

DURATIVITY, PUNCTUALITY, AND THE IMPERFECTIVE PARADOX: THE CASE IN ESAN

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Durativity, punctuality, and the imperfective paradox are relevant concepts in the discussion of semantic oppositions of the aspectual system of languages. We examine the semantic classes of verbs from the fact that static and dynamic situations are two basic distinctions germane to their definition and characterisation, given that this basic distinction is relevant to the analysis of the grammatical category of aspect.

The concepts of durativity and punctuality are investigated to see how the different semantic verb classes behave in similar syntactic environments, and finally we look at the imperfective paradox as an aspect of durativity in verb use in the Esan language.

It is found that durativity and punctuality are grammaticalized in Esan, and all semantic verb classes occur in these structures with similar results but with different semantic interpretations. Furthermore, accomplishments, a subclass of processes to which the imperfective paradox applies, behave like events in both punctual and durative structures, thus confirming Lyons' position that they, in fact, become events when their terminal phase is achieved/attained.

La durativité, la ponctualité et le paradoxe de l'imperfectif/l'inachevé sont des concepts pertinents dans la discussion des oppositions sémantiques des systèmes aspectuels des langues. Notre examen des classes sémantiques des verbes se base sur le fait que les situations statiques et dynamiques sont deux éléments qui servent à en établir les définitions et les caractères, vu que cette distinction fondamentale est pertinente à l'analyse de la catégorie grammaticale de l'aspect.

Nous étudions les concepts de la durativité et de la ponctualité afin de comprendre le comportement des diverses classes sémantiques verbales dans des contextes syntaxiques analogues, pour ensuite évaluer le paradoxe de l'imperfectif comme aspect de la durativité dans le système verbal de la langue esan.

Il se trouve qu'en esan la durativité et la ponctualité sont grammaticalisées, et que toutes les classes sémantiques verbales s'utilisent dans ces structures, pour donner des résultats similaires, mais dont les interprétations sémantiques diffèrent. De plus, les accomplissements, sous-classe des procès auxquels s'applique le paradoxe de l'imperfectif, se comportent comme des événements dans les structures, si bien ponctuelles que duratives, ce qui confirme l'hypothèse de Lyons selon laquelle ils deviennent des événements une fois accomplie/atteinte leur phase terminale.

INTRODUCTION

Esan is a North-Central Edoid language of the Benue-Kwa grouping (Elugbe 1986). In the earlier classification by Greenberg (1963), it was treated as a Kwa language of the Niger-Congo grouping now classified as New Benue-Congo by Williamson (1989). The language is spoken in four Local Government Areas of Edo State, Nigeria viz. Esan West, Esan Central, Esan North-East, and Esan South-East. The data is taken from the Ekpoma dialect.

This article investigates durativity, punctuality, and the imperfective paradox as relevant concepts in the specification of semantic oppositions that find expression in the aspectual system of the Esan language. Consequently, we briefly look at static and dynamic situations, i.e., the semantic classes of verbs, before we discuss the concept of durativity and punctuality with respect to the semantic verb classes in order to see how different verbs behave in similar environments. Finally, we examine the concept of imperfective paradox to see the case in Esan.

STATIC AND DYNAMIC SITUATIONS

In the literature, a distinction is usually made between static and dynamic situations. The two notions are terms used in grammatical classification to refer to two main aspectual categories of verb use. The criteria for distinguishing them in the literature are mainly syntactic. For instance, whether they occur with the progressive (as stative verbs do not and dynamic verbs do) and whether they occur in the imperative (as stative verbs do not and dynamic verbs do). In this article, however, we are more interested in the semantic view point. Thus, based on distinctions on semantic grounds, stative verbs express states of affairs rather than actions (activities or acts), unlike dynamic situations (see Van Dijk 1977, Crystal 1997).

The conceptual framework within which we organize and describe our perceptions of the physical world for all languages is one in which we can identify all kinds of situations which are distinguished on the basis of stativity and dynamics. Following Lyons (1977), we use the term SITUATION as a cover term for states-of-affairs, events, and processes. A static situation is one that exists, rather than happening; it is homogeneous, continuous, and unchanging throughout the period of existence. In contrast, a dynamic situation is one that happens, occurs, or takes place. It may be momentary or enduring in temporal terms in which case it will have several temporal contours and may or may not be under the control of an agent. On grounds of the stativity and dynamics distinction, Lyons (1977) defines different semantic classes of verbs. Thus, a dynamic situation that is extended in time is a process; one that is nonextended and momentary is an event. Hence, both processes and events are dynamic while statives are nondynamic. Furthermore, if the dynamic situation (process or event) is controlled by an agent, it is an action; if the action (process) is under the control of an agent, it is an activity, but if the action (event) is under the control of an agent, it is an act. Lyons treats activities as agent-controlled processes and acts as agent-controlled events. It is important to note that while all processes and events are happenings, only actions (activities and acts) are doings.

Quirk and Greenbaum (1977:21) see nouns and adjectives (with only a few exceptions) as being naturally stative since they refer to entities that are regarded as stable. In contrast, verbs and adverbs are naturally characterized as dynamic as they usually depict situations that indicate action, activity, and temporal or changing conditions. For Comrie (1976:49), dynamic situations necessarily involve change. This is unlike stative situations which do not normally involve change. Thus, unless something happens to change the state, that state will continue to exist. Hence, states are homogeneous situations which last.

From the above, it is clear that, as already observed by Lyons (1977:485) among others, the distinction between static and dynamic situations is relevant to the analysis of the grammatical category of aspect. In many languages, it finds expression in being either lexicalized or grammaticalized in semantic oppositions of the languages. For instance in English, it is lexicalized in the opposition between 'be' and 'become'. Stativity is part of the aspectual character of a subclass of verbs. Progressivity which is the inherent aspectual quality of most verbs, is grammaticalized in English. Thus, semantically, the progressive aspect represents a situation that is seen or interpreted not merely as existing (as with the static) but as happening or developing through time. When so used, that situation cannot be associated with a verb that denotes a state of affairs. The specification of the temporal axis is of utmost importance for the definition

of stativity and dynamics, as we shall see when we examine durativity, punctuality, and the semantic classes of verbs, to which we now turn.

DURATIVITY AND PUNCTUALITY IN RELATION TO THE SEMANTIC CLASSES OF VERBS

In the organization and description of our perceptions of the physical world, we can identify not only states-of-affairs of shorter or longer duration but also events, processes, and actions. Durative (Durativity) according to Crystal 1997, is a term used in the grammatical analysis of aspect to refer to situations involving a period of time and contrasts with punctual or nondurative. In the literature, the term durative is also used as involving time interval/period/extension/stretch (see Dowty 1979, Vendler 1967, Comrie 1976, Lyons 1977). These terms contrast with punctual time instants/moments. Vendler (1967) classifies verbs into four distinct categories: states, activities, accomplishments, and achievements. For Vendler, activities, accomplishments, and states are durative since they depict situations involving temporal extension. In contrast, achievements are nondurative or punctual because they involve time instants.

Lyons (1977) classifies verbs into three main classes based on semantic criteria: states, processes, and events. Vendler's activities are for Lyons agent-controlled processes while his acts are for Lyons agent-controlled events, as earlier observed. States and processes are durative situations that last/endure for a certain period of time (whether short or long). This similarity was noted by Aristotle and recently by other scholars like Ryle (1949), Kenny (1963) and Vendler (1967) cited by Lyons (1977:711). Stative and process verbs, being durative situations, involve temporal extension (long/short), so the relevant question is how long did it take? In addition, durative situations allow co-occurrence with appropriate temporal adverbials such as 'for x days/months/years'. These adverbials express duration and are used to express durative aspect. In contrast, verbs denoting events are expected to co-occur with temporal adverbials that express punctuality. For punctual situations, the relevant question is when/at what time did the situation depicted by the verb happen?

From the above discussion, it is clear that events are distinguished from states and processes, in involving punctual situations that do not necessarily last or endure through time but take place momentarily or instantaneously, that is, at a *point* in time. Thus, punctual situations have no duration, no internal structure. In a language that has the imperfective forms to indicate reference to the internal structure of a situation it is expected that punctuality and imperfectivity will be incompatible (see Comrie 1976:41). Interestingly, this is the case in the Esan language in the situation where iterativity neutralizes this expected incompatibility, see below.

Similarly, Comrie (1976:49) observes that punctual situations automatically involve a change of state and so are automatically dynamic. On the basis that states are homogeneous situations that endure through time, it is paradoxical to have a punctual state. From the data on Esan, however, states can be made dynamic on occasions when focus is on their beginnings or endings, since they can start or end. In fact, durative situations (states and processes), unlike punctual ones, usually have both a beginning and an end, unless they are omnitemporal/eternal (e.g., oil floats on water). In between the beginning and the end, they have many temporal phases.

Esan does not make a clear distinction between 'in/at/on' since these are all represented by **bhi** (or **bhe**), the deictic locative, used for both spatial and temporal reference. Syntactically, it occurs directly before the noun phrase with which it co-occurs.

- (1)
- | | | | | |
|----|------------|--------------|-----------|--|
| a. | bhi | egógo | éà | at three o'clock |
| | | clock | three | |
| b. | bhi | íkpe | éà | at three years old; in/for three years (= in three |
| | | years | three | years hence; in the course of three years) |
| c. | bhi | èkì | | in/at the market |
| | | market | | |
| d. | bhi | òtò | | in/on the ground |
| | | ground | | |

How then are durativity and punctuality expressed in Esan? In Esan, it is observed that the concepts of durativity and punctuality are grammaticalized. Each finds expression in a particular syntactic pattern and combination of morphemes along with their associated tones in the particular structure (see Ejele 1986:88). Esan has two contrasting structures which respectively mark punctual and durative situations. In both structures, the temporal adverbial obligatorily occurs sentence initially, a position associated with focus.

- (2) Temp.advbl. + (that)NP₁ [**dâ** VP/**dâ á**-VP]

[**rè** VP/**rè a**-VP]

It was at t_i(that)NP₁ VP-ed/was VP-ing
It was for/in x time that NP₁ VP-ed/
has been VP-ing

Properly expanded (2) means:

- | | |
|--|--|
| a) Temp.advbl. + (that)NP ₁ dâ VP | It was at t _i (that)NP ₁ VP-ed |
| b) Temp.advbl. + (that)NP ₁ dâ á -VP | It was at t _i (that)NP ₁ was VP-ing |
| c) Temp.advbl. + (that)NP ₁ rè VP | It was for/in x time (that)NP ₁ VP-ed |
| d) Temp.advbl. + (that)NP ₁ rè á -VP | It was for/in x time (that) NP ₁ had
been VP-ing |

In the above, **dâ** VP and **dâ á**-VP, when used with the temporal adverbial in the structure, imply reference to time instants as 'at t_i', which are therefore interpreted as punctual situations. In contrast **rè** VP and **rè a**-VP, when used with the temporal adverbial in the above structure, imply reference to time interval which literally means 'NP₁ used/spent x time' in doing whatever the verb depicts. Hence, it is interpreted as durative time interval/period/stretch. For the status of **á**-VP in Esan to refer to 'progressive/continuous/iterative situations, see Ejele 1986. For the perfective/ imperfective paradigms see Ejele 2000a. In what follows, we examine whether all verb classes can occur in these structures, and the implications they have for the verb classes. Note the role of tone in showing that the **rè** in **rè** VP/**rè á**-VP, the perfective/imperfective correlates, is different from **rè** in durative structure.

PUNCTUALITY/DURATIVITY AND STATIVE VERBS

To recapitulate, statives (like processes) are durative because they take place and go on in time. However, throughout their period of existence consisting of successive phases, they remain unchanging. In a durative situation involving temporal extension

whether of long/short duration, the relevant question is how long did the situation persist. It is not surprising that it can occur with appropriate temporal adverbials such as 'for x days/months/years'. Given the fact that punctuality and durativity are grammaticalized in Esan; we shall see how stative verbs behave in these structures. There are many stative verbs in Esan, examples are: *rẹbhọ* 'believe', *họn* 'hear', *ghe* 'look', *zilo* 'think over/deliberate', *lo* 'think', *khọ* 'resemble', *yan* 'possess/own', *gua* 'contain', *ni* 'survive'. We shall illustrate with *ghe* and *yan* in punctual structures (3a) and (3b), and durative structures (3c) and (3d).

- (3) a. *íkpe èà ọdíá dâ ghé óní èbè*
 years three PUNC look the book
 It was at three-years-old Odia looked at the book.
- b. *íkpe èà ọdíá dâ á-ghe óní èbè*
 years three PUNC ing-look the book
 It was at three-years-old he was looking at the book. (inceptive interpretation) /
 It was at three-years-old he started looking at the book.
- c. *íkpe èà ọdíá rẹ ghé óní èbè*
 years three DUR look the book
 It was for three years Odia looked at the book. / Odia spent three years
 looking through the book. / It took Odia three years to look through the book.
- d. *íkpe èà ọdíá rẹ a-ghe óní èbè*
 years three DUR ing-look the book
 It was in three years Odia was looking at the book. / For three years Odia
 was looking through the book.
- e. *íkpe éeà¹ ọdíá rẹ a-ghe óní èbè*
 It was every three years Odia was looking at the book. / Every three years
 Odia looked at the book.
- (4) a. *íkpe èà ọdíá dâ yan úwâ*
 years three PUNC own house
 It was at three-years-old Odia possessed/owned the house. (e.g., by inheritance)
- b. *íkpe èà ọdíá dâ á-yan uwâ*
 years three ing-own house
 It was at three-years-old Odia was owning the house. / It was at three-
 years-old Odia began to own houses. (OK only under inceptive reading)
- c. *íkpe èà ọdíá rẹ yan úwâ*
 years three DUR own house
 It was for three years Odia owned the house. (maybe he sold it) / Odia
 owned the house for three years.

¹Note that *éèà* is the reduplicated form of *èà* (See Ejele 1982).

d. **íkpe èà ódíá rẹ a-yan uwâ**
 years three ing-own house

It was in three years he was possessing/acquiring houses. / In three years he acquired a house.

e. **íkpe éèà ódíá rẹ a-yan uwâ**

Every three years Odia was acquiring house(s).

Examples (3) and (4), show that stative verbs in Esan can occur in the punctual and the durative structures. In the punctual structures, **dâ VP**, illustrated in (3a), (4a) (simple past) and **dâ á-VP** in (3b), (4b) (progressive aspect), the interpretation 'at three years' marks the time as punctual, thus behaving like momentary/instant situation. It marks a point in time. Interestingly, statives in the progressive aspect are acceptable only under an inceptive interpretation. Thus, Odia initiated the state depicted by the verb ('look' and 'possess') at three years old. It is important to note that when statives occur in the progressive aspect, the situation depicted by the verb is not seen as being in progress but rather as the beginning of a continuous phase. Note also that in (4b), in addition to the inceptive interpretation, Odia could not have owned only one house. The acceptable interpretation is that Odia began to own houses. **úwâ** 'house', refers to singular or plural (see Ejele 1998 for *The Expression of Plurality in Esan*).

In the durative structures **rẹ VP** (in (3c), (4c)) and **rẹ a-VP** (in (3d), (4d)), the interpretation is periodic. Thus, in (3c), (4c) it took Odia three years to look at the book/possess the house. However, while in (3d) it is possible for him to spend three years looking through the same book, in 4d it is very unlikely that he possessed the same house in three years. A possible interpretation of (4d) (like (3d)) as 'every three years' is explicitly expressed in (4e) (like (3e)) which shows clearly that every three years, Odia acquired/took possession of another house. The concept of the time span being interval or periodic is encapsulated in 'in three years' which as a continuous phase is 'every three years'. Recall that statives in **á-VP** structure also mark continuity (see Ejele 2000b). Thus, in Esan statives do occur in the punctual and durative structures. What seems to be more important is that they have different interpretations. Thus, both stative verbs and temporal adverbials are given instant/momentary/punctual interpretation in the **dâ VP/dâ á-VP** structures (whether it is simple past or continuous aspect). In contrast the same stative verbs and temporal adverbials are given periodic/interval/durative interpretation in the **rẹ VP/rẹ a-VP** structures whether in the past or continuous aspect. Surprisingly, statives CAN be given a punctual reading if the period is interpreted as a phase. Thus, three years is seen as one continuous phase interpreted as every three years, seen as point of time reference therefore forcing a punctual interpretation. This contrast with the three years being interpreted as made up internally of three separate years, which would then have entailed a periodic interpretation. This possibility has the effect of neutralizing the expectation that it is a paradox to have a punctual state (see Comrie 1976:49).

PUNCTUALITY/DURATIVITY AND EVENTS

To recap, events are dynamic situations that occur momentarily in time so they do not involve duration, rather they involve punctual time. By their nature, therefore, they do not occur in durative structure. In line with this, they are not expected to co-occur with a durative temporal adverbial. Examples of events in Esan are **san** 'jump, burst' **fi**

úbì 'slap', **biẹ** 'give birth', **u** 'die', **fi osísì** 'shoot', **saa** 'sting', **sua** 'push', **bigbe** 'shirt'. **saa** and **sua** are used to illustrate the case in Esan.

- (5) a. **uki igbé éhíhí dâ sáá ẹfẹ**
 month ten insect sting
 It was at ten months (old) an insect stung Efe.
- b. **uki igbé éhíhí dâ á-sáá ẹfẹ**
 month ten insect PUNC ing-sting
 It was at ten months (old) an insect was stinging Efe. / It was at ten months (old) an insect started stinging Efe. (inceptive reading)
- c. **uki igbé éhíhí rẹ sáá ẹfẹ**
 month ten insect DUR sting
 It was for ten months an insect stung Efe.
- d. **uki igbé éhíhí rẹ a-saa ẹfẹ**
 It was in/for ten months an insect was stinging Efe. / It was every ten months an insect was stinging Efe.
- e. **uki igbúgbé ehihi rẹ a-saa ẹfẹ**
 month ten ten
 It was every ten months an insect was stinging Efe.
- (6) a. **uki igbé ọdiá dâ súa imótò**
 month ten push car
 It was at ten months old Odia pushed a car.
- b. **uki igbé ọdiá dâ á-súa imótò**
 ing-push
 It was at ten months old Odia was pushing a car. / It was at ten months old Odia started pushing a car. (inceptive reading)
- c. **uki igbé ọdiá rẹ súa imótò**
 month ten push car
 It took Odia ten months to push the car. / Odia pushed the car for 10 months.
- d. **uki igbé ọdiá rẹ a-súa imótò**
 month ten DUR ing-push car
 For ten months Odia was pushing the car. / It used to take Odia ten months to push the car. / Odia used to spend ten months pushing the car.
- e. **úkí igbúgbé ọdiá rẹ a-súa imótò**
 It was every ten months Odia was pushing the car. (habitual past) / Odia was pushing the car every ten months.

As observed with statives, events also occur in both punctual and durative structures. It is not surprising that events can occur in punctual situations, as in (5a) and (6a). However, in the progressive aspect in (5b) and (6b), only an inceptive interpretation is allowed. What is surprising is the fact that events can and do occur in the durative structures (5c), (6c) and (5d), (6d). Thus, in (5c) and (6c), the interpretation of the situation depicted by the verb is for the period of ten months. This does not mean that

the stinging/pushing went on progressively for ten months. Rather, all the different instants are seen over a period of time. Similarly in the progressive aspect expressed in (5d) and (5e), 'every ten months' is seen as an instant on each occasion. In actual fact, these iterative instants seen over a period of time in the past can be interpreted as habitual past, as indeed expressed in the interpretation of (6d) and (6e). What is becoming clear in Esan is that the verb classes all occur in the punctual and durative structures and have the respective interpretations in these structures. Also, the interpretation of the temporal adverbials is determined by the structure in which they are used. Let us now see what obtains with processes.

PUNCTUALITY/DURATIVITY AND PROCESSES

To recap, processes (like statives) are durative situations that last through time. Most verbs in Esan are processes. Examples are *gui* 'beg', *tie ébè* 'read', *gben ébè* 'write', *rie fi* 'throw', *wenna* 'work', *talọ* 'talk', *khen* 'play', *tonọ* 'itch, scratch', *gbonọ* 'sweep', *won* 'drink', *le ébàè* 'eat', *yen ébàè* 'cook'. Two of these, viz. *wenna* 'work' and *talọ* 'talk' are used for illustration in (7) and (8).

- (7) a. *íkpe evá ódiá dâ wènná*
 years two
 It was at two years (old) Odiá worked
- b. *íkpe evá ódiá dâ á-wènná*
 years two ing-work
 It was at two years (old) Odiá was working. / It was at two years (old) Odiá started working. (inceptive reading)
- c. *íkpe evá ódiá ré wènná*
 It was in/for two years Odiá worked. / Odiá worked for two years.
- d. *íkpe evá ódiá ré a-wènná*
 years two use ing-work
 It was two years Odiá spent working. / Odiá was working for two years. / Odiá spent two years working.
- (8) a. *íkpe evá ódiá dâ táłọ*
 years two talk
 It was at two years (old) Odiá talked.
- b. *íkpe evá ódiá dâ á-tàłọ*
 years two ing-talk
 It was at two years (old) Odiá was talking. / It was at two years (old) Odiá started talking. (inceptive reading)
- c. *íkpe evá ódiá ré tàłọ*
 years two use
 It took Odiá two years to talk. / It was two years before Odiá talked.
- d. *íkpe evá ódiá ré a-tàłọ*
 years two ing-talk
 It took Odiá two years to be talking. / It was two years Odiá spent talking.

The data in (7) and (8) shows that processes in the punctual structure behave like states and events that we have looked at. Thus, in (7a) and (8a), the time is specified as 'at two years old' which is a point in time, being a punctual interpretation, just as in states ((3a) and (4a)) and events ((5a) and (6a)). In the progressive aspects as in (7b) and (8b), processes also occur with an inceptive reading just as in states (3b), (4b) and events (5b), (6b). In the durative structures, a period/interval is referred to in the temporal specification. Thus, in (7c) and (8c) 'in two years' marks duration, just as in states (3c), (4c) and events (5c), (6c). In the durative progressive aspect as in (7d), (8d), the interpretation is a 'period of two years'. Again just as in states (3d), (4d) and events (5d), (6d). Thus, Odia was working/talking for a period of two years. Note that the durative aspect is interpreted as a progressive process, that is, seen as being in progress for the period referred to.

What is now clear from the behaviour of these classes of verbs is that they all occur in punctual and durative structures, with similar meaning, being inceptive in the punctual (progressive) aspect (temp.advbl. NP; *dâ á*-VP) for all verb classes. However, even though they all also occur in the durative progressive aspect:- (temp.advbl. NP; *ré a*-VP) structure, their meaning is not quite the same. Thus, for statives, the situation is interpreted as continuous, for events the iteration/repetition of the situation is seen over a period of time while for processes, the situation is seen in progress. In what follows, we look at the subclass of processes called accomplishments, for which the imperfective paradox obtains as an aspect of durativity.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND THE IMPERFECTIVE PARADOX

Vendler (1967) calls a subclass of processes accomplishments. These go on in time like other processes but must be completed for such situations to be called accomplishments. Thus, completion is an important distinguishing criterion for their definition. Accomplishments are processes which proceed towards a climax/terminal point which is logically a part of its meaning. They, as durative situations, take time and are completed in time, rather than merely going on and coming to an end. In the literature (see Vendler 1967, Comrie 1976, and Lyons 1977 among others), the terms perfective and perfect are aspects that function to express completion. The terms 'telic' and 'atelic' are also associated with this aspectual behaviour of verbs (Comrie 1976:44). For instance, 'Mary was singing' and 'Mary was running' do not mean the same thing as 'Mary was singing a song' and 'Mary was running a race', as they entail different situations. Apart from the relevant question for all processes: how long did it take?, the relevant question for accomplishments is, has it finished? Thus, we can say that 'Mary has sung' if 'Mary was singing' and 'Mary has run' if 'Mary was running' because once the situation of singing/running starts, the end of the process is irrelevant. This situation is said to be atelic.

This is distinct, however, from the durative situations of 'Mary was singing a song' and 'Mary was running a race' which are said to be telic. To these one cannot say 'Mary has sung a song' or 'Mary has run a race' unless 'Mary has completed/finished the song/the race'. This is what is referred to as the imperfective paradox (see Dowty 1979). Telic situations involve durative situations which must be completed before one can call that verb an accomplishment. Thus, with respect to the internal structure of telic situations, completion is important to its being said to have been done, as in 'Mary is singing a song/Mary is running a race'. In contrast in atelic

situations, the inception of the situation is what counts, not the completion. Thus, from 'Mary is singing/Mary is running' one can say 'Mary has sung/Mary has run' even if she has not finished singing/running.

We can test the telic nature of a situation by the entailment it has. Thus, a situation expressed through the imperfective meaning, as in progressive aspect, entails one that is expressed through the perfect(ive) meaning. Such a situation is said to be atelic, otherwise it is telic. Thus, 'Mary was singing' entails that 'Mary has sung' so the situation is atelic. In contrast, 'Mary was singing a song' does not entail 'Mary has sung a song' because we do not know whether she has finished singing the song. So the situation is telic. Thus, a telic situation is one that involves a process that leads up to a well-defined terminal point, beyond which the process cannot continue. For Lyons, such processes which proceed towards a terminal point are, in fact, events. Thus, Vendler's accomplishments are processes to which the notion of completion is criterial. Examples are 'making a chair', 'building a house', 'carving a stool', 'eating up one's food', 'playing a game', etc. We shall illustrate the case in Esan with *yen ébàè* 'cook', *fí isẹ* 'play ise game' and *kanọ àgá* 'carve a chair'.

- (9) a. *ódiá dā á-yén ébàè* Odia was cooking.
 ing-cook food
- b. *ódiá yén ébàè* Odia (has) cooked.
 cook food
- c. *ódiá yén ébàè fo* Odia has finished cooking.
 cook food finish
- (10) a. *ódiá dā á-fí isẹ* Odia was playing ise game.
 ing-play game
- b. *ódiá fí isẹ* Odia (has) played ise game.
 play game
- c. *ódiá fí isẹ fo* Odia has finished playing ise game.
 finish
- (11) a. *ódiá dā á-kanọ àgá* Odia was carving a chair.
 ing.carve chair
- b. *ódiá kánọ agá* Odia (has) carved a chair.
 carve chair
- c. *ódiá kánọ agá fo* Odia has finished carving a chair.
 finish

In (9)–(11), the progressive aspect in (9a), (10a), and (11a) do not entail their simple past in (9b), (10b), and (11b) because the situations depicted in them have to be completed (as in (9c), (10c), and (11c)) for their entailments to hold. In other words, one cannot mean 'Odia (has) cooked/played ise game/carved a chair' in saying 'Odia was cooking/playing ise game/carving a chair' unless 'Odia has finished cooking/playing ise game/carving a chair'. These are telic situations since their progressive aspect do not entail the situations depicted by the perfect(ive)/simple past.

Next, we need to see how the nonaccomplishment processes behave in such structures with examples as in (12)–(14) using *le ébàè* ‘eat’, *rie únè* ‘run’ and *gbèn ébè* ‘write’.

- (12) a. *òdiá dâ á-lé ébàè* Odia was eating
 ing-eat food
 b. *òdiá lé ébàè* Odia ate/has eaten.
 c. *òdiá lé ébàè fo* Odia has finished eating.
 finish
- (13) a. *òdiá dâ á-rie únè* Odia was running.
 ing-take run
 b. *òdiá rié únè* Odia ran/has run.
 c. *òdiá rié únè fo* Odia has finished running.
- (14) a. *òdiá dâ á-gbèn ébè* Odia was writing.
 ing-writing book
 b. *òdiá gbèn ébè* Odia wrote/has written.
 c. *òdiá gbèn ébè fo* Odia has finished writing.

In (12a), (13a), and (14a), the progressive aspect entails their simple past (12b), (13b), and (14b), unlike in (9)–(11), where the entailment relationship fails to hold. Thus, ‘Odia was eating/running/writing’ in (12a), (13a), and (14a) entails that ‘Odia ate (has eaten)/wrote (has written)/ran (has run)’, in (12b), (13b), and (14b). These are atelic situations, since their progressive aspect entails their simple past. Note that completion which is crucial to the entailments of accomplishments can also be applied to them, as we see in (12c), (13c), and (14c), although it is not crucial to their entailment of the simple past. As already noted, for the entailment to hold with nonaccomplishment processes, what matters is beginning the process, not the termination or endpoint.

It must be mentioned that as processes, accomplishments occur in punctual and durative structure, and have their associated meanings in these.

- (15) a. *íkpe ìgbé òdiá dâ yén ébàè*
 It was at ten years old Odia cooked.
- b. *íkpe ìgbé òdiá dâ á-yén ébàè*
 ing-cook
 It was *at ten years* old Odia was cooking. / It was at ten years old Odia started cooking. (inceptive reading)
- c. *íkpe ìgbé òdiá ré yén ébàè*
 Odia cooked *for ten years*.
- d. *íkpe ìgbé òdiá ré a-yén ébàè*
 It took Odia ten years in cooking. / Odia spent ten years in cooking.
- e. *íkpe ìgbùgbé òdiá ré a-yén ébè*
 It was every ten years Odia was cooking. / Odia was cooking every ten years.

Accomplishments seem to behave like events in having a possible interpretation of iteration, as in (15e) rather than progressive like other processes. This, interestingly, should not be surprising since accomplishments are, in fact, events when the terminal stage is achieved.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions and/or highlights can be drawn from the foregoing discussion:

1. There is no doubt that Esan has punctual and durative structures grammaticalized.
2. All verb classes occur in the two structures in Esan, unlike in languages like English where only states and processes are durative. This kind of grouping together is irrelevant to Esan. However, the meaning they have is determined by the structure in which they are used. What is consistent is that all verbs in the same structure have similar meanings, being punctual in punctual structure and durative in durative structure.
3. All verb classes occur in the punctual progressive aspect with an inceptive meaning.
4. All verb classes occur in the durative progressive aspect but their meanings differ. Thus, statives are interpreted as continuous, events as continual/iterative being seen over a period, and processes as situations in progress. We saw the paradoxical situation where stative verbs occur in punctual structure, this situation is possible because of the interpretation of the state as the beginning of a new phase, with focus on the inceptive phase.
5. Again we saw the surprising situation of events occurring in durative structure, against our expectation, given its definition. This is possible in Esan because of the interpretation of events as iterative instants, seen over a period, thereby acquiring an interval/durative interpretation. Thus, the interval structure of the situation of events is one of iterative instants which taken as a whole, functions as a period.
6. Finally, it is observed that accomplishments to which the imperfective paradox applies, involve telic situations. They behave like events (in having iterative interpretation) in durative structure, and punctual interpretation in punctual structure. This behaviour confirms the fact that they, in fact, become events in their terminal phase, justifying Lyons' position.

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