65) (Mwageni 2019). Example (1) from Bokamba (1971) is repeated here as (5) to illustrate the pattern in Dzamba.

- (5) a. *bá-tò*
2-person
'People'
- b. *bà-bá-tò*
AUG- 2-person
'The people' (Bokamba, 1971:218, glosses modified)

The absence of the augment in (5a) yields an indefinite reading while its inclusion in (5b) induces a definite reading. This widespread use of the augment seems to suggest that expression of definiteness is among the commonly attested roles of the augment in Bantu languages.

Besides the use of the augment, definiteness in Cigogo can be expressed syntactically through a demonstrative. Thus, the presence of the demonstrative indicates that the NP is familiar to the hearer and thus definite while its absence signals unfamiliarity and thus indefinite. The presence of the demonstrative restricts the occurrence of the augment, hence the two are in complementary distribution. Again, definite reading of a referent can further be supported by the fact that both the speaker and the hearer can locate the referent within the environment. This is made possible through the demonstratives as illustrated in (6-7).

- (6) a. *ayi kaya*
 1DEM.PROX 9. house
 ‘This house’
- b. **ayi i-kaya*
 1DEM.PROX AUG-9. house
 ‘This house’

- (7) a. *alyo li-luwa*
 5DEM.NON_PROX 5-flower
 ‘That flower’
- b. **alyo i-li-luwa*
 5DEM.NON_PROX AUG-5-flower
 ‘That flower’

In (6a) and (7a) above, the demonstratives *ayi* and *alyo* induce definite readings of the referents. Conversely, the examples in (6b) and (7b) indicate that the co-occurrence of the augment and the demonstrative is not permitted in Cigogo since both elements perform the same role.

The Augment as a Marker of Specificity

One of the attested functions of the augment in Cigogo is to indicate specificity of the NP. A noun phrase that is specific is referential and its existence is presupposed (Bokamba, 1971). Apart from using the augment, Bokamba (1971) adds that specificity can be expressed

by some specific verb forms and construction types. He thus argues that when an affirmative verb is in the past tense, the subject NP has specificity since the action is assumed to have already taken place. Moreover, affirmative verb forms such as ‘hear’, ‘drink’, ‘see’ and ‘eat’ can suggest specificity of their objects because they imply the existence of their object nouns (Bokamba, 1971; Asiimwe, 2014). Similarly, in Cigogo, both the augment and certain verb forms can be used to indicate specificity. The example in (8) illustrate the expression of specificity through the augment.

- (8) a. *wana wo-demul-a i-ci-tabu* [specific]
2.child SM2.FUT-tear-FV AUG-7-book
‘Children will tear the book.’
- b. *wana wo-demul-a ci-tabu* [non-specific]
2.child SM2.FUT-tear-FV 7-book
‘Children will tear a (any) book.’

In (8a), the presence of the augment in the noun *icitabu* ‘the book’ indicates that the noun is specific, that is, a specific book. In this case, the interlocutors share some knowledge of a specific book in mind. On the other hand, the absence of the augment in (8b) induces a non-specific reading, meaning that it refers to any book.

As for the verb forms, in Chigogo, affirmative verb forms in the past tense can induce a specific reading of the object noun even if such a noun occurs without an augment (9a). However, the verb in future tense yields a non-specific interpretation (9b).

- (9) a. *i-ma-bwa go-li-won-a li-zoka* [specific]
AUG-6-dog SM6.PST-OM5-see-FV 5-snake
‘Dogs saw the/a snake.’
- b. *i-ma-bwa go-li-won-a li-zoka* [non-specific]
AUG-6-dog SM6.FUT-OM5-see-FV 5-snake
‘Dogs will see a snake.’

In (9a), the past form of the verb *wona* ‘see’ gives rise to the specific

reading of the object noun *lizoka* ‘snake’ since this form of the verb makes the object noun presupposed. This contrasts with (9b) where the object noun is interpreted as non-specific because the verb is in future tense; the event of seeing has not yet taken place.

The Augment as a Topic Marker

The augment can function to co-reference the topical element in instances of topicalization. Topicalization involves moving one constituent of a sentence to the front so that it becomes a topic, that is, ‘the entity which the proposition expressed by the sentence is about (Lambrecht, 1996: 118)’. The topic, therefore, denotes the issue under discussion, whether previously mentioned or assumed in discourse (Bresnan & Mchombo 1987: 746). When topicalization takes place, the sentence initial position, which is traditionally occupied by subject, is taken by some other elements, such as a locative expression or object, and thus pushing the subject to the postverbal position. In Cigogo, a topicalised noun must be augmented to give it prominence in a declarative sentence, as shown in (10-11).

- (10) a. *baba ka-li-ulag-a li-dogowe*. [non-topicalized]
 1.father M1.PST-OM5-kill-FV 5-donkey
 ‘Father killed a/the donkey.’
- b. *i-li-dogowe, baba ka-li-ulag-a* [topicalized]
 AUG-5-donkey 1.father SM1.PST-OM5-kill-FV
 ‘The donkey, father killed it.’

In the non-topicalized construction in (10a), the object NP appears in the canonical postverbal positions, hence it does not take the augment. On the other hand, in (10b), the object NPs is topicalised and shifted to the preverbal position where it triggers affixation of the augment.

A similar pattern has been observed in Kagulu(G12) (Petzell 2003), as exemplified in (11).

- (11) *i-kalinde nho ya-ku-lond-a i-muke Wa-nyenda kwa*
AUG-Kalinde then SM1-PST-take-FV
AUG-1.wife Wanyenda from *m-dala* 1-old woman
'Kalinde then took his wife Wanyenda from the old woman.'
(Petzell, 2003:8)

The example in (11) shows that the elements that are topicalized and brought to the initial position of the sentence are augmented to give such elements prominence. In this sentence, the noun *ikalinde* (the name of a person) has been topicalized and thus it occurs with an augment. This seems to suggest that in both Cigogo and Kagulu, word order has significant influence on the occurrence of the augment.

The Augment as an Indicator of Anaphoric Reference

Anaphoric reference is one way of marking the identity between what is being expressed and what has already been expressed (Crystal, 2008:25). In Cigogo, the augment functions to indicate anaphoric reference when it is attached to a noun that was previously mentioned in the same discourse or text. In this regard, the augment is used to indicate an entity that is familiar to the hearer from the linguistic context. In example (12) below, the noun *munhu* 'person' appears twice; firstly, without an augment and later with an augment. In the second appearance, the noun is augmented since it was introduced earlier in discourse, and thus the hearer simply recalls it. The augment, therefore, serves to establish a reference to the earlier mention of the noun.

- (12) *Katali hali hoyali mu-nhu mu-monga, u-munhu yulya*
Long time ago there was 1-person 1-one AUG-person
1.DEM *yali yenha wa-golece we-jete* he had 2.wife 2-two
'Once upon a time, there was one man, that man had two wives.'

In the context illustrated in (12) above, leaving out the augment in the second mention of the noun makes the sentence ungrammatical.

Conclusion

In this article, we have explored different functions of the augment in Cigogo. We have shown that the augment is an important linguistic resource in the language as it performs several communicative roles. The presence of the augment in the NPs shows that NP is definite or specific. The augment also indicates anaphoric reference in the text. Moreover, the augment functions as a topic marker in topicalised constructions. This latter role of the augment seems to suggest that besides semantics and pragmatics, word order has an influence on the occurrence of the augment in Cigogo. These findings contribute to the body of literature on the functions of the augment in different Bantu languages.

Abbreviations

* (asterisk)	Ungrammatical / ill-formed expressions
ADV	Adverb
AUG	Augment
DEM	Demonstratives
FUT	Future
FV	Final vowel
OM	Object Marker
PRS	Present tense
PRO	Pronoun
PROG	Progressive
PST	Past tense
SG	Singular
SM	Subject Marker

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